Spaces of hope in authoritarian Turkey: Istanbul's interconnected geographies of post-Occupy activism

Abstract

In Istanbul's history, Taksim Square has always been an identity place for activists, similar to Tahrir Square in Cairo or Maidan in Kiev, but this paper points out that the Gezi protests created other identity places across Istanbul. This article focuses on the notion of 'spaces of hope' in relation to 'cycles of protests' and 'repertoires of collective action', in examining the post-Occupy activism in Istanbul following the Gezi protests and in the face of increasing authoritarianism. Based on two phases of ethnographic research conducted in Istanbul from 2013 to 2017, commencing during the Gezi Park protests and later expanding to its anniversaries and other political events in the central parks of Istanbul, the paper traces the spatial memories, political emotions and cultural legacy of waves of protests. It defines the previously occupied parks as 'political parks' (Bayat, 1997, 2012) where identities of protesters transform and intersect through offline networks formed at various parks in Istanbul. This paper makes the case for how people's identities and political emotions transform due to their engagement with the spaces of social movements not only at their peak but also following their demise in an attempt to test, reinforce and challenge the participatory and spatial strategies of the Gezi protests and from a wider perspective other Occupy movements.

Keywords:

1.Introduction

People in Turkey are cowed into silence even submission from especially 2015 onwards, since the two general elections, while the failed coup (July 2016) accelerated the pace of this process. This research, however, looks into existing forms of political voice and is concerned with newly formed political geographies in the center of Istanbul, specifically Kadıköy, Beşiktaş and Beyoğlu districts[i], following the Gezi protests (May-August 2013) and the ways in which activists transformed these spaces into 'political parks' and 'spaces of hope'. Whitehead and Bozoğlu (2016) identify Taksim Square[ii] as a multivalent site and an identity place. In Istanbul's

history during modern Turkey, Taksim Square has always been an identity place for activists, but this paper points to the ways in which the Gezi protests created other identity places across Istanbul. The articulation of 'everywhere' as the all-encompassing political geography of resistance during the Gezi protests led to the formation of park occupations across Istanbul and other cities in Turkey rather than 'isolating' the movement to the Gezi Park. Solidarity networks in local neighborhoods, political, creative and art events and environmental social movements constituted Gezi Park protests' spatial and organisational legacy but most importantly the protests marked parks as political geographies.

By using a spatial ethnography, this research looks at the performance of spatial activism formed in and around 'political' parks in the context of increasingly authoritarian Turkey in the mid-2010s following the Gezi protests in order to examine the ways in which protest spaces extend, amplify, contribute to, or limit performances of activism. The first part of the paper introduces the notion of 'spaces of hope' in relation to the concepts of 'cycles of protests' and 'repertoires of collective action' within the context of studies on new social movements, which informs the ensuing section on the spatial ethnography used in Istanbul following the Gezi protests until 2017. The article then conceptualises and historicises authoritarian urbanism in Turkey and lays out the findings of this study with key activists and their actions in 'political parks' across Istanbul to account for the ways their spatial strategies of Gezi protests fed into consecutive social movements and the ways they coped with challenges of authoritarian urban politics in symbolic political spaces in contemporary Turkey.

David Harvey (2000: 196-199) coined the concept of 'spaces of hope', in order to 'pull together a spatio-temporal or dialectical urbanism, which would lead to conversations about alternatives and possibilities against global capitalism'. While Harvey's account embraces a theoretical perspective, other studies have employed the term to bring empirical evidence into a variety of contemporary activist spaces and resistances (see Phillips, 2009; Novy & Colomb, 2013; Luger, 2016). As an example, Luger's research on the Singaporean activist spaces (2016) delineates 'the possibilities of material places and digital spaces as sites of political engagement in Singapore as activism is generated by virtue of the site's capability to bring together groups and coalitions that would not normally come together, thus forming a space of hope'. From a similar perspective, this research suggests that 'spaces of hope' emerge

out of Turkey's activist milieu, as cultural groups form coalitions and alliances in parks around specific issues related to perceived social, political and economic injustice due to policies and interventions of the Islamist neo-liberal authoritarian state in the aftermath of the Gezi protests. This study addresses key research questions related to but not limited to how social movements form and persist in authoritarian regimes, how some of the symbolic spaces of social movements function as spaces of hope and identity-places and how activists use spaces of social movements not only in their peaks but also within other 'cycles of moments' (Sofos, 2017).

Existing research looks into the ways in which spatio-temporal dimensions of previous action feed into the newer social movements. Tilly (1986: 176) defines the notion of 'repertoires of collective action' as 'accumulated experience that change continuously as a consequence of previous action. These repertoires interact with the strategies of authorities to make some forms of action more feasible, attractive and frequent than others'. Tarrow (1989: 284-286) coins the terms 'protest cycles' and 'heightened conflicts', both of which imply sequence of stages that characterise periods of social unrest by producing new or transformed symbols, frames of meaning and ideologies. The sequence of stages justifies and dignifies collective action and around which following mobilisations can take place not only in relations, but also in the streets, villages or in the schools. McAdam and Sewell (2001) point to the vitality of temporality in social movements and use the term 'transformative events' to refer to waves of protests and/or moments of social change. In this light and following Halvorsen's study (2015: 404) with Occupy London, this research conceptualises activism 'not as a moment of rupture but an ongoing set of everyday practices through which the transition to post-capitalist worlds takes place'. While Halvorsen (2015: 403) builds the argument on the emergent tensions between occupations as a moment of rupture and a space-time of everyday life, Juris' (2012) work with Occupy Boston shows that the Occupy movement is based on a 'logic of aggregation' that involves the coming together of activists to inhabit space for an indefinite period. The spatial order of so-called "rebel cities" (Harvey, 2012), which centre on a typical cityscape of squares, boulevards and roundabouts, rendered these sites "iconic" (McGahern, 2017: 92).

In the context of the cycle of Gezi protests, this study stresses the three-fold role of the previously occupied parks that became 'iconic', namely making

communities, creating alliances as well as testing, reinforcing and challenging the participatory strategies of the Gezi protests and other Occupy movements. It rests on an empirically informed account of the spatiality of bottom-up-politics in Istanbul through an analysis of political voice from within the emergent 'spaces of hope' following a big wave of protest, 'even if many communities have limited access to these iconic places' (McGahern, 2017: 92). Previous social movements and political geographies played indispensable roles in the formation and consolidation of the Gezi protests such as the struggle to keep the Emek movie theatre, which relied on activists/audiences' DIY media activities in the spaces of protest (Özdüzen, 2017: 16) or the political mobilisation of the football fan group çArşı that brought together community activism with neighborhood-based rhythms and rituals, generating a new urban sociability, overlapping with Gezi protests (Eder & Öz, 2017: 58). Additionally, Karaman and Erensu (2017, 13-22) examine how 'the Gezi enabled new political imaginaries that articulated and connected various political and grassroots mobilizations across the urban–rural continuum' by for instance concentrating on struggles against HES (small hydro) projects that have turned almost every single valley and creek into a construction site as the AKP government launched an aggressive programme targeting 2,000 hydropower plants by 2023, the centennial of the Turkish Republic'. While other social movements and existing political geographies helped the formation of the Gezi protests and enabled the unfolding of newer political imaginaries in both urban and rural settings, this paper examines the ways in which the 'Gezi's children' continued to use their urban spaces of discontent following the demise of the protests not only to go against the Islamist neo-liberal policies of the government but also to question and criticise the sustainability and effectiveness of some of the remaining tactics of Gezi's 'ongoing set of everyday practices'. Gezi protests became the largest and most dramatic protest movement in the recent history of Turkey, following social movements, however, remained comparably small in the face of increasing authoritarianism. Despite smaller in scope, these social movements have been a consistent force in tackling authoritarianism, particularly AKP's authoritarian urban politics.

According to Reed (2005), the cultural study of social movements needs to pay attention to various relationships between and among movement cultures, and the cultural formations of movements and subcultures. By movement culture, Reed means the 'general meaning making patterns that develop among participants in the

subculture formed by a given movement' (2005: 296). Although the following urban social movements in Istanbul were small in comparison to the Gezi, they have rested on meaning making patterns that were borrowed from the Gezi's movement culture in its symbolic spaces. This research is thus concerned with how place and space impact on people's translation of their grievances into collective political action (Routledge: 1996, 2003; Polletta, 1999; Miller, 2000; Martin & Miller, 2003; Leontidou, 2010; Monterescu and Shaindlinger, 2013) and aims to illustrate the political geographies of collective action (Staeheli, 1994; Amin 2008; Luger, 2016; Arampatzi, 2017; Eder & Öz, 2017). In the recent growing strand of research, networks are discussed as more vital components of new social movements than their spaces (Diani, 2000; 2003; Castells, 2004; 2011; 2015; Anduiza, Cristancho & Sabucedo, 2014), while most of this strand of research looks into the role of internet in the formation of communities and networks in social movements (Carty & Onyett, 2006; Garrett & Edwards, 2007; Diani, 2011; Breuer, Landman & Farquhar, 2014). This research, however, shows the ways in which networks and movement cultures are formed geographically and how physical spaces play important roles in shaping their specific functions whilst feeding collective imaginaries of activists and members of NGO's and political organisations. This research makes the case for how people engage with the emergent sites of social movements not only at their peak but also following their demise and is based on three phases of ethnographic research conducted in Istanbul from 2013 to 2017 with the 'children of the Gezi'.

  In this sense, this study is also concerned with the temporality of the new social movements as much as their spatialities. Growing literature on the post-Occupy situation generally questions the tactics and legitimacy of the Occupy, whilst challenging the theoretical and practical validity of existing paradigms to throw light on the emergent social movements in the aftermath of the Occupy (Mayer, 2013, Chou, 2015; Lam, 2015; Arampatzi, 2017). Chou (2015: 46) conceptualises the post-Occupy condition as 'a passage from crisis to crisis' in the sense that the Occupy Movement also embroiled in its own democratic crisis. As an instance of this, in the post-Occupy situation in Hong-Kong, illustrated by Lam (2015: 118-119), the prospect of consolidating a democratic model for Hong Kong acceptable to all parties has been remote and the legitimacy problem of the government has further extended while the Hong Kong society has remained divisive in this period as the movement did not result in consensus. In her research on urban activism in the global North

following the Occupy, Mayer (2013: 5-6) points out that much of the conceptual and theoretical framework traditionally used for understanding the dynamics and potential of urban activism is not helpful in highlighting the reconfiguration of the relations between social movements and local states: what used to be a rather antagonistic relationship transformed into a more cooperative one, as newly installed innovative urban revitalisation programmes encouraged movement organisations to move 'from protest to program'. Showing how social movements in the post-Gezi period transformed from 'protest to program' (Mayer, 2013) in especially activists' collaboration with local initiatives, unions and formation of neighborhood initiatives, this research also points to the changing features of tactics and strategies to cope with the neo-liberal and conservative state in the context of the passage from 'crisis to crisis' (Chou, 2015), while also questioning the organisation of the existing networks and the shortcomings of the existing research approaches.

2.Methodology

My early observations draw on my initial ethnographic research for my doctoral thesis prior to, during and right after the Gezi protests in 2013 and 2014, which captured cultural activism in the spaces of Gezi and in other creative spaces that 'mimicked the Gezi experience'. My ethnographic observations for this research have commenced in 2015, followed by my ethnographic interviews and participant observation during the Gezi commemorations, Gezi-related events and demonstrations at the parks in 2016 and 2017 and the third phase is constituted of my participation in some of the Yeryüzü Sofraları (Earth Tables) in May-June 2016 and May-August 2017 to trace in what ways its communities, strategies and methods in its key spaces persisted. During my fieldwork, I was a participant in some of the events at the parks during and after the Gezi Park protests. While my previous informants for my ethnographic fieldwork prior to and during the Gezi protests provided access to other members of activist communities through personal recommendation, I also used snowballing method in order to have access to key activists following the protests, which implies that newer contacts helped me reach other activists. While my field notes during and after my visits to the parks enabled recording of every day engagement of activists with protests spaces, the in-depth interviews with 31 key activists, whose ages ranged from 23 to 66, opened up a space to draw out their feelings and thoughts about the socio-political characteristics of diverse engagement with the spaces of social movements within the post-Occupy period until 2017. While

some of these interviews took place at Abbasaga and Yogurtcu Parks, in the aftermath of the failed coup I conducted some of the interviews in other community centers, union offices and local district branches of political parties such as the pro-Kurdish party HDP offices in Beyoglu, mainly for security purposes. 'The ongoing production of space-time is a rich process that draws upon multiple material and discursive resources, is imbued with relations of power, and is malleable through individual agency and imagination' (Leander & McKim, 2003: 212). To account for individual agency and imagination in the uses of protest sites in the post Gezi era, following Marcus (1995), this study is partly based on a multi-site ethnography, which examines practices of people in motion across locations. During the Gezi protests, protestors hailed from neighbourhoods dominated by high-income earning secular Turks (e.g. Etiler, Nişantaşı, and Bebek) as well as from largely low-income earning worker areas (e.g. Gaziosmanpaşa and Ümraniye), radicalized left-wing Alevi areas (e.g. 1 Mayıs Mahallesi, Gazi, Okmeydanı, and Alibeyköy), and predominantly middle-class ones (e.g. Beşiktaş and Kadıköy) in Istanbul (Goksel & Tekdemir, 2017: 8).

I had fieldwork interactions with self-identified children of the Gezi protests, including Yoğurtçu Kadın Forumu (Yoğurtçu Women's Forum), Göztepe Forum, Kadıköy Kooperatifi (Kadıköy Cooperative)[iii], Kuzey Ormanları Savunması (Northern Forests Defense) and Don Kişot İşgal Evi (Don Quixote Squat) as well as the Validebağ Savunması (Validebağ Defense)[iv]*, Anti-Capitalist Muslims* and TMMOB* (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects). The first four organisations respectively were formed during and following the Gezi protests whereas the Validebağ Defense, the Anti-capitalist muslims and the TMMOB commenced prior to the protests. Along with the LGBTI communities, Anti-capitalist muslims and TMMOB became the main symbols of the Gezi protests and continued to use its strategies and spaces in its aftermath, while Validebağ Resistance was referred to as the 'small Gezi' in 2014, constituting the largest urban resistance in Istanbul following the Gezi protests. During my data collection, I arranged field visits to the Gezi Park (Beyoğlu/Taksim), Abbasağa Park (Beşiktaş), Maçka Park (Şişli), Yoğurtçu Park (Kadıköy), Özgürlük Parkı (Kadıköy) and Validebağ Woods (Üsküdar) but this research relies on data from Abbasaga and Yogurtcu Parks but does not capture LGBTI+ communities' activism in Macka Park in the aftermath of the Gezi protests and retains focus on urban collectives, park use and self-identified Children of the Gezi.

I asked interviewees to speak about their role and nature of involvement in local park activism and to reflect on a series of themes such as relations between culture and activism; activism, participation and democracy; interpretations of the limits of park activism, particularly with regards to increasing levels of state violence. Other than in-depth interviews with leading figures of park activism, I organised regular visits to the parks in order to capture lived experiences in protest sites in Istanbul, particularly Abbasaga and Yogurtcu Parks and surrounding independent 'autonomous spaces' of activism. 'Ethnographic research reveals a further dimension of networking processes and their politics. It shows how in the everyday reality of social movements, networking practices create multiple and overlapping spaces of action and meaning' (Barassi, 2013: 49). Previously inner areas in lower class revolutionary neighborhoods such as Gazi, Kucuk Armutlu or Okmeydani and the squares of middle-class central districts like Beyoglu, Kadikoy and Besiktas, park activism united various parks and independent spaces in Istanbul for challenging various aspects of Islamist neo-liberalism. Following the failed coup, pro-governmental groups also employed these parks in order to keep watches against the coup forces, but this research is limited to the place-making practices of the Gezi's children in the same parks.

With my place-based ethnographic in-depth interviews in 2016 and 2017, I reached out leading activists and key members of civil societies that have been the symbols of the Gezi protests, while remaining active about Gezi-related activities and protests at the parks and other independent spaces in Istanbul. Thus this study relies on a place-based ethnography where spaces become objects of ethnographic inquiry, looking into the social construction of space and place-making. A contemporary ethnography of space and place, according to Low (2017: 6), is process-oriented; person, object and community-based; and allows for multiple forms of agency and political possibilities. It explores 'the spatial contexts of the research encounter in everyday and familiar places such as homes and living environments (Porter et al., 2010) and less familiar environments such as sites of protest (Anderson, 2004)' (Holton & Riley, 2014: 59). Holton and Riley (2014) look into student geographies in England, by using a place-based ethnographic interviewing with students when they are on the move between a variety of student places. While my ethnography was place-based, as I devoted my main research interest to parks in the heart of Istanbul, I was also on the move between parks and the research participants' smaller in-door

places of activism such as community centers, bookshops, movie theaters and the offices of their NGO's and unions.

3.Turkey's Authoritarian Urbanism

Turkey increasingly moved to authoritarianism shortly after the Gezi protests, which is defined as 'competitive or neo-authoritarianism' in the existing literature (Başkan, 2015; Akçalı & Korkut, 2015; Esen & Gümüşçü, 2016). The AKP comes closer to the Turkish-Islamic synthesis, which has been one of the main characteristics of many right wing parties in Turkey since the 1980s. 'Although the AKP also claimed that it was a centre-right party, their policies, especially policies on education and reform debates, proved to the contrary' (Boyraz & Turan, 2013). The AKP's pragmatic and populist use of motives from within Turkish nationalism and Islamic culture at the same time as its foreign policy and economic policies, such as its pro-EU foreign policy and neo-liberal economic agenda (anti-protectionist and globalist), account for its neo-liberal and Islamist agenda (Coşar, 2012: 89). 'Authoritarian regimes perceive space as a potential resource for rebellion against the regime and they seek to shape, dominate, and control domestic space to ensure a monopoly of power through direct intervention by policing agencies, employing patrolling, surveillance, detention, and violence; through the use of social hierarchies, patrimonial relations, and informal controls; via the development of particular patterns of political economy; and, finally, by shaping spaces in the built environment through architecture and urban planning.' (Lewis, 2015: 141). Kanna (2011) shows that the Al Maktoum Royal Family attempts to claim a total territorial control of Dubai, by reclaiming complete control over urban planning. While Dubai and other Gulf countries conflated notions of architectural iconicity based on the ideology of the ruling family state, Istanbul conflates notions of the ideology of the ruling state of AKP.

In order to throw light on the specific authoritarianism of the AKP era in Turkey, this study addresses the growing literature on the affinity between neoliberal projects and various religions on a global scale such as Hinduism, Christianity or Buddhism (Gopalakrishnan, 2006; Symes & Gulson, 2008; Tuğal, 2009; Nanda, 2011; Porter, 2012; Martikainen & Gauthier, 2016; Forbes, 2017). Burgeoning research also captures different facets of the marriage between Islam and neo-liberalism (Coşar & Özman, 2004; Gökarıksel & Secor, 2009; Rudnyckyj, 2009a, 2009b; Gökarıksel, 2012; Göçmen, 2014; Işık, 2014). Islamist neo-liberalism in Turkey started during Özal's period, after the coup d'etat of 1980. Islamism in Turkey

has benefited from especially the local governments of the Welfare Party (RP) after 1994. RP was the first party to adopt political Islam as its direct aim, which was an outcome of the military coup in 1980 and the neoliberal economic policies of Özal's era from the mid-1980s onwards that relied on privatization of all sectors. The founding and key members of the AKP were members of RP in the 1990s, such as Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and Abdullah Gül. Bozkurt-Gungen (2018: 1) 'challenges the claim that an authoritarian turn emerged only after the early 2010s and argues that a deeper authoritarianism was embedded in the neoliberal experience in Turkey, systematically preventing popular democratic empowerment and facilitating the expansion of the authoritarian repertoire under the AKP governments. Bozkurt-Gungen (2018: 15) calls this embedded authoritarianism that was inherited by the AKP government, which commenced with the 1980 *coup d'état* and put long-term limits on popular democratic empowerment, followed in the early 2010s by a shift in the predominant authoritarian technique from a rule-based/technocratic strategy to a more discretionary one. Following the November 2015 elections, AKP combined more intensely with overt coercion and repression against oppositional social forces. Under Erdoğan's AKP government (2002-…), economic policies became increasingly neoliberal, leading to further consolidation of this mode of capital accumulation (Tanyılmaz, 2015: 111). Even in its early days, the AKP adhered to the IMF-supervised crisis management programme and continued to adhere to the IMF's programmes in its later periods. Whitehead and Bozoğlu (2017:5) argue that the AKP's remembering of selected dimensions of the Ottoman past is a syncretic way of reconciling Islamist morality with neo-liberal capitalism. AKP also initiated a construction-based growth model beginning in 2002 (Çavuşoğlu and Strutz, 2014: 141) as 'neoliberal urban policies and practice are used to legitimise the enhancement of authoritarian governance and governments use urban areas not only as a growth machine but also as grounds for a socio-political transformation project' (Eraydin & Kok, 2014: 111). During the late AKP period, construction-sector led policies expanded to vast and widespread areas of the country with aggressive projects such as 'mega projects' or hydroelectric power plants (Alkan, 2015, p. 850). AKP has used an authoritarian understanding of urban renewal in various parts of Turkey by building hydropower plants in the culturally and spatially specific context of the Eastern Black Sea region of Turkey (Yaka, 2017) or by 'regenerating' Kurdish neighborhoods such as Sur in Diyarbakır following an intense military operation and police campaign that

severely destroyed the district (Turem, 2017: 40). Nonetheless, 'Istanbul has become the privileged arena of operation for the government' (Aksoy, 2012, 97–98) in its transformation to another regime that combines Islamism with neo-liberalism. Tayyip Erdoğan, the first avowedly Islamist mayor of Istanbul in 1994, explained his approach as follows in his early days in power: 'Istanbul is a global city, which is accepted not only by the world but also the prophet Mohammed. Istanbul should have an Islamic identity'. Today, the AKP aims to Islamise the city (Öktem, 2011: 35–36), which implies the increasing penetration of mosques, the boom of neo-Ottoman style and decreasing numbers of alternative spaces for any other religious, ethnic, and sub-cultural groups, apart from the majority Sunni Turks. The radical urban regeneration programmes have become the common traits of today's urban heritage in Istanbul. These programmes aim to bulldoze historical and cultural quarters of cities, in an attempt to transform these spaces into shopping malls, student housing, studios or office spaces. Istanbul experienced the process of 'bulldozer neo-liberalism' even more brutally (Lovering & Türkmen, 2011). The bulldozer neo-liberalism operated all around the city, from the peripheries to the centre of Istanbul, in order to transform it not only as a centre of commerce, tourism and business, but also to show that it is part of a brand new era/regime. 'Hotels suited for Muslims, the Islamic fashion industry, the government's limitations on alcohol consumption, more references being made to the Quran and Islamic sources in daily speech, increasing practice of sex segregation in daily life, such as the proliferation of women-only hotels, buses, swimming pools and public parks' (Karaman, 2013: 8) show the combination of Islamist neo-liberalisation of every day culture in Turkey. The AKP governments also distribute patronage through privatisation and redistribution of rents within the upper income brackets. AKP has brought the 'periphery', its conservative, nationalist and non-affluent supporters, to the 'centre' and elevated them to a new bourgeoisie. Through this new bourgeoisie, the party has gained the loyalty of conservative and religious voters. The regime also punishes those businesses that have been critical of its rule and have supported the opposition (Yilmaz & Bashirov, 2018: 8). Yilmaz and Bashirov (2018: 2) argue that a new political regime has emerged in Turkey in recent years which can best be defined as Erdoganism, refering to the emerging political regime in Turkey that has four main dimensions: electoral authoritarianism as the electoral system, neopatrimonialism as the economic system, populism as the political strategy and Islamism as the political ideology. Today, the AKP transforms the

constitution and executes the presidential system whilst the culture of Sunni Islam extends via censorship, the construction of mosques and extension of Quran courses everywhere, hand in hand with the consolidation of the neo-liberal culture (via for instance shopping-mallisation [Özdüzen, 2017: 3-4]).

4.Gezi countering-the authoritarian urbanism

Similar to the Gezi protests' main motivation to go against the neo-liberal and authoritarian policies of the AKP government by using the Gezi Park and other parks across Turkey, the ongoing spatial struggles aim to challenge multiple aspects of the Islamist and neo-liberal ideologies and urban regeneration programmes of the Turkish state by instigating spatial strategies of urban resistance. As cities play a central role within the development of counter-austerity politics (Peck, 2012) in Greece or Spain, they assume fundamental roles in challenging Islamist and neo-liberal ideologies in Turkey. In her activist ethnographic research with 'bottom-up' democratic politics constituted in the post-Syntagma occupation period in Athens of crisis, Arampatzi (2017: 2158) shows the ways localised initiatives and solidarity structures are formed, countering the effects of austerity on the social reproduction of urban populations, through everyday practices of mutual aid and solidarity making in neighbourhoods and across the city, grounded and negotiated in everyday life contexts, such as a solidarity and cooperative economy. In the case of the Occupy movement through the case study of Occupy London's two protest camps: St Paul's courtyard and Finsbury Square, as studied by Halvorsen (2015: 401-402), the taking of space was the defining act, and it has become a central feature of diverse uprisings around the world in recent years, from Taksim Square to Puerta, which involves a tension between moments of rupture, lived spacetimes of intensity that provide an opening to new possibilities.

The Gezi uprising formed not only as an opposition to the radical urban restructuring programmes and the commodification of urban space (Kuymulu, 2013; Karakayali & Yaka, 2014) but also opened new possibilities in challenging growing competitive authoritarianism. The anti-capitalist dimension was a noteworthy characteristic of Gezi but it is not possible to fully comprehend the driving social force behind Gezi without taking into account the intensifying alienation of non-conservative citizens (e.g. secularists, liberals, and Alevis) from the AKP. These groups did not necessarily represent a rising anticapitalist movement, but simply a

social force opposed to the construction of a new collective identity and political regime—the 'New Turkey'—by the AKP (Goksel & Tekdemir, 2017: 7). During the uprising, a variety of different groups coalesced and created their own counter-public spaces, which instigated networks of mutual aid and solidarity between lived spacetimes of intensity. The city during the uprising became a dynamic and complex territory whereby different groups with a diversity of concerns intersected. Through this uprising, activist communities and NGOs created a park culture (Özdüzen Ateşman, 2015: 695; Özdüzen, 2017: 16), which implied claiming rights to not only the Gezi Park but also various parks across Istanbul, and Turkey, in order to initiate alternative organisations such as the neighbourhood collectives or alternative NGOs. While maintaining their 'independent' aspects of organisation, these collectives aimed to find alternative ways to enable different groups' participation in and engagement with the public spaces and decision-making processes in these parks. Additionally activists communities created their DIY networks of offline media platforms like film festival communities (Ozduzen, 2016, 2017) or online media networks such as social media such as Facebook groups of the park forums such as *Diren Kadıköy* (Resist Kadıköy), *Cihangir Parkı Forumu*, *Maçka Parkı Forumu* or online bulletins like *Hemzemin Forum Postası* (Hemzemin Forum Mail) or Parklar Bizim (The parks are ours) (Akcali, 2018). Akcali's research (2018: 7), which rests on her participation in four of these park forums in different neighbourhoods of Istanbul, namely Beşiktaş Abbasağa, Kadıköy Yoğurtçu, Cihangir and Maçka Park between July 2013 and August 2014, accounts for how forums attracted thousands of people in the first formative months during and after the Gezi Uprising. Rather than genuinely challenging the ongoing power structures in the current socio-political and economic order of things and offering a genuine political alternative, the park forums helped nourish a pluralistic ethos in the society and provided safe ground where disagreements could be peacefully negotiated. Agonistic pluralist practices could not go beyond this stage, however, because of the existing and constraining socio-economic and class structures. The unproblematised class divide between the participants and the organisers of park forums and the different degrees to which these people were affected by existing socio-economic exploitation and impoverishment hindered genuine practices of agonistic politics and consequently the formation of radical political alternatives (Akcali, 2018: 14). While Akcali has spoken to the Gezi activists, this research captures ongoing conversations in its aftermath until the

present day. Rather than looking at pluralistic practices, this article focuses on how in an increasingly authoritarian setting, the strategies and tactics continued to challenge the authoritarian policies by using the parks as operational grounds and as spaces for visibility of movements.

The first year of the Gezi anniversaries in 2014 was still marked by the multiplicity of intersectional alliances such as those between environmental organisations, political parties and anti-capitalist groups. The common slogans in 2014 were 'Thief, Murderer AKP' and 'This is only beginning, we will keep on fighting', which were also the trademark slogans of the Gezi protests. The march took place on the Istiklal Street in Beyoglu whilst the festival and forums occurred at the Abbasaga Park, Yogurtcu Park and Don Quiote Squat. The traditional characteristic of the Gezi commemorations such as the street march and demonstrations were replicated at the Taksim Square and on the Istiklal Street, while the Abbasağa and Yogurtcu Parks were the touchstones of cultural events and participatory culture of the Gezi's legacy during the annual anniversaries along with other parks in the heart of the city. Beyza Üstün (Academics For Peace, ecology platforms, HDP & No! Platforms) defined the vitality of the Abbasağa Park and other parks for activist communities and the general public:

> Parks are spaces where people rest, run, meet, chat, wait, think and sleep. They are places where homeless people find shelter and animals walk freely. That's why we wanted to keep them via actively using them after the Gezi by organising 'Street Academies' in the face of the totalitarianism of universities and No Platforms! against Erdoğan's presidency campaign.

A consistent theme that my informants alluded to was the idea that these parks retained their characteristic of being the center of every day social activities whilst also becoming the nexus of political action following the protests. A higher level of belonging to activist communities translates into a higher propensity for communitarian park use. My research participants were preoccupied with the use of public and semi-public spaces in alternative and creative ways against the homogenising efforts of the government, such as the foundation of Street Academies[v] and organisation of public lectures in the parks against the regime's increasing assaults on journalists, intellectuals, civil society members and especially academics. The 'No' camp was composed of various political parties including the main

opposition CHP (*Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi* - Republican People's Party) and pro-Kurdish HDP (*Halkların Demokrasi Partisi* - People's Democratic Party) together with groups of different ideological leanings. Despite the government's unfair advantages and an alliance with the MHP (*Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi* - National Action Party), the 'Yes' side prevailed by only a small margin, denying Erdoğan the sweeping endorsement he had expected (Esen & Gumuscu, 2017: 303).

Mücella Yapıcı (TMMOB, NO! Platforms and women's movements) was not only active in the organisation of the annual events on the anniversary dates of the Gezi protests and participated in most activities related to the Gezi but she also actively used the rest of the remaining alternative spaces in Istanbul:

> What we do is to use the parks and other public spaces against the violence of the Islamising and privatising state. They want us to go to shopping malls as well as sending our children to religious vocational schools but we need to get together using our existing urban commons. I go to parks, Beyoğlu Movie Theatre[vi] (BMT) and other public spaces to just use them against their neo-liberal ideology.

Urban commons in the 2010s became symbols of public imagination and shaped activists' political action as well as their sentiments, culminating in the Gezi protests. Chatterton (2010) defines the urban common and the act of commoning as a means to promote stronger spatial justice in the city, identifying three ways in which to understand and practice the potential of the urban common. The first potential is to see the whole city as a common and as a site for resistance; the second is to decommodify urban life and thus celebrate the sociality and everyday vitality of the city; and the third potential is to try to build the urban commons by introducing new political imaginaries through struggles in and against the city. Seen in this way, the commoning of the city can mean both the concrete actions and alternative imaginations taking place in urban space (Lundman, 2018: 4).

commons" stand opposed to "commodity", as several scholars have noted (Neeson 1993; Linebaugh 2009; De Angelis 2007; Bakker 2007; Reid and Taylor 2010; Walljasper 2010).

commons thrive and survive by dancing in and out of the State's gaze, by escaping its notice, because notice invariably brings with it the desire to transform commons into state property or capitalist commodity.

Commons, then, as the historian Peter Linebaugh (2009) reminds us, involve "being-in-common", or using resources in more or less shared, more or less non-subtractable ways through practices he calls "commoning". (Gidwani & Baviskar, 2011: 42).

As commons are a way of pointing out that resources used to be and should be owned and managed collectively as a common good, the concept of commons are not limited to urban commons (Harvey, 2012: Bromley, 2008) but extend to 'knowledge commons', 'social commons', 'intellectual and cultural commons', 'musical common' and many more (Hess & Ostrom, 2007; Bollier, 2003; Nonini, 2007) (Bruun, 2015: 154). TMMOB became the voice of those who oppose the commodification of urban land, especially in the built-up areas that had formerly belonged to the public, and the loss of urban values and assets. Such losses vary from individual projects—such as a historic movie-house (Emek Sineması) slated to be turned into a shopping mall, or a skyscraper (Gökkafes) within the historic area that disrupts the skyline of Istanbul (Günay 2005)—to developments at the neighbourhood or even the urban scale (Eraydin & Tasan-Kok, 2013: 120). In his work on the Egyptian and Iranian social movements, Bayat (1997; 2012) defines the spaces of contentious political action as 'political street'. Bayat highlights the need in authoritarian contexts to focus on 'spatialities of discontent' or 'how particular spatial forms shape, galvanise, and accommodate insurgent sentiments and solidarities'. Based on Bayat's framework, I call the previously occupied parks 'political parks' where identities of protesters transform and intersect while producing strategies to challenge Islamist-neo-liberal policies of the AKP government. Activists also campaigned about the potential demise of the BMT in the summer of 2017, which is one of the remaining independent public spaces in Beyoğlu. The campaign was not a leaderless political campaign as in one of the new managers of the movie theatre, Cem Altınsaray, acted almost like the leader of the movement in mobilising people on online and offline platforms. Although the movement had a leader figure where the activists referred to in their actions, the grassroots communities equally referred to the Gezi protests in order to express their reasons to participate in the movement and protect the dissolution of this urban common. Can Göktaş, whom I spoke at the desk to sell BMT loyalty cards in front of the movie theatre, said:

> On my first year as an undergraduate student in Istanbul, the Gezi broke out and I became a part of it. I started to get to know Istiklal Street then learnt how I could stand with the people that I didn't previously know and how total strangers could behave nicely and sympathetic to each other. The next struggle that I was able to sympathise was the struggle to keep the BMT. It could have been Emek movie

theatre[vii] or the Robinson Crusoe bookstore[viii] but this struggle happened next. There is a beautiful sprit here at the movie theatre, we stand together voluntarily to sell cards. It all started through Cem's tweet but the real change can only happen if people actually come and use this movie theatre and buy its loyalty card.

While the most important channel for the mobilisation of this initiative in the summer of 2017 was seemingly social media, activists' offline presence in the BMT in fact sparked more visibility and generated financial support for keeping the movie theatre. The collective imaginations of activists took the Gezi protests as a reference point in building their next mobilisation on keeping public spaces from privatisation and/or gentrification. They created a space of hope from an independent movie theatre that was on decay along with many other independent spaces on Istiklal Street. In their descriptions of the small initiative to keep the BMT, activists used words like joyful and beautiful during my visits to the field site. The concept of 'politics of emotions' (see for instance: Lutz & Abu Lughod et al., 1990; Zembylas, 2010) deals with various ways in which emotions are individual as well as political and are formed in social, political, and cultural spaces. The joyful and beautiful feelings unfold through people's political interaction with and communal place-making practices on commons such as the BMT. While the activists protected the BMT as it is in 2017, it still faces severe financial problems in 2018.

In the parks and other symbolic public spaces across Istanbul, activists used conventional ways of protesting such as press releases and marches but they also organised art events or parties in relation to perceived political and cultural problems. Yoğurtçu Women's Forum was formed out of the call of the Istanbul Feminist Collective (IFK) on the social media during the Gezi protests. They first met on the 26th of June 2013 at Yoğurtçu Park and formed Yoğurtçu Women's Forum. They have been an independent initiative since then, which also collaborate with other women's groups, local initiatives and other solidarity networks.[ix] In their weekly meetings, they have activated the Yogurtcu Park in order to plan their activities, creative visibility in public spaces and reach out other women around the area. Selin Top from Yoğurtçu Women's Platform explains thus:

> Other than traditional demonstrations, we organised women-only parties and festivals in the parks. We also initiated panels on feminist psychology, produced graffitis on the walls of the streets and the parks here in Kadıköy. While we used our forums to organise against increasing numbers of women being killed, we also coalesced with other groups to support the Justice and Conscience Watches by HDP taking place at Yoğurtçu Park in order to promote peace and create newer alliances.

Brown and Pickerill (2009: 28) show that 'space is emotionally saturated and spatial elements, such as 'negative' emotions like hate and disgust but also the use of

humour, transmit the affects, feelings and emotions that can fuel political activism. Expressing opposition through performance (such as dancing in costume or acting with one's body during direct action) enables activists to intensely feel and express their protest, perhaps more powerfully than through instrumental mobilisations (such as the more formal street march with placards) (Eyerman, 2005; Wettergren, 2009). And of course, these performances are located in particular places, which themselves are often laden with meaning that activists draw upon in their acts'. Through an analysis of two activist groups based in Stokes Croft in Bristol, Buser, Bonura, Fannin and Boyer (2013: 606-607) suggest that cultural activism has an important role to play in constituting particular urban neighbourhoods as centers of social activism, which not only constructs meanings about urban space, but it also provides the 'prospects for a new progressive political opening' and resists urban developmentalism. While instrumental organisation still constituted an important feature of political action in Turkey in the 2010s, local initiatives, urban collectives, feminist and LGBTQ communities were involved in cultural forms of political activism such as throwing parties in public spaces or by keeping 'watches' with their own bodies in the presence of traditional political parties, which implies that they used less instrumentalised forms of political action even in their alliances with traditional political parties. This way, they not only kept their public space from the invasion of the government with urban development programmes but also felt the spirit and emotions of the Gezi as well as connecting with non-activists around the park, which has blurred the boundaries between activists and non-activists. A lot of women that were only passing by the park involved in the Yoğurtçu Women's Platforms' activities, fostering visibility and helping the formation of newer alliances and networks.

While grassroots organisations used various online and offline tactics in other to protect their public spaces and create alliances, the Göztepe Forum and forums in Abbasağa Park organised against Islamisation of the city and education system by establishing demos and forums in the name of Okuluma Dokunma! (Don't Touch My School!), demonstrating against the construction of mosques in public parks and also organising street academies in the parks. Eymen Demircan talked about the most important actions they have taken following the protests:

> I went to the Yoğurtçu Park immediately after the occupation of the Gezi Park by police forces, but shortly after I went to the park in my neighborhood, the Özgürlük Park in Göztepe, and organised with my local communities. We did not know each other and came from different ideological backgrounds belonged to different

generations and sexual orientations. There were people from Kurdish political movements, but there were also Kemalist aunts and uncles, youth and elderly people. It was like a commune experience. We organised forums and panels to solve our problems in the neighborhood but we were not nostalgic about the Gezi at all. We organised against the transformation of Tuğlacıbaşı Mosque into an Islamic-Ottoman social complex along with it the formation of Quran courses for kids. We delayed it for three years with our events and demonstrations. There was also a public land of provincial directorate of agriculture in Caddebostan, we occupied this place for months and slept there for a while and prevented its privatisation. We also organised against the transformation of the Yeşilbahar Primary School into an imam hatip high school (religious vocational school) along with the parents by using the forum structure. We named the slogan and initiative 'Don't Touch My School' and protected it with our months of struggle.

One of the most important achievements of the Göztepe Park Forum, as exemplified by Eymen, was activists' coalescing with parents and older local residents, which led to the vernacularisation in the social movement as well as the formation of horizontal and vertical alliances. This resonates with Arampatzi's research (2017: 2162) with the Solidarity Network of Exarcheia in Athens. These place-based solidarities were constructed through struggle and managed to generate 'new ways of relating to others', especially for people not previously involved in political activism. In their research on women's rights in Peru, China, India and USA, Levitt and Merry (2009: 446) define vernacularisation as a process of appropriation and local adoption, arguing that by connecting with a locality, women's human rights ideas take on some of the ideological and social attributes of the place, but also retain some of their original formulation. Older people who voted for the Kemalist party mobilised for the first time on the streets and created vertical alliances with some Kurdish youth and LGBTQ activists in order to go against the Islamisation of the education hand-in-hand with the neo-liberalisation of the urban space. Similarly, Elliott's study (2014: 51) with feminists in Ireland employs a definition of vernacularisation that critically combines localised meaning-making practices with movement mobilisation practices. Dunford and Madhok' research (2015: 608-616) also shows how Landless Workers Movement in Brazil and the Via Campesina mobilisations give rise to a vernacular rights culture that changes the nature of the rights demanded, transforming rights to food and land into a right to food sovereignty, which did not come solely through local action, but occurred in combination with peasant mobilisations elsewhere, with horizontal forms of communication and exchange revealing and developing transnational resonances amongst peasant struggles. Although the networks in the parks following the Gezi protests were local in their concerns and actions such as

preventing Yeşilbahar Primary School's transformation into a religious vocational school, activists also followed and other similar protests, particularly those in Egypt, Rojava and Europe.

The parks and the Validebağ Woods also became avenues where activists continued to question conventional party politics and propagandist attitudes of traditional leftist parties in these spaces. Arif Belgin articulated such tendencies within the Validebağ Volunteers that led to a small 'Gezi' resistance in 2014:

> The Validebağ Volunteers is an independent initiative, there is no reason for propaganda amongst us. We would go and organise within political parties if we want to, we all have that kind of consciousness, but we want to remain independent. Of course, we have organised people in our community but they work independently here at the parks and forests. We do not want to spend time on consensus-building between groups coming from different political traditions. This way we were able to take practical political action and protected Validebağ woods against the government's plans to construct a mosque and commercial enterprises here.

Evident here is a tension between 'ecologic' and 'local' initiatives and leftist political parties. Following the Gezi protests, conventional leftist parties like the TKP (Communist Party of Turkey)[x] intended to dominate the park forums. While fighting against the neo-liberal and Islamist ideologies in the ground, these communities also resisted the hegemonic tendencies of some of the leftist parties. My informants problematised the actual and potential interventions of traditional leftist parties on their independent and DIY events in the parks, which might have hindered the defining feature of the park activism as in the 'participatory' aspects of their social movements. This points to a 'resistance within resistance' and was a sentiment that was shared across many of my informants following the Gezi protests as the newly formed coalitions at the Gezi Park and other parks were less hierarchical and more heterogeneous compared to the conventional –be it Stalinist or Leninist- political organisations.

During and following the Gezi protests, a lot of newer platforms, initiatives and NGO's were formed, which continued to use more participatory tactics and were concerned with urban regeneration and the destruction of ecology. Northern Forests Defense was one of the biggest and most influential of these newly formed groups. It was established during the Gezi protests in July 2013 in order to go against 'the creative destruction' of the power-holders such as the constructions of the 3rd Bridge, 3rd Airport and the Istanbul Canal, to protect our life spaces and to bring together

those who fight for ecology, rights and living together[xi]. Environmental values are central to their agenda, followed by social and labour dimensions. From their beginnings to the present day, the Northern Forests Defense used the forum structure in their organisation. In their initial days during and right after the Gezi protests, this initiative used the Gezi Park itself as its spatial base for their weekly Friday forums. Despite all the efforts of the Northern Forests, the third bridge and the third airport construction had gone ahead, destroying the only remaining green space known as the 'lung of the city'. Creative practice was woven through their campaigns and events such as their ongoing organization against nuclear power plants.

They took the most important decisions with the help of the discussions in these forums. Towards the end of 2014, they moved into their own office in Beyoğlu, which is subsidised through the sales of bags and other products as well as donations from both members and non-members. During summers, they have also continued to use external spaces for their forums in various parks of Istanbul. Deniz Yazlı from Northern Forests Defense problematised some aspects of the participatory dynamics of the new social movements in the post-Occupy era:

> While our forum structure gives voice to everyone involved in the organisation, it sometimes leads to taking wrong decisions due to the cacophony of voices. For instance, when ten workers were killed at the Torunlar Center's construction site in Istanbul after an elevator carrying them plunged to the ground in 2014, we went there following an emergency forum at the Belgrade Forests (we were supposed to camp there). We were exposed to so much gas and violence that halted our actions for a while because our members were hospitalised and taken into custody. I also find the intended domination of Halkevleri (People's Houses)[xii] in our organisation sometimes a bit aggressive.

Following Sassen (2012), the formation of these NGO's and their use of the tactics and spaces of the Occupy led to 'the emergence of different territorial vectors' against the sovereignty of nation-states. More traditional leftist parties such as Halkevleri also formed part of their organisation, which implied that issues revolving around coalition formation and tactics of negotiation were present in their every day organisation of their post-Occupy social movements. Furthermore, following the Gezi protests, the structure and operation of their ecological network transformed from one issue to multi issue actions, including labour, work safety and right to the city. In relation to the participatory aspect of the new social movements, Smith and Glidden (2012: 289-290) describe the participatory dynamics of the Occupy as 'tyranny of the structureless'. While these practices created alliances, Smith and Glidden's research

with Occupy Pittsburgh shows that the attention and energy focusing on consensus process can detract from the work of movement building. 'One way it does so is by complicating or slowing decision-making in ways that make it difficult to respond to requests for support from potential allies or to plan actions with sufficient advance time. Another limitation is that a focus on group processes can reflect the avoidance of a larger discussion of goals and strategies. A great deal of time is spent attempting to build consensus among activists who did not share the same strategic orientations or goals, only to see decisions blocked in the end' (Smith & Glidden, 2012: 289-290). Chou (2015: 47), similarly, argued that 'horizontal and participatory as procedures were, certain individuals and factions nevertheless found themselves alienated, voiceless or left behind'. From a parallel perspective, newer alliances in the parks spent more time on negotiation and consensus-building, which, as it is in the case of the example from the Northern Forests Defense's action at the Torunlar Center, might lead to wrong decision-making processes and impede some aspects of the movement building.

Even after the failed coup in 2016, the symbolic parks of the Gezi protests, particularly the Maçka and Yoğurtçu Parks, were still the main avenues for contentious political action that opened up, tested and challenged alternative ways of dealing with global capitalism through local practices. In the summer of 2017, the Justice Watches (Adalet Nöbetleri) and Conscience and Justice Watches (Vicdan ve Adalet Nöbetleri) were initiated by two main opposition parties in the parliament, CHP and HDP respectively, in order to go against the arbitrary detentions of senators, lift the state of emergency and help release two hunger strikers. The march, rally and watches were the most substantial signs of opposition to authoritarianism escalating in the aftermath of the failed coup. The Justice Watches started in Ankara and ended in Maltepe in Istanbul but the Maçka Park became the nexus of these watches in Istanbul during the ongoing walk of the CHP senators along with the public. While the Maçka Park continued to be a more-or-less 'free' and 'safe' space for CHP's Justice Watches, which created a swell of public sympathy across Turkey, the Yoğurtçu Park was under police blockage during the Conscience and Justice Watches, organised by the pro-Kurdish party HDP. During the 'Justice Watches' of CHP, there were a lot of events at Maçka Park, from concerts such as the concert of Ataşehir Youth Choir, to screenings of films, from demonstrations to the organisation of Earth Tables. The use of these parks in artsy and political ways owe back to the Gezi Protests and the talks

and discourses during the park watches, people referred back to the Gezi protests. DISK[xiii], Birleşik Haziran Hareketi (United June Movement)[xiv], ÖDP[xv] and Halkevleri were also there, participating and taking turns in the watches. One of the common slogans in the park was 'we are no longer inside our houses, we are on streets to defend and promote justice!', which was directly related to the re-use of the DIY activist spaces in Istanbul. As the buzzword for this movement was 'justice for all', lawyers were at the forefront of the movement. Accordingly one of the most important marches during this movement took place from the Istanbul Çağlayan Justice Palace to the Maçka Park where lawyers walked with their traditional court dresses in the strong support of the public.

Justice watches increased the participation of public in the parks for a while and transformed them into popular political destinations, the Earth Tables have not only been a part of these watches but have also been one of the most effective ways of actively using parks and squares. A variety of plates of food were on display on the floors of the streets: white meat and rice, chips, green salad, dates, olives, baklava, cookies, meatballs, tomato salad. Conducting experimental research with food cooperatives in Bristol, UK, Roe and Buser's (2016: 589) study shows how these organisations operate to more or lesser degree outside the corporate food mega-complex. While Earth Tables are not food cooperatives, various functions of Earth Tables are similar to them as they offer food as a way to then help people with a range of social problems such as debt, addiction, housing or family break-up. On the days I visited their cultural center in Fatih, they were hosting homeless people as well as the members of the organization. This space was their center for their meetings but Earth Tables were more public for the use of citizens outside their own neighborhood. The Anti-Capitalist Muslims organised these iftar protests by inviting not only pious Muslims, who are sensitive towards Islamic worship and rituals, but also 'secular' communities having little, no relations with Islam and faith. What was even more interesting was the massive participation of non-Muslim, non-religious and secular communities in these Islamic-oriented protests. This remarkable interest showed itself in the first Tables of the World protest, which was conducted on the first day of Ramadan, 10 July 2013, in Taksim Square. A total of 15,000 protestors sat at a kilometre-long dinner table, which was set up on the ground (Ongun 2015). They collectively voiced their discontent with the authoritarianism of the AKP government, and reflected the diversity of the Gezi protests (Damar, 2016: 209). In addition to

creating alliances, Earth Tables combated the violence of police forces as participants practiced a political and a religious practice on the floors of parks and squares. İhsan R. Eliaçık (Anti-Capitalist Muslims):

> The Gezi Spirit changed our practices, especially in terms of questioning the existing hierarchies in society and within our communities. Following the Gezi protests, we used parks, streets and squares as well as our own community house for organising Earth Tables. These spaces make us not only form communities but also help feed those who are in need. We also have a space at our community center for homeless people and those who are in need. We use all these spaces to create an alternative every day life against capitalism. Through our iftars and events at the parks and streets we also build alliances with other communities in and across Turkey, for instance the Alevi foundations in Germany.

While their Earth Tables against capitalism that constituted of fasting on the floors in front of five star hotels as a way of protest against the logic of Islamism and capitalism started in the summer of 2011, other groups' participation, their formation of alliances with a variety of groups and wider recognition happened during and following the Gezi protests. In addition to Earth Tables, the Anti-capitalist Muslims were actively involved in the banned 1st of May protests prior to the Gezi protests and after the protests, they were at the forefront of public demonstrations in the parks and beyond the parks in Istanbul on from the state violence against the members of the pro-Kurdish party HDP to Justice Watches initiated by the CHP. Partly different from other groups that I interacted, the Anti-capitalist muslims appropriated not only the parks in the popular centers of Istanbul, like the Abbasağa Park, but also used the parks around more conservative centers of Istanbul like the Fatih Saraçhane Park. In this way they were able to interact and form vernacular encounters with more conservative populace of Istanbul. New social movements created new avenues of political change through autonomous capacity to communicate and organise beyond the reach of the usual methods of corporate and political control (Castells, 2015: 21). These social movements have also created solidarity economies as a strategic alternative to austerity (Arampatzi, 2017: 2064) or neo-liberalisation of religious practices such as the organisation of Iftar meals in five star hotels. The cross-fertilization with Alevis was also an important dynamic of this group, which is generally not a common practice amongst Sunni-Muslim groups in Turkey and points to another form of vernacularisation amongst the children of the Gezi with the help of spatial interactions in parks and other independent spaces of hope.

5.Conclusions for New Directions in the Post-Occupy Period

Offering a hint of the emerging forms of political activism in the post-Occupy Turkey, this article sets out newer forms of spatial engagement of social movementsthat goes against various aspects of Islamist neo-liberalism. It aimed to show the ways in which activists do not coalesce officially in new social movements but through meetings/encounters in space by making tactical use of certain programmes of action and collaboration with new and existing urban networks. It also aimed to show how connective action (Bennett & Segerberg, 2012) was enabled through actual spaces but not mainly through Internet, even in the age of digital revolution. While their initial organization and internal and external communication owed much to their digital tools, the majority of existing post-Occupy urban activism rely on spatial encounters and face-to-face vernacular organisation in independent spaces or 'spaces of hope' in cities of Turkey, especially in Istanbul.

The article also delineated that while some of the Gezi's strategies, such as the forum structure, turned out to be inefficient in the post-Occupy situation, the parks as locations continued to serve as identity-places in the collective imaginaries of activists in this period. Although the post-Gezi period also points to an increasing density of competitive or neo-authoritarianism in Turkey, this research goes against the previous scholarly work on social movement research that sees no opportunity for mobilisation in authoritarian regimes (Foweraker, 1995; Hinnebusch: 2006), by accounting for the ways in which social movements are in the making even in an authoritarian context. To provide empirical evidence to this claim, this paper brings together glimpses of how self-identified 'Gezi's children' use spatial tactics to fight against Islamist neo-liberalism in the ground. Relying on the repertoire of contentious political action, especially from the Gezi protests, activists transformed these parks into spaces of hope in instigating ongoing forms of spatial political action against the neo-liberalisation of Islam and Islamisation of every day life in Turkey, such as the Islamisation of education, neo-liberalisation of Islamic practices like Iftars and the authoritarian/top-down regeneration of urban space in Istanbul.

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[i] These four districts constitute the main axis of cultural and political center of Istanbul.

[ii] Taksim Square was a place whereby the main water lines passed to distribute water lines to the north of Istanbul starting with the 18th century, it then transformed into Taksim Artillery Barracks in the 19th century during the period of Ottoman Empire and took its present form with the Taksim Monument of Republic in 1928, on the 5th anniversary of the foundation of the Turkish Republic.

[iii] Kadıköy Cooperative has been active from 2014 onwards and it turned in to a legal cooperative in November 2016. It has its own local shop in Kadıköy selling locally produced goods from across Turkey and organises a lot of other events and gatherings in order to transform consumption habits and activities in the area.

[iv] Validebağ Volunteers were a group of neighborhood residents to protect the Validebağ Woods from 1995 onwards. In 1998, following the news that some parts of Validebağ Woods were given to Marmara University to construct a hospital, Acıbadem, Barbaros and Koşuyolu neighborhoods' residents joined to volunteers based at Altunizade and they reacred to this decision. In December 1998, they collected more than 6.000 to turn it into a protected area. They won their struggle but due to ongoing violations, citizens of the area decided to turn their initiative into an association in 2001, namely the Validebağ Volunteers Association. Relevant information about this initiative is retrieved from their Facebook page https://www.facebook.com/pg/KoruyuKoru/about/?ref=page_internal [Accessed on the 14th of January, 2018].

[v] Since 'the Academics for Peace' signed the petition "We will not be a party to this crime!" and it was declared to public through a press conference, the signatories, whose number at that time already exceeded 2000, faced many attacks. Hundreds of them have been fired from their jobs, their passports have been cancelled and confiscated, they were prevented from finding jobs, others were taken into custody, hundreds have been robbed from the right to work in the public sector through governmental decrees and finally all of them are currently facing individualized court. Street Academies were formed some members of this group in order to actively used public spaces, not AKP's universities, to continue their teaching and

claim right to spaces and education. For more information: https://barisicinakademisyenler.net/node/1 [Accessed on the 18th of January, 2018].

vi The Beyoğlu movie theatre was activated in 1989. It faced financial issues in the 2010s but it is still active through ongoing campaigns.

vii The EMT was constructed in 1884 as a school and was reopened as a movie theatre in 1924. In addition to being a symbolic venue for the cinema in Turkey, it was a centre of film festivals and political activism. For example, it hosted many political events, such as the meeting for the 1st of May celebrations in 1987, which were the first such celebrations following the 1980 military coup. From 2010 to 2015, there were ongoing protests to keep the EMT from demolition, which was initiated by the AKP-run local municipality along with AKP supporter construction company Kamer Construction Company. It was demolished in 2013 and there is now a shopping mall entitled Grand Pera in place of it.

viii The Robinson Crusoe 389 was one of the landmark independent bookstores of not only the Beyoğlu area but also Istanbul. It was opened in 1994 but had to leave its central office on the Istiklal Street due to increasing rents, in order to move at its smaller space within the fourth floor of the Salt Beyoğlu, which is a contemporary art institution.
ix Information about this forum is taken from their own Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/pg/yogurtcukadin.forumu/about/?ref=page_internal [Accessed on the 15th of January, 2018].
x The Communist Party of Turkey was founded as the Socialist Power Party in August 1993. In 2001, the party changed its name to the Communist Party of Turkey (TKP) and took over historical legacy of the TKP. Since 2014, it has been divided into two separate parties entitled HTKP (People's Communist Party of Turkey) and KP (the Communist Party).

xi Descriptive information regarding the Northern Forests Defense is taken from their own website: http://www.kuzeyormanlari.org/hakkinda/ [Accessed on the 6th of January, 2018].
xii Halkevleri is a Turkish state sponsored enlightenment project and history can be reviewed in three separate eras; between 1932-1951 (1st era), 1963-1980 (2nd era) and after 1987 (3rd era). In 1987, Halkevleri was re-opened by the civil community. Today Halkevleri acts as an umbrella organisation covering struggle for rights including struggle for right for free education, free medical treatment, housing" etc. Information retrieved from http://www.halkevleri.org.tr/hakkimizda [Accessed on the 18th of January, 2018].

xiii Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey was formed in February in 1967 by a number of unions in different fields as an independent and democratic class-based organisation. Information retrieved from http://disk.org.tr/2017/03/50-years-of-disk/ [Accessed on the 18th of January, 2018].

xiv United June Movement was established in the Middle Eastern Technical University in Ankara in August 2014. This movement has a mission to bear Gezi protests' legacy and is a combination of some of the political parties actively involved in the protests, including ÖDP (Freedom and Solidarity Party), KP (the Communist Party) and HTKP (People's Communist Party of Turkey). It has also been criticised by Gezi activists based on the 'independent' aspect of the movement's legacy.
xv ÖDP (Freedom and Solidarity Party) is an internationalist socialist party that founded in 1996 as a merger of a variety of left-wing groups.