

GOLD MINING IN MOUNT IDA: DEVELOPMENT DISCOURSES AND
VALUATION LANGUAGES IN THE SOCIAL MEDIA



ÇAĞLA TABAK

BOĞAZIÇI UNIVERSITY

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Çağla Tabak

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The thesis of Çaęla Tabak

has been approved by:

Prof. Begüm Özkaynak
(Thesis Advisor)

Prof. Gökhan Özertan

Assist. Prof. Barış Gençer Baykan
(External Member)

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Çaęla Tabak, certify that

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ABSTRACT

Gold Mining in Mount Ida:

Development Discourses and Valuation Languages in the Social Media

This thesis analyses the development discourses and valuation languages used in the social media during the environmental conflict over the gold mining project in Mount Ida. Public opposition had escalated at the operational stage of the project when the Canadian company, Alamos Gold, cut down 195,000 trees to start the mining activities. Social media was a vital pillar of the debate in 2019 and played an essential role in social appraisal. Based on the social media analysis, I examine the actors' opposing or supporting arguments for the project. In particular, I use Twitter as a source to explore the values attributed to the environment. By analyzing both sides' tweets between 24 July 2019 and 31 August 2019 using qualitative methods, I draw development discourses and valuation languages dominating the scene. The research findings suggest that while opposing actors articulate discourses rich in valuation languages, create substance and value for the discussion from the environmental, economic, and cultural perspectives, supporting actors' arguments were superficial and shallow. The study also reveals that both groups have prejudices towards each other.

ÖZET

Kaz Dağları'nda Madencilik:

Sosyal Medyada Yer Alan Kalkınma Söylemleri ve Değerleme Dilleri

Bu tez, Kazdağları'ndaki altın madenciliği projesi üzerinden çevre çatışması sırasında sosyal medyada kullanılan kalkınma söylemlerini ve değerlendirme dillerini analiz etmektedir. Madencilik faaliyetlerinin başlaması amacıyla, projenin operasyonel safhasında 195.000 ağacın Kanadalı Alamos Gold şirketi tarafından kesilmesi halkın projeye yönelik muhalefetini artmıştır. Sosyal medya, 2019'daki tartışmanın önemli bir ayağı olmuş ve sosyal değerlendirmede önemli bir rol oynamıştır ve bu nedenle sosyal medya analizi ile tarafların projeye karşı çıkan ve projeyi destekleyen argümanları bu tezde incelenmiştir. Çevreye atfedilen değerlerin keşfedilmesi için sosyal medya kaynağı olarak da Twitter seçilmiş, 24 Temmuz 2019 ile 31 Ağustos 2019 tarihleri arasında her iki tarafın tweet'lerini nitel yöntemler kullanarak analiz ederek, tartışmaya hakim olan kalkınma söylemleri ve değerlendirme argümanları belirlenmiştir. Araştırma sonuçları gösteriyor ki projeye karşıt olan aktörler değerlendirme dilleriyle zengin söylemlerde bulunurken çevresel, ekonomik ve kültürel bakış açılarından tartışmalar için içerik ve değer yaratırken, buna karşılık olarak projeyi destekleyen aktörlerin savları yüzeysel ve derinliksiz kalıyor. Bunun yanı sıra bu çalışma, iki grubun da birbirlerine karşı önyargıları olduğunu ortaya çıkarıyor.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

On 26 July 2019, the public started to react right after Alamos Gold, the Canadian gold mining company, started to cut down trees as part of a gold mining project planned in Mount Ida. After several demonstrations took place with only 13 people as part of “Water and Conscience Vigil (WCV),” the case caught national attention, and 13 protesters turned into hundreds within a short period. In the end, we witnessed a tremendous collective attempt on 5 August 2019, with tens of thousands marching to the mining area to protest against this large-scale environmental destruction motivated by commercial interests (“Su ve Vicdan Nobeti”, 2019). Social media have been one of the main pillars of this environmental conflict, one of the biggest social media mobilizations after the Gezi Park protests in 2013.

On their website, Alamos Gold announced: "Our Kirazli Gold Project in Turkey represents a significant near-term source of low-cost production growth. With its low capital and operating costs, Kirazli is one of the highest returns, undeveloped gold projects in any gold price environment" (“Turkish Development Projects”, August 2019). With that motto, the company started its operation, and the deforestation of Mount Ida took place in June 2019. Although exact impacts are still unknown today, irrecoverable damage is undoubtedly done to vegetation and wildlife in the region. According to the project plan and the EIA, the company would cut only 45,650 trees. However, an estimation elicited with satellite images from the area depicts that the actual numbers are around 195,000 trees, around four times greater than the ones reported in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

This thesis analyses the development discourses and valuation languages used in the environmental conflict over the gold mining project in Mount Ida—a region important with its historical, cultural, and ecological aspects. Although the conflict in the area was ongoing for more than a decade, it has mounted when Alamos Gold, the company exercising gold mining, caused some severe and visible environmental damage.

This analysis aims to provide insights into the motivations and arguments of the social actors who participated in the environmental conflict in Mount Ida amidst gold mining activities by Alamos Gold. As the protests caught national and even international attention, it motivated many field studies to investigate the complexity of this environmental conflict. However, this study differentiates itself from existing studies as it relies on the social media aspect of the protests as its data source. With this analysis, I aim to show whether social media can reflect the rich discussion found in the field studies.

The use of social media has become central in the Mount Ida environmental conflict, marking itself as one of the most significant movements to do so after the Gezi Park protests in 2013. Social media is the most accessible and widely used public forum, allowing individuals to express their positions while revealing the complex nature of any environmental conflict. As a gold mining project can bring discussions around economic cost-benefits, territorial rights, environmental justice, and environmental impacts (Martinez-Alier et al., 2010), this thesis builds on these different ways in which actors legitimize their respective positions.

The use of social media during a conflict is indeed widespread worldwide. In the 2000s, social media usage to mobilize and reach out to actors has increased (Isa & Himelboim, 2018). In addition to its being a new way of communication technology, the

increased use of social media maybe because “social media allows for more personalized, expressive involvement and reduces barriers to collective action” (Hodges & Stocking, 2016, p. 223). Moreover, Tufekci and Wilson (2012) state that Twitter’s structure that consists of public and networked users creates a space where actors can interact to a far greater extent than other networking technologies. Another essential role of social media outlets in conflict is that they facilitate democratization in developing democracies while increasing participation in established democracies. Especially under authoritarian leaders, social media, especially Twitter, allows individuals to express their opinions (Gleason, 2013). Throughout the world, there are examples of such uses of social media. BlackLivesMatter (Yang, 2016). movement against police brutality, ArabSpring (Khondker, 2011) where people rose against totalitarian leaders, OccupyWallStreet (Hardt & Negri, 2011) movement to criticize unequal wealth distribution, and actors who participated in demonstrations heavily used Twitter to communicate within their groups, to express their ideas and attract newcomers to the protests and share information. In the academic literature, there are also some pioneering studies using social media to frame an environmental conflict. These are as follows: analysis of the Cerattepe and Gezi Park protests using Twitter (Odabaş & Reynolds-Stenson, 2018; Doğu, 2019) and mapping of wind-power controversies using Facebook (Borch et al., 2020).

From a methodological perspective, in the thesis, I adopt a discourse analysis approach to examine the statements, value articulations, and valuation languages used in social media. Environmental conflicts occur because participating actors have different values regarding a particular project decision. Actors can articulate different value dimensions while referring to nature and how a project impacts it such as; instrumental,

relational, and intrinsic (Himes & Muraca, 2018). Some actors oppose a project because they appreciate ecological aspects or the aesthetic and cultural aspects of a region; others want to preserve it because their livelihoods depend on the area. On the other hand, a company may advocate the project in a mining conflict because of monetary gains, or a local actor may support the project because of potential employment opportunities (Munda, 2008). A better understanding and inclusion of these values in decisions would surely lead to better development outcomes for nature and people.

The Ida Mountain conflict was a trending topic on Twitter for more than a week during the summer of 2019, and thousands of tweets were sent with the hashtag #KazDaglari (Mount Ida). In this context, I conduct a social media analysis by retrieving the tweets using the hashtag during 24 July 2019 and 31 August 2019, the peak of the social media pillar of the conflict. While I do not claim to represent all protesting or supporting groups in the field, such an analysis gives us some insights regarding the content and depth of the argumentation of social media participants in the debate based on some relative frequencies.

The thesis consists of six parts. After this introduction, Chapter 2 reviews the literature on the neoliberal developmentalism approach adopted in Turkey after 1980s and its effect on the environmental policies at the national level. It also gives a brief conceptual background to the environmental conflicts in the country. Chapter 3 focuses on the historical background of Mount Ida gold mining conflict and the social movement that resurged in the summer of 2019. Chapter 4 introduces the methodology adopted for the discourse analysis in social media. Chapter 5 discusses the results from the analysis and provides some qualitative insights into the motivations and arguments of the actors who participated in the conflict. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis.

CHAPTER 2

NEOLIBERAL DEVELOPMENTALISM IN TURKEY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

2.1 Roots of neoliberalism in Turkey

Since the foundation of the Republic in 1923, modern Turkey's ideal has been rapid development, and the fuel for it has been rapid economic growth, for which different governments made concessions on environmental protection continuously (Adaman & Arsel, 2010). Unsurprisingly, these concessions led to conflicts between the state and local communities, especially in the last 30 years.

Ergan (1998) summarizes Modern Turkey's main growth characteristics in three main periods. At the beginning of the Republic, to boost industrialization, statist policies were adopted. The private sector was supported and controlled by the state when needed, and the state covered the areas that the private sector could not afford at the time. Then, in the 1950s, the transition from one-party regular to multi-party period led to the market economy, but only partially. The major shift in the economy's structure took place only in the third period, starting with the coup d'état of 1980, which changed Turkey's state-driven politics entirely, moving the country towards neoliberalism (Avcı, 2008), where the country witnessed market-oriented reform policies that would reduce state influence in the economy, mainly through large-scale privatization and austerity to increasing efficiency ultimately (Boas & Gans-Morse, 2009).

Turgut Özal was the prominent figure of the transitioning Turkey in the first phase of the neoliberal era, as he was the country's prime minister. He and his legacy transformed the nation from varying perspectives; economics, politics, culture, and foreign policy (Öniş, 2004). In this first phase, trade and financial systems were

liberalized. The Turkish economy became more integrated into the international monetary system with international players, notably the World Bank and IMF. Agricultural subsidies were cut down, which was the state's strategy to reduce exports since the 1960s (Boyrac, 2018). With the introduction of new laws, previously state-controlled State Economic Enterprises (SEE) were privatized, leading to further privatization of various sectors under state control (Avcı, 2008).

The mining sector was among the sectors opened up to private investment. Arsel (2012), in this context, notes that “whereas previously extraction of national underground resources could only be carried out by state-owned enterprises, the new law enabled and encouraged the involvement of foreign corporations.” The goal was to increase foreign direct investment, which would help transform the economy from its agrarian base into an export-oriented industrial character.

The second phase of the neoliberal era started with the liberalization of capital accounts in 1989, allowing free capital inflows and outflows (Öniş, 2004). While the aim was primarily to attract external capital and increase economic growth, with no adequate institutions and legal framework, macro-economic instability made Turkey instead entirely dependent on short-term and highly speculative capital inflows. The country went through successive economic crises, also known as currency crises, in 1994, 1998-1999, and 2001 (Boratav & Yeldan, 2013). In the 1994 crisis, the Central Bank intervened in the foreign exchange market to stop approximately 70% depreciation in the Turkish Lira and consequentially lost half of its international reserves (Feridun, 2008). Furthermore, economic growth declined 6%, the highest deterioration in the level of GDP since the foundation of the Republic (Celasun, 2000). In 1999, an exchange-based disinflation program was launched, backed by a standby IMF agreement with

hopes of stabilizing the economy. In the beginning, the program was effective and reduced interest rates inflation rates until the end of 2000, when the economy hit a liquidity trap caused by a setback in capital inflow. The economy could not recover from it soon enough, and the program was cancelled in 2001 when the international debt market collapsed (Ekinçi & Ertürk, 2007). As policymakers were trying to preserve pegged exchange rate regime during the turmoil, overnight interest rates climbed to 1000%. Upon discarding the managed exchange rate regime, the Turkish Lira depreciated 30%, and inflation started to escalate drastically again, and government debt doubled (Dufour & Orhangazi, 2008).

The recovery came with privatization gaining a new pace with further changes in trade and financial systems (Öniş, 2011). The following section will focus on the post-crisis period as there is a significant shift in the country's development agenda towards extractivism with the The Justice and Development Party (JDP) taking the government in 2002.

2.2 From neoliberalism to extractivism

JDP's logic of developmentalism was no different from its predecessors in terms of reason but more intensive in terms of content. As Gündüz (2015) notes, the JDP's economic model had mainly two pillars – crazed consumption via consumer credits and immense rent gains via commercialization of the commons, such as rivers, mountains, historical buildings, forests, parks. The continuous growth vision was mainly based on state-driven construction projects and new energy and mining investments—the so-called extractivism. Rather than dealing with the distributive conflicts and ecological costs of continuous growth, the main priority was to increase growth, assuming this

would lead to higher living standards. In JDP slogans, rhymes such as "megaprojects" or "project of the century" have found many places, as they were introduced as the new engine of economic development. In this period, the appearance of natural assets as capital has also increased, and legal arrangements have been made to privatize places previously regarded as public.

The welcoming of new mining laws by JDP (in 2001, 2004, and 2010), aiming to attract new investments, mainly granting some further rights for foreign and domestic enterprises to produce minerals, should be regarded in this context. According to Mining Special Expertise report of 2007, there were 576 public and 1167 private enterprises in mining in total (Avcı, 2008; Arsel, 2012). With additions made in 2010 to Article 7 of the Mining Law No. 3213, mineral exploration and operation activities in areas such as national parks, wildlife protection and development areas, conservation forests—all important in terms of protecting the biological diversity of the country—became possible provided that permission is obtained from the relevant institutions (TEMA, 2015).

Of course, from the surface, extractivism has many upsides for the ones holding the political power. It creates new employment areas for those who could not benefit from neoliberalism before, and hence, tries to achieve a degree of redistributive economic growth (Acosta, 2013). In this context, Adaman and Akbulut (2020) argue that “infrastructure construction and extractivism” is a way of using state power to patronage and corrupt on behalf of sustained economic growth. Indeed, this close relationship between statism and neoliberal reforms and the continuous interventions to societal spaces have been substantially considered related themes within the research agenda for “authoritarian populism.”

Here, the term “authoritarian populism” has been used to refer to how such state practices evolved to marginalize oppositional groups and politics. While the interventions to “societal sites” (e.g., urban and rural spaces, rivers) are repeatedly legitimized through an emphasis on “the market” and “economic necessity,” whilst this narrative of “necessity” laid the foundation to justify repression of opposition groups (Bruff & Tansel, 2019).

Moreover, throughout the JDP era, although there have been regulations regarding liberalization of the previously state own sectors, the laws guarding the nature/environment remained largely ineffective because of governments’ either unwillingness or inability (or both) of addressing environmental issues (Adaman et al., 2020). Appetence to rapid growth combined with inadequate regulations paved into "overuse of natural resources and disposal of waste beyond the capacity of the ecosystem" and hence resulted in severe environmental degradation (Adaman & Arsel, 2005, p.3). Turkey has been ranked as 99th among 180 countries on Environmental Performance Index (EPI, 2020), an index where countries are rated according to environmental health and ecosystem vitality. JDP’s mega projects, such as dams, power plants and construction in large areas, destroying living areas, and affecting human health, have also caused many new environmental conflicts (Akbulut, 2010). The following section will now focus on examples of such environmental disputes in Turkey.

2.3 Environmental conflicts in Turkey

Environmental conflicts in Turkey have been increasing between local actors and the state and companies since the shift to neoliberal policies and privatization (Özen, 2014).

Resistances often start locally because of their instantaneous effect on the environment (Özen, 2014), and some gain appeal nationwide. Mining resistances in Bergama (Özen, 2009) and Cerattepe (Cansız & Cansız, 2016), anti-coal movement in Aliaga (Turhan et al., 2019), battle against the nuclear power plant in Akkuyu (Aydın, 2020) and the Gezi Movements are examples of such conflicts over resources and green areas of national importance. This section mainly reviews some of these cases; the emblematic mining cases, particularly the Bergama movement, Soma mining disaster, Cerrattepe mining conflict, and the Gezi movement, given the role that social media played in there.

The Bergama Movement: Bergama movement emerged when a multi-national mining company Eurogold attempted to operate gold mining in Bergama, a province of Izmir, and some social groups resisted the project (Özen, 2009). Eurogold was indeed one of the first multinational companies endeavoured to gold mine in Turkey, and it took 12 years to start the operation (Arsel, 2012). At the beginning of the project, peasants living in the area showed a positive attitude toward the project. They were expecting to earn revenues from land sales and hoping for well-paid jobs. However, their positivity has changed when it has become public knowledge that gold cyanide will be used heavily during the extraction of gold. Also, contamination of the water supply because of chemicals at the exploration stage alarmed the peasants and caused a disturbance. Heavily agriculture-dependent locals were mainly motivated by environmental and public health risks, and as one farmer put it to protect their homes, land, and water, locals started to mobilize (Avcı, 2008). As the movement became more and more vocal, it attracted national attention (Özkaynak et al., 2012).

The movement got support from many national and international NGOs, and together with the local community, they tried to prevent the establishment of the gold

mine. With various actors getting involved in the conflict and environmental protection and livelihood themes, the movement started to represent broader demands such as discontent about the foreign exploitation of resources and demand for democratic decision-making (Özen, 2009). In 1997, to cancel Eurogold's license, the locals brought the case to the court, which found the mine incompatible with public welfare (Avcı, 2008).

The government was unwilling to implement the ruling even though the locals insisted on the government (Çoban, 2004). With intense pressure from protesters, the mining site was closed for a short period. The TUBITAK report commissioned by the government indicated that “the facility has been changed and improved in a way to eliminate risks [negative effect of cyanide leaching on the environment]” (TUBITAK, 2019). With this report indicating that the mine's safety has been improved, the company was given a license once again in 2001. The government feared losing additional foreign direct investments because of the Bergama movement and moved along with Eurogold despite public concerns (Çoban, 2004). While the movement might seem fallen short of its ultimate aim (preventing the operation of the gold mine), its impact at the national scale in terms of development critique at large and peaceful resistance tactics was significant. It inspired numerous other mobilizations that followed in different settings and geographies (Arsel, 2012).

Soma Mining Disaster: In Turkey, another mining conflict became better known when 301 miners lost their lives in the mine pits of Soma, province of Manisa. The disaster was a fatal mining disaster in the history of the Republic. In the night hours of 13 May 2014, a fire caused by the flammable equipment buried 787 miners; 301 could not be saved and lost their lives due to carbon monoxide poisoning (Atalay, 2015). The

report written by the State of Auditing Institution of Turkey stated that “the lack of enforcement of safety regulations caused the accident in Soma Coal Mine” (TBMM, Aftermath of Soma Report, p.25). Also, due to the hazardous working conditions and previous accidents in 2012 and 2013, Republican People’s Party (RPP) proposed to investigate the safety of Some Coal Mine, however, this proposal was rejected just 20 days before the disaster. (“Acı facia Soma”, 2018). As numerous other reports noted, the accident was highly preventable, and the company operating the mine, Soma Holding, did not take the necessary safety measurements (Akarca, 2016).

A vast public outrage was unleashed as the accident was indeed preventable. Unions started to protest the mining policies of the Justice and Development Party (JDP), which was followed by public protests in various cities in Turkey (Akarca 2016). The company operating the mine, Soma Holding, had close connections with the government, and hence JDP became the main subject of protests. JDP had governed the country since 2002, and the mine was assigned to Soma Holding by the ruling party (Adaman et al., 2018). Nevertheless, protestors faced police brutality in many cities. In Istanbul, for instance, protestors were not granted access to demonstrate at Taksim square, a street where almost all Istanbul protests are done. There have also been demonstrations at the headquarters of Soma Coal, the Some Holding parent company (“Soma maden faciası”, 2014). During the public outrage, social media platforms, mainly Twitter, were also heavily used to protest the ministries, JDP and Soma Coal. The case of the Soma Disaster was finalized in court on 11 July 2018; 37 of 51 defendants were acquitted. Soma Mine basin continues its operation up until today (“Altı yıl geçti”, 2020). Indeed, in the last ten years, such social uprisings have further increased in Turkey.

Cerattepe Mining Conflict: Another well-known mining conflict in Turkey occurred in Cerattepe region (a district of Artvin); an area with a unique fauna and homeland to many endemic species but cursed with its richness of gold and copper and similar mines (Özgökçeler & Sevgi, 2016). The dispute over the land has a history of more than 20 years. It began when a Canadian mining company, namely Cominco, drilled the region to further the exploration efforts launched by the General Directorate of Mineral Research and Exploration in 1986 in the area. The drilling resulted in contamination of local water, causing animal deaths. After this accident, with the efforts of the Green Artvin Association, established after the accident in 1995, series of protests began in the region (Doğu, 2019). After heavy protests by the well-organized locals who blended national actors to the conflict by creating reports and holding meetings, Cominco ended the mining efforts in the region in 1998 (“Artvin’de 25 yıllık mücadele”, 2018). In 2004, Cominco transferred its rights to another Canadian mining company, Inmet Mining. Although Inmet Mining localized its name to Artvin Mining to not get a reaction from the locals, Green Artvin Association and Artvin Bar carried the conflict to the legal ground. The court cancelled the operation license of the company in 2009. (“Cerattepe davasında reddi hakim talebi”, 2016). However, the desire to extract mines from Cerattepe did not end there.

The recent conflict in Cerattepe re-emerged in 2012 when the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources permitted Cengiz Holding to extract copper. The license was temporally suspended in 2013, and in 2014, the Council of State ruled that “a mine cannot be operated in this region”, and hence operations stopped for a while. Upon the decision of the Council of State, the company received an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) report, enabling it to start its operations again (“Dokuz soruda

Cerattepe”, 2016). Again, a new case was filed by 761 people and 60 attorneys and was “the greatest environmental court case of Turkey” (Özgökçeler & Sevgi, 2016, p. 504). In addition to the legal actions, the resistance against the project on the field was an important pillar of the opposition. The people of Artvin formed a 3 km long human chain with 15000 people, held a protest for 245 days to prevent the cutting of trees in the mining area, sit in front of the governorship, and many other demonstrations (“Artvin’de 25 yıllık mücadele”, 2018). Five thousand people gathered in the city centre of Artvin and protested the mining company; however, the protestors were tear-gassed by the police forces (“Cerattepe’de taşlı eyleme gazlı müdahale”, 2016).

In the field study, Cansiz and Cansiz (2016) reported that 80% of the Artvin citizens were against the project. There were many reasons why the locals were against the project. Dogu (2019) framed the conflict using Twitter from environmental justice and political economy perspective and found that people were discontent about the policies of the JDP government and the mentality of the state as much as they were worried about social justice, nature and ecology. Moreover, the study also elicited that the people of Artvin wanted “democratic participation in deciding the future of their environment” (p. 624). Regardless of the public opposition to the project from many aspects, the mine still operates (“Cerattepe’de maden çalışmaları devam ediyor”, 2020).

Gezi Park Movement: The most significant on the ground and social media uprising, Gezi Park protests, started when the JDP government decided to cut down trees in the city centre to rebuild the Ottoman Military Barracks that was demolished in the 1930s. Even though the project was rejected by the regional Cultural and Heritage Conversation Board in January 2013, Erdogan was resolute to build the barracks

(Özkaynak et al 2015). This was one of the many examples of the government's top-down approach to the usage of public spaces and urban development.

The Gezi Park protests started in late May 2013 as a small-scale environmental uprising and evolved into nationwide protests all around Turkey because of excessive use of force by police to the peaceful protestors (Odağ et al., 2016) by burning their tents and attacking them with tear gases (Özkaynak et al. 2014). The neoliberal violence used during the protests and censorship by the mainstream TV and news channels escalated the small-scale environmental revolt against urbanization. It incorporated various actors into the conflict, many of whom have never participated in any protest before (Farro & Demirhisar, 2014).

The lack of media coverage in the early stage of the conflict led to a shift in how the information is shared; protesters resorted to social media, mainly Twitter, with hashtag #occupygezi to circumvent government media censorship (Özkaynak et al., 2014). According to a survey conducted by KONDA, 70% of the survey participants heard about the protests from social media, and 80% of them used social media during the protests (KONDA, 2014). Approximately 14 million tweets were sent between 26 May 2013 and July 2013. The central theme of these tweets was Gezi Park protests locations, political opponents, activists, and resistance against the police who used pepper spray and tear gas heavily (Ozturkcan et al., 2017). The Gezi Park protests were about one park and a reaction to neoliberal governance and authoritarian social policies implemented by the ruling party, JDP. After weeks of "occupation" of the Gezi Park, it is possible to say the protests have achieved their goal, saving the park, but not without any loss. During the protests, eight people (one of them being police) were killed, and thousands were injured.

Recently, another significant conflict in the mining sector is the case of Mount Ida. The uprising for Mount Ida proceeded in 2010 and hit its peak in 2019 when local insurgency conjugated with social media changing its scale from a local one into a national one. The next chapter will focus on the gold mining conflict in Mount Ida.



CHAPTER 3

GOLD MINING IN MOUNT IDA

3.1 Historical background

Mount Ida¹, located in Northwestern Turkey between Balıkesir and Canakkale Provinces, is one of Turkey's most important critical floristic areas. Its importance comes from its rich and endemic flora and fauna with three types of vegetation (forest, shrub, and high mountain) and diverse mammals, birds, and reptiles (İlgar, 2008). 2.4 km² of the mountain was declared a nature conservation zone to protect its biological diversity, endemic species, rich water resources, and cultural heritage (Özkök et al., 2019). Apart from its vegetative and zoological wealth, Ida is rich in underground natural resources, gold and silver. Over the years, governments preferred to put the region's natural beauty aside to plunder the underground resources.

Indeed, national and foreign companies plunder Mount Ida's tantalizing wealth since the beginning of 90s and mining operations have been extending in the district since 2007 (Sivri et al., 2008). Since then, licenses are given to 44 companies to conduct more than 100 projects (Environmental Justice Atlas, 2019). One of these companies, Alamos Gold got its license in 2007, and is in charge of operating three projects in the region (namely, in Kirazlı, Ağı Mountain and Camyurt). The company was planning to start production in Kirazlı in 2013 and 2014.

¹ Kazdağı in Turkish Mother of Goddess, Cybele in ancient Greek



Figure 1. Locations of mining projects in Biga Peninsula as of 2019
Source: GEODI, n.d. (<https://servis2.dece.com.tr/>)

Although the exploration activities in the region started in 2004, the projects had not created a conflict until 2007, when Global Mining from Turkey started its operations in Bahcedere. Its arrival to the south of the Biga Peninsula sparked a local resistance, which promptly became a nationwide dispute (Avcı et al., 2010). Such an immediate and robust reaction is related to the economic dependencies of the population living in the rural areas. In Biga, more than half of the population live in rural areas, and their stable incomes rely on “agriculture and animal husbandry, related food production industries, and forestry” (Avcı, 2012, p. 176). In addition to local growers in the rural areas, the Edremit Bay coastal side is resided by summer vacationers and retirees from big cities. Urbanization on the coastal side increased the market for the growers. In particular, newcomers have boosted olive oil production in the region and driven the establishment

of many ecotourism facilities (Hurley & Ari, 2011). The urbanization in the area had led to new housing constructions, road expansions, and some environmental destruction. However, the threads from the gold mining project united all the actors living in the region. Homeowners, producers, and business owners came together in a short amount of time. With the assiduous efforts of these actors, copious protests were held in the region. While the company dropped the explorations in the south, it did not abandon these projects entirely (Avcı, 2012). Alamos Gold then acquired the two most developed projects in 2010 and brought these projects to the mine development stage (Environmental Justice Atlas, 2019).

In the meantime, the opposition had almost faded, and the resistance remained low for a while between 2009-2011. Even though the local community was still against the project and believed that the burden of environmental degradation would fall on them, they thought there was nothing they could do to stop the projects (Avcı et al., 2010). After increased exploration efforts, with the court's decision in December 2013, Canakkale Administrative Courtroom gave a suspension of execution on the exploration activities. However, Alamos Gold did not cease to pursue the case because of its low cost of the initial investment in infrastructure and get an operation license from the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources with the support of the JDP government (Environmental Justice Atlas, 2019). The picture below (Figure 2) provides a list of recent projects in the region, in the planning, exploration or operational stage.

After this brief introduction on the mining projects in the region, the following section will focus on the recent conflict and its reflection on social media.

3.2 Current situation and social media uprising

On 26 July 2019, public opposition escalated for the gold mining project in Mount Ida when Alamos Gold cut down 195.000 trees to start exercising mining (Environmental Justice Atlas, 2019). The demonstrations against the project, “Water and Conscience Vigil(WCV)” started with 13 people, according to the WCW Coordination Board. Then, the vigil got national attention and, these 13 people turned into hundreds and thousands. In the end, tens of thousands of protesters were marching to the mining area on 5 August 2019 (“Su ve Vicdan Nobeti, 2019).



Figure 3. Water and conscience vigil on 5 August 2019

Source: Kaz Dağları'nda yürüyüş: Suyuma ve toprağıma dokunma in 2019. From: <https://tr.sputniknews.com/cevre/201908051039849959-kaz-daglarinda-yuruyus-suyuma-ve-topragima-dokunma/>

Protestors oppose the mining project for various reasons. Their principal reason was the risk of damage to the Atikhisar Dam—the only water resource for 180 thousand people, primarily drinking water supply and agricultural irrigation (“Kaz Dağları: Tüm yönleriyle tartışmalı maden projesi”, 2019). Another critical concern is the negative impact on the ecosystem in the region. According to the 2020 TEMA² Mount Ida Report, Ida Mountains are a vital habitat for wildlife, and it is home to 800 plant species, 77 of which are endemic, with 32 only found in these mountains (TEMA, 2020). Arguably, the mining project is a significant threat to wildlife and plant species in the region.

As environmental concerns rise, the number of trees cut down in the region became a debated issue. It is given as 195.000 according to TEMA, 46.500 according to Environmental Impact Assessment and is 13.400 according to the General Directorate of Forestry (“Thousands of Trees Cut in Mount Ida”, 2019). TEMA started a campaign on change.org to increase public and civic awareness by putting photographs taken by the drones (Figure 4) and explaining that the conduct was a violation of the EIA. Three hundred thousand people signed it in the summer of 2019 and six hundred thousand at the end of the year (“Kaz Dağları: Tüm yönleriyle tartışmalı maden projesi”, 2019).

² TEMA is an NGO with the objectives of increasing awareness of environmental problems, protection of natural habitats and ecosystem conservation of water resources and establishing the necessary organization and legislation with the support of volunteers in order to achieve goal of stopping soil erosion



Figure 4. What is happening in Kirazli, Canakkale?

Source: Kirazlı Altın Madeni Projesi için ÇED Raporunda Belirtilen Rakamın 4 Katı Ağaç Kesildi, 2019. From: <https://www.iklimhaber.org/kirazli-altin-madeni-projesi-icin-ced-raporunda-belirtilen-rakamin-4-kati-agac-kesildi/>

At the same time, the main opposition party, RPP, proposed to set up a commission to investigate the harm done to nature in Atikhisar Great Divide. While such an investigation might be crucial for the continuum of any life in Mount Ida, the proposal got rejected by the ruling party's votes and its stooge, MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) ("Su ve Vicdan Nobeti, 2019). Nevertheless, local communities and municipalities were determined to make the damage done visible to the public eye. They held a press conference in the mining area, which caught the public eye nationwide. This press conference was also the tipping point for the social media uprising. People sent vast numbers of tweets to support the "Water and Conscience Vigil". With no sign of withdrawal from the project, neither on the government nor on the company side, public unrest grew even more prominent ("Thousands of Trees Cut in Mount Ida", 2019). In the following days of the end of July 2019, hundreds of thousands of tweets were posted

with the hashtag #KazDaglariHepimizin (MountIdaBelongsToUs). The event is the most significant social media uprising in Turkey since the Gezi Park protests in 2013, which was also about cutting down trees in the city centre, Taksim. The timeline (Figure 5) below gives a summary of these events.

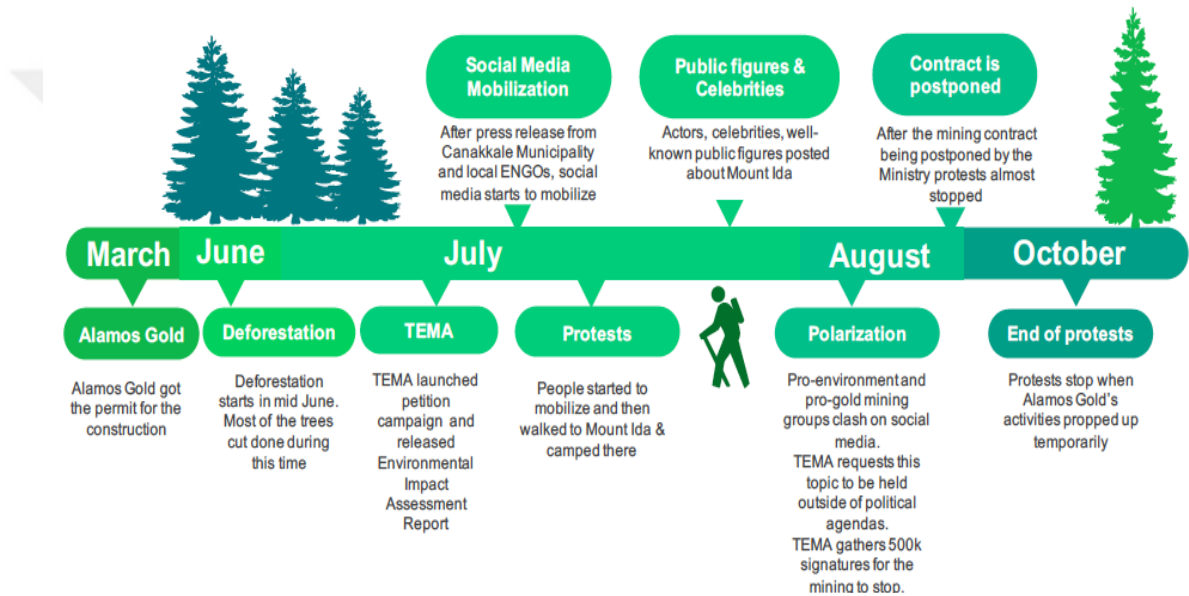


Figure 5. Timeline of the current conflict

Participants of the vigil were local actors and artists, public figures, unions, municipalities of different cities. They gave their support to the vigil and posted about Mount Ida's deforested hills. After the public outrage and vast support, The Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture released a statement entitled "the false facts about Canakkale Kirazlı mine site" on Twitter. It announced the number of trees cut down for the project as 13,400.400 (Figure 6). The Ministry indeed claimed that the number of trees cut down and the reported location of the mining project did not reflect the truth. The extent of ecological destruction exaggerated as the mining site will be reforested again with 'Mine

Fields Rehabilitation Act.’ (“Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığında Kaz Dağları açıklaması”, 2019).



Figure 6. The false facts about Canakkale Kirazli mine site
Source: The Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture in 2019. From Twitter
(<https://twitter.com/tctarim/status/1155052077435035648?lang=en>)

The false facts campaign launched by the Ministry contained the messages as summarized by the JDP spokesperson, Omer Çelik: “There is an agenda with the hashtag of Ida Mountains. We are highly sensitive to environmental issues in Ida Mountains or anywhere in Turkey. We are most proud of the afforestation activities carried out by our government in the last decades. The reports suggesting that this mine is in Ida Mountains are false. The mining site is not Ida Mountains. There is a distance of 40 kilometers in between. All the trees were not cut either; the saplings were planted in a different area. Following the company's contract in question, the afforestation of this place will be carried out after the operations here are completed. Finally, these

permissions were given in 2001 before our governments. There is site permission removed before us. There is absolutely no process like cyanide exploration.” (“AKP Sozcusu Celik’ten Kaz Daglari Aciklamasi “, 2019).

Pro-miner social media users were silent until the Ministry’s tweet about the "False Facts" at the end of July. However, after the tweet, various newspapers and news channels stated that “there is another intention behind these protests” and shifted the environmental debate to a political discussion. A news article, A Haber—a news channel and newspaper with close links to JDP—reads as follows: “where are the Ida Mountains? The provocations over the Ida Mountains have gained momentum in recent days. The perception that “Ida Mountains are being destroyed” has also emerged. Work has begun to mine gold in the Kirazlı mining field, 40 kilometers away from the Ida Mountains in Canakkale. Photographs of Kirazlı Hill as if it is Ida Mountains are continuously shared as part of the operation carried out on social media” (“Kaz Dağları üzerinden algı operasyonu”, 2019). Following statements similar to A Haber from various government sources and supporters, the discussion on social media was not only about negative impacts on the environment anymore.

According to the pro-miners’ tweets, numbers regarding the trees' cutdown and location were announced wrong by the protesters. The majority of the tweets claim that there are malicious intentions behind the protests. They are not about the environment but done to harm the government and slow down national development. Some tweets even claim that these protests are the first steps of a coup d’état.

After the three-month long incensed demonstration, in October 2019, protestors returned their homes when Alamos Gold’s activities were propped up temporally. While the movement might seem to have achieved its goal for today, the gravity still endures

because 79% of the region is licensed for mining (Figure 7). The following section describes the methodology used in this study.

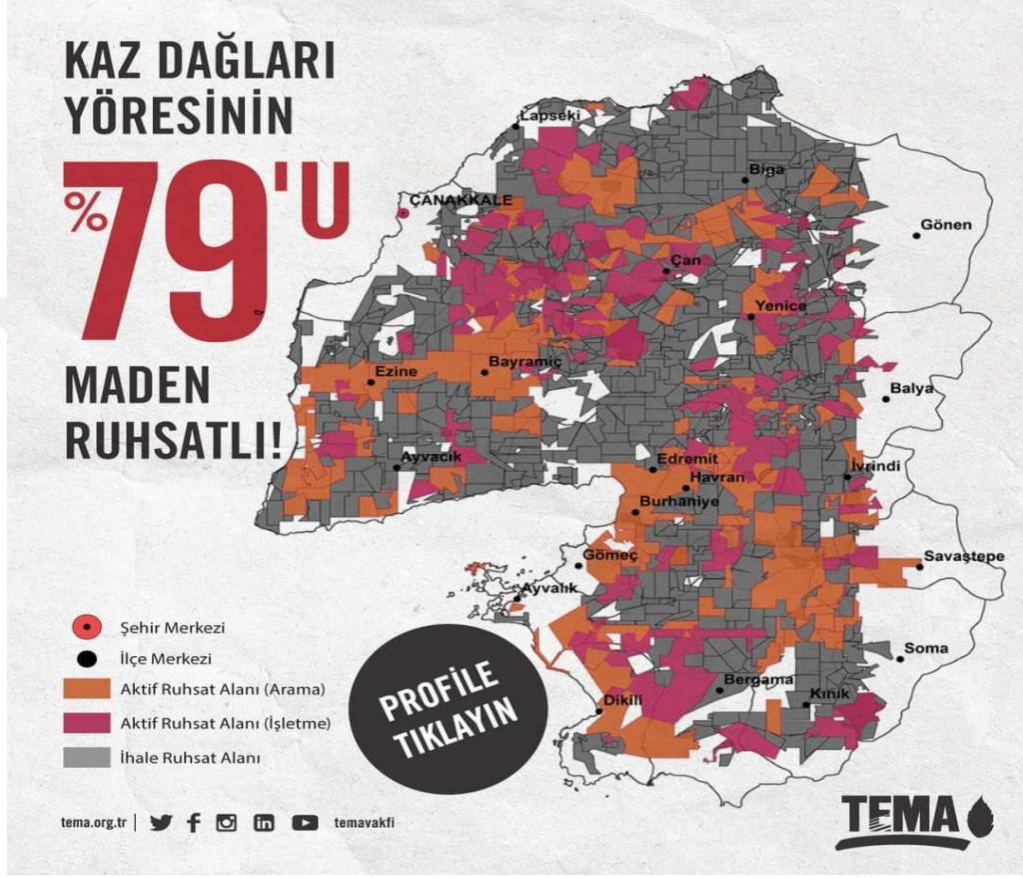


Figure 7. 79% of Mount Ida region is licensed for mining

Source: Kaz Dağları Yöresinde Madencilik Raporu by TEMA in 2020. From (<https://www.tema.org.tr/basin-odasi/basin-bultenleri/kaz-daglari-yoresinde-madencilik-raporu>)

CHAPTER 4

METHODOLOGY

This section describes the methodology deployed in this study. In order to frame the public opposition concerning the gold mining project in Mount Ida from a value articulation perspective, I mainly use discourse analysis and qualitative methods. For this study, I created a dataset is to capture the general public opinion. I first searched for available social media outlets to disentangle the public responses to the project. Initially, I examined the replies to Tarkan's Instagram post, in which he opposed the gold mining project ferociously. He is a well-known singer and who is believed beloved by both opposers and supporters of the project. His Instagram page has 4+ million followers, and his Mount Ida post got approximately twenty thousand replies. However, the contents of these replies did not articulate any value or variety in general. Thus, I have decided to focus on Twitter, a place for discussion in various public disputes.

There are two ways of retrieving data from Twitter. Data is either collected from paid resources or collected from streamed data. First, I aimed to use a Twitter API, namely Tweepy, in this study to collect the data. Unfortunately, collecting old tweets is not easy as collecting recent tweets. After 32 e-mails back and forth with a Twitter employee, I was only granted 500 tweets free of charge (the cost for a premium account was \$1250) monthly for my study. Moreover, the access Tweepy gave me did not allow me to apply any criteria (such as the popularity of a tweet) while collecting the data. Popular tweets in the Twitter environment mean that these tweets are retweeted or liked more than the others for a selected day. Since these tweets are retweeted or favoured more than other tweets, the assumption is that these opinions are endorsed more than the

others. Therefore, the dataset contains the most popular discourses and valuation languages concerning mining activities in Mount Ida.

As collecting all of the tweets was impossible without paid resources, I retrieved a selected amount of the tweets by applying popularity criteria and collected streamed data without any additional cost. Moreover, while creating the dataset, I attached “Kaz daglari” (Mount Ida) to the code to capture the public tweets about Mount Ida. I used a Python library called ‘Get Old Tweet3’ to retrieve old tweets without cost while allowing me to apply popularity criteria. I have used the code below and iterated to cover 24 July 2019 and 31 August 2019. This code only captures the maximum amount of 100 tweets from publicly available profiles.

```
pip install -e git+https://github.com/Mottl/GetOldTweets3#egg=GetOldTweets3  
GetOldTweets3 --since 2019-07-26 --until 2019-07-28 --querysearch "kaz daglari" --  
toptweets --maxtweets 100
```

The data captured from twitter concerns information flows between 07/24/2019 and 08/31/2019. Even though the Mount Ida movement has a long history, these dates are chosen since the uprising hit its peak both in the field and social media between these dates. Initially, the dataset consisted of 2262 tweets. The social media uprising slowly faded until the end of August, and the tweets sent at that time got little or no endorsement. Therefore, a popularity criterion is applied, and the tweets which have five or fewer favourites or retweets are omitted. Some tweets that were irrelevant to the topic are also omitted. 549 tweets are eliminated, and the remaining 1713 tweets are analyzed for this study.

The first step of the analysis was categorizing Twitter users according to actor type. Actors of the gold mining discussion on social media can be individual accounts,

political figures, NGOs, or famous people such as actors/actresses, musicians By categorizing them, I differentiate each actor's type and analyze their discourses and valuation languages within groups.. The detailed discussion concerning actors is presented in Section 5.1.

The next step of the analysis was labelling tweets as either for or against the gold mining activities in Mount Ida according to the context of each tweet. This labelling is done by reading and analyzing each tweet individually. Before labelling the whole dataset, the tweets are sorted according to their popularity, and the first 200 tweets are chosen as a sub-group to create discourse categories. While analyzing the remaining dataset, there have been additions to the created discourse categories. Some tweets do not fall into either category, as they are neutral tweets such as news.

Finally, I have re-examined the entire data set to discover valuation languages used to support or oppose the mining project. A detailed explanation of the discourse categories is in Section 5.2 of this thesis. Of course, it should be noted that the analysis here has no claim to represent a complete set of opinions during the environmental conflict. It mainly aims to frame the most popular discourses and valuation languages that are used to oppose or support the project by collecting the most endorsed tweets. Therefore, using any numbers and percentages would be misleading. Instead of a quantitative representation of the results, bubble charts are chosen to express relative frequencies at large.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS

5.1 Actors in social media

Before describing the tweets and their discourses and valuation languages, I first analyze the participants and how they became involved. A vast number of tweets are sent from different types of Twitter accounts. Therefore, I have categorized the senders according to their Twitter “bio,” where people use them to introduce themselves to other Twitter users. Figure 8 summarizes the distribution of the tweets sent by actor categories.

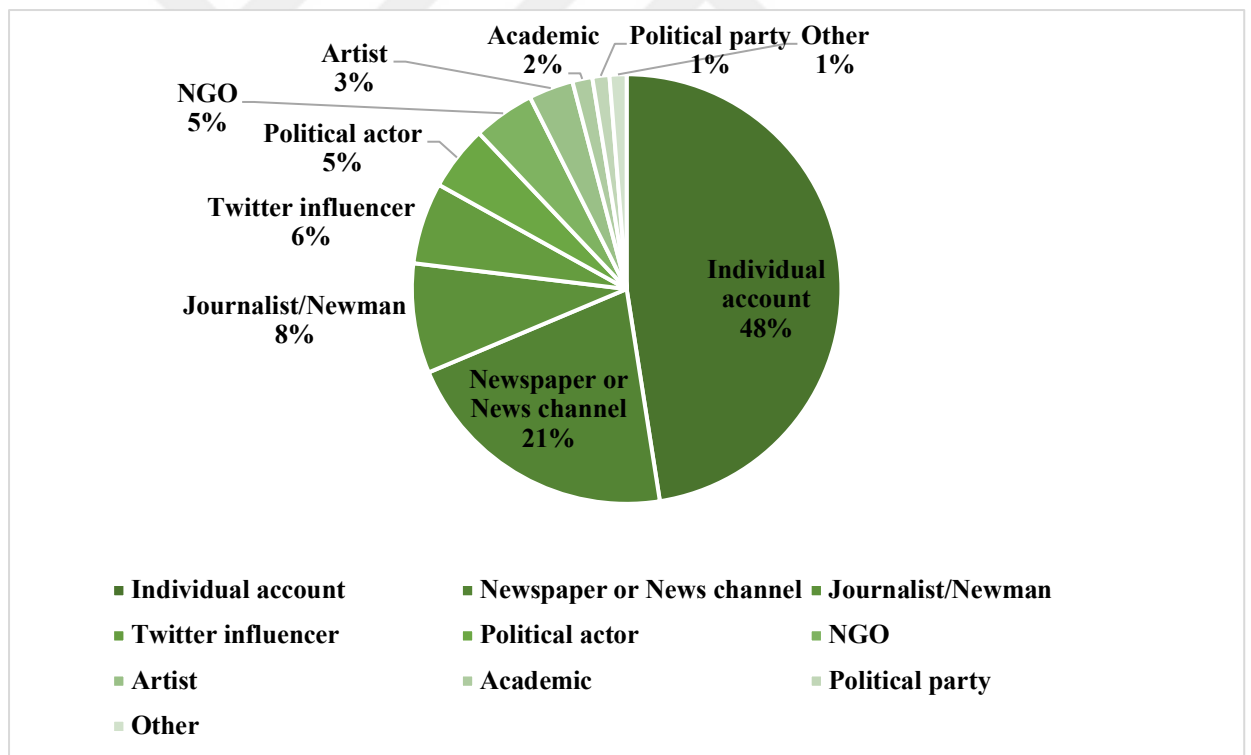


Figure 8. Actors in social media uprising

The results indicate that individual accounts send the majority of the tweets. I have characterized those accounts after determining other users' types as these accounts

cannot be put into different categories; they are non-specific. 21% of the tweets are sent by Twitter accounts of newspapers or news channels. Most of the tweets sent by those accounts are neutral and mainly give information about the mining conflict's current situation. The results also reveal that journalists and twitter influencers were quite active in the social media during the mining protests.

After characterizing the gold mining project participants, I have labeled their tweets as either for or against the project. Figure 9 depicts the distribution of the tweets sent to support or oppose the project. The results show that the majority of the actors sent a tweet to oppose the project.

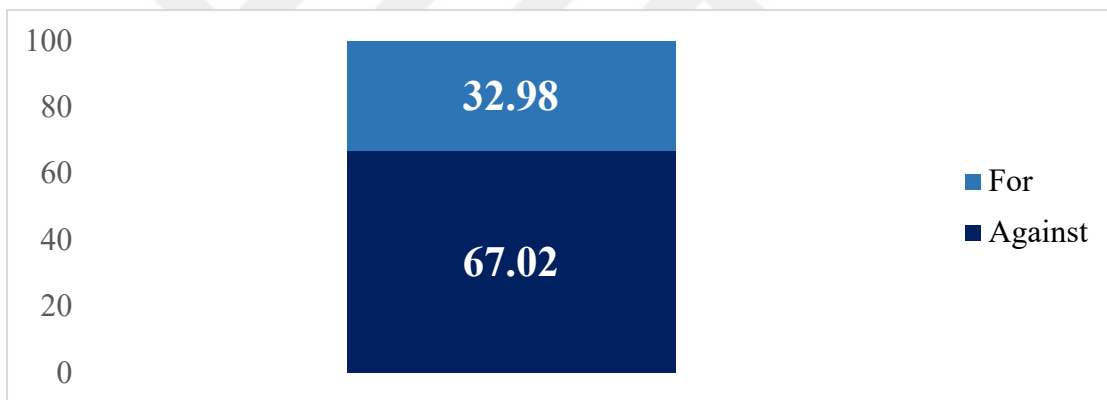


Figure 9. Distribution of for and against the project tweets

5.2 Discourse analysis to identify valuation languages used in social media

5.2.1 Arguments used while opposing the project

Actors in the social media uprising had various reasons for posting tweets. Protestors' tweets contain viable concerns about the impact of the mining activities on various issues using significant and diverse valuation languages. Tweets are not necessarily sent to address only one concern; instead, various tweets are sent to speak out about more

than one issue caused by the mining project. The better part of the tweets opposed to the project is predominantly sent because of environmental, developmental, or cultural preservative related reasons. Discourse categories for those that are against the project are shown in Table 1 sorted according to their frequencies.

Table 1. Discourse Categories Opposing the Project

Discourse Category	Refers to
Negative impact on environmental quality/ecosystem	Projects negative impact on the environment and ecosystem.
Listing of other/similar cases of natural destruction	Reference to some other destructive projects like mining in Mount Ida; with a negative impact on environment and ecosystem.
Exploitation of resources	People see the project as the destruction of nature. Extractivism and over usage of the resources are underlined.
Foreign exploitation of resources	Extractivism and over usage of the resources, and appropriation of national resources by foreigners are emphasized.
Ida Mountain is part of World Natural and Cultural Heritage	We need to protect Mount Ida because it is world natural and cultural heritage.
Rent seeking activity	Reference to short-term gains from land; corruption in bids.
Nature is belonging to nature	Nature's right to exist without human interference.
Reference to suppression	Discontent about the ongoing suppression in Turkey.
Reflection of structural problems; the issue is secondary	There are critical problems in Turkey.to be solved
Kaz rhetoric	Word games using "Kaz," the name of the mountain. In Turkish, "Kaz" has various meanings. One of them is the animal goose (easy pickings); the other is extracting.
An alternative development vision in the region is possible	Reference to other possible alternative developments in Mount Ida other than mining projects.
Against top down decisions; we need bottom up protection	Discontent about top-down approach in decision making.
Nation divide	Adverse and hostile tweets towards supporters.

The size of the bubbles in Figure 10 represents the relative frequency of a discourse category against other categories. Most tweets do not present just one discourse, so many are put into more than one category.

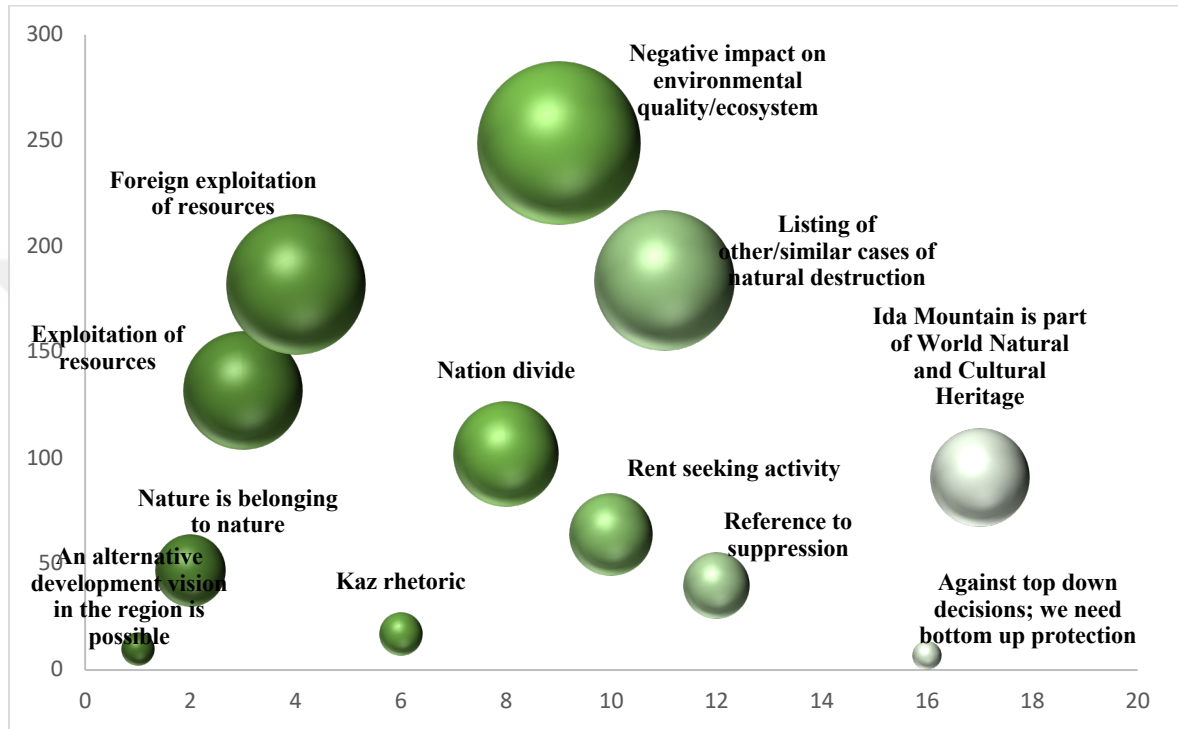


Figure 10. Discourses adopted to oppose the project

The most outspoken concern among the against tweets is the project’s negative impact on the ecosystem’s environmental quality. Tweets against the project evolve around deforestation and its effect on the level of oxygen produced by the trees and suggest that forests in Mount Ida generate vital oxygen for the Aegean region and Turkey. Another notable common point of these tweets is the irrecoverable negative impact of deforestation on biodiversity, destruction of natural life. An example as such is as follows: *“We must protect the natural resources and living spaces of this country like*

our dear. The disappearance of Mount Ida is the cessation of the air we breathe into our lungs. #MountIdaBelongsToAllOfUs". – Ekrem Imamoglu, Politician

While addressing the negative impact of the project on the environment, it is also possible to observe that the tweets contain various value dimensions when examined from a valuation language perspective.

- Some users assert that Mount Ida and its forests must be preserved because they are unique beauty, and their value cannot be measured with dollars.
- Protestors handling the issue from an environmental perspective also see Mount Ida as a piece from heaven and see the habitation as a whole that cannot be separated from each other. From the animals living there to the streams flowing through the forests, Mount Ida's biodiversity should not be ruined. Moreover, the mining project is seen as a massacre of the biodiversity and unique beauty of Mount Ida, while many tweets state the deforestation of the mountain is a slaughter.
- There is also a strong belief that the area is a public good; therefore, the ones who enforce the project have no right to destruct this spring of life, heaven on earth, lungs of the country for monetary gains.
- As mentioned in the Section 2.3., Turkey's history is abundant with projects of natural destruction; Mount Ida is just an example. Especially in recent years, many projects created public disturbance because of their negative impacts on the environment. It can be said that opposition to mining in Mount is also a reflection of an accumulated outburst. Therefore, while addressing Mount Ida significant number of tweets also mentions other projects or destructions. Reference to other cases of natural destruction discourse clusters the concerns

regarding mining projects and other similar issues. An example tweet of Hakan Demir, a journalist as such is as follows: *“Mount Ida ends, Salda begins. Hasankeyf ends, METU forest begins. One ends; the other begins. What about your grudge against the historical places, trees, lakes, and mountains of the country? What an exhausting hunger is this.”* Since these tweets are concerned about Mount Ida and the disappearance of the other natural beauties, they are rich in emotion. They perceive the projects that harm nature as greed, pillage, and hostility towards nature. The majority of these tweets indicate that these projects are “nature massacre” and “looting.” This is in line with the history of resource exploitation by humankind as put by Ludwig, et al, p.36: “resources are inevitably overexploited” and Peterson and Fisher (1977) assert that since the beginning of extractive activities, humankind was concerned about exploiting resources and their limits.

- Many tweets worry about the extraction of the resources from Mount Ida by national or foreign companies. Even though both “Exploitation of resources” and “Foreign exploitation of resources” discourses express concern about similar issues, they differ in one point, who is extracting the gold? “Massacre,” “slaughter,” and “plundering” are commonly used words while expressing discontent with the project. While the protests were enduring, incentives are given to Alamos Gold, the mining company operating in Mount Ida, which has transpired (“Tarım ve Orman Bakanlığında Kaz Dağları açıklaması”, 2019). The following tweets are examples in this line. *“Mount Ida is PLUNDERD! Forests, lakes, streams, everything is PLUNDERED!” – An Individual Account*
“1) Mound Ida is homeland! 2) The fight against the imperialist companies that

plunder Mount Ida for gold is the defense of the homeland! 3) the country must oppose those who offer Mount Ida to the imperialist companies! 4) Those who fight there by saying # Don't touch Mount Ida, are patriots!" -Mehmet Ali Guller, Journalist

Apart from environmental concerns, Ida Mountains, which have been a living space since ancient times, have an essential place in the world cultural history, from Troy to the Iliad, from the world's first philosophy school to local legends (TEMA, 2020). According to the 2020 TEMA report, there are many cultural heritages of different statuses in the region. The cultural heritage in the mining area covers a total area of 102,891 hectares in the categories of archaeological site, urban site, immovable cultural property to be protected and site area.

- In this context, many actors sent tweets to express that Ida Mountain is a critical world natural and cultural heritage. Some of the tweets sent to express dissatisfaction with the project stem from the desire to protect this world heritage for future generations. In these tweets, the emphasis on "ownership" is one of the most prominent features while explaining the value of this place. "Betrayal to the future", "a legacy incommensurable and invaluable in terms of gold", "a beauty that should be preserved for generations", are observed in almost every opposing tweet. In addition, there is a particular emphasis on Mount Ida belonging to all of us. Twitter users using this discourse think Mount Ida is essential not only because it provides oxygen but also a world natural and cultural heritage that should be protected so that their children can also benefit from it. Some examples in this line are: "*Mount Ida is not inherited to us; it is entrusted to us. Then, how can we look at the faces of our children and*

grandchildren” – Irfan Donat, Editor, Bloomberg HT; “Mount Ida is heritage of humanity, part of the earth, life itself. Let's take care of Mount Ida.” – Ahmet Umit, Author.

Reference to suppression tweets are about restraints put for the protests by the government. For example, police have been sent to the region to block the demonstrations. Moreover, during the protests in a kids TV Channel, TRT Kids, censored a little kid who wanted to speak about the project's destruction and negative impact on the environment (“TRT’de ‘Kaz Dağları’ diyen çocuk susturuldu”, 2019). *“Mount Ida censorship by TRT Kids(a national TV Chanel). A child who wanted to draw attention to Mount Ida by saying "Great damage is being done to our Mount Ida right now" by connecting to the program called “Haberin Olsun”, broadcasted on TRT Kids, was not allowed to speak.”- Dayanisma Mor, A Non-Governmental Organization*

The call for development alternatives and sustainable development in the region are among the demands of protesting actors in social media. Sustainable development can be explained as “an attempt to combine growing concerns about a range of environmental issues with socio-economic issues” (Hopwood et al., 2005, p.2). While most of the Twitter actors focus on negative impact on the environment and extractivism, a proportion of them also emphasise the need to discuss development alternatives. However, there are only a few examples as such in the dataset, and their discourses are limited. Examples are as follows: *“We aspire to repair the disaster in Mount Ida. Because #MountIdaBelongsToUs!”- Murat Calik, Political Actor.* *“Hundreds of people from all over Turkey, founded 8 different symbolic villages around a village near Mount Ida.” – Evrensel Gazete, News Account*

There is also an emphasis on people living near the region and providing their livelihoods from the right to decide the future of Mount Ida, and protesting actors are against the top-down decision-making process.

“The public reaction against the mining project in Mount Ida is growing. People who want to live here have the right and duty to fight these shameless people. These lands, these forests, these mountains are ours.”- Ilber Ortayli, Academic

Even though most tweets sent to oppose the mining project contribute to the discussion with a strong argument incorporating value articulation, an essential portion of them does not. These tweets are labelled as nation divide, as they are posted only to tell something negative to supporters of the project without using a valuation or development discourse. These tweets are categorized as nation divide since they block the conversation between the opposers and supporters and create a divide.

“MHP members who said" I will die to the flow of the river, refused the motion not to touch the Mount Ida! Mhp is not patriotic, it loves the seller!”- Ozlem Agirman, A Musician, Artist

The results reveal that actors against the project articulate diverse value expressions; including environmental, economic and cultural. For many, Mount Ida is a peerless beauty, which's value cannot be measure with dollars and to ruin this piece from heaven is a massacre. Actors articulate that nature/Mount Ida does not belong to anyone; it is an irreplaceable heritage that they should be passed to the next generations. Moreover, nature is defenseless against such destructive projects and people should protect it. The word cloud below (Figure 11) summarizes these values expressed while opposing the project.

project at Mount Ida could be considered within the frames of aesthetics and destruction of an ecosystem on the surface. However, the methodological approaches by academics and NGOs reveal that this is an issue of exploitation, while political actors refer to the systematic nature of environmental destruction. The social actors within the group against the project mainly express the legitimacy of their positions by directly addressing the project. They argue about their values or expertise in the subject matter.

5.2.2 Arguments used while supporting the project

Actors that sent tweets to support the mining project offers a somewhat limited discourse and valuation language. Almost none of the tweets sent to support the gold mining project contributes to the discussion and states why they support the project; instead, these tweets are reactions to the “against the project” tweets. In the field research conducted by Avcı et al. (2010) in the region around the gold mining conflict, people expressed supporting the project for various reasons. These reasons are categorized under “National development and reduction in current account” and “Increase in local economic activity and employment” discourses. However, we cannot observe a deep conversation about why they accept or support the project on social media. Supporters’ discourse categories are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Discourse Categories Supporting the Project

Discourse Categories	Refers to
Incorrect information about location/deforestation/cyanide use	Information about the location, deforestation of cyanide usage is incorrect
Kaz rhetoric but supportive of the project	Word games using of “Kaz,” goose. In Turkish, “Kaz” in Kaz (Ida) Mountain has various meanings. One of them is the animal goose, for example, goose heads
Nation Divide	Adverse and hostile towards tweets to supporters.
National Development	Monetary gains and employment opportunities of the project
Protesters/Opposers are not environmentalists	Opposers (individuals) are hypocrites because they are not environmentalists.
Protesters have summer houses/land	Opposers (individuals) are hypocrites because they have summer houses or lands in Mount Ida.
Protesting actors (politicians, famous people) have summer houses/land	Opposers (politicians/celebrities) are hypocrites because they have summer houses or lands in Mount Ida.
Protestors are not patriotic. They are terrorists/coup plotters	Opposers are not protesting the mining project to protect nature. Instead, they are protesting to overthrow the government, and they are coup plotters; therefore, they are not patriotic; they are against the developments in Turkey.
Reference to Gezipark protests with a negative connotation	The protests in Mount Ida resembles to what we experienced during the Gezi Park protests in 2013.
This issue is secondary	Protestors are not opposing more significant issues.

Indeed, the rich and argumentative discussion built by the opposers seems missing in this list of supportive for labelled tweets. Almost all of the tweets supporting the project revolve around the belief that the protestors are not environmentalists. Actors who

believe that protestors are not environmentalists form their opinions based on two reasons. First, these actors assert that protestors (individual accounts or political actors and famous people) have summer houses/lands in the surrounding area. Therefore, protestors are not environmentalists by heart; instead, they care about the region's future sale value or intrinsic value. The second common opinion is that protestors are using protests to overthrow the JDP government using the uprising. Nation divide discourses are also ubiquitous among the tweets for the mining project. Similar to against labelled tweets, most of the tweets also belonged to more than one discourse category. Figure 12 show the relative frequency of a discourse category against other categories.

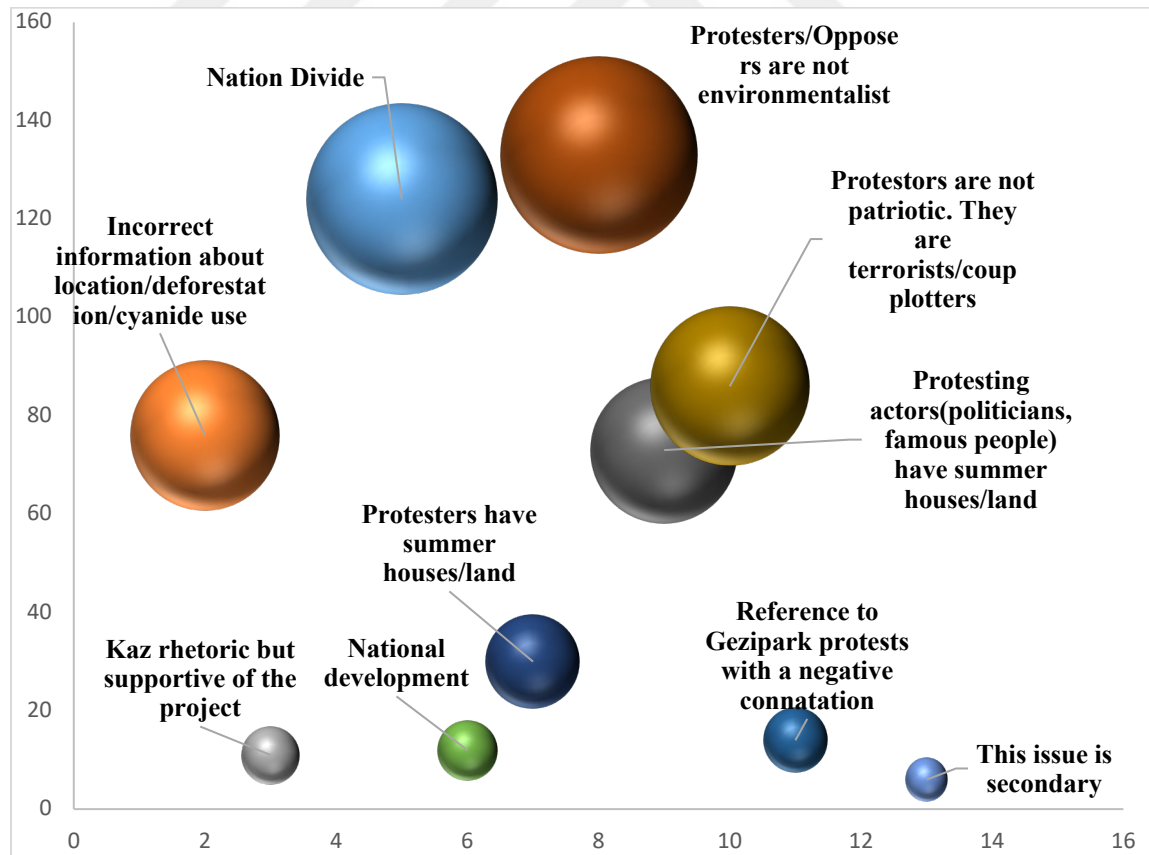


Figure 12. Discourses adopted to support the project

The majority of the “Protestors are not environmentalists (hypocrites)” discourse category can be further categorized into four sub-groups:

- Protestors are not real environmentalists
- Protestors have summer houses or lands
- Protesting political actors or celebrities have summer houses or lands
- Protestors are coup plotters

Even though all four categories express that they find protestors insincere, each sub-category narrates a particular reason for why. The first category claims that protestors are hypocrites because they say they are concerned about the environment, but they pollute it. Commonly, tweets consist of garbage left after the protests. Additionally, there is a belief among these tweets that these protestors who would often take a vacation in the Aegean or Mediterranean would again leave their garbage behind them. Therefore, these tweets assert that protestors are not here to protect nature; they are in Mount Ida mainly to oppose the government. Lastly, some actors claim that protestors were trying to find gold in the mining area while posing as environmentalists. The following tweets are examples as such: *“You will set out for Mount Ida, but you will throw the bottle of water you drink into nature. You are fake nature lovers.”*- *TheLaikYobaz, Twitter Influencer*; *“Kaş's natural wonder is Büyükçakıl beach. 'Environmentalists' come every year, they light a fire at night. They drink until the morning and leave in the morning. It is always up to the local people to clean the remaining dirt, plastic bottles, beer cans and burnt woods. This mob is now orchestrating Mount Ida protests.”*- *Hasan Kacan, Actor*; *“What about the gold exploration efforts of the demonstrators who went to protest the gold mine in Mount Ida? We are a country like an anecdote.”* - *Aysun Kayaci, Model and Actress*

During the protests, famous people, from political actors to musicians, journalists, and actors, sent tweets against the project, supporting the protesters. The most prominent figures were Tarkan (singer), Ekrem Imamoglu (politician), and Cem Yilmaz (comedian). The second and third categories here, which giving reference to protestors who have summer houses or lands, are pretty identical; they diverge on their focus. While they both concentrate on summer house ownership, there is a distinction made concerning protestors (some famous) who have summer houses in Mount Ida, and protestors (white Turks) who would have summer houses in general in coastal areas. The first reasoning is clear and admissible – how one could argue for /refer to nature conservation in the region while owning a summer house (which can be seen as part of urbanization trend) there at the same time. The second reasoning is a bit more complex and a particular logic: Almost all coastal cities in Aegean and Mediterranean are governed by the Republican People’s Party (RPP). These municipalities granted construction to build summer houses and cut down trees. People, who have summer houses in these regions, are opposing the government. Protesters are opposing the government by opposing the gold mining project and deforestation. Protestors and the people who have summer houses in these regions are the same. Therefore, political actors and protestors are hypocrites since they granted the summer houses or live in summer houses built by cutting down the trees.

Examples of Tweets in this vein are as follows: *“Today, I passed through Kuşadası and Söke, the districts of the RPP-run Aydın Municipality. They built tons of villas in forest areas. They cut the trees and planted concrete in their place. We have seen how those who pretend to be environmentally friendly for Mount Ida can be insensitive when it comes to their own pleasure!”* – *TheLaikYobaz, Twitter Influencer;*

“Why is the subject of Mount Ida closed? Is it because the owners of Mount Ida are leftist villagers and the owners of thousands of acres are leftist...” – Nurettin Simsek, Journalist

“Here are the villas where RPP members cut and planted trees in Mount Ida”

The tweets supporting the project also give special attention to some political figures and celebrities who posted against the project. RPP’s candidate Ekrem Imamoglu won Istanbul Municipality elections from long-ruling JDP in June 2019. He is targeted at almost all tweets that fall under the category; political figures have summer houses or lands. Many tweets claim that he has vast land in the region, so he does not want them to lose their value. Tarkan, a famous singer, and Cem Yilmaz, a famous comedian, are also commonly referred celebrities because the claim is that Tarkan has a summer house in Mount Ida and Cem Yilmaz goes to an upscale village of Bodrum for vacation every year. They posted about the mining project on Twitter and Instagram.

“Cem Yilmaz posted about "Mount Ida". He spends his summers in his villa in the Mandarin, built by pillaging Cennet Bay in Bodrum.” – MetoCumhur, An Individual Account; “RPP’s Ekrem, did you worry while buying the land on the slopes of Mount Ida”- Emine Guclu, An Individual Account

In the last sub-category, actors also assert that protestors are not environmentalists; but from another perspective. According to these tweets, protestors are coup plotters or terrorists; they are not patriots, and they are using these protests to overthrow the government. The common language in these tweets is “real concern” and “real reason”. This is to state that the actual intention of protesting is not environmental motivations. Examples in this category are as follows: *“The terrorists who burned our forests are marching to Mount Ida. This nation cannot be fooled with these tricks!”-*

SafiyeDemirRTE, An Individual Account; "Hey, hypocritical fraudsters known as tree friends. You are marching for the trees in Mount Ida but where are you when PKK terrorist organization is burning of the lungs TURKEY WHERE are you? We know very well what your purpose is, not Mount Ida or anything, but you will not reach that goal."- Trabzon26312211, An Individual Account

Almost 1/5 of the tweets to support or not to oppose the project are categorized as nation divide. These tweets do not contribute to the discussion much and use sinister language against opposers. Apart from not contributing much to the debate in terms of argumentative content, these tweets also mislead the discussion and take it in another direction that would not yield a productive outcome. These tweets that exist in both for and against labelled discourses block the conversation. Also, the Kaz rhetoric category tweets do not add value to the discussion on social media and show similarity with tweets labelled as nation divide. Some examples in these categories are:

"Mount Ida and forest fires operation to prepare voters for the new political party. They do not need a lot, but 5% is enough for them." – Hamdi Cinal, An Individual Account

"Those who set fire to the country using two trees as an excuse, METU looters who climbed trees like monkeys and said not to cut the tree, Goose-heads shouting Ida mountains. The PKK says, "I burned the forests," why don't you get angry? Why don't you react! What a bloody mess!"- Hakan Gurcan, An Individual Account

In social media, there is a strong belief that protestors are spreading wrong information about the project. This disinformation comprises three sub-categories:

- Disinformation about the location of the project
- Disinformation about deforestation
- Disinformation about the cyanide usage

Each is reported in turn with some concrete examples. Location dispute started with Energy and Natural Resources Ministry's following statement: *"The mining region is not Mount Ida, but in Kirazlı Balaban Hill, approximately 40 kilometers from Mount Ida"*. On the same day, Burhan Kuzu, founding member of JDP and former president of the Turkish Grand National Assembly Constitutional Committee, also tweeted about the location with some similar content: *"The mining region is not in Mount Ida, but in Kirazlı Balaban Hill, approximately 40 kilometers from Mount Ida. There is no activity outside the forest permit boundaries. In addition, the company operating in Mount Ida will create a memorial forest."*

Following Burhan Kuzu's tweet, many tweets were sent copying these words by political figures and individual accounts. Like previous discourse categories, there is an emphasis on "real intentions" behind the protests in these tweets. *"Why do they present the work done on Kirazlı Balaban Hill as if it was done in Mount Ida? Because Mount Ida is known to all of Turkey. If they used the name Balaban Tepesi, they could not create such a perception. Their job is spreading lies."* – AntepMamato, *An Individual Account*. The remarkable point is that most tweets in the "disinformation" discourse category concern the location. For supporters, arguing about the mining project location seems more important than the harm done to nature.

According to the EIA, the number of trees cut down is 45 thousand. After TEMA published the estimated number of trees cut down in Mount Ida, approximately 193 thousand, discussion about deforestation started on social media. Various photographs from the mining site showing deforestation have been posted while opposing the project. In reply to this, supporters of the project claimed that the numbers are inflated, and the actual figure is indeed 13.500.

“If we are using paper, if we are eating on a wooden table, these are products made from cut trees. In addition, the mining region is not in Mount Ida, but in Kirazlı Balaban Hill, approximately 40 kilometers from Mount Ida. The operating company will create a memorial forest. Let's not distort!” – Burhan Kuzu, Politician

“1- The place in question is Mount Ida, Kirazlı 40 km away Ida. 2- The mine exploration permit was granted in 2001³ 3- The number of trees cut is not 195 thousand, 13,500 but 14,000 saplings have been planted 4- Many politicians and famous people politicians have villas in Mount Ida that are built by slaughtering trees.” –

KacSaatOlduTR, A Twitter influencer

According to the various sources from the government, no cyanide is used while exploring gold in Mount Ida. The final sub-category repeats these announcements.

Journalist Hilal Kaplan’s tweet summarizes the announcements in her tweet as follows:

“Currently, there is NO cyanide use in the Kirazlı mining operation, which is 40 kilometers from the Kaz Mountains. It is claimed that it will be used, so we will follow it.”

Gezi Park protest was an uprising for removing the trees in the park near Taksim square, and it was the latest and most significant nationwide social movement. Like the gold mining project in Mount Ida and Gezi Park protests, opposers are accused of being coup plotters. According to some people, protestors’ main aim was to overthrow the government. This discourse captures the tweets comparing two uprising/protest to each other and claiming that the reason behind the Mount Ida protests is the same as the Gezi

³ JDP came to power in 2002.

Park protests. They are not to protect nature but to overthrow the government, prevent the country from developing, and harm Erdogan.

“We have seen this movie before during the Gezi military coup. The script did not work. It won't work again. Externally supported social media accounts again pressed the button for the operation. Mount Ida provocation is an operation with external support just like Gezi.! You Won't Succeed Again !!” – Murat Ozer, Individual Account

The only discourse category among the project labelled tweets that propose why they support the project is national development. These tweets assert that there will be monetary gains with the mining project, and with that gain, there will be an increase in the national GDP, so the project should be supported for national gains. However, as can be seen from the examples below, these tweets are not purely about development. The majority of them fall into also the nation divide category.

“The issue is not Mount Ida. The issue is to block Turkey from extraction of gold. But they won't be able to prevent it.” – Bartugcan_2018, Individual account

“Let's clarify the issue of Mount Ida: They are making an issue by saying the mining site is in Mount Ida, but that mine is not in there! It is on the Kirazlı Balaban hill, 40 kilometers away from Mount Ida. We do not extract our own gold; we pay 8.5 billion dollars a year for imports.” – Emin Pazarci, Journalist

The least expressed discourse is "this issue is secondary." In these tweets, supporters assert again that protesters are not opposing more critical issues such as forest fires allegedly made by Kurdistan Worker's Party (knowns as PKK in Turkey).

“The PKK says I burned the forests. Soner Yalçın still says Kaz Mountains. First, react to the PKK.” – brahimTemo1, Individual Account

The framing changes significantly among the group supporting the gold mining project when the tweets are analysed according to the actor types. The social actors emphasize the legitimacy of their positions by referring less to the project itself but more about the protestors, the details and the potential consequences of having this debate. While individuals, academics and political actors use languages of nation-divide, political parties criticize the protestors by referring to them as “not patriotic” or “coup plotters”. News outlets within the group supporting the project argue against protests about location details, claiming information about the location is incorrect. In turn, journalists, artists, celebrities and Twitter influencers also directly address the protestors, assigning them to “not environmentalists”.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was three-fold: Alamos Gold cut down trees in Mount Ida to exercise gold mining, and this project has resulted in severe public opposition. Twitter was one of the pillars of this opposition. The thesis aimed first to explore development discourses used in this nationwide public uprising and categorize them according to their initial stand of the project, as for or against it. Secondly, this study aimed to extract value articulation used by the actors to better understand their positions regarding the project and the environment. It was found out that actors who have expressed their opposition regarding the gold mining project have a rich set of values and perceptions regarding the environment; therefore, their views contained value richness and diversity. This thesis finally aimed to link the Mount Ida conflict to Turkey's extraction based neo-liberal growth and development agenda in the last decade and found out that those supporting the project, at least on social media, do not have considerable counter arguments for the opponents and/or well articulated value attributions to the mining project .

Regarding the first and second aim, it is clear that actors who oppose the gold mining project examine the issue from many different perspectives. Also, while expressing their concerns, most of the actors voice more than one issue. On the opposition front, the main reason for opposing is a negative impact on the environment or ecosystem; the deforestation done by the mining company and its effect on biodiversity. Many actors oppose it because they are against the extraction of resources either by national or foreign companies. Opposing actors attribute values to Ida

Mountains; they see the region as a cultural and natural heritage that must be protected. They express that nature belongs to nature, and its value cannot be measured in dollars. Discourses are rich in valuation languages and question the development path taken in the region, creating substance and value for the discussion. Actors also demand alternative solutions for national development but to a lesser extent; sustainable development and local decision making are popular discourses.

However, on the support front, the findings suggest that actors who support the project do not add much value to the discussion. Most of their tweets are not sent to make a concrete argument or propose an idea. Instead they are sent as a reaction to the opposing actors. In that regard, it can be said these tweets are not sent to support to project but to oppose the opposers. The reason for such behavior can be examined from their tweets; supporting actors thinks opposers are not environmentalists. The common belief is that protesters have summer houses or lands in the region, and they are against the project to protect their estate's value. Moreover, they are also coup plotters who want to overthrow the government, and they are using this *excuse* to attain their goal. All of the tweets are sent in a hostile manner, accusing protestors of this or that reason, and only just a small proportion of them sent to advocate for national development.

Opposing actors analyze the conflict from varying environmental, developmental and cultural dimensions; however, the expected development discourses cannot be found in the supporters' expressions. In the field studies conducted in the region, supporters advocated that the project would increase the local economic activity and contribute to the country's economy. Unfortunately, in this social media study, that kind of richness and values could not be found.

The outcome can be reached from this study is that supporting actors do not believe opposing actors' intentions and see them as non-patriotic. Nation divide discourse is also popular among the against the project tweets. Supporters have an abysmal prejudgment against the opposers and vice versa. Another important outcome of this thesis is that actors in this conflict resorted to the social media as a medium of opposition, which is consistent with the literature studying increased social media activism in the cases of authoritarian regimes.

Of course, there are several limitations in using social media analysis. Firstly, the value expressions from those support projects do not convey well-conceptualized arguments for the project, but rather a direct attack on protesters, limiting the study's categorization of "for" arguments. However, the insubstantial arguments from the support group could reflect the limitations of social media as a communication tool, which would reveal a lack of depth in our study compared to field research. In turn, the fact that the mining project in Mount Ida was a national level conflict, we are analyzing not only local actors' value dimensions but also national actors' ones. This implies that there is a possibility that national actors' tweets are endorsed more than the locals and their opinions may have become more prevalent in this analysis.

Regarding the final finding of this study, the priority given to rapid economic growth since the foundation of the Republic, but more importantly, Turkey's extraction-based neo-liberal growth and development agenda in the last decade seems to block a healthy conversation for sustainable development in the country. The unwillingness to consider other development alternatives from successive governments and the broad range of ideological positions challenge the policy changes regarding the environment. Moreover, increased authoritarian policies under the JDP regime and polarization in the

society further undermine a healthy discussion for pro-environmental actions. It is clear from this study that the opposing and supporting groups of the project are polarized, and supporters of the project are not articulating any viable reasons for supporting it; instead, they are trying to defend the JDP government's actions.

As mentioned in the theoretical chapters of this thesis, there is a focus on economic growth over the environment, and this view often instigates conflicts. In the last decade, these conflicts escalated, and the mining conflict in Mount Ida is only one of them. Opposers of the projects that harm nature create substance and value for the discussion from the environmental, economic, and cultural perspectives and, some of their opinions and values should be incorporated in the development discussion.

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