

# Gezi Assemblages: Emergence as Embodiment in the Gezi Movement

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## **ABSTRACT**

The dissertation is an interdisciplinary work at the intersection of political philosophy, social movement studies, sociology and science and technology studies that aspires to problematize the question of the emergence of new dissident communities in the reclaimed Occupy space(s) via data coming from the Gezi Movement through participatory observations during the mobilization, interviews with activist and analysis of assembly minutes.

The Occupy Movements that are characterized by the encampment in and occupation of public space(s) have indeed marked the twenty-first century global political scene. Right after the eruption of the wave of political contention called alter-globalization movements that brought together wide activist networks in protest campaigns against corporate capitalism (NATO, G-8, IMF etc.), the occupy movements witnessed larger groups of people who have not been previously part of the existing activist networks swarming reclaimed public spaces around a broad range of grievances. In the case of the Gezi Movement, occupied public space(s) witnessed novel constellations of contentious populations that brought together the entire opposition of the country in direct life/protest making actions action. Heterogeneous collective(s) in-the-making thus emerged throughout the course of the mobilization wherein practices and concerns over the reproduction of daily life became political. The dissertation thus

aspires to give an empirical account of the lived experience of the mobilization so as to attend to the emergence of these collectives by tracking the life/protest making practices, enactments and performances throughout the course of the movement. Attending to the lived experience of a contentious movement, especially an Occupy Movement wherein problems of making a life space in reclaimed public space(s) becomes political, requires that bodily and affective aspects of community-making be duly taken into consideration. The Gezi Movement was indeed a moment when bodies with their requirements, affects, fragility and power came to the fore. The protest types that were consistently selected and sustained were highly bodily and embodied. Assemblies, human chains, sit-ins, collective cooking, food-sharing, praying, cleaning practices in reclaimed space(s), bodily exposure on the streets despite severe police violence, Earthmeals, all amounted to bodily enactments replete with an affirmative affective charge of joy. The heterogeneous community that populated the reclaimed spaces experienced new means to relate to one another and to the public space around these bodily life and community making practices. These new means of relationality had a transformative effect on the components of the movements symbolized by openness to raise issues that were hitherto considered as taboos and make new and unexpected alliances.

Hence, the question of the emergence of new dissident communities in occupied public space(s) shall be considered as a question of *embodiment*, the latter taking into consideration the agency of bodies and affects in contentious action. The first section of the dissertation thus provides an account of *the lived experience* of the Gezi

Movement wherein a keen attention is paid to attend to the introduction and sustenance of protests and concerns that in time started to define the movement in general.

The second section of the thesis provides a theoretical discussion of the empirical findings of the first section to search for conceptual tools to elucidate emergence *as* embodiment. Problematizing the capacity of the concept of network –the dominant conceptual tool when it comes to define and analyze Occupy Movements- to elucidate emergence of new dissident communities in reclaimed Occupy space(s) via experiments with new relationalities and bodily capacities to act, the dissertation proposes another concept, that of assemblage (*agencement*) to account for the question of emergence and embodiment in Occupy Movements. Assemblage, as war machine (Deleuze and Guattari 1980) points to a relational domain among heterogeneous elements wherein each new component transforms the overall relationality while being transformed by it. Furthermore, the assemblage is also conceptualized as body that is defined through its affects. As such, the concept of assemblage provides us with the means to consider community-making as a process wherein bodies are endowed with new capacities to affect and be affected by one another.

The concept of assemblage thus provides us the means to ponder over *the emergence* of new Gezi communities *as embodiment*, amounting to *becoming*, i.e. a dynamic



process pointing to encounters in reclaimed public space(s) wherein bodies' affective capacities, i.e. power increased in novel alliances.

## **INTRODUCTION**

It has been four years since the Gezi Movement erupted and left its undeletable mark on the political history of the country. Studies on this movement prove to be all the more significant given the response of the ruling AKP government to this historical moment: expanding the grip of its authoritarian rule. Yet, the Gezi Movement and what it signifies continues to haunt the ruling AKP government which is pushing for a constitutional change granting expansive and unmonitored rights to the president Erdoğan. The Gezi Movement also remains an active force for the population that is against these constitutional amendments, pictures from the Gezi mobilization are circulating in the social media these days with the hashtag #CourageIsContagious with reference to the speech of the now imprisoned co-president of the HDP Selahattin Demirtaş calling the citizens to vote for ‘no’ to the constitutional amendments in question in the forthcoming referendum.

The Gezi Movement started as a peaceful protest in the Gezi Park against an urban development plan of the ruling AKP government for Taksim Square and Gezi Park envisaging the demolition of the park and the construction of a shopping mall and artillery barracks on its grounds. Soon, it turned into a national protest with millions swarming Istanbul Gezi Park and public squares in other cities. Gezi Park was occupied by protesters for around two weeks in the June of 2013 in what was called by the protesters the ‘Taksim Commune.’ Gezi Park encampment proved to be an experiment on alternative means to sustain a communal life based on solidarity economy. It was an encounter among a wide range of people and collectives from

very different political backgrounds. The entire opposition of the country including political parties, associations, professional organizations, women's movement, LGBT movement, fan clubs of football teams, anarchist organizations and urban movement networks and autonomous –non-institutional- movement networks came together in the reclaimed public spaces. Apart from these already existing collectives and networks, larger populations that were not already organized in previously existing networks swarmed the squares, leading yet another encounter at a different level.

It was also an experiment with an alternative sociability wherein flourished affects of solidarity, joy and care despite the risk of being involved in a contentious action at this scale that was countered by the violence of the law enforcement forces resulting in the death of 12 people and thousands of injured protesters.

The Gezi protests witnessed a rich repertoire of contentious action mostly leaning on bodily practices as barricading, direct clashes with the riot police, human chains, sit-ins, encampment, occupation, the standing man performance, *Earthmeals*, among others. Decisions concerning the maintenance of life in the reclaimed public spaces, especially during the encampment of Gezi Park, around basic needs like food, shelter, cleaning also became a part of politics in this mobilization.

With the forceful evacuation of the Gezi Park encampment, protesters started to assemble in respective parks of their neighborhoods. The park assemblies that continued throughout the summer and autumn of the same year paved the way for the

establishment of neighborhood solidarity organizations. In Kadıköy, two of the neighborhood solidarity organizations, Yeldeğirmeni and Caferağa, squatted vacant buildings and turned them into cultural centers. The Gezi Protest, as such, was the name given to a series of protests that were translated and translocated since the Gezi Park encampment and the national uprising that followed.

The thesis aspires to, both empirically and conceptually, account for the making of dissident communities around the *lived experience* of the mobilization throughout different phases of the mobilization. Special emphasis is given on the question of *how* Gezi communi(ties) were made within the reclaimed public spaces and what conceptual tools can better serve us to grasp the emergence and sustenance of contentious Gezi communities. Therefore, particular attention is paid to the practices, protest types and concerns around which these heterogeneous and multiple communit(ies) were assembled. The thesis proffers that the Gezi movement shall better be conceived as an event made up of consecutive translations and translocations of highly bodily protest types mostly pertaining to the protest culture of the autonomous –non-institutional- movement network of Turkey. Gezi communities were thus collectives in the making during the course of the mobilization around these contentious practices and common concerns around what the activists call ‘defense of life spaces.’ Defense of life spaces by directly experimenting an alternative life and politics in the public space –basically public parks and streets- was sustained by the positive affective charge prevailing in the relational space thus created in the reclaimed public spaces. The Gezi movement shall thus be conceived as an affective

bodily encounter that was sustained in time around these contentious practices and protest types in a relational space of interdependency.

The concern of the empirical part of the dissertation is thus to make an account of the protest types of the Gezi Movement in their consecutive phases, i.e. Park Watch, occupation and encampment and park assemblies in a way to reveal the material practices, affects, concerns around which a heterogeneous group of protesters were assembled. Therefore, I am tracking the contentious action repertoire of the Gezi movement by paying particular attention to the critical moments when one protest type gave way to another and common concerns that brought together and/or divided the protesters.

This is in line with the methodological concerns of the Actor-Network Theory that is interested in depicting *how* collectives are assembled via tracking the translations in action and concerns and controversies that amount to this constant assembling and disassembling in the making. This theoretical and philosophical lineage will be discussed in the fifth chapter of the dissertation.

The theoretical and philosophical concern of the dissertation is, accordingly, to come up with conceptual tools to account for such an idea of assembling a contentious community or better contentious communities. I will therefore visit the concept of network so as to check its capacity to account for the making of Gezi communities around the maintenance of public space, bodily practices and protest types and

concerns over defense of life spaces. The theoretical claim of the thesis is that the concept of network in the concept of the networked social movements (Castells 2012, 2015) –which constitutes the majority of Occupy accounts- falls short of accounting for this highly material, place-specific and bodily social movements. I propose that the concept of *assemblage* is better endowed with the capacity to account for embodiment in the Gezi movement. In doing so, I visit the original use of the concept of assemblage (agencement) in the political philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari and re-contextualize it as part of the concept of body in the larger corpus of *Mille Plateaux* (1980).

Hence, the dissertation is an interdisciplinary project at the intersection of science and technology studies, –more specifically ANT with recent contributions from the feminist science and technological studies- political philosophy and social movement studies aspiring to give an embodied empirical account of the Gezi protests and theoretically and philosophically discuss this account with the help of the concept of assemblage (agencement) in the larger corpus of Deleuze-Guattarian political philosophy. I use methodological tools of sociology, as semi-structured narrative interviews with protesters, content analysis of these interviews and the assembly notes gathered in the web site <http://parklarbizim.blogspot.com.es>, as well as my own observations during different phases of the movement to come up with an account on the *lived experience* of the Gezi Movement. This account thus attained, is *philosophically* discussed to visit the concept of network in its various uses in the literature on the social movement studies to see whether it can account for emergence

of new protester communities within the occupied spaces and the bodily, affective characteristics of this encounter. Then, the concept of network in ANT –that is mainly proposed as a means to dismantle the concept of the social in the classical sociological account that treat the society as a self-sustaining, pre-ordained substance obfuscating the fact that the social is also dynamically constituted through both human and non-human actors- is analyzed in the philosophical background of the theory to see if it can provide us with conceptual tools to analyze emergence *as* embodiment. ANT’s use of the concept of network indeed underlines communities as emergent entities at the intersection of heterogeneous forces –human, non-human, material-semiotic. As such it provides valuable philosophical tools to discuss emergence. However, the internal critics towards the concept (from ANT scholars themselves and feminist science and technology studies) point to the fact that most ANT accounts lack the element of the ‘virtual’ that points to becoming (Farias 2012) and that we need accounts that also have an ethico-affective touch, a touch of care (Puig de la Bella Casa 2011, 2012). I then propose to use the concept of assemblage –that is already in circulation in the social movement studies- within the larger political philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari as a possible means to be able to refer to the question of becoming (hence, emergence) as an affective embodiment. Becoming is indeed construed by these philosophers as a positive change in bodies’ capacity to affect and be affected by other bodies in an encounter.

There is indeed a growing literature in the social movement studies regarding the importance of bodily practices, lived experience, embodiment and affect Butler 2011,

2014; E. Happe 2015; Gregory 2013; Perrugorría & Tejerina, 2013, Protevi 2015). The data used to compile the Gezi Movement account presented in the second, third and fourth chapters also evinces the importance of encounters, affect, bodily practices and protest types. Especially the assembly as a protest type leans on a very bodily experimentation with non-representative and deliberative politics, as well as a different rhythm and pace of social interaction and urban sensibility (Estalella & Jiménez, 2016).

The use of the concept of network as it is influenced by Castells' concept of network society, has certain setbacks to account for a. the place-specificity of these mobilizations (Escobar & Osterweil 2012, p. 194), b. the role of embodiment, bodily practices and affect in the Occupy movements. The last point, just as the first one, is directly related to my main concern in the thesis: the abundance of disembodied accounts of social movements wherein network analysis –mostly leaning on the role of social media in their organization- renders a lifeless expression of what is otherwise a highly bodily, affective and lively moment of social contention. Escobar and Osterweil thus posits: “In this modernist view, information is often seen as disembodied, and one could argue that there are many embodied aspects to both knowledge and networks” (p. 199). The protester accounts presented in the second, third and fourth chapters further evince the importance of the embodied features of the Gezi Movement such as bodily protest types, heterogeneous encounters, interdependency and feelings of joy, solidarity and care. They also evince the fact that protesters are indeed not comfortable with theoretical accounts that give the lion's



share in the Gezi Movement to the use of social media. Underlining the significance of the social media channels especially with respect to their role in the diffusion of information in a time when the mainstream media channels were heavily censored by the government, the protesters nevertheless defend that physical presence on the streets and public space was at the heart of the mobilization. Gezi narratives of the protesters are replete with lively accounts on what it meant and how it felt ‘to be there.’

Hence, we need a conceptual account of the Gezi Movement that would do justice to this understudied aspect of the mobilization: its bodily, affective, lived experience.

The Gezi Movement account presented in the second, third and fourth chapters evinces the emergence of a new community in the reclaimed urban space via new, unexpected and unprecedented encounters among populations of very diverse political backgrounds. One of the most significant features of the Gezi Protests was indeed the diverse character of its components. A sense of *interdependency* was prevailing among these components. The protesters felt themselves part of a historical and unique moment (as one of the most famous Gezi graffiti avers as follows: “wipe your tears, nothing will ever be the same again,”) in which they did unexpected things mostly for the first time in their lives (clashing with the police, barricading, occupying a public park and creating an alternative life therein). Hence, collective and individual components of the movement felt that what was happening was ‘beyond’ themselves. The Gezi Movement, as an event ‘beyond’ its components, had transformative effects

on protesters that showed themselves as ‘openness’ towards other world(s). Political issues that are deemed taboos, such as the Kurdish problem or the Armenian genocide, were openly discussed; LGBTI communities were very visible and highly accepted in every phase of the mobilization, anti-sexism was indeed among the most highly regarded values of the protester communities.

Nevertheless, network accounts that are mostly interested in the connectivity of already existing components of a given network (Juris 2012, McFarlane 2009, Lockie 2004, Chesters & Welsh 2006, Ingold 2007, 2011, Rodriguez-Giralt 2015) fall short of duly accounting for this atmosphere of ‘openness,’ interdependency and transformation that goes hand in hand with new communities being assembled and re-assembled around feelings of joy, solidarity and care.

Here, the problem with the concept of network is two-fold. On one hand, it does not account for the *emergence* of new communities (Juris 2012, McFarlane 2009, Lockie 2004, Chesters & Welsh 2006). On the other hand, it doesn’t provide us with the means to account for the afore-mentioned place-specific, affective and bodily aspects of social movements.

I concede that in order to better elucidate *how* a contentious, emergent and heterogeneous collective is established around common issues in reclaimed, occupied public spaces in an atmosphere of joy, openness, inclusivity, solidarity and care around very bodily practices, we need to use a concept that would do justice to:

- Emergence and surprise of the event.
- Its material, bodily and affective aspects.

I, therefore, claim that the concept of *assemblage* (*agencement*), within the larger corpus of the work of its inventors, i.e. Deleuze and Guattari, could serve us better to elucidate the Gezi account presented in the first section of the thesis with respect to the aforementioned two concerns.

The first chapter of the dissertation is composed of a discussion of the research questions, literature, methodological concerns that are kept in mind in the writing of the Gezi account presented in this section, main empirical and philosophical hypothesis and an empirical account of the Gezi Movement based on my participant observation in different phases of the movement since the first time it erupted in Gezi Park (four months in the summer and autumn of 2013 –in Gezi encampment, Diyarbakır and Cologne street protests and Kadıköy Yogurtcu Park and Beşiktaş Abbasağa Park Assemblies; five months in 2014 in Caferağa Neighborhood Solidarity Organization and its squat, Mahalle Evi (Neighborhood House), content analysis of the assembly notes compiled in the web site called *parklarbizimdir*, being the only web site that draws together assembly notes of various park assemblies at a national and international level), and 21 in-depth semi-structured, narrative interviews with protesters from different political backgrounds. The second chapter introduces the making of Gezi communities through successive translations and translocations in

protest types around emerging problems throughout the course of the movement. It is indeed true that the Gezi Movement was not a pre-ordained protest. Rather, it was defined by practices and protest types that were enacted as solutions to emerging problems throughout the course of the mobilization. Protest types, practices and political values that came to be an integral part of the movement –as the ParkWatch, encampment and occupation, Earthmeals, assemblies, feminist corrective action, the 2013 Gay Pride, anti-sexism, anti-nationalism, participatory democracy, horizontal organization, inclusivity- were the ones which emerged as solutions to problems confronted by the protesters throughout the course of the movement. Tracking these solutions around the problems that gave way to them was the methodological choice I made in my account of the Gezi Protests. This is an approach deeply influenced by Bruno Latour’s and John Law’s contention that what is to be accounted for is how communities are assembled around both material and semiotic concerns. Hence, in the third chapter, I approach the making of Gezi Communities, this time in park assemblies, around certain concerns that assembled and de-assembled protester communities. An analysis of the assembly minutes, as well as activist accounts, in light of my observations in Abbasağa and Yoğurtçu Park Assemblies throughout the summer and fall of 2013 reveal the fact that certain concerns kept coming to the fore, hence reiterated and sustained, throughout the course of the movement. Anti-sexism, defense of life spaces, anti-nationalism, participatory/horizontal democracy, inclusivity were indeed concerns that led to both conflicts and agreements that, in turn, assembled and de-assembled assembly communities. Therefore, these concerns became the values of the Gezi Movement that were carefully selected and repeatedly

enacted throughout the course of the movement. The fourth chapter further dwells on the role of body in the movement, as well as the use of social media.

The second section of the thesis aims to discuss the findings of the empirical part with respect to the theoretical question of the thesis in mind: what kind of conceptual tools can do justice to the question of *emergence as embodiment* in Occupy movements that lean on a highly bodily and performative contentious action.

In the fifth chapter, I conduct a theoretical discussion on the use of the concept of network so as to elucidate social movement communities. The question of the chapter is thus whether the concept of network is a sufficient conceptual tool to account for the latest wave of social contention in terms of both the question of emergence of new dissident communities in the occupied spaces and the prevalence of bodily, performative practices and protest types therein. I visit the use of the concept by Manuel Castells (2012, 2015), as it constitutes the majority of occupy movement accounts. As stated above, Castells pays particular attention to the networked character of the recent occupy movements, the term of network basically referring to digitalized networks via the mediation of social media. However, the term of network, being a good analytical tool to dwell on relations among already existing points proves to have certain setbacks to account for the emergence of new relationalities. As such, although it is a useful concept to analyze alter-globalization movement that are composed of networks of already existing activist networks, we might need other concepts to account for the type of community-making in Occupy Movements

characterized by the participation of larger population who have not been previously involved in activist networks (Juris 2012). Besides, such accounts heavily leaning on the capacities of digitalized networks to promote horizontal assembling in online media might at times prove to underestimate the role of the place-specificity of the movements that are characterized by highly bodily and affective practices and protest types.

Later on, I turn to the use of the concept of network in the Actor-Network theory. As stated by Escobar, the actor-network theory mobilizes the concept of actor-network to elaborate a critic of the 'social' as an analytical study in sociology (Escobar & Osterweil 2012, p. 194). As such, it is developed as a means to grasp the multiple connections, relations and supports that constitute what is traditionally called the social domain. By extension, actor-networks, unlike other network accounts, do not analyze relations among already existing points, rather they underline the fact that such points are not self-sustaining entities, but relations themselves. As such, ANT gives us a better understanding on the emergence of relationalities. Shifting the attention to the question of *how* a given community, thing or substance comes to be conceived as a self-sustaining whole, the ANT takes into consideration material, infrastructural, technical, technological etc. supports behind any given entity. Therefore, any element that makes a difference in the action becomes an actor and a network, an actor-network. Bruno Latour contends that such an idea of agency introduces a better account of action by including a considerably larger number of previously unaccounted actors in the picture (Latour, 1996, 2005). We see that this

conception of network has recently influenced social movement studies. It is indeed true that such an idea of agency evoked by the concept of actor-network has started to be mobilized also to elucidate social movements (Rodriguez-Giralt 2011, Marrero-Guillamon 2013, Lockie 2004). Social movements in these accounts have come to be considered as *emerging* relationalities among heterogeneous components of different natures. This emphasis on *emerging* relationalities indeed provides us with a different perspective on the concept of network. In that sense, it is also seen that ANT scholars recently refer to other concepts as assemblage and material-semiotics to better underline this characteristic of the concept that cannot be seen in the concept of the network.

Bruno Latour, indeed avers that this conception of network is closer to the Bergsonian heritage of Deleuzian materialism, rather than Castells' use of the term (Latour 2005, p. 129). He thus directly refers to Deleuze when explaining what the term of network means for him: "a very special brand of active and distributed materialism of which Deleuze, through Bergson, is the most recent representative" (*idem.*). Leaning on this background, I then aver that the concept of assemblage in the larger philosophical background of its inventors (Deleuze and Guattari) can indeed be a useful tool to account for both emergence and embodiment in Occupy movements. The concept that is already in circulation in social movements literature to discuss contentious action as an emerging heterogeneous spatio-relational ordering (McFarlane 2009, Müller 2015, Bennett 2015) also provides us with means to elucidate embodiment in assemblages. In the original use of the concept by Deleuze and Guattari (1980), the

concept also refers to a certain conception of body that is defined through its affects. As such, assemblages are themselves bodies whose capacity of action is determined by the ways they are affected in various encounters.

Accordingly, the sixth chapter dwells on the concept of body in assemblages; or assemblage as body. Assemblage is indeed defined as body in the original use of the concept in the work of Deleuze & Guattari. It is the Spinozist body defended in *Mille Plateaux* (1980) that is defined by its capacity to affect and be affected. Joyful affects therefore increase the capacity of the bodies to act, hence to become other than what they currently are. Becoming is thus an affective issue. In this chapter, I explain this affect politics intrinsic to the concept of assemblage and its relevance in social movement studies. As such, I claim that a return to the concept of assemblage (*agencement*) in the work of its inventors provides us with the means to account for both *emergence* and *embodiment*, two significant features of the Occupy Movements.

Seventh and last chapter gives a more detailed background of the political philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari. The purpose of the chapter is to better situate the concept of assemblage in the lineage of Deleuze-Guattarian political thought and show its relevance to social movement studies. Here, I aver that the question of emergence – as embodiment-, hence becoming has always been a central political problem of Deleuze who is highly influenced by Althusserian materialism of the encounter, the latter envisaging a dynamic conception of emergence that foregrounds the very making of communities in surprise encounters.



## CHAPTER 1

### **The Gezi Movement: Emerging contentious communities in-the-making**

It has been more than a decade now that we have come to witness the emergence of a new wave of contention dating back to the occupation of Syntagma square in Athens, occupation of public spaces as part of the so-called Arab Spring and Spanish *indignados* or 15M movement, as well as the Occupy Wall Center movement (Tuğal 2013, della Porto and Mattoni 2014, Tejerina et al. 2013, Vatikiotis and Yörük 2016, Gerbaudo 2012, Özel in Özkırımlı 2014)<sup>1</sup>. Also referred as *occupy social movements* that show themselves as “a new international cycle of contention... that seeks to both transform the economic system to provide greater equality, opportunities, and personal fulfillment and, simultaneously, to democratize power in more participatory ways” (Tejerina et al. 2013), or *les mouvements des places* (Pleyers, Glasius 2013), this new wave of social contention has come to bring forward significant matters on alternative organizational structures within the structural schema of a particular form of contention: reclaiming public spaces via occupation and encampment.

Reclaiming public spaces and occupation, in themselves, point to a very material form of contention revolving around the (re)construction of everyday life in the reclaimed

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<sup>1</sup> For a critical approach to this argument, see Judith Butler’s preface to the *Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey: #occupygezi* edited by Ümit Özkırımlı (2014b). In her preface to the book, Butler questions accounts that conjure easy alliances among these movements and defends that we should take into consideration the historical and political context of each and every country She thus avers that “it is probably best to think of these alliances across the geopolitical spectrum as allowing for both resonance and dissonance.”

zone in ways alternative to representations of the space imposed by the sovereign power (Dhaliwal 2012). A certain “place specificity” (Escobar 2001) or “territoriality” (Hardt 2011) is highly visible in this new wave of social contention. Place specific occupations indeed “challenge the transformation of social space into abstract space,” (Juris 2012, p. 269) and constitute “terrains of resistance” acting both as a physical space and physical expression (Routledge 1996, p. 517). Reclaiming public space in order to prevent its commercialization goes hand in hand with its reterritorialization around alternative, non-commercial and communitarian forms of relationality based on the affections of joy and solidarity and a culture of share, solidarity and gift economy. Vatikiotis and Yörük (2016), in their analysis of the Gezi Movement, underline this characteristic of the global Occupy movements and state that “another obvious similarity of the recent protest movements has been the physical occupation of public spaces and the development of discursive practices in protest camps, generating alternative visions of democracy. These spaces provided dynamic sites of interaction, along with informal gatherings, group meetings, and general assemblies of people from diverse backgrounds and orientations. Social actors engaged in processes of collective decision making and participatory democratic practice in general and experimented creatively with self-organized projects” (p. 2) (see Annex 1 for the chronological deployment of the protest).

Gezi movement which can aptly be analyzed as part of this new cycle of contention (Tuğal 2013, Vatikiotis and Yörük 2016, Castells 2015) started as an encampment in Gezi Park to prevent the unlawful construction of artillery barracks and a shopping

mall in the park. The encampment soon turned into a national protest against government's gentrification projects, commercialization of the urban space and authoritarian rule over the people (see Annex 2 for further information on the literature about this aspect of the movement), witnessing the participation of unprecedentedly diversified groups of people. Gezi was occupied by the activists for around two weeks until the violent police operation on the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> of June. During these two weeks, the activists experienced direct decision-making practices through assemblies, developing effective means to find solutions to their basic needs through what we might call a donation and solidarity economy (Telseren 2014, p.44, 46). "Taksim and Gezi were claimed by the ever-growing population of protestors as a venue for displaying an alternative democracy" (Ors 2014, p.27). The assemblies provided the means for a "face-to-face interaction among citizens that is differentiated from the state" (Melucci and Avritzer 2000, p. 509) "where performances and debates of democratic ideas took place" (Ors 2014, p.8).

After the police intervention that violently evacuated the park, popular assemblies propagated in the parks of Istanbul neighborhoods, as well as a number of other cities leading to the foundation of neighborhood solidarity organizations. These park assemblies where the neighborhood residents had the chance to voice their discontent over government's policies and define what the Gezi movement meant for them proved to be effective means to frame, hence consolidate, redefine and reorient the mobilization.

This place specific contention at Taksim Square and neighborhoods of the entire country presents “a rich study on the political symbolism of urban place” (Gul et al. 2014, p.70) with its emphasis on direct and horizontal participation in politics of a diverse community and thus it refers to another characteristic of the recent cycle of contention which is mostly referred as prefiguration, the latter mostly described by the famous slogan of alter-globalization mobilizations: “be the change you want to see in the world.” It includes taking direct action to protest certain state actions through performing the proposed alternative. As such, prefiguration leans on a very material and corporeal repertoire of action and it is defined as “the attempted construction of alternative or utopian social relations in the present, either in parallel with or in the course of adversarial social movement protest” (Yates 2015, p. 1). Thus, it goes hand in hand with a space of encounter (Perugorria and Tejerina, 2013) enhancing highly diverse populations to build an alternative life with the affections of solidarity and joy and have communicative means for further transformation both at individual and collective level.

As such, the Gezi mobilization displays the experience of reclaiming “that which is ultimately common” against various mechanisms of enclosure that act as “a technology of dispossession and subjection” (Vasudevan, McFarlane and Jeffrey 2008, p. 1644). “Taksim is ours, Gezi Park is ours,” was indeed the prevailing slogan in the mobilizations in Turkey that had by then come to be known as the Gezi Movement. The Gezi mobilization was replete with practices and discourses directly opposing these technologies of dispossession. As we will see in the next chapter,

reclaiming Taksim square and Gezi park went hand in hand with aspirations to reclaim rivers, forests, water, bodies and technologies. At all levels, the Gezi movement witnessed a struggle to oppose the neoliberal urban policies of the AKP government based on violently destroying affective bonds of residents with their neighborhoods via imposing urban transformation projects with no regard to social, cultural and environmental ecology. Therefore, opposing such urban transformation projects was quickly translated into opposing the authoritarian rule of the government that had become even more ruthless in its efforts to de-territorialize urban and rural space so as to turn them into commodity. The activists were quick to make the connection between what they perceived as an ‘attack against their parks and neighborhoods’ and the ongoing assaults against women’s bodies<sup>2</sup>, rural space and the communitarian lifestyles still prevailing in the *mahalle* (neighborhood) culture of Anatolian neighborhoods. The emphasis on the defense of a public park soon turned into a more comprehensive defense of ‘life’ which included urban and rural space, bodies and practices that foregrounded communitarian bonds in neighborhoods. Gezi was thus the performed reaction of the urban dwellers to the attack of the government against their ‘life spaces.’

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<sup>2</sup> The Gezi movement re-animated a great upheaval on the side of women –incorporating more than half of the protesters see Ellialtı, T (2014). “Resist With Tenacity, Not With Swear Words”: Feminist Interventions in the Gezi Park Protests- against the government’s attack on women’s bodies that showed itself in its previous attempt to withdraw the legal abortion right of women in 2012, as well as the discourse of the then prime minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan that systematically reduced the role of the women in the society to child-bearing and motherhood.

### 1.1. How were Gezi communities made? Accounting for embodied emergence of new dissident communities

One particular aspect of the Gezi Movement is unanimously underlined throughout the literature on the movement: the movement witnessed the participation of protesters from a very wide range of socio-economic backgrounds and political affiliations (Adaman, Akbulut and Arsel 2017). This included the supporters of the political parties in opposition against the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) –mainly the central democratic Republican Party (CHP), the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) and the right-wing National Movement Party (MHP)- leftist trade unions, socialist political parties that are not represented in the parliament, fan clubs of the main soccer clubs of the country, non-institutional left of the country including urban activists, LGBT movement, women’s movement, anti-capitalist Muslims’ organization. The Gezi Park encampment was indeed populated by protesters from the organized left, be it autonomous –institutional- or not, as well as protesters who had never been in a protest before. In fact, the latter outnumbered the protesters who were already involved in activist networks of the city. There were the settled park dwellers and visitors whose number amounted to thousands towards the evening. There were stray dogs and cats, homeless children who found shelter, food and support in the whereabouts of the Gezi Park, white collar workers and professionals who used to spend the day working in their respective offices, then to return to park and spend the evening and night therein. Judith Butler comments on

this aspect of the Gezi Park protesters as follows:

The “people” gathered in the summer of 2013 had not gathered there before – not in those terms, and not in that combination. The environmentalists found themselves joined by the anti-capitalists, including the anti-capitalist Muslims who did not want that mosque in that place and for that reason; and they in turn were joined by those who demand the public ownership of water rights. In addition, the gay, lesbian and transgender community was significantly represented, occupying public space and demanding the right to do so without fear. The women against sexual harassment in the streets also showed up, clearly finding temporary public safety in a non-violent movement of direct democracy. When the Kurdish mothers arrived, holding the signs emblazoned with images of their “disappeared” sons who had clearly been tortured, killed and disposed of by Turkish army troops, the crowd was apparently aware that something breathtaking was taking place. There had been talk that the Kurds could not join because they were in delicate negotiations with the state. But when the mothers arrived, they were entering into a public sphere to be heard in a new way, a public sphere from which they had been excluded, and where their petitions to find out what had happened to their sons had never been honored. The very idea of public space had been transfigured (Butler 2014b, *foreword*).

It is indeed true that the making of an alternative space went hand in hand with the making of alternative communities in an unprecedented encounter among a diverse protester population. Onur Bakiner, in that respect, discusses what was referred as “the Gezi Spirit” which brought together people from a broad political spectrum, many with no prior history of activism. In his attempts to understand “what kept such a diverse crowd together for weeks,” he states that “the Gezi protests have produced a *“surplus”* above and beyond the expectations based on previous configurations of the political landscape in Turkey” (Bakiner 2014, p. 66, *emphasis is mine*). It can aptly be said that there is very little research on how this ‘surplus’ is created and with what theoretical tools it can be accounted for.

Lorenzo d’Orsi, in his analyses of the Gezi Protests, points to that aspect of the

movement by stating that “the Gezi protests, moreover, had a non-teleological trajectory: it materialized in the same moment it was born and was characterized by a sharp *aporia*. Therefore, the question is not to merely analyze the reasons that led to dissent and grievance. Instead, by shifting the analysis from the why to the how, it is possible to observe new mechanisms triggered by the participation in the movement itself (d’Orsi 2015, p. 17). D’Orsi’s emphasis on the requirement to shift to the question of ‘how’ leads him to turn his attention to the ‘lived experience’ of the movement and embodied practices that sustained the protests in each and every phase of the mobilization. In that, his analyses might be the only one in the literature that deals with the question of how Gezi communities were established in the lived experience of the movement. Furthermore, it is also noteworthy to notice that, according to d’Orsi, a concern on the making of dissident communities requires a keen interest in the lived and embodied experience in the reclaimed public space. He relates this experience with transformation and the creation of new processes of subjectivity: “The Gezi park protest movement can be seen as a transformative practice establishing temporary forms of collective belonging that made new processes of subjectivity possible (p. 17-18). This emphasis on the question of *how* a dissident community is made, which is immediately related to the question of emotions, embodiment and transformation, can be deemed part of a new axis in the study of the Gezi Movement and Occupy Movements in general: their bodily, embodied and affective character.

The main research question of the dissertation thus aspires to respond to this need to account for the lived experience of the movement so as to better grasp how this new



community of protesters were constituted during the very course of the dissident action. It aims to illustrate this encounter of protesters from very diverse backgrounds and their engagement in protests and life-making practices that led to the creation of new Gezi communities.

Hence, the main research question of the dissertation is to account for how the Gezi communities were made within the occupied spaces. To put it more succinctly, *how contentious Gezi communities were made in the occupied public spaces during and after the Gezi Park encampment in the summer of 2013 based on the lived experience of the protesters in the encampment, on streets and in park assemblies?*

Following this main question, other questions of the dissertation posed to specify the constitution of new dissident communities are as follows:

- Through what *practices* and around which *protest types* this community established itself?
- What concerns (or issues) and what controversies came to the fore in the community-making process of the Gezi Movement?
- What is the role of the social media in the community-making activities of the protesters?
- What is the role of body, bodily affects and performances in the constitution of these Gezi communities?

Gezi Park, streets and park assemblies welcomed an unprecedented encounter among

heterogeneous<sup>3</sup> populations in terms of political affiliations, socio-economic status, class affiliations, sexual orientations, age and gender. The Gezi Movement was indeed a dynamic course of action that corresponded to the assembling and re-assembling – and at times de-assembling- of new dissident communities out of these disparate components. As such, Gezi communities, in their totality, were actually *made* within the course of the movement out of a very heterogeneous population of protesters that took the streets to prevent the demolition of Gezi Park via directly occupying it and constituting an alternative community-in-the-making therein. This, as such, requires an account of how, under what *concerns*, through what *practices*, *protest types*, *community-making activities* such communities were constituted in the very experience of the contentious action. Such an account would thus deal with the question of the *emergence* of new dissident communities during the course of the movement within its lived experience.

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<sup>3</sup> The term heterogeneous has come to signify in the science and technology studies –especially in ANT- a relational domain composed of elements of different natures (human and non-human, infrastructural, material and discursive). As such, it points to the theory’s aspiration to consider reality as a hybrid relational domain that doesn’t lean on a separation between humans and non-humans, nature and culture. Keeping this in mind, here I limit myself to the heterogeneous relational domain composed of individual protesters and already networked and organized collectives. However, it is noteworthy to state that this heterogeneous encounter also included non-human elements (as the Park itself with the infrastructural problems it posed and the rich imagery it evoked for different groups of protesters. For the Armenian protesters the park which was previously an Armenian cemetery signified an affective bond with their ancestors. For the republicans, it was one of the first urban projects of the republican Turkey. The park was the crusing site for the gay protesters coming from LGBT network of the country.) There were of course stray dogs and cats, social media etc. that shall all be deemed elements of this heterogeneous encounter we call the Gezi Movement.

Such an emphasis on the lived experience of the mobilization also takes into consideration the *embodied components* of the mobilization. There is, although very limited, discussions in the literature on the Gezi Movement regarding the role of the body and emotions in the Gezi Movement.

Most of the studies that can be classified under this sub-section deal with the significance of humor as a prevailing and affirmative affective state during the protests (d'Orsi 2015, Öğün, Çoban and Şener 2013, Dağtaş 2014, Özkaynak et al. 2015). Öğün et al. (2013) refer to Melucci (1998) and his emphasis on the requirement to study the 'emotional investment' in mobilization and underline the role of humor and the carnivalesque atmosphere of the Gezi Movement in the creation of an alternative space. According to them, the Gezi Movement signifies an affective intervention to space and time:

Social movements strive to find and provide living spaces beyond the outreach of the authority. This struggle is carried out by finding and creating alternative time and places within the city. Urban struggles which have a carnivalesque style exceed the space and time boundaries set by the authority and reject such regulations. During Gezi Movement which broke out as a movement against urban renewal, modifications by the resisters to the city's signs (Contradiction in Taksim for Construction in Taksim, Tomalı Hilmi Street for Tunalı Hilmi Street, etc.) and symbols ('gezikondu'—modified version of 'gecekondu' which means 'shanty'— for the resisters' tents, image of Resist Kuğulu Park, etc.) are the examples of intervention to the space while the slogan 'Ankara için direniş vakti' (Time for Ankara to resist) is an example of intervention to time. Time to resist has become the time to enjoy, carnivalesque activity has filled the leisure time and resistance has been interlocked with joy and leisure time when the time was targeted. Resistance has

become the activity where laughter spread to everyone. Carnival which has a libertarian reference within the Bakhtinian context is the activity of social discharge occurring in a limited time during which replacement, subversion and displacement take place (Öğün et al, 2014, p. 433)

This account analyzes social movements in their capacity to intervene in the regular course of time and space and the accompanying positive affective charge (characterized by joy and laughter). It is indeed true that the carnivalesque atmosphere in Gezi was sustained by humorous interventions of the protesters in the way politics is made. The protesters, in time, adapted a positive, joyful and humorous language to attack the authority figures. Hence, instead of using swear words, protesters started to call the then prime-minister Erdoğan, ‘kurabiye Tayyip’ (cookie Tayyip). Istanbul streets were home to ‘kurabiye Tayyip’ graffiti on the billboards having the pictures of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. ‘Dear police officers, you do not need to make us cry with your tear gas, we are already very sentimental kids,’ was another graffiti of the Gezi times, just as ‘What if it (the tear gas capsules) hit my Pelin.’ This humorous and affirmative language was really successful in sustaining the atmosphere of joy as opposed to the unending hate messages of Erdoğan and the police violence.

Apart from the studies underlining the significance of joy and humor in the Gezi Protests, there are other studies that point to the significance of embodied practices in the Gezi Mobilization.

Fatmagül Berktaş, for instance, opened the ’13 *Politsci* Conference on the Gezi Movement by stating that “In the space of action and freedom symbolized by Gezi Park, individuals gathered together with their differing views and with their **concrete**

**bodies marked by difference.** Thus, in the contradictory and hybrid space of the ‘Gezi *agora*’ they embodied and put into practice this new concept of power.” (Berkday 2014) This emphasis on the concrete bodily presence marked by difference and embodied practices is also congruent with the intervention of Zeynep Gambetti.

Gambetti calls the Gezi Movement as “the resistance of a multiplicity of bodies” calling forth Hardt’s definition of multitude: “multitude is not a body in the sense that Hobbes theorized the body politic; it is rather a corporeal assemblage that acts as a living multiplicity” (Gambetti 2014, p. 98). Here, Gambetti opposes two body politics, one that is characterized by Hobbes’ concept of bodies acting according to their function within the composition of the all-encompassing body of the Leviathan and the other that is a corporeal *assemblage*, that acts as a multiplicity. Body as assemblage refers to a relational domain in which the whole is not posited as superior or transcendental to its parts. The multiple bodies, as such, are not construed according to a *function* or pre-determined organizational structure with respect to the integrity, *telos* or concept of the whole. Bodies are rather relational entities that are provisionally assembled to make a meta-relational domain, a space of encounter where each new configuration amounts to transformation both in the interacting bodies and the totality of the relational body. Gambetti, as such, paves the way for further studies on the Gezi Movement as a body-assemblage in her invitation to “look into the extensive interstices of this politics of the body, rather than turn to macro-level discourses, to begin deciphering it” (p. 100).

The above-mentioned analysis of Lorenzo d’Orsi on the embodied practices in the Gezi Movement can indeed be considered as an intervention in this line of thought. d’Orsi analyzes the use of tear gas, *iftar* dinners organized by the protesters and the *duran Adam* (standing man) performance<sup>4</sup> as bodily practices that respectively amount to the creation of a common bodily involvement, hence solidarity, and a common space. In this respect, d’Orsi analyzes how the use of tear gas “paradoxically fostered the creation of a shared experience, emotional and bodily level that acted as social glue... Instead of disciplining bodies, gas allowed different experiences to unite through a common bodily involvement” (d’Orsi 2014, p. 20). Similarly, d’Orsi contends that “the motionless body of *duran adam* has also proved to be a physical space for rethinking society, upsetting the dominant codes upon which social relationships are founded. The people standing in Taksim Square, and in other part of the city, can be seen as an articulation of bodies-out-of-place (Butler and Athanasiou, 2013) able to subvert and undermine the hegemonic frame. Indeed, the body, as a system of signs and symbols, a surface to write and rewrite, is the place embodying the truths of the dominant power (Foucault 1976). Therefore, remaining motionless can be intended as a refusal to stay in an assigned “proper” place, disrupting the way in which spaces, forms of dissent and resistance have been interpreted. Furthermore,

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<sup>4</sup> Collective *iftar* (the dinner in the month of Ramadan) –which will be called *Earthmeal* was organized by the anti-capitalist Muslims on the streets to oppose government’s extravagant and luxurious *iftar* organizations. The idea was to underline the fact that *iftar* was a collective, modest share of food. *Duran adam* (standing man) was the performance of an artist who started to stand still in Taksim Square after the forceful evacuation of Gezi Park and the square. In a few days, thousands stood beside him and the police intervened in the performance. For further discussions on these protest types see Chapter 2.

the epistemic relevance of such a body has a historical density that exceeds the contingency of the protest for the park and against Erdoğan's policies" (p. 24).

Such interventions can be considered as part of the requirement to account for embodiment and materiality in recent social movements so as to better conceptualize the significance of the bodily aspects of such mobilizations which is supported by growing data in the discipline (Butler 2011a, 2014; E. Happe, 2015; Gregory 2013; Perrugorría, I., Tejerina, B. 2013, Protevi 2015; Federici 2011). Both d'Orsi's and Gambetti's emphasis on the body politics of the Gezi Movement refers to Judith Butler's interventions on the Occupy Movements.

Butler posits that a body is always supported, while the mechanisms that support it turns it into a subject. The struggle in the age of bio-politics thus inevitably concerns the very support of bodies, including the infrastructural conditions (Butler, 2014a, p.102). As it fundamentally revolves around that which supports the bodies, this struggle includes the extreme exposure of them. The bodies on the streets are indeed naked and unprotected against the excessively armed policing institution of the state apparatus, at odds with accounts asserting that recent mobilizations are more cost-effective as they are organized through digital media where participation is less costly (Garrett, 2006 p. 204).

This bodily exposure also constitutes a space where life as *bios*, bodies as productive forces, desire (Deleuze and Guattari 1979, 1980) or constitutive power (Hardt 2009) act and where the novelty emerges. Butler states that "the body is the means and ends

of the politics... the demand that is made is also enacted, which means that a bodily performativity brings together acting and speaking in a particular way, bespeaking what is acted, and acting what is spoken” (Butler, 2015, p.102). Acting/speaking thusly constitute an *in-between space* (Butler, 2011, p.1) a space in the making freed from the codes of the existing order that support the bodies in alternative ways, hence pave the way for transformation.

Happe (2015), influenced by Butler’s analyses of the Occupy Movement, underlines the extremely corporeal character of the Occupy movement in Zucotti Park and defines the mobilizations in terms of “action as a mode of speaking” (p. 212) and aptly puts forward that “a great deal of effort was placed on sustaining the material and immaterial conditions of life of the occupiers” (p. 214). According to Happe as well as Eagan (2014), this was a model of what Foucault called *parrhēsia* (frank speech) which is a “style of existence,” “attitude” or a “way of being” that occurs in moments when the above-mentioned axioms are dissolved “to reduce life to itself” to *bios*” (Happe 2015, p. 215-216). It is a moment that “opens up the space for an ‘other’ life” (ibid. p.216) and creates the grounds for new subject formations. According to Happe, it is in plain acts like cooking which comes to forefront in the construction of a life that remains, the *bios* that the occupiers of the parks perform what it means to create an alternative to the existent system. Bayer refers to these activities as “practices of cultivation” with respect to Harrison’s “gardener’s vocation of care” (Bayer, 2012, p.28).



Here, in this literature, we clearly see that the question of the emergence of new dissident communities is construed as new embodiments in alternative, experimental spaces that opens up the means for transformation and novelty.

The research question that aspires to grasp how Gezi communities were made within the lived experience of the mobilization hence leans on this literature to account for the question of *emergence* as *embodiment* of new relations within the occupied spaces. It leans on this understudied literature on Occupy Movements that dwell on the question of the emergence of new communities as alternative embodiments. As stated by d’Orsi, “The Gezi Movement, with its ability to reinvent the meaning of bodies, words and things, can be seen as an intertwining of lived experiences and experimentation of new ways of subjectivity, which transforms the imaginary where people locate themselves and opens people to new social and political configurations that are alternatives to the existing hierarchies of everyday life” (d’Orsi 2014, p. 25).

The empirical part of the thesis tries to illustrate this lived experience of the movement by tracking the practices and protest types enacted in the occupied space, the immediate problems that led to the introduction and subsequent subsistence of certain protest types, values and concerns during the course of the mobilization. In line with this literature on the movement, the hypothesis is that Gezi communities did not precede their encounter in the occupied public spaces and they were in a dynamic process of constitution, re-constitution and de-constitution through the course of the action when new protest types were introduced around new problems and certain concerns came to hold and be prominent. Hence, the empirical part tracks the

problems around which a protest type led to another (encampment to occupation, occupation to park assemblies; the introduction of the assembly as a political practice and its subsistence in time etc.), the protest types and practices that held in time and the main concerns that sustained the communities together. This quest on the emergence of new communities around emergent protest types and practices that were selected and reiterated in time always go hand in hand with a keen eye on the question of *embodiment*, hence bodily, performative and affective aspect of these community-making.

## 1.2. Some methodological concerns: how to dwell on community-making

The Gezi Movement account that I aspire to present here thus revolves around the question of “how” mostly transitory and highly unexpected Gezi communities and alliances were established within the constraints of the occupied space and a limited time framework. As an activist told me later on in one of the interviews (see chapter 7): “It was like living in a half-moment, an in-between moment. It was as if you jump on a single foot, while not knowing where you would step with the other.” My personal experience within the occupied spaces of the Gezi Movement (Gezi Park Watch, Gezi Park Encampment, Street protests, neighborhood assemblies in the summer and fall of 2013 and Caferağa Neighborhood Assembly in the summer and fall of 2014) was also akin to this experience. Since the first flood of non-familiar faces to Gezi Park, being there on the ground seemed like constantly being under construction and transformation. It was like being carried away by something that was both beyond us, yet being made by us.

Then, the question was how to do justice to an in-between-moment that was constantly in the making. The only way to do this, it seemed to me, was to orient towards that process of the making-of-communities instead of starting from pre-established notions, frames and identities. Life-making practices within Gezi Park, unexpected alliances made in the streets and behind the barricades, protest types and decision-making mechanisms introduced and prevailed throughout the course of the movement, concerns which were not there before, but turned into being the very characteristics of the Gezi Movement in time, problems faced out there on the street and collective responses to them that shaped the course of events.... This then should have been the right way to do justice to an in-between moment in the making. The concept of 'translation' widely used in the literature of science and technology studies in general and conceptualized by Bruno Latour as part of Actor-Network theory seemed to be a useful starting point to explicate such a concern.

Bruno Latour, in *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, defines actor-network theory as the 'sociology of translation' (Latour 1995, p.9) in that it doesn't resort to pre-existing concepts and categories to define an already constituted 'social realm. Rather, it is related to the constitution of which is 'not yet' there (p. 12), hence emergent through transformations in action. As such a translation is "a connection that transports transformations" (p. 108) that needs to be tracked and followed.

This, to begin with, looked like a reasonable ground to approach the Gezi Movement communities that were not, but on the way to be assembled. Social mobilizations as the Gezi movement that witness emergent communities, alternative spaces at the borders of the seemingly ‘established’ social realm might indeed prove to be good laboratories to think outside the common notions we have come to define the ‘social,’ be it class or identity or certain political affiliations. The world-making/protest-making practices performed in the occupied space thus constitute a situation where ‘tracing actors’ new associations’ become more and more difficult. They indeed amount to “situations where innovations proliferate, where group boundaries are uncertain, when the range of entities to be taken into account fluctuates” (p. 11). As stated by Melucci, the significance of the new social movements is what they call forth, the novelty that they enact (Melucci 1985, 1996) (more on this on Chapter 7 and Chapter 5). This novelty and surprise experienced by a highly diverse community of protesters in the occupied space which constitute one of the most important aspects of the Gezi movement –as it is repeatedly noted by the activists in the chapters of the Section 1- it requires an approach or a methodology that would give precedence to the transformations in the action repertoire of the mobilization that would –*only*- in time constitute the Gezi Movement in general. Therefore, I tried to follow the action repertoire of the Gezi Movement paying special attention to the problems that gave rise to the introduction of new protest types and their insistence over time so as to become an integral part of the Gezi Movement. One such moment was the translation from the Park Watch initiated by urban activists to actual encampment in the park which witnessed the participation of a larger population the majority of which did not

have an activist background. Another important translation in the action repertoire of the Gezi Movement was the introduction of the assembly-type decision-making mechanisms at the very beginning of the Park Watch, which soon reappeared in a critical moment of the Gezi encampment when the protesters were to decide on the future of the park, and finally became the main protest type in the action repertoire of the Gezi Movement right after the evacuation of Gezi Park in park assemblies. All of these translations were accompanied by a process of problematization, a crisis so-to-say when immediate solutions were required to solve emergent problems. Therefore, the account of this chapter is based on a sensitivity to follow these translations in the action repertoire of the Gezi Movement. I tried to navigate through problematic situations that gave way to the introduction of new protest types or reappearance of the already introduced ones. As such, I tried to depict the dynamic flow of the Gezi Movement on process. The main concern here is to make an emphasis on the movement as a community-in-the-making, comprised of these situations “where innovations proliferate, where group boundaries are uncertain, when the range of entities to be taken into account fluctuates” (Latour 1995, p. 11). The proliferation of innovative solutions to problems (the evacuation of the park and maintaining the sustainability of the movement this time outside the park, daily problems arising from the maintenance of life in occupied spaces etc.) navigating through uncertain group boundaries (the entire leftist organizations, both institutional and non-institutional – political parties on the leftist spectrum of the political panorama of the country, central left represented by the Republican Party (CHP) and even adherents of the nationalist

party in the opposition (MHP), NGOs, were as such on the forefront in this account of the Gezi Movement.

As such, I made use of data coming from my observation in different phases of the movement (Gezi Park Watch, Gezi Park Encampment, Street protests, neighborhood assemblies in the summer and fall of 2013 and Caferağa Neighborhood Assembly in the summer and fall of 2014), content analysis of 21 narrative interviews with protesters of varying political backgrounds representing in their totality the diversity of the participants of the movement and content analysis of minutes of assemblies 18 cities (46 park assemblies in Istanbul, 12 park assemblies in Ankara and one in Eskişehir, Antakya/Hatay, Antalya, Sinop, Ayvalık, Bodrum, Bozcaada, Bursa, Gebze, İzmir, Kocaeli, Marmaris, Mersin, Sakarya, New York, London and New Zealand) gathered in <http://parklarbizim.blogspot.com.es>, the only web-site with a collection of assembly minutes in order to come up with the below account of the Gezi Movement that aspires to depict how communities are assembled by tracking the action repertoire of the movement.

Following the protest types and action repertoire of the Gezi Movement by making emphasis on *practices-in-the-making* (Marres, 2007, p. 763) adopted by protesters throughout the course of the mobilization went hand in hand with an analysis of the *concerns* that came to define the main characteristics of the Gezi Movement. Marres, with reference to Bennett and Norris claim that “recent accounts of the rise of ‘lifestyle politics’ discuss the possibility that issues rather than political parties

mediate public involvement” (Marres 2007, p. 761). This ‘issue-oriented’ approach in STS on democracy foregrounds that issues are not simply discursive, rather ‘issue formation (...) intervenes in ‘collectives’ or ‘life worlds’ that include associations of material and social constituents’ (*ibid.* p. 762). As such, I adapted this concern for issue-formation in STS so as to analyze the ‘concerns’ of protesters that are raised both in material practices and discourses used in the assemblies.

The third chapter thus includes an analysis of the common concerns raised –both in deed and word- by Gezi Park assembly communities throughout the country and abroad. I paid special attention to present these concerns at the intersection of the practices, encounters, bodily affections, material situations *and* values attributed to them. Framing in social movements is indeed a process that occurs in the making of these *gatherings* or world(s). Thus I tried to show that values that have come to be associated with the Gezi Movement (horizontal, non-institutional politics, anti-sexism, anti-racism/anti-nationalism, defense of life-spaces, inclusivity) introduced or emerged, propagated, practiced on and endured throughout the course of the mobilization via the material and affective experiments with a wide range of embodied protest types. Hence, the account aspires to dwell on the contentious practices, as well as the values that arise in their experimentation, which reflects John Law’s insistence on the significance of practices in his understanding of science and technology studies (Law, 2015).

It is indeed another concern of Latour to pay attention to *matters of concern* and controversies in our accounts on how communities are being assembled. The term matter of concern is deployed by Latour so as to breach the gap or dichotomy between what is deemed 'natural' (fact) and social/ cultural. Given the concern for symmetrization prevailing in his work and driven by the requirement to stay away from the category of the 'social' that is conceived as a force behind the material, Latour proposes the term 'concern' so as to introduce plural worlds in which elements, mediators of different natures both material and semiotic get assembled/de-assembled and reassembled in multiple ways. As such, this concern is a material-semiotic one which urges us not to start with social categories that are deemed 'forces' that would be mobilized to explain a certain gathering. It is rather the gathering itself of elements of different natures (human, non-human, infrastructural etc.) that is the matter of concern. This concern is akin to the concern of Donna Haraway who proposes situatedness as a methodological standpoint in our accounts of reality. Driven by the wish to find a new conception of objectivity that would go beyond the dichotomy between the natural and the social (the world of hard facts and the world of social constructions), Haraway urges feminist science studies to once more reclaim the right to say a word over the 'real' (that is mostly assigned to the world of the facts (hard sciences), while feminist studies confined themselves to the realm of the social sciences that aspire to reveal the social construction of these so-called facts) through a novel way to consider objectivity not as an impartial, all-encompassing and neutral vision from above, but as a *partial, local* and highly situated vision that takes the responsibility of its world-making activities (Haraway, 1988) (more on this discussion



in the 5th chapter, b). Latour's move away from the matters of fact to the matters of concern so as to overcome the dichotomy between natural, hard facts and social constructions is thus furthered by an ethical urge to consider and take responsibility of the type of interventions our scientific endeavors undertake. It is thus a more assertive *intervention* than merely tracking translations and matters of concern that amount to assembling communities. It is acknowledging the fact that tracking translations or associations also contribute to the world(s)-making process –which doesn't exclude the technical, technological and infrastructural, and a keen awareness of this is a must for any claim of objectivity. The material-semiotic move of Latour is thus furthered by a touch of *care* for the very impact of the scientific method and intervention of creating stories/accounts. Each scientific product is yet another world-making story to be assembled in its object of study, if we may still call it as such. This goes a bit further than the original Latourian stance with respect to following translations that would amount to presenting a thick description of the concerns involved in the network assembled via multiple associations. It also includes the partiality, locality and incompleteness of this initiative. “For Haraway objectivity is doubly ‘partial’: because it knows that it is one-sided, and because it also knows that it is incomplete. Her argument is therefore that to achieve objectivity scientists and social scientists need to be accountable for what they write, rather than hiding behind the fiction that what they are reporting comes direct and unmediated from nature” (Law, 2015). Hence, situating one's world-making account requires that it is made clear the optics involved in the process of its creation instead of hiding behind the assumption that our methodologies provide one way or another an unmediated and

direct account of the ‘reality’ behind the subject of the study. Any reality claim, rather requires the acknowledgement of partiality, incompleteness and locality of the ‘intervention’ in question. One way of doing this is to report one’s own position with regard to the subject of study. Being an activist who has been loosely involved in the autonomous (i.e. non-institutionalized) movement network of Istanbul for years before the eruption of the Gezi Movement, my engagement with the movement was that of an insider who was amazed by the force of the event to assemble such a diverse population and transform its components in ways that were impossible to imagine. Therefore, my interest in not resorting to pre-ordained categories to elucidate the Gezi Movement and searching for means to follow it through the course of its evolution directly stems from my own engagement in the Gezi Movement. At that time, analysts had already started to forge ideas on the movement based on the categories used in the social sciences to discuss social movements: class, identity etc. I had the feeling that we needed more accounts that would orient towards what seemed to be the most frivolous yet the most ubiquitous features of the movement: how it felt to be there, how we found ourselves in situations we could have never expected to be involved in, how we came to stand in the park one day, clash with the police the other day, shared food with people we didn’t know, took decisions in an assembly setting on the future of the make-shift yet beloved life we established in the park, got discharged from the park and started to assemble this time in parks of our neighborhoods, listen to people who were from completely different political stances etc. All those mundane things that constituted the experience of being there. Indeed, those days such were the things that brought us together and kept us apart, such were the things that we kept talking

about. The experience itself, how it made us feel, in what weird situations we found ourselves into... That was our main agenda and that was what I wanted to write about. I needed a methodological approach that would foreground the power of the action to carry away its actors and orient towards practices in a way to encompass their material and discursive features. The Actor-Network theory as it is conceptualized by Latour and Law seemed to be a good start: I would follow the translations in the protest types and contentious practices that in their totality constituted the Gezi Movement alongside with certain values (anti-sexism, anti-racialism, inclusive, horizontal, participatory decision making, an overall emphasis on the defense of life spaces against capitalist and neo-liberal plunder) that were selected, repeated and propagated through the course of the movement by means of these protest types and contentious practices. The interventions of the feminist science and technology studies (see Chapter V), especially the work of Maria Puig de la Bella Casa (2011, 2012), Braidotti (1995), AnneMarie Mol (2008) also sided with my concern to highlight body, senses and feelings in the contentious practices deployed throughout the course of the movement.

The data thus organized came from my observations in the movement (in Istanbul Gezi Park throughout the Park Watch and a week of the encampment, Street protests in the summer and fall of 2013 in Taksim and Kadıköy, in Kadıköy Yogurtcu Park and Beşiktaş Abbasağa Park assemblies in the summer and autumn of 2013 and in Kadıköy Caferağa neighborhood assembly and its squat the Neighborhood House in the fall of 2014), content analysis of 21 semi-structured in-depth narrative interviews

realized with activists (15 women and 6 men) in the fall of 2014 and summer of 2015 from different political backgrounds and content analysis of the minutes of assemblies notes gathered in <http://parklarbizim.blogspot.com.es>. Narrative interview method seemed to be the best way to let the informants structure their own story in a more spontaneous way, as it involves spontaneously told life-stories of the respondent (Muylaert et al. 2014) with minimum intervention on the side of the researcher (Jovchelovich and Bauer, 2002). As such, this is a method that is well aligned with the intention of the empirical part of the dissertation: having a grasp on the “‘here’ and ‘now’ of the ongoing situation (Muylaert et al. 2014, p. 185). Accordingly, I asked the interviewees to tell their Gezi story for the first half an hour. Then, I posed them questions about their participation in the encampment and different phases of the movement, which protests they participated in and what practices were involved in the life constituted in Gezi Park, their thoughts and feelings about assemblies, the way they *felt* in the occupied spaces, what changed in their lives and their engagement with and thoughts on the use of social media in the movement. In the analysis of the interviews, I paid particular attention to the spontaneous narratives of the interviewees in order to see what mattered to them the most. The categories to organize the data were then established based on the question of ‘what matters.’ The first four categories were thus concerns, controversies, practices, feelings and thoughts on social media. Then, I went through these categories and established sub-categories based on the most ubiquitous concerns, feelings, practices, thoughts appearing in the interviews, assembly notes and my observations. I paid particular attention to bodily and material practices as food sharing and protests that require bodily performance –dancing,

standing, clashing with the police, barricading etc. This might seem at odds with the agonistic attitude of the Actor-Network Theory in that it urges the researcher “just to describe the state of affairs” at hand (Latour, 1995, p. 144) let the actors speak for themselves. It’s true that this is the approach I adapted most of the time listening the advice of Latour when he says that “It all depends on the sort of action that is flowing from one to the other, hence the words ‘net’ and ‘work’. Really, we should say ‘work-net’ instead of ‘network’. It’s the work, and the movement, and the flow, and the changes that should be stressed” (*ibid.* p. 143). So, where to put that attention to body and emotions which imposes itself as a ‘category’? This, I guess is where my methodology leans closer to the type of situatedness proposed by Haraway. It’s where it goes beyond merely describing the translations in action and states that action is already bodily and affective. The ‘beyond-ness’ of the action with respect to its components mostly speaks the language of the body. This might also be the reason why a Gezi account which is assembled by a keen eye to the role of embodiment and affections in the world-making activities of a contentious community ends up asking for a conceptual framework that question the capacity of the concept of network to account for the body and proposing another concept that explicates all types of heterogeneous gatherings as affective bodies, i.e. the Deleuze-Guattarian concept of assemblage (*agencement*) (more on this on the 5th chapter).

Let me explain this touch of feminist science studies. Situatedness is more than an auto-biographical account of one’s engagement with the world-making activities she takes part in, it is more than giving a partial account of the methodological choices. It

also offers more than reflexivity offered by Woolgar (Schneider, 2002, p. 469). It's rather related to what Haraway and Barad calls a '*diffractive*' thought (Haraway 1997, Barad 2007). Diffraction, in the sense, is an *intervention* aspiring to foster affirmative difference.

Situatedness, as such, is taking an active part in the world we wish to create via our own accounts. Schneider refers to Haraway to explain this as follows: "not only to know but to know in a place, at a time in service of some specified worlds and not of others (...) to make a difference in the world, to cast our lot for some ways of life and not others" (Schneider 2002, p. 469). As such, there must be a *yearning* (see bell hooks 1990) included in the task of knowing (Braidotti 1995). bell hooks describes yearning as "a commonality of feeling" that can aptly be used for the Gezi communities: "All of us across our different experiences were expressing this longing, this deep and profound yearning to have this oppression *end* [...] a yearning to just be in a more just world" (hooks, 1990, p. 217). It seems to be that the yearning that plays an important part in the community making activities of contentious groups shall also be reflected in the type of accounts we make of them. Hence, knowing and writing shall care for the world(s) that are made through this very intervention. My caring for the world that appeared in the Gezi movement as an interstice out of yearning "to just be in a more just world" required me to go beyond classical ANT accounts that are criticized of being "an agonistic contest of struggle, of victors and vanquished; of power and allies" (Schneider 2002, p. 473). Maria Puig de la Bella Casa (2010) proposes the term of "matters of care" instead of matters of concern to underline this yearning that is

constitutive of knowing. For her, matters of concern aspires to “move the notion of ‘interest’ towards more affectively charged connotations, notably those of trouble, worry and care” (Puig de la Bellacasa 2010, p. 89). Nevertheless, she states that we need to “add care to our concerns” which has “stronger affective and ethnical connotations” (*idem.*) As such “care signifies: an affective state, a material vital doing, and an ethico-political obligation” (*ibid.* p. 90). Alongside with Donna Haraway and Karen Barad, Maria Puig de la Bella Casa also insists on the fact that we need to do more than just be concerned about our objects of study but actually care for them: “Care is mobilized to serve a gathering purpose: to hold together the thing” (*idem*).

The knowing and writing practice that I practiced then needed to be an ethical-political obligation to underline my yearning to be a part of the *commonality of feeling* so powerfully expressed in the Gezi Movement. The way to do that, it seemed to me, was to make an emphasis on this very *commonality of feeling*, make the bodies talk as actors throughout the translations their actions go through. It might then be as well possible to switch from the term *translation* to diffraction, or *translation as diffraction* and aspire to “build diffraction apparatuses in order to study the entangled effects differences make” (Barad 2007, p. 73).

### **1.3. Conceptualizing the communities-in-the-making: From network to assemblage**

The theoretical concern of the dissertation is, on the other, to search for a conceptual tool to account for this dynamic community-making process that leans on the *emergence* of dissident communities via the embodied, lived experience in the occupied spaces. This is the philosophical part of this interdisciplinary endeavor: conducting a philosophical discussion on possible conceptual means to account for the type of community-making that would do justice to the *lived experience* of its participants.

While above-mentioned aspects of the Gezi movement in particular and occupy movements in general that lean on the significance of the construction of an alternative space in reclaimed public spaces are highlighted, a great deal of emphasis is also made on yet another aspect of such mobilizations: the use of online social media platforms as Facebook, Twitter and Youtube (Castells 2012; Bennett & Segerberg 2012; Barbera et al. 2015; Vatikiotis & Yörük 2016; Tüfekçi 2014; Demirhan 2014).

This new cycle of contention is indeed mostly defined in terms of the wide use of internet and especially social media. It can aptly be discussed that the dominant academic production on the recent wave of social contention revolves around the novelty created by the use of new online communication technologies (Monterde et al. 2015 p. 932) and such accounts mostly lean on the concept of network developed by Manuel Castells in his analysis of the networked social movements (Castells 2012, 2015). Given the dominance of this concept of network in the studies of Occupy



Movements, the dissertation is interested in taking a look at the concept of network as a possible means to account for emergence as embodiment therein. Can the concept of network explain such a conception of community-making based on the lived, bodily experience of occupation? Can it explain the emergence of new communities within the very practices and enactments of contentious alternative life-making?

The theoretical hypothesis of the dissertation is that Castells' concept of network as it is used in the networked social movements has problems in dealing with the question of emergence as embodiment as it construes embodiment mainly as the embodiment of a virtual crowd connected-networked via new communication channels, basically the social media. As we will see below, the digitalization of the network is considered to be a necessary part in the networked social movements. The main emphasis is on the capacities of the new communication channels as YouTube, Facebook and Twitter to create virtual societies that already experiment on horizontal democracy. The emergence of new dissident communities is thus considered to be a quality of being connected to these digitalized networks that would be materialized or embodied in occupied public spaces. This understanding is different than embodiment as it is construed as the lived experience of experiments with alternative life and protest making practices on the very occupied spaces throughout the course of the contentious action. In his analysis of the networked society, we see that networked space, against the space of places comes to the fore in the information society and the space of network –as the space of flows- as opposed to the space of places becomes the site where the power resides (Escobar & Osterweil 2012, p. 195). Castells analyzes the

new wave of social contention called Occupy with respect to his analysis on the *Communication Power* (2009). In this book, social change via social movements is conceived as a particular strength to be switched to digitalized networks, as “the politics is media politics” (p. 302) and the main objective of the social change is to reconfigure the dominant media. In the information society, the social movements develop means to switch to digitalized networks, hence make use of the communication power and constitute a networked social movement that have the means to diffuse, share and reproduce feelings of discontent against power by means of horizontal communication in online media that is autonomous from the state and corporate control (Castells 2012, 2015). The networks thus constituted take the streets in a series of contagious protest waves. In this account, the autonomy of the online media and their role in promoting horizontal and deliberative means to make politics come to the fore.

In this analysis, particular features of this new wave of social contention as horizontality and deliberation are attributed to the networked character of the movements, here networked referring to digitalized networks. The use of social media with respect to the material and infrastructural networks that sustain them are not thoroughly problematized. Besides, the place-specificity (Escobar, 2001) or territoriality (Hardt 2011) of these movements that are organized around reclaimed public spaces is at odds with the importance attributed to the space of networks –that are conceptualized by Castells as opposed to the space of places (Escobar & Osterweil, 2012, p. 195).

In the second edition of *the Networks of Rage and Hope*, Castells (2012, 2015) discusses the Gezi Movement as part of a global wave of social contention he calls the networked social movements. The Gezi Movement is, in this sense, part of a global uprising that includes, but not limited to, the Occupy Wall Street, Spanish indignados movement or the 15M, the so-called Arab Revolutions, as well as “the relentless demonstrations in Brazil in 2013-14 asserting people’s dignity and claiming their right to change the model of development and the priorities in public spending while fighting political corruption (...) the student movement in Chile, initiated in may 2011 and extended to 2014; the Mexican movement #YoSoy132, formed in May 2012, seeking the regeneration of politics; the Mexican mass protests in September-November 2014 against the assassination and kidnapping of students in Iguala, Guerrero, by the agents of the narco-state in September 2014; the Moscow demonstrations in defense of democratic rights against Putin authoritarians in 2011-12; the nationalist Ukrainian movement in Kiev in 2013, occupying Maidan square; Hong Kong’s umbrella Revolution of September/October 2014 and the continuing mobilizations in Spain, Greece and Portugal (p. 220-221). According to Castells, despite their vast and disparate socio-political contexts, these movements share in common two features: a crisis of legitimacy of the political system, hence distrust in the existing parliamentary mechanisms for further social change and their “autonomous communicative capacity; being able to connect among the participants and with society as a whole via the new social media mediated by smart phones and the whole galaxy of communication networks (Cardoso and de Fatim, forthcoming)

(p. 223). Castells, as such, avers that “the diffusion of Internet-based social networks is a necessary” but not “sufficient condition” of these social movements (p. 226).

Therefore, Castells claims that, in the case of the Gezi Movement, “a cultural conflict” occurred between “the citizens’ right to their city as a public space and the conservative policy aimed at restricting cultural life and submitted it to the pattern of traditional family life, with women being asked to have at least three children, abortion sharply limited, the wearing of the veil coming back into daily life, and the uses of public regulated and curfewed” (p. 229). According to him, this cultural conflict first occurred on the social networks, then to “shift to the urban space” (p. 229). Hence, “A most fundamental conflict of the new Turkish society was played out in terms of contemporary social movements: autonomous social networks constructing an autonomous urban space to confront the old repressive forces of state and God, cemented now by their integration in global capitalism” (p. 229).

Here, Castells is clear in his contention that the occupation of the physical urban space followed the construction of an autonomous digital space. Here it is clear that networking in autonomous social networks is the fundamental feature of the protest, while this digitalized-networks were materialized in the occupation of the public square. As such, such a concept of network seems to be inadequate in accounting for community making in material life-making practices like cooking, cleaning, food sharing, barricading, encampment etc. in the lived experience of the Gezi Movement.

Zeynep Tüfekçi (2014b) follows this line of thought and locates the Gezi Mobilization within the broader scope of global occupy movements as “the Occupy Wall Street in the United States, the Indignados (or #m15) in Spain, Italy and Greece, some segments of the activists in initial Tahrir protests (#jan25)” (p. 202). According to her, just as Castells, these movements come to the fore in their reluctance to adapt parliamentary mechanisms and their reliance on the savvy use of social media (p. 203). According to her, the second aspect is the reason for the first, meaning that “organizing through advanced communication tools rather than formal institutions makes it harder for movements to engage policy through paths, such as elections, court cases and primary challenges, that require formal and institutional organizational structure” (p. 203). She associates the “thick participation” and active engagement of Gezi protesters in the various phases of the mobilization with the reliance on social media as an organizational tool, instead of traditional politics (p. 206).

Kamil Demirhan (2014), in this respect, provides an analysis on how the use of social media, Twitter in that matter, contributed to the organization of the mobilization. Demirhan analyzes the role of social media, Twitter in particular, in different phases of the Gezi Movement. Analyzing tweets in hashtags during the course of the Gezi Movement, Demirhan claims that the use of Twitter in the Gezi Movement had functions that are already covered in the literature, as coordination among people, cooperation among actors, dissemination of information, self-organization, creating new communication spaces and developing public discussions (p. 291). Accordingly, Twitter was used to report news and spread information, to confirm shared news and

information; enhance inclusion in the process of communication; coordinate and organize action with other protesters; mobilize resources; enhance self-organization; create new social and cultural spaces; motivate protesters; and mobilize people (p. 292-306). Such an analysis further supports Tüfekçi's point in her contention that organization through social media, instead of traditional tools, came to the fore in the Gezi Movement and paved the way for a contentious action that relied more on self-organization, self-resource mobilization and autonomous spread and share of content.

Nevertheless, there is also ample research and evidence on the significance of a more aligned relationship between online (social media) and offline (physical) action in the Gezi Park movement. These theoretical accounts are more reluctant to give precedence to online media in the organization of the movement and attribute qualities of the movement as inclusion, horizontality and self-organization to the use of social media. Rather, they make emphasis on both the physical space and online media within a larger perspective regarding the transformation of the public sphere (Vatikiotis & Yörük 2016).

Vatikiotis & Yörük (2016) do justice to the significance of social media in the course of the Gezi Protests, especially with respect to the role it played in the share of information:

The Gezi protest developed as a networked movement due to both the availability of the new communication technologies for the protesters and the inconsistencies of the conventional mass media. During the protests, new digital mediums, particularly the social media channels, were escalated

to the status of the major source of information and the primary devices of communication.

However, they are reluctant to “attribute the very role of social media in the unfolding of protest movements to their technological capacities (networking)” (p. 8) and rather underline the significance of face-to-face communication in assemblies. Criticizing the divide between the ‘mediated’ and ‘unmediated,’ -distorted and undistorted in terms of Habermas- communication in Occupy Movements, they underline the fact that the Occupy Movements in general and the Gezi Movement in particular point to a “return of the ancient Greek *agora* and *ekklesia*” (p. 9) where face-to-face communication in public assemblies come to the fore, while at the same time communication in online media become a part of this scheme. In that sense, Vatikiosis and Yörük aver that there is a transformation of the public sphere, which includes the accentuation of both online and face-to-face communication.

Under these conditions, and noting the essential functions that social media played in recent protests, from the 2009 Moldova and Tehran protests to the Occupy movement in the west and the Arab Spring, and from there to the Gezi uprising, the assertion of a new transformation of the public sphere could legitimately be sustained. This transformation, rather than excluding any media from the project of the public sphere in favor of direct and undistorted communication, occurs along with a transformation in communication technologies, with progressively increasing use of social media networks and devices (p. 9).

Hence, the transformation of the public space comes to the fore in these analysis, while digitalized media becomes a part of this transformation with any other media.

Hence, it would be more adequate to highlight the significance of the use of both online and offline communication that paved the way for the transformation of the public space, going beyond the division between mediated and un-mediated communication. In that sense, Barbera et al. (2015), in their network analysis of twitter shares during the course of the movement, underline that fact that main twitter users were the ones who shared content directly from Gezi Park or other sites of contentious action. Özkaynak et al. (2015) also stress that “online activism complements traditional means of protests well and as such renders citizen activism more powerful (see also Carty and Onyett 2006; Khamis and Vaughn 2011). At Gezi Park, it was crucial to have activists pour into the center, followed by social media efforts that carried the protests beyond the Park, beyond Istanbul, and even beyond Turkey, all within hours” (p. 102). Farro and Demirhisar (2014) also do justice to both online and offline communication in the Gezi Mobilization and state that “The flow of information from word of mouth or through the various communication means is a constitutive part of the collective Gezi movement” (p. 182). Harmanşah (2014) also considers the use of social media in the Gezi Mobilization as part of reclaiming public space for public. As such, it is posited to play its role, alongside with the physical occupation of the park in the making of an alternative space, just as “the so-called pots and pans protest” that “created soundscapes of the resistance across neighborhoods without necessarily filling the streets” (p. 132).

The role of social media in the Gezi Movement will further be problematized in the fourth chapter, this time based on data from the Gezi Movement. Nevertheless, the



concept of network in the networked social movements seems to point to certain problems in terms of accounting for both emergence and embodiment in social movements. Above, I mostly underlined the problem of embodiment, as Castells' account, with its emphasis on the precedence of digital networked organization over on-site practices in occupied spaces (or places in his terms) is primarily interested in digitalized network analysis, not the lived experience on the streets. Nevertheless, the above literature on the Gezi movement also shows that the lived experience of contentious action on the occupied spaces had a precedence over or went hand in hand with organization in digitalized networks.

Furthermore, the term of network (as it is influenced by Castells' networked movements) is also questions in its capacity to account for the emergence of an encounter between already existing activist networks and new protesters, the latter being one of the most significant features of Occupy Movements. The concept of network, in that sense, is mostly interested in tracking the connections or nodes between already existing points, hence already detected, fixed entities (Juris 2012, McFarlane 2009, Lockie 2004, Chesters & Welsh 2006, Ingold 2007, 2011.). However, the Occupy movement witness the participation of a large number of previously non-networked individuals and collectives. It is indeed true that "network has a connotation of fixed lines of communication or connection bounded in closed conduits. Network analyses typically represent findings diagrammatically depicting linkages and frequencies of interactions between identified and known parties" (Chesters & Welsh, 2006, p. 20). For this very reason, Jeffrey Juris (2012) searches

for a new concept to define the dissident community-making in Occupy Wall Street movement and he comes up with the concept of aggregation.

He identifies a different logic in the Occupy Wall Street movement when compared to the previous cycle of global justice movements governed by the logic of network. Accordingly, while the logic of network is operated among already politicized activists, the Occupy movement witnesses another logic, a *logic of aggregation* “which involves the assembling of masses of individuals from diverse backgrounds within physical spaces,” (p. 260; Gerbaudo 2012, p.11). Therefore, while the alternative globalization movements he meticulously analyzes in *Networking Futures* (Juris, 2008) relies on a logic of network whereby a self-generating network enhanced by new technologies like Free and Open Software (FOSS) development process “becomes a powerful model for (re)organizing society based on horizontal collaboration, participatory democracy and coordination through autonomy and diversity,” (p.17) the new social movements characterized by the occupation of public squares rely on a logic of aggregation whereby a large number of people are at first organized via social media, then to be embodied on the streets. The occupations as such are “the physical and communal *embodiments* of the virtual crowds of individuals aggregated through the viral flows of social media.” (Juris 2012, p. 269). Although Juris recognizes the need to come up with a different concept to account for the emergence of Occupy communities (aggregation), it seems that he follows the logic of Castells in assuming that embodiment in Occupy Boston was *the embodiment of the virtual crowds of individuals aggregated through the viral flows of social*

*media*. Therefore, it doesn't refer to the relational *surplus* created by this fruitful encounter of very diverse protester populations within the lived experience of the movement through life and protest-making practices. As such this concept of the network seems to be problematic in explaining the type of community-making that the dissertation is interested in in two aspects: *emergence* and *embodiment*.

As such the theoretical line of the dissertation will visit the concept of network in its various usages in the social movements' theory each time with respect to the question of emergence as embodiment. The theoretical hypothesis of the dissertation, based on above theoretical evidence, is that this concept cannot account for the type of community-making based on the lived experience within the occupied spaces that is highly performative, bodily and affective. It cannot also account for the emergence of new dissident communities through these bodily practices, as it is basically used as a tool to track connections and nodes among existing points. (Juris 2012, McFarlane 2009, Lockie 2004, Chesters & Welsh 2006, Ingold 2007, 2011). In the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter, this theoretical hypothesis will then be re-visited with the data coming from the Gezi Movement presented in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter.

The dissertation thus proposes to check the concept of assemblage, introduced above with reference to the call of Gambetti to see Gezi communities as assemblage-bodies to do justice to the body politics therein. Accordingly, the dissertation will analyze the concept within the larger political philosophy of Deleuze-Guattari so as to check whether it can account for emergence as embodiment within the Gezi Movement. This

will be done via the intermediary of the usage of the concept of network within the Actor-Network theory, as the usage of the term in this line of thought has affinities with the concept of assemblage and it also leans on a relational ontology that foregrounds relations and day-to-day practices in community-formation. In the fifth chapter, the usage of the term in the general relational ontology of the actor-network theory will be visited so as to pave the way for a discussion on the capacity of the concept of assemblage to account for emergence as embodiment. This will also serve as the presentation of the concept of actor-network theory in general –thus give a more detailed account of this approach that widely inspired the methodological decisions taken in the dissertation- and its possible relevance to social movement studies. This discussion, alongside with the discussions on assemblage as body and event-assemblage (specifically war machine) within the larger political philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari presented respectively in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> chapters, enriched with the data on the Gezi Movement presented in this section will thus be the theoretical contribution of the thesis that imports political philosophy of the Deleuze and Guattari and philosophical discussions on the relational ontology of actor-network theory to discuss empirical data presented in this section. The interdisciplinary ambition of the thesis is thus to discuss the Gezi Account compiled via qualitative data gathering and analysis methods through philosophical means to question the usage of the concept of network in social movement studies and propose the concept of assemblage as a possible means to conceptually elucidate the type of embodiment peculiar to Gezi communities (Chapter 5).

The concept of assemblage within the larger political philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari leans on an understanding of reality as an heterogeneous assemblage of elements of different natures (material, semiotic, symbolic etc.) wherein relations cannot be reduced to their terms. The latter guarantees an assemblage's openness to novel configurations, as opposed to the concept of network wherein relations are conceived as connections between already existing points (Ingold 2011). The irreducibility of relations to their terms creates an ontological realm open to the virtual, *becoming*. As such emergence is conceived as the capacity of the assemblage to be transformed with each new element included therein and the subsequent transformation of its elements. Furthermore, an assemblage is a body, the latter referring to the Spinozist body that is defined through its capacities to affect and be affect by other bodies. Deleuze and Guattari (1980) with this understanding of assemblage as body defined through the affects always in the-making via material-semiotic encounters thus proposes a valuable source to conceptualize emergence of new Occupy communities via bodily encounters.

## CHAPTER 2

### **Action in Translation: The Action Repertoire of the Gezi Movement**

And a community was formed in an *ad hoc* way to sustain those who took the gas, fell to the ground or found themselves dragged away. It sustained as well those who wanted to appear and speak in public for the first time about matters that have been shunned or demeaned: the right to know whether your son has died, how and where, and to receive public acknowledgment; the right to appear as gay, lesbian, bi- or trans in the public sphere, and to belong to that mixed and expansive crowd that is “the people”; the right to walk the streets without the fear of being humiliated or injured, without the need for self-protection, with a sense, however temporary, that one belongs, and that one will be sustained and supported by those who are one’s people (Judith Butler 2014b, *foreword*).

The popular uprising called the Gezi movement with reference to Gezi Park occupied for fifteen days by the activists, in fact incorporates a rich repertoire of action that includes but cannot be restricted to occupation and encampment. Prior and during the occupation of Gezi Park, there were marches, sit-ins and symbolic protests against the government, as clattering pots and pans or turning on and off the lights of apartments around the country. During the occupation of Gezi, clashes with the police and marches continued in many cities, notably Ankara. After the forceful evacuation of Gezi Park by the police forces, marches continued throughout the summer and autumn in Istanbul and other cities, while the mobilization was extended across various parks of the city where park assemblies continued to incorporate various protest types to

raise voice against local and national issues. Marches, workshops, discussions on a broad range of issues from the adverse impacts of certain urban transformation projects to LGBT rights and violence against women were among the daily activities of the neighborhood assemblies. In that sense, there was not a single action, mobilization or protest that defined the movement in its totality. It is rather constituted by a consistent and continuous flow of very different and diverse protest types and actions. The heterogeneity with respect to protest types and participants themselves is indeed one of the most important features of the Gezi Movement.

Trying to follow this diverse action repertoire and the conditions under which different protest types are introduced and one protest type is translated into another with respect to thoughts, emotions and perspectives of the activists themselves will also give us an idea about the characteristics of the embodiment involved therein. It would be more useful to consider decision-making within the context of Gezi as local and highly embodied solutions presented to problems at hand confronted by a collective-in-the -making. The very local and spatial problematic at hand and various solutions to solve it constituted this collective around a common goal and identity, while different constituents (individuals, collectives, non-human constituents) introduced and collectivized their particular protest types at different moments of the movement.

Below, I am going to present the movement around a set of protest types and embodied practices involved therein. The presentation orienting towards a given

problematic and solutions to it might at times seem to defy chronology as diverse protest types are used and reintroduced at different moments of the mobilization, yet each time with a difference. *Taksim Solidarity* composed of 128 organizations emerged as the entity which assumed responsibility for the decision-making processes regarding the maintenance of life established within the park, the relations with the government, communicating the demands of the activists via press releases and making call of actions. However, the concern to have horizontal relations amongst the components of the mobilization and the lack of a strict top-down leadership mechanism provided each organization within or outside *Taksim Solidarity* a space to introduce its specific protest forms (feminist corrective acts, Earth-meals of anti-capitalist Muslims, Gay Pride) at critical moments of the movement, while at the same time enabling individual interventions (standing man) that would later on be collectivized.

Therefore, it can aptly be claimed that Gezi provided a space of communication and convergence wherein various political groups and individuals had a chance to communicate and collectivize their particular positions and solutions to the problem at hand. This capacity to rapidly incorporate new protest types at critical times provided the continuity and geographical expansion of the movement, while at the same time prevented it from being captured by the ideological and physical assaults of the government. Below, I am going to introduce these protest types, the type of problems they themselves put forward and the practices created to solve these problems in a sequence and flow of action that is always in translation, translocation



and transformation. It is indeed true that the richness of the movement shall be seen in the success of these translations that continuously relocated and transformed the practices that constituted it.

## **2.1. Occupation and encampment**

### **2.1.1. From ParkWatch to Encampment and Occupation**

Occupation, as one of the strongest protest types in the action repertoire of the Gezi Movement was not a foreordained act. It was rather a solution to a problem that the activists confronted in their attempt to protest against the urban transformation plan ordained by the government in Beyoglu in general and prevent the unlawful demolition of Gezi Park in particular, which was endowed with further symbolical meanings once the protesters grew in number and started to live in the park surrounded by barricades. As one of the activists who was already active in an urban planning organization and who was among the first activists to protest in the park stated:

The construction in Taksim Square was initiated, we thought that we could at least withdraw to Gezi Park, stay in the park and protect it. Of course, we never thought that something like this could happen. We couldn't have even imagined it... We just thought, 'all right, let's stay here as much as we can. Then, people pitched their tents. At first, the tents were burnt down by the police, then they pitched them anew. It started like that. The idea was like, 'all right, so we stay here, then we also eat here'" (Hatice, woman, 34, activist in the urban movement network of Istanbul).

The encampment which turned into an occupation was accordingly developed as a solution to the direct physical assault on the side of the government. Hatice explains it as such: “Making a meeting or a press release is very passive, all right it is a show of power, but it has its limits. It also depends on what to do against a situation you find yourself into. If you want to inform people or tell them what your problem is, you distribute leaflets, we did all of it. If you want to show your power, you go march on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May. However, if there is a direct physical assault, if there is a construction machine entering in a park, it is vital to stop it. Then, confronting it, making barricades etc. become important. You cannot stop it with a legal petition, marching also has limited consequences. That’s why in neighborhood movements and in ecological struggles, we use such actions. Blocking a road for instance is also related to intervening in the work going on there. It is more active, they are actions to stop them, not letting them go further. It started with a “watch,” meaning that you have to stay there, you will intervene if something happens. If the construction machine enters the park, you will stop it. If there is an engineer making calculations in the park, you will send him away. It started as a “watch,” not as an occupation. Anyhow, we did not have enough people to occupy. We just thought, “OK, we stay here and wait, let’s see what will happen. I mean, you can occupy a building, but we are talking about a huge park!” Deemed an active intervention in a direct physical assault, occupation was at first considered as a “watch,” a defensive and highly bodily act to confront the instruments of power. Later on, this “watch” would turn into an occupation, as the reality of staying in the park with an ever-growing population

created its own requirements, just as the activist Hatice states: ‘all right, so we stay here, then we also start eating here.’”

The growing number of people joining day by day to the first few urban activists that had initiated the ParkWatch was followed by the violent assaults of the police against the accruing crowd, introducing direct clashes with the police and the barricades to the action repertoire of the mobilization. Although activists from socialist political parties and anarchist organizations who had previous experience in clashing with the police were abundant behind the barricades of Taksim, there was a significant number of unorganized people who found themselves, mostly for the first time in their lives, in direct conflict with the armed forces of the state. An activist who appeared in the social media badly beaten by the police in the first days of the clashes explained in his blog the situation in which he found himself as such:

Maybe it is difficult to believe in it, but I am neither a member of a political organization nor a professional provocateur, as some people claim in their remarks. On the contrary, as I am pretty sure that our friends in the police station already found out, this was the first time I participated in a demonstration throughout my 24 years of life and it is my first police record. As you can clearly see in all videos, I haven't damaged any public property or police officer. I was there with basketball pants and a t-shirt, the only purpose was to run around fast and help people (...) I am a graduate of the department of English literature, I spend ninety percent of my time reading, writing and doing editorial jobs, I love my cat, I feed animals in the street, I listen to the outdated Marin Marais music when I work and metal music when I am training. I am a quiet and boring man, I cannot even bear myself. Not to mention participating in mass demonstrations, I tend to escape any situation involving more than 7-8 people (...) I participated in the protests on the 31<sup>st</sup> of May at

20.00 in Taksim. I was a real amateur. At first, I was observing what was going on behind the crowds of people in a protest that I participated for the first time in my life (...) The next day on the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, I learned that the urban plan was rejected by the court and the police withdrew from Taksim. I went back to Taksim. I was happy that people were celebrating and the park was safe for the time being. When I heard about clashes in Beşiktaş, I went there with my camera. I was shocked by what I saw, it was like a war, everywhere was destroyed and burnt down. There were barricades, burnt down vehicles and thousands of protesters as if it was Stalingrad or Berlin (...) I did hear things about police violence, but it was the first time when I saw, with my own eyes, that the police officers were deliberately shooting people with plastic bullets for the purpose of killing or injuring them, I saw people who lost their eyes. I was just taking pictures, but I felt a huge rage against the police violence. The police was attacking its own people, as if we were enemies, the officers were trying to destroy protesters who hadn't done anything to harm anyone. (...) The other day, on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June, I couldn't sleep at night because of what I saw that day. In the afternoon, I bought a gas mask to protect people from the police whose very job was to protect the people, I also bought gloves to throw the tear gas capsules back, I stocked piles of medicine to help people on the streets. In the boat, an old lady said, 'Boy, I am from Taksim. This park means a lot to me, may God help you.' This was all I needed. Clashes were about to start when I arrived in Dolmabahçe. Ten thousands of protesters were clashing with the police. I was at the front this time, I was prepared. I could stay in front of the crowds with the help of my tear gas and I could throw away tear gas capsules that were falling on people. I distributed the medicines as much as I could in that hassle, there was a man at the age of 60 who was shot by a plastic bullet, yet he was still in the front ranks, risking his life just to yell at the police officers, 'Killers! Barbarians!' For two hours, I threw away tear gas capsules and helped people around me as much as I could. Until the time when some protesters dismantled a big billboard and brought it to the fronts of the crowd so as to use it as a shield to protect people from the tear gas capsules and plastic bullets that were directly aiming at people. One of them asked protesters with gas masks to come to the fronts to protect others from plastic bullets. I was physically strong and I had a gas mask. It sounded reasonable to protect people with the billboard. We fixed the billboard between the police and the crowds as if we were a

Phalanx troop from Sparta. The police officer got angry, they started to shoot the billboard with hundreds of bullets, but the billboard was strong. People started to come and take the injured protesters, ten thousands of people got happy. Police on the other hand got even more angry, they started to attack people with water cannons and throw even more tear gas. We started to lose sight, but the safety of people behind us was what mattered”.<sup>5</sup> (Selçuk Uygur, man, 24, no political affiliation).

Direct bodily confrontation with the police was experienced more as a situation that most activists found themselves into, as yet another local and embodied solution to the problem at hand. Here and there, people from very diverse political backgrounds who did not comply with the classical activist typology in Turkey were directly revolting against the riot police, which created a surprise on the side of the latter. An activist from the art collective ‘Ötekiler’ (the Others) depicts this atmosphere as follows:

We were trying to arrive at the square with a friend. We were very close to Taksim square when the police drove us back with the teargas. We were terribly gased and beaten and turned towards Kurtulus. We were very angry, I mean, we had to run away. We started to chant a slogan. We were just the two of us. All of a sudden, people started to applaud from their windows. They started to clitter pots and pans and chant with us. We passed by Kurtulus street and turned to Tatavla street. There were some people there and we decided to block the traffic. I don’t know, we just felt confident all of a sudden although we were just two. I don’t know where this confidence came from. We blocked the traffic and people applauding us from their apartments started to take the streets. We were ten thousand within minutes!.. We left the street, then came people from Dolapdere making the hand signal of a wolf (the ultra nationalists in Turkey). I got tense in seeing them, I thought, ‘now we will have

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<sup>5</sup> Retrived from <https://odatv.com/kafa-travmasi-bacakta-ve-kafada-yarik-0506131200.html>

trouble with them.’ One of them approached me and said, ‘Hey chef what are we doing now?’” I laughed at him when he called me chef and said, ‘we go to Taksim.’ There were revolutionary Muslims there, they have a cultural center there, they joined us. There were women who joined us with their slippers. They took the streets to protest with their slippers, they did not even had shoes! I mean, you might need to run away from the riot police, you might need to clash, no, they hadn’t thought about it, they had taken the street just like that. They don’t know, they don’t have the habit. One had a Turkish flag at hand, the other had the flag of Besiktas” (Muzaffer, male, 62, affiliated to an artist activist network).

At all moments of the mobilization, there appeared surprising, improbable encounters of people from very diverse political backgrounds, which became one of the peculiarities of the Gezi Movement.

Taksim barricades were established accordingly, both as a physical blockage to stop the police assault and as a symbolic boundary separating the alternative space created in the Taksim Square and the Gezi Park. An activist from an anarchist organization explains the function of the barricades as a protest type as follows:

It signifies claiming a space in the fight against the power, saying, ‘we are behind the barricades and you shall not pass’ and making a life for yourself behind the barricades. Gezi was the symbol of it. It gave us the means to discuss it in our daily lives, to discuss where capitalism takes a hold on our lives, where it is weakened. Barricade means more than blocking the road, yes, it is blocking the road, but it also means to say, ‘don’t occupy my life, don’t exploit my body.’ The barricade in that sense is built against a system that denies and ignores my existence” (Özlem, woman, 27, anarchist).

Barricades, by extension, also served as a boundary to demark the reclaimed space where the activists would experiment on alternative ways to relate to one another. The

occupation of the public space, just like *Parkwatch* and barricading against the armed police forces refers to a highly bodily protest type that creates its own problematic, i.e. the creation and maintenance of an infrastructure that makes it possible for thousands to lead a life in the reclaimed public space. The activists mostly define occupation as the *lived* declaration of reclaiming the public space.

(Occupation is) like making that space ‘yours.’ Previously, it was state’s property, state’s park, after the occupation, it became the park of people living there, it became everyone’s. I am sure that, even now, people passing by Gezi say to themselves, ‘this is my park.’ To make it yours, that’s what occupation means.” (Hatice, woman, 34).

Re-appropriating, reclaiming the public space has a lot to do with the physical, bodily presence of the protesters who, just by being and living there, make a strong claim on the rights over the public space. A young activist who lived in the park throughout the occupation explains this sense of re-appropriation and the importance of the protesters’ presence therein as the reclamation of being aware of her rights over the public space:

That was how I felt myself in Gezi, when we occupied the square. Streets pertain to people, this space is already ours. State is something that we create. Before, such things were lingering on thin air, people actually could not understand them. Back there, during the occupation of the square, we saw it concretely. I think that one realizes that the streets actually pertain to her in the occupation. Sorry, but it is not true that you only possess a place through a rental contract, while the rest is the state property. Everywhere belongs to us, state is us, *you cannot understand it thoroughly without actually sitting there, occupying that space*. It is also an act that makes the governors understand it, it’s like saying, sorry to remind you of the

fact that this place is ours. I believe that it is a very effective and strong method” (Hüma, woman, 22, non-organized before and during the Gezi Movement, became a part of the LGBT movement after the protests).

Many times, when referring to Gezi, the activists claim that one cannot understand what they actually mean without being there. It is as if the lived experience of the occupation constitutes a common embodied knowledge that cannot be duly explained through words. Activists mostly refer to the life-making practices and emotions when they refer to that experience. Below, I will attempt to follow the practices that constitute the life in Gezi, again from the perspective of the activists.

### **2.1.2. Occupation and the maintenance of daily life**

*All right, so we stay here, then we also eat here (Hatice, 34, urban activists' network of Istanbul)*

Once the park and Taksim square were cleansed off the police, the activists found themselves alone in the reclaimed park. The celebrations slowly gave way to concerns over the maintenance of the daily life in the park. The reality of being there and the will to stay there with thousands of people created its own problematic, i.e. the maintenance of the daily life in alternative ways. The mechanisms to cover the basic requirements to yield a life in the park and the square became solutions to this problematic that in turn represented the very alternative that the activists proposed against the established life that they criticized. It was around this problematic that the



ParkWatch, marches and the clashes with the police were translated into yet another protest type: the occupation. Hüma describes this process when the activists felt the need to settle in the park and make it a space to live in as follows:

It was interesting to see the how the occupation took place, it was beautiful. That night when we first entered the square, we could not enter the park, there was police there, but people were in Istiklal Street and in Taksim square. The square was cleaned off the police, but people were aimlessly wondering around, I mean not aimlessly but idly. It was more like, great we got the square from the police. We were enjoying ourselves and trying to be alert against a possible police assault, just in case we would need to run away again. However, we still did not have that Gezi consciousness, people were having parties, taking alcohol, everywhere was full of garbage. Towards the morning, people somehow got conscious, I don't know how and everyone started to clean the park. We stayed there for some time and then went home. When we returned, we entered the Park, there was the same order in the park, I mean there was order and organization, everyone was settled. The rules of communal living were started to be applied. It was as if people asked themselves what they were doing throughout the night and they decided to pull themselves together. Somehow it happened. That's how we started to live in the park (Hüma, 22, non-organized before and during the Gezi Movement, became a part of the LGBT movement after the protests).

Although the carnival-life atmosphere was still prevailing in the Park, there was indeed a well-executed organization around the basic needs like food, accommodation, health care for humans and stray animals, day care activities and tents for children. Workshops around diverse issues were organized throughout the day and over the time a stage was built towards the square where people could express their opinions and different groups and artists made concerts. Both in the opposition media and in the discourse of the activists, the occupation started to be called 'Taksim

commune.’ Although the organized leftist activists were not the majority in the occupation, a leftist language and leftist concerns became prevailing throughout the organization. Hence, a kiosk called ‘revolution’ where food was distributed for free was established at the very first day of the occupation. Signs around the park were showing the way to the occupation: “Goes to Taksim Commune.” Zeynep, an activist that had loose connections with a sociologist organization posits it as follows:

“It was a very diverse crowd composed of people and collectives who had different values, either as a group or as individuals. The common point was to be against AKP (the ruling Justice and Development Party). What was important for me, for us, was that leftist fractions had a hegemony. It was assumed that there was a crowd that adapted leftist values, but it was not actually like that. I mean, the crowd was not totally leftist. Even when they called themselves leftist, there were many Kemalists<sup>6</sup> inside. Left, on the other hand, had a hegemony. We were talking about the attitude of the Workers Party<sup>7</sup> in the Taksim Solidarity for instance. It is really weird, but they were cooperating... because there was a group of leftist organizations organizing the life in the Park. It was not a single organization, but a group of organizations that is mostly called *the radical left*. They had contact with each other and took certain decisions accordingly (Zeynep, woman, 37, loose connections with a socialist political party).

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<sup>6</sup> Kemalist signifies the Republicans in Turkey, coming from the name of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder and the first president of the Turkish Republic. For the pro-Kurdish left and the Kurdish Movement in Turkey, the republicans are considered to be ‘nationalist,’ even ‘racist’ on ground that the Turkish Republic was considered to be found on severe assaults on minorities, especially on Armenians and Kurds. Although the Kemalists might as well define themselves as ‘the left,’ they are not regarded as such in the socialist, communist, anarchist and autonomous movement networks of the country.

<sup>7</sup> An ultra-nationalist right-wing political party.

There were different collectives that one way or another ‘led’ the mobilization at different points of the contention by introducing protest types that were peculiar to them. The particularity of the Gezi Movement, on the other hand, was that it was not a single organization that had a voice over the course of the event. Instead, the course of the event was marked by solutions to highly embodied problems confronted by the activists. In this process, different collectives and even individuals introduced their protest types which were quickly adapted by others and collectivized. As such, it can aptly be claimed that there was leadership, but it was not seized by a single organization or an individual. Rather, it was distributed and horizontal and it did not include ‘commanding’ or ‘deciding for the rest of the activists.’ It was rather a process wherein certain protest types were introduced via directly performing them in the square, and were eagerly adapted and collectivized by the rest. These practices which were directly performed in the reclaimed space were introduced by the so-called ‘autonomous’ collectives, non-institutionalized organizations and activists that had been active in the political scene of Turkey since the 1980s. They were the ones who previously organized the social forums, anti-NATO and anti-IMF mobilizations in Turkey. They also had experience and knowledge about the other occupation movements throughout the world. Hatice who had been involved in these processes throughout her career as an activist and who was in the first group to protest against the demolition of the Gezi Park explains it as follows:

Those assemblies and similar protest types... they come from the social forum movement. The young and middle-aged people in Gezi, which are politicized -and which may be anarchists-, have this knowledge. Some lived abroad and experienced similar movements

there. We need to understand something clearly. There is a serious post-graduate population in Turkey who are still in the academia, they were all there in the Gezi protests and they deeply influenced the protest types to be adapted during the course of the mobilization. They are the ones who previously lived abroad, who use internet and who are curious about global mobilizations, especially following the social forums. There were people who were involved in anti-IMF mobilizations. There was the European Social Forum conducted in Turkey. There was a certain level of knowledge I guess and this was what shaped the square. It is not something that is discovered one day out of the blue. There were people following occupy movements around the world, most of the young activists, I mean the ones younger than us knew about them and were curious and excited about them (Hatice, 34, woman, urban activist network).

The Gezi movement as such was a mobilization that was mostly shaped by the language and the protest tradition of the autonomous left, the latter that managed to introduce its practices and political values like direct participation and horizontality to the entire opposition in the country.

Hence, the word ‘commune’ that was used to define the life in the Gezi Park comes from this background. A column titled ‘the communal life in the Gezi’ published in the pro-Kurdish Yeni Özgür Gundem newspaper<sup>8</sup> on the 10th of June explains what the protesters meant by defining the occupation as ‘Taksim commune:’ : “Taksim Gezi resistance introduced many novelties both in protest types and lifestyles. Activists living in tents pitched in the park try to organize the collective life in the park by establishing food, beverage, accommodation and book communes. While, the

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<sup>8</sup> <http://yeniozgurpolitika.org/index.php?rupel=nuce&id=21158>

requirements in the communal tents are listed day by day, the requirements of the food communes are covered by donations managed through announcements on various internet sites and social media sites. There are many kiosks where the dwellers of the Park can have food. With the help of these kiosks that are spontaneously organized, an activist without a penny in his pocket can live in the Gezi Park.”

Yet in another article published again on the 10th of June, 2013 in the independent media agency Bianet under the title: *Taksim as a Commune: Successes, Deficiencies and Suggestions*, Ulaş Başar Gezgin states that “most of us consider Gezi Park Resistance as an insurgence or a reaction. However, Gezi also has the features of constituting a new society... The resistance has a library, a kitchen powered by solar energy, a vegan kitchen, a museum of revolution, health clinics, a wish tree (a reclaimed police vehicle), a network to distribute food and materials for accommodation etc. The resisters are also cultivating vegetables. They call it ‘the Gezi Garden.’ Seeds are already planted” (Gezgin 2013). The authors of Eksi Sozluk, an online platform where authors can share content under pseudonyms, also refer to the experience as ‘Taksim Commune’ and one of them who uses the pseudonym *ozheliades* defines Taksim Commune as follows: “It is the happiest place on earth where no one remains hungry or thirsty, where those who don’t have money can also enjoy art, books and humanity; a place that makes you ask yourself ‘is it a dream or what?’ You are heartless if you manage to wonder around in Gezi Park without being touched. With the rise of the day, the kids club will also start its activities. There is a

music tree, a chess club, a library, a Gezi residence, i.e. the hotel of the ‘plunderers<sup>9</sup>,’ an open stage, free concerts and shows, art exhibitions, a disproportioned intelligence in action, what else shall I say?<sup>10</sup>”

*Taksim Solidarity*, indeed, makes reference to the significance of the ‘life’ established in the park and defines the struggle performed therein as ‘a defense of life and rights over their lives’ in a public statement broadcasted in its official web site on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, 2013. “Gezi Park is life: we continue to defend our life and rights over our lives (yaşamsal haklar) in all circumstances,” says the statement and refers to the fight between ‘those who assume their park and their lives’ and ‘those who want to bury them under a block of cement’ (*betonlaştırmak*). The emphasis on ‘the defense of life, life spaces and rights over life’ is indeed one of the prevailing features of the mobilization. To create an alternative life within the reclaimed public space thus becomes the means to defend and assume the life itself.

Below is a map of Gezi prepared and shared on Twitter by an activist called İpek Yezdani showing the infrastructure of the Gezi Park during the occupation (Table 1).

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<sup>9</sup> Since the then Prime Minister of Turkey Recep Tayyip Erdogan called the protestors, ‘a bunch of plunderers,’ the protestors reappropriated his insult and turned into an overarching identity to define themselves.

<sup>10</sup> Retrieved from <https://eksisozluk.com/taksim-komunu--3859355?p=1>

# Gezi Parkı'nın yeni haritası



Table 1. The new map of Gezi Park (8 June 2013).

1. Gezi library, 2. Commemoral monument of Abdullah Cömert (an activist who is shot to death by a police officer in Gezi Park mobilization) 3. Gezi workshop for the children 4. Gezi Orchard 5. Civilian Initiative (The storage of materials) 6. Çarşı Book Stand 7. The site of resistance 8. Health clinic 9. Health Clinic (Istanbul Chamber of Physicians), 10. Kitchen (unicef), 11. Coordination (Food/Beverages), 12. Taksim Solidarity, 13. State Theatres, Opera and Ballet 14. Pharmacy, Food/Beverages 15. Gezi Cafeteria 16. The Cafe of High School students 17. Physicians/Pharmacy/ Clothes 18. The Museum of Revolution 19. Revolution Market 20. Cartoon Exhibition 21. Wish tree (a reclaimed police vehicle) 22. Democracy workshop 23. Food/Beverages/ Clothes (individual) 24. Food/Beverages (TMMOB- Turkish Chamber of Engineers and Architects)

25. Kitchen working with solar energy 26. In memorium of Gezi Par 27. Gezi  
Cafe 28. Food/Beverages (LGBT) 29. Food/Beverages (individual) 30. Gezi  
Park TV



# GEZI REPUBLIC

June 2013

30 m



- Anarchist
- Communist
- Socialist
- Nationalist
- LGBT
- Green
- Muslem
- Kurdish
- Football



- |              |                       |
|--------------|-----------------------|
| 1 Commons    | 10. Fountain          |
| 2. Café      | 11. Stage             |
| 3. Infirmary | 12. Radio             |
| 4. Kitchen   | 13. TV                |
| 5. Warehouse | 14. Livestream        |
| 6. Garden    | 15. International     |
| 7. Library   | 16. Memorial          |
| 8. Mosque    | 17. Taksim Solidarity |
| 9. Castle    |                       |

## Table 2. The Map of Gezi Park

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<https://postvirtual.wordpress.com/2013/06/27/historical-atlas-of-gezi-park/>

Both maps prepared by the activists show the organization of life in the Gezi Park. The author of the second map describes the reason why he sketched the park as follows: “One of my primary objectives when I arrived at the Gezi Park almost three weeks ago, was to leave a map of this place, for the historical record. The reason is obvious. Temporary Autonomous Zones are highly evanescent. You have to catch them straight away. » In total, he has six maps of the Gezi Park, while the above one is said to be a sketch aspiring to show the heterogeneity of its participants. The author of the maps, a foreigner who publishes in his blog called *PostVirtual* calls the population ‘messy’ in trying to give an account of the geographic dispersion of the activists from different backgrounds. Let’s see the way he describes various collectives who participated in the occupation according to their geographical dispersion in the park:

Much more difficult than plotting the basic structures of the park, is plotting the nature of the neighbourhoods. This has everything to do with the complicated divisions and subdivisions of the Turkish left. My brother Naber tried to explain to me which are the major and minor parties and how they relate to each other, but it’s a mess. You don’t just have communists and socialists, you have marxists, leninists, maoists, stalinists, trotskyists etc. And that’s not even it. You have different sorts of trotskyists, different sorts of leninists, etc. etc. They used to hate each other more than anything else, but they were all together represented at Gezi Park. There’s no point in trying to classify them all. I don’t understand. You wouldn’t understand. And besides, they are all ‘oldthink’. The miracle of Gezi Park was exactly that it went beyond old differences to create a new paradigm.

The communists and the socialists were concentrated mostly in the Central Park, in Uptown and on the Lower West Side. Still, the majority of left wing political stands were located in Taksim Square, until the battle of June 11. Even more significant than the presence of the left wing in Gezi Park was the presence of the nationalists. They participated in wide scale resistance against the government for the first time, because they see Erdogan as a danger for the secular Turkish state founded by their iconic hero Mustafa Kemal, 'Atatürk'. Images of Atatürk, and the Turkish flag, are a fundamental characteristic of the uprising.

There was nationalist presence everywhere in the park. It was curious to see them next to the Mosque in downtown. They also had a small presence in the slums of the Upper West Side, right next to the Kurds. In the final days of Gezi, they colonized the Upper East Side along First Street.

The presence of the (anticapitalist) Muslims in Gezi Park was important to debunk claims by the government that the people in Gezi were no more than a bunch of drunken hooligan terrorists who like to organize bacchanalia in the country's mosques without taking their shoes off. The Muslims had their political base on the platform in Uptown and their religious base around the Mosque in Downtown.

The Kurds came to Gezi only after their leader Öcalan exhorted them to do so, and then still, they stayed in a corner. For the first time ever they could raise images of their leader without all hell breaking loose. Not everyone in the park was happy with their presence, but nobody made a fuss about it. Ecologists, gays and other special interest groups had their main basis in upper Central Park.

Another miracle of Gezi – most astounding for some – was the fact that it brought supporters from the three rival football teams of Istanbul together. Fenerbahçe, Galatasaray and Beşiktaş. They stood as one against police. They stood as one at the barricades. A few weeks earlier, they would have passionately fought each other, and now you could buy t-shirts of 'Istanbul United' in the park, with the logos of all three teams.

Finally, the anarchists. They had a strong presence in Downtown, near Gezi gardens, and on the platform in Uptown. But on a subconscious level they embodied the spirit of the park as a whole, for two reasons. One, occupation itself is an anarchist practice, even if it isn't pronounced. Gezi Park, the Gezi Commune was an anarchist experiment. And two, anarchism is the only political theory that isn't hopelessly outdated. The communists and the

socialists at Gezi Park represented the past. The nationalists and the Muslims represented the present. The anarchists represented the future<sup>11</sup>.

The nationalist presence in the park, in fact, included a wide non-organized population who, mostly being young activists, were on the streets generally for the first time in their lives. The Turkish flag, was, rather than a symbol of nationalism, the unique symbol they could hold on to. Zeynep describes it as such:

For us, I mean for people thinking like me, we were not happy with the presence of Kemalists, especially the Workers' Party. At first, we got transformed. I mean, you think about it, you say to yourself, other people come to check what is happening in the park when they see the flag, those people have no other symbols in their lives, they can only hold a flag. They have no ideology, they do not feel a belonging to anywhere. Although we have lots of ideological critics against the use of the Turkish flag, those people don't think like that. There are many others coming to join us in seeing the flag. I mean we got transformed from the inside. Around our tent, there were a couple of Turkish flags. I had a foulard (*poşî*) at home in yellow, red and green (the colors of the Kurdish flag the use of which is banned in Turkey), I put it on my tent, it stayed there until the Gezi Park was evacuated and no one reacted against it (Zeynep, woman, 37, loose ties with a socialist political party).

Therefore, the presence of nationalist symbols in the Gezi Park, as the Turkish flag, does not evince the nationalist or republican character of the mobilization. The organized nationalists from the Workers' Party (İP) and the Nationalist People's Party (MHP) had a rather marginal presence in the mobilization, while their nationalist discourse, as discussed in the next chapter on the park assemblies, did not have a

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<sup>11</sup> Retrieved from <https://postvirtual.wordpress.com/2013/06/27/historical-atlas-of-gezi-park/>

reflection on the greater population of the Gezi Movement. Here and there, assaults were reported to have occurred against the stand of activists from the Kurdish movement, the latter being hesitant to show a full-fledged organizational presence in the movement due to the presence of nationalist symbols, although the Kurdish and pro-Kurdish activists actively participated in all phases of the mobilization at an individual level. Activists who came from the leftist circles close to the Kurdish movement made *human chains* around the activists from the Kurdish movement to prevent possible physical assaults and show their solidarity with them. Human chains were indeed one of the many embodied practices and protest types that characterized the Gezi movement. Making the body a boundary between two conflicting forces had a strong power in mitigating possible problems that might have occurred in a space-in-the-making where previously unimaginable encounters occurred. The LGBT activist Irem (queer, 29) states that the traditional dance of the Kurds, i.e. ‘halay’ (a dance that is performed in a circle) also served as a human chain wherein the Kurdish activists could approach the protestors they did not know, get to know them and protect themselves against possible assaults from ultra-nationalists: “There was this never-ending halay in front of the BDP (the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party) tent. This was also a security belt, when someone they did not know arrived, they approached him as part of the dance and asked, ‘hi, who are you?’”

The human chain or the barricade of bodies proved to be a very efficient protest type with a strong symbolic power when the mayor of Istanbul called the mothers of activists to ‘come and take their children away from the Gezi Park and Taksim Square.’ Right after the violent evacuation of Taksim Square, the mayor called

mothers to take their children away from the square and the Gezi Park: ‘Dear mothers, we want the activists to leave the park for their own safety. I call families to keep an eye on their children<sup>12</sup>.’ Upon this call, the mothers of the protesters appeared in the square making a human chain around the park and chanting: ‘the mayor asked us to come and take care of our kids, we are here and we call the mothers of the cops to take their sons away from the square.’ This protest had a strong symbolic and affective power in a time when the activists were demoralized by the forceful evacuation of the Taksim Square. Such collective bodily interventions at critical times of intense demoralization due to violent assaults of the government served to maintain joy and hope being, as we shall see in the chapter on the affective charge of Gezi, the prevailing affections that governed the activists throughout the Gezi movement.

At this heterogeneous geography, there occurred a vivid and exhaustively active life where all the above components ate and cooked together, worked in and benefited from health care and legal services, organized and participated in workshops. Activists in their Gezi narratives anonymously refer to an atmosphere of solidarity, share, care and understanding both during the occupation and in the park assemblies that followed the evacuation of the Gezi encampment.

I think there was a strange thing going on there, everyone was so understanding and caring towards one another, weirdly. I mean, you live together, you wake up together, go to bed together and you are neighbors of course... Somehow, everyone was living in harmony. (Zeynep 34, woman, loose connections with a socialist organization).

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<sup>12</sup> News available at <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gezi-de-anne-zinciri-23502040>

“Most importantly, there was an incredible solidarity culture. Everyone was striving to share what they had with one another. We had lists of requirements, people in need could just go there and take what they asked for.” (Özgür, male, 38 years old, anti-capitalist Muslims).

“There is also this thing. It was a time when you could tell everything to everyone easily. For instance, you could talk about Armenian genocide with a colleague. Under normal conditions, you cannot talk such things with your apolitical friends, right? They react against hearing such things, when you say genocide or so. There, we started to talk. We started to have common points. I guess, the organized people had that feeling, that they could tell what bothered them to others for the first time and that their message was actually perceived.” (Ece, woman, 31 organized in a Trochcist organization).

“Those days, I mostly felt like we were a body or an organism that moves and breaths together. With thousands of people.... There was also something that we lacked in our daily lives. People were in contact with one another. I remember holding hands of many friends and walking like that in order not to be lost amongst the crowds. It was like that, we used to touch each other more, hug each other more. Personally, I felt so good of this contact and the confidence coming with it. On the other hand, everybody was in contact in other ways, as well. It was not only physical but also intellectual. Everyone was disclosing her own life and trying to understand the lives of others. Lastly, I learned that the word peace in Turkish, *barış* comes from arrival and to make peace is to arrive, meaning that people go to others' houses. There was peace in the Park in that sense. Of course, we did not live together, but everyone was in other's houses, in a constant visit (İrem, queer, 29).

Some activists associate this atmosphere of confidence, solidarity, understanding and care to the fact that basic requirements were collectively and easily covered, while others also refer to the fact that uniting under a single goal and making a space outside the codes and norms of a life that is regulated through capitalist relations also create an environment where one is more open to see things differently and relate to each

other differently. Özgür for instance sees it as an experience of collectivity that comes from collectively covering basic requirements, which is at odds with the relationality created under capitalism: “we did something that is considered as ‘stupidity’ under capitalism. It means that one doesn’t ask for what s/he doesn’t need when s/he feels safe and knows that s/he won’t be hungry. We experienced it. One needs to be there to understand what I mean.” Zeynep, in the above cited quotation, refers to the fact that ‘waking up’ and ‘going to bed’ together, being neighbors have utmost importance. An activist from a Marxist Autonomous organization explains this caring and understanding atmosphere by making reference to unexpected encounters created in an environment where the alienating codes of the ordinary life do not exist anymore:

(In Gezi) all previously theoretical problems became problems of the life itself. It was the realization of the materialism of bodies. There were so many encounters. Different generations encountered, people who would otherwise never come together were together. In was true that people with Ocalan flags encountered with people with Turkish flags. Do you remember that photo of a housewife standing right beside a gay activist? They were dancing together. The crowd was also hybrid, they were dancing in Balkan music. Normally, in our ordinary lives, also in classical political terms, we live so cautiously. There are codes determining the social relationships, you act accordingly, we are relating to one another always through these alienating codes. These codes were not there in Gezi. It was a process of taking our codes off. In our daily lives we are so harsh on one another. City life makes one a bully. In Gezi, in all moments, in the parks, behind the barricades, people were so caring. It is what the British people call “care.” It was so great. Everyone was so caring! It was wonderful. You see that something you know from your own



body becomes socialized. It was so amazing!” (Sinem, woman 34, Marxist-autonomist).

As the LGBT activist İrem (queer, 29) states, ‘space is not space in itself, it is always there with respect to relations’ and the process of making an alternative space also involves making an alternative relationality. In an heterogeneous crowd as the Gezi community where this very heterogeneity is accepted as the power of the mobilization –a point that we will abundantly see in the next chapter on park assemblies- this alternative relationality in the making of an alternative space inescapably involves transformations in the way that each activist and collectivity perceives others. One of the biggest concerns in the park assemblies following the evacuation of the Gezi encampment was indeed finding new ways to relate to one another and to AKP-supporters, as it was clear to anyone and everyone that they *needed* one another to achieve what they did in Gezi. The minutes of Ankara Çamlık Park assembly on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June report that one of the activists refers to that point as follows: “We have seen that we could achieve our goal by collectively doing things that we cannot alone do, that’s why we all are here.” (anonymous). An acute consciousness that everyone and all organizations *needed* the others to achieve what they did –which is anonymously considered as amazing, incredible, unprecedented- brought forward transformation in the way the activists related to one another.

Space, practices of production/consumption and mechanisms of relationality all go hand in hand and the making of a space via alternative production/consumption practices (collective production/consumption, donation, exchange) create alternative

relationalities. That must be the reason why the activists frequently state ‘one needs to be there to understand’ when they refer to the way they perceived the life in the Gezi encampment. This refers to a very bodily knowledge bound to this intertwined relationship between the production of space, practices of production/consumption and mechanisms of relationality. “There was a community being made there, a community was experiencing to inhale and exhale together,” posits an anarchist activist (Özlem, 27). The highly bodily language used by the activists to define the experience in Gezi also refers to the prevalence of this relationality. The LGBT activist İrem, in defining the life there as a carnival, refers to the etymological origin of the word that comes from the Latin *carne* (flesh) and underlines the significance of ‘flesh’ in the construction of a community.

It felt like we made a party in our house and many people attend, much more than you anticipated. It was like this. I talk about party, it looks like I do not acknowledge the seriousness of the matter, but many others say that it was like a carnival. Not that I want to talk of it as a TV show, but on the other hand, it had a carnival-like atmosphere. Then, when we consider the etymology of the word, it comes from *carne*, meaning flesh, and makes you think of the relation one has with her own *carne*, the flesh of ceremonies and rituals.” The practices in the construction of the daily life in Gezi were indeed the means to make up a community in its flesh and bones (İrem, queer, 29, LGBT activist).

In this process of collective production/consumption, the food had a special importance. There was a very well-established food distribution system at different points of the park. The first map shows different kiosks and kitchens where food was regularly distributed at different times of the day. This food distribution network had

a special importance also in the imaginary of the activists. When it comes to the ‘life’ in the Gezi encampment, activist narratives mostly revolve around the distribution and share of food. Food appears in these activist narratives as a significant actor that marks the ‘life’ created in Gezi and that gives way to encounters between the activists pertaining to this ‘messy’ and ‘hybrid’ political panorama of the country’s opposition. The LGBT activist İrem describes the importance of food as follows:

Everyone was a host and ours was mostly related to food. In the park, we decided to establish a dining hall. This is also important for the people in the park. You eat the food cooked by a group of people that you have come to hate or have had a potential to hate up until that time. This is common, ‘eating the *börek* (a Turkish patisserie) of a *ibne*, *dönme* (pejorative words signifying homosexual).’ It is important to share food with someone, to eat what s/he cooked. I think food was very determining in the park because since the very beginning when there were just 50-60 people in the park, people were bringing food (İrem, queer, 29, LGBT activist).

Eating together and eating the food cooked by another also signified ‘recognition’ and ‘respect’ as the above LGBT activists meant to say when she referred to the significance of ‘eating the *börek* of an *ibne*.’ Food circulated in the park as an agent that brought the activists together and sustained the contact and communication among them. Özlem from the organization Revolutionary Anarchist Activity (DAF) states that they used their café in Taksim as a place to eat, have rest and get health care, while they were cooking both in the square and in the café. The very practice of cooking and eating collectively, she states, was also an opportunity to *talk about* cooking, about collectivity and sustaining life:

Cooking there was also a means to tell the others about our practice (of solidarity). We cooked cakes in the café, established a small kitchen and cooked rice there, as much as we could. We shared what we cooked, but it also had this impact: while eating that food with the others, we talked about eating, food, about the very practice of cooking that food. We talked about what all this signified in the context of sustaining a life because it was not anymore about 15-20 eating together, it was about being involved in the production of an experience (Özlem, woman, 27, anarchist).

Cooking collectively, donating and sharing food created the means to talk about these practices that sustain life. Sustaining life alternatively, hence, marked the decisions taken around practices to cover basic requirements. Collective involvement in these practices also paved the way for pondering over the inequalities involved therein in the ways we regularly sustain our lives. In this vein, an activist in the special assembly on Violence and Discrimination against Women and LGBT on the 5th of July 2013 in Ankara 100. Yıl Park Assembly states that “equal distribution of housework was important in the protests and assemblies (Ezgi, woman, age not specified). Proposing an alternative via directly performing it thus provides the means to further ponder over these alternatives. As the above-mentioned Marxist Autonomous activist states, ‘the theoretical problems became the problems of the life itself’ in the Gezi encampment where the lived experience became the very grounds of political reflections. This refers to a space-in-the-making that goes hand in hand with the creation of a community-in-the-making in which neither of the components preceded the relationality that was constantly being made, re-made, sustained and trans-located. One of the most significant translocations came to life again as an answer to a problematic that imposed itself over the course of the occupation of Gezi: *assemblies*.

## 2.2. Gezi Park Assemblies

Assemblies were at first created by the initial group of activists on the very first days of the ParkWatch. Hatice, the urban activist affiliated to the urban activist network of Istanbul dates them back to the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of June: “The assemblies started on the 28<sup>th</sup> or 28<sup>th</sup> of June by that initial small group of activists, then we could only assemble once more after this initial decision.” As the Parkwatch gave way to encampment with the participation of ever growing numbers of people, *Taksim Solidarity (Taksim Dayanışması)* took over the role of the organizational entity.

*Taksim Solidarity* which acted as the main organizational entity in the park was composed of 128 smaller organizations including leftist political parties, chambers, trade unions, women organizations, LGBT organizations, artist platforms, neighborhood organizations, organizations of seniors and disabled people, environmental organizations, anarchist, socialist and communist organizations, urban movements, student movements, organizations to defend the rights of minorities (Nor Zartong/ an organization defending the self-organization of Armenians in Turkey)<sup>13</sup>. Originally an organization found to discuss planned urban transformation projects in the neighborhood and their impact on the political ecology of the district, *Taksim Solidarity* witnessed the participation of wider range of organizations as of the 30<sup>th</sup> of June in parallel with the growth of the Gezi mobilization. “Before the 30<sup>th</sup> of June, *Taksim Solidarity* had a small number of components, later on, all the organizations,

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<sup>13</sup> See the official web site of *Taksim Solidarity* <http://taksimdayanisma.org/bilesenler>

I mean everyone joined it and started to attend the meetings.” (Hatice, woman, 34, urban activist) The *Taksim Solidarity* can aptly be said to have evolved in line with the very evolution of the Gezi mobilization. In time, with the heterogeneity of its components and with its flexible and loose organizational structure, it reflected, in a way, the so-called ‘spirit’ of Gezi. In all phases of the Gezi Park encampment, the Taksim Solidarity regularly conducted open meetings in the park to discuss the requirements for the maintenance of life, to come up with common grounds that would be translated into demands, and to communicate these common grounds to the wider population and the government. All of these procedures were by no means unproblematic, though.

*Taksim Solidarity*, conducting hours long, exhausting open meetings with the representatives of all its components, though having an active role in the organization of the park and communication with the rest of the population, had hard times in taking decisions and a two-layered structure started to occur within the park composed of the representatives of the *Taksim Solidarity* on one hand and the greater majority living in the park, on the other hand. Zeynep conveys the role of *Taksim Solidarity* and its setbacks as follows:

The *Taksim Solidarity* was indeed doing well in the organization of the movement, all the smaller organizations were, in time, integrated to it. They were having meetings day and night. Later on, towards the last days in the park, assemblies were created. That’s how we started to have assemblies. The crowd started to be divided in itself to get organized in smaller units and the *Taksim Solidarity* coordinated it. All organizations affiliated to the *Taksim Solidarity*

were effective in this process. There were indeed unending meetings. I participated in one of them once, it was unbearable. They were both trying to conduct high-level political meetings and talk on what we were doing there (Zeynep, woman, 37, loose ties with a socialist political party).

The *Taksim Solidarity* that had evolved into the flexible and loose organizational entity of the Gezi Park encampment as part of the dynamics of the mobilization was, in this respect, a solution that, in turn, posed a problem in itself which led to the creation of assemblies, this time within the park. We started to get together around the *Taksim Solidarity*, but the *Taksim Solidarity* was even incapable of organizing a meeting. They discussed for 16 hours without a solid result. They couldn't even decide who would make a speech in the meeting! Sometimes, horizontality also has its problems. You cannot make such a meeting with 160 people, it is impossible to organize a meeting like that. I don't know, you need representative boards, you may call them 'collectives' or whatever, a structure which would enhance everyone living in the Gezi Park voice her word," says Ece regarding this particular problem posed by the organizational solution we call the *Taksim Solidarity*. If one side of the problem was the difficulty of taking decisions through open meetings of representatives from all components of the Solidarity, the other side of the problem was the segmentation that started to occur between the 'organized' components of the mobilization that were represented in the *Taksim Solidarity* and the groups of activists living in the park who were not affiliated to any of these organizations.

The non-organized activists in the park started to react against the decisions taken in the *Taksim Solidarity* meetings. That's why the assemblies were created. They were

right indeed, those meetings created a gap between the components of the meetings and the park itself... The meetings were so complicated, it was impossible to take decisions. There were meetings that lasted for 6 to 8 hours. But on the other hand, there was a life going on in the park. There were issues that require urgent solutions, while you conducted a meaningless discussion for 8 hours. Non-organized people were annoyed by that, me too, in fact, I was annoyed. Assemblies were the best way to include people in the decision-making processes, we were a bit late to make it happen. I mean, in the beginning, it was how the things were working, but then it turned into a more institutional, closed structure, maybe due to the security concerns, fear of police... We should have had assemblies from the very beginning, Ok decision making is difficult in assemblies, but it is also difficult in the *Taksim Solidarity* meetings,” says Hatice underlining the fact that the *Taksim Solidarity* which was established as a solution to the heterogeneous organizational presence in the Gezi Park created its own problems.

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of June, representatives of the *Taksim Solidarity* had a meeting with the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and returned to the park to inform the larger group of activists regarding the content of the meeting. Tayfun Kahraman, the spokesperson of the *Taksim Solidarity*, conveyed the details of the disappointing and inconclusive meeting with Erdoğan which resulted in the rejection of the demands of Gezi Park activists. In his speech, Kahraman returned to the Park as the ultimate decision-making organ: “The decision-making organ regarding the meetings with the government is the Gezi Park itself. We conveyed all our demands. The Park is the



ultimate representative and legitimate organ<sup>14</sup>.” Assemblies in seven parts of the Gezi Park were decided to be held to discuss the meeting with Erdoğan and take a decision on the future of the encampment. The activists of the seven assemblies discussed the meeting with the PM throughout the night and decided not to leave the park and finalize the encampment until the demands were taken into consideration by the government. Ece, though being an organized activist in a socialist political party, states that the solution to decide on the future of the Gezi encampment via assemblies was indeed an effective and politically progressive move. “I think that the independent assemblies were more assertive. People think very rationally. They say, we have revolted, but what have we gained? Even the organized groups did not have that, sometimes they cannot be at the level of the collective consciousness. The most progressive decisions were taken in the assemblies. Not to leave the park, for instance.” On the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, *Taksim Solidarity* publicly announced the decision of the park assemblies<sup>15</sup> which was followed by the police attack evicting the activists first from the Taksim Square, then from the Gezi Park.

The assemblies that were initially created during the first days of the ParkWatch by a small group of urban activists and reintroduced at the final days of the encampment as a solution to the problems raised by the organizational structure around the Taksim Solidarity would mark the next phase of the Gezi mobilization when the activists started to come together in their respective neighborhoods and hold park assemblies

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<sup>14</sup> <http://bianet.org/bianet/toplum/147585-gezi-parki-bir-sonraki-adimi-tartisiyor>

<sup>15</sup> <http://bianet.org/bianet/insan-haklari/147610-nobete-ve-mucadeleye-devam>

after the final eviction of the park. Before passing to the chapter on the most important translocation of the Gezi mobilization, being the park assemblies, we will take a look at some examples on the ways certain components of the Gezi mobilization introduced and collectivized their own protest types.

As seen in the chart on the components of the *Taksim Solidarity*, the Gezi Mobilization was home to the entire opposition of the country in all its heterogeneity. Physical presence of these very components in the park and their direct interaction with non-organized activists and the activists from other organizations resulted in transmission and collectivization of certain protest types previously introduced and applied by these respective ‘autonomous’ organizations. As already stated, one of the particularities of the Gezi movement was the fact that what was incorporated, transmitted and persisted were the organizational structures and decision-making processes peculiar to the respectively micro autonomous movement tradition of the country. Hence, the discourses, practices and protest types of the autonomous left (assemblies, horizontality, grass-roots organization, inclusion etc.) including the urban activists, anarchists, women’s movement, LGBTI movement (anti-sexism, sexual diversity, the Gay Pride) and the anti-capitalist Muslims (Earthmeals) were transmitted and incorporated within the larger body of the mobilization, although the activists from this background were small in number. Below, we are going to discuss this characteristic of the movement with respect to, on one hand, the introduction and collectivization of discourses, concerns and practices of the women’s movement and LGBTI movement and, on the other hand, the introduction, transmission and

appropriation of a particular protest type developed by the anti-capitalist Muslims: *Earthmeals*. Finally, we will also discuss a protest type introduced by a performance artist, then to be appropriated by other Gezi activists: DuranAdam (the standing man).

These examples both show what practices, concerns and protest types are selected and repeated through on-going translations and translocations the totality and persistence of which constituted what we call the Gezi Movement and give an important insight on the distributed agency therein. It is indeed true that certain protest types (human chains, sit-ins, *Earthmeals*, performances), organizational structures (assemblies) and discourses (anti-sexism, anti-nationalism, inclusivity, defense of life spaces etc.) were collectively selected, repeated and transmitted throughout the mobilization. Some turned into the constituent parts of the Gezi Movements (protest types as *Earthmeals*, organizational structures as assemblies based on openness, equal participation, horizontality, values as anti-sexism, anti-fascism) through insistent repetitions, while others appeared as efficient solutions to local problems (DuranAdam, human chains).

## **2.3. Heterogeneity in Action**

### **2.3.1. Standing Man: “I stood in the right place at the right time”**

Right after the forceful eviction of the Gezi Park by the police, activists forced the means to continue their presence in and around the Taksim Square. Throughout the summer of 2013, there were ongoing marches and clashes with the police in the Istiklal street. Nevertheless, one of the most efficient protests in the aftermath of the

eviction of Gezi Park came from a performance artist who since then was called ‘the standing man.’ On the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, a man was seen standing in the Taksim Square which was under police seizure. He had nothing but a backpack and a placard saying, ‘put some biscuits and water in my bag from time to time.’ The very act of standing alone in the Taksim Square which was banned to the protesters turned into a political uprising soon to be collectivized. The standing man, the performance actor Erdem Gündüz who was also awarded with the ‘Media Prize’ of m100 Sanssouci Colloquium, stated that his real intention was to participate in a protest march organized by the trade unions and when the march was blocked by the police, he came up with the idea of standing still in the Taksim Square:

It was a completely spontaneous protest. I was there to participate in a protest march. I was to march with DISK and KESK. The idea was to march from Tunel to the Taksim Square. I even bought a gas mask in Karakoy for 60 TL. I had my gloves and a whistle. The swim mask was still wrapped up in my arm when I first started to stand in the square. They did not let us march from Tunel to the Taksim Square. The group made a sit-in, but the police cleared the Street via tear gas. If I am to evaluate the performance objectively, I think that I stood in the right place, at the right time<sup>16</sup>.”

The performance being a solution to the problem of the authoritarian restrictions over public marches became an inspiration to the protestors who were frustrated by the recent police intervention in the life constructed in the Gezi Park.

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<sup>16</sup> Interview with the Standing Man Erdem Gündüz.

Duran Adam : Doğayı Katledenlere Kimse Ödül Vermez (No one Bestows a Prize to the Ones Who are Destroying Nature) <http://t24.com.tr/haber/duran-adam-dogayi-katledenlere-kimse-odul-vermez,238410>

Within hours, thousands started to stand right next to the Standing Man in the Taksim Square. The next day, the performance spread to other cities in Turkey. When the police finally intervened in the group of standing men and women, the activists left their shoes on the square. An individual protest introduced by a performance artist turned into a collective action in times when the bodily presence in the public square itself became a means to defy the authoritarian grip of the government. Just as human chains, the performance of standing men and women became a part of the highly bodily action repertoire of Gezi.

### **2.3.2. Feminist Corrective Action**

*Resist With Tenacity, not with Swear Words*

*Gezi Slogan of Feminists*

Anti-sexism, being one of the most important values of the Gezi Movement, was among the concerns introduced by the women's movement and LGBT movement, each being a highly visible component of the mobilization since its very first days. As stated by Özgür Kaymak in her article in *Bianet* on the "Local and International Movements at the Anniversary of Gezi and Protests in Turkey," Conference held by Heinrich Böll Stiftung Foundation on May, 24-25 2014, "Women were the majority in

the protests and LGBT activists were one of the main components of the action, which resulted in them being influential in the choice of the protest types. Homophobic discourse used in the first days of the mobilization was criticized, interrogated and ultimately rejected<sup>17</sup>.” Here, we witness that a political concern –anti-sexism- peculiar to the women’s movement and LGBT movement of the country was introduced during the first days of the Gezi encampment as a ‘problem’ to be taken into consideration. We also witness that the Gezi encampment took that invitation seriously so that anti-sexism became one of the pillars of the mobilization especially later on in park assemblies.

*Istanbul Feminist Collective* (IFK) was there in Gezi Park since the very first days of the encampment. The activities of the protesters coming from this collective targeted the sexist language prevailing among the majority of the activists and the sexual harassment of women in the park and in police custody. The sexist words and expressions in graffiti on the reclaimed streets of Istanbul were one by one replaced by a language that conveyed rage towards the ruling government’s politics in a non-sexist way. Mehtap Doğan from the *Socialist Feminist Collective* (SFK), one of the components of the *Istanbul Feminist Collective* reports this protest as follows:

Although 50 pct of the activists against whom the government opened criminal proceedings were women; women activists, sex

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<sup>17</sup> Kaymak, Ö. 2014. Toplumsal Hareketler ve Gezi Direnişi (Social Movements and Gezi Resistance) <http://bianet.org/biamag/siyaset/156089-toplumsal-hareketler-ve-gezi-direnisi>

workers and LGBTs were subjected to verbal abuse via homophobic swear words used by the activists. There were graffiti including swear words against the mother and daughter of Erdogan, although they were not the direct target of this rage (of the activists). This was a projection of the patriarchal morality. Feminist women created the slogan 'resist, not with swears, but with tenacity.' On the 4<sup>th</sup> of June, women invited all activists to 'come with spray paints' to Taksim and they erased sexist and homophobic words and expression in graffiti. In the meanwhile, they were chanting slogans like "resist with tenacity, not with swears," 'Tayyip run, women are coming.' Four days after this protest, women organized a swear workshop in the Gezi Park to discuss the means to fight against and reverse words and expressions targeting bodies and sexuality of women. While the relation between the body, sexuality and language is being discussed, the feminists reminded other activists of non-sexist swear words that fell into disuse in time and discussed the means to create new non-sexist swear words or the possibility of a protest without using them at all. They made stickers saying, "do not swear women, whores or faggots," "we are behind the barricades, we are uprising," "no abuse in the Gezi Park." These interventions of women did not remain inconclusive. Those who were recklessly using sexist swear words like 'son of a bitch,' 'faggot,' 'fuck you' at the beginning of the mobilization started to come and ask, 'sister, could we use the swear word 'inglorious?' and warn those who were using sexist swear words<sup>18</sup>.'

Another feminist activist Tuğçe Ellialtı reports a similar account on the influence of the women's movement on the mobilization in general and how feminist concerns became the concerns of the Gezi collectives:

Going into the fourth day of the occupation of Gezi Park and Taksim Square by thousands of protesters, Istiklal Street became home to a

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<sup>18</sup> Doğan, M. 2014. Kırmızı, Siyahlı, Başörtülü, Sapanlı Kadınlar (Women in Red, in Black, with headscarves and Slings). The official web-site of the Socialist Feminist Collective. <http://www.sosyalistfeministkolektif.org/guencel/kad-nlar-n-gezi-direnisi/865-k-rm-z-l-siyahl-basoertuelue-sapanli-kad-nlar.html>

creative protest-like event organized by the ‘women of the resistance’ that fundamentally transformed the resistance’s language. Feminists’ painting over the sexist and homophobic swear words with purple sprays was not only a counter-stance to the deep-seated sexism and misogyny in society at large, but also a bold objection to the violence and discrimination that those insults coming from within the park conveyed. While feminists chanted the slogans “stop the abuse, continue the resistance,” and “swear word is abuse, resist with tenacity,” they did not seek to erase or merely censor these graffiti or writings on the walls, but they made a pivotal intervention in the protesters’ ways of doing politics in the park and beyond. In the midst of an urban uprising which has become a turning point in Turkey’s political history, feminist and LGBT groups suggested that a real political transformation, in fact, requires being able to be critical about what we say and how we say it, and to question the reactions that manifest themselves in ‘unsettled times’. When feminists loudly chanted the slogan “resist with tenacity, not with swear words” on the streets, which was later embraced by many protesting groups and became a widely-accepted part of the resistance, they deeply criticized the hierarchical and patriarchal organizational structures embedded in oppositional groups, including some leftist political parties, non-governmental organizations, professional chambers, and unions in Turkey. By uncovering and persistently targeting these long-established ways of doing politics, feminists showed what was off-limits in the language circulating in and out of the park, and developed a counter-language to oppose the one used by many other protesters. In doing so, they also clearly illustrated that, in a ‘people’s movement’ like Gezi, it is crucial to have a comprehensive transformation of ways and means of doing politics, in developing a language of resistance, connecting and engaging with each other, and raising effective opposition to the state and its increasing misogynist authoritarianism. While feminists successfully communicated their very reasons for being a part of the resistance to the park community, they gave each and every one of us quite tangible ways of revolutionizing the opposition’s language” (Ellialtı 2014)<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Ellialtı, T. 2014. Resist with Tenacity not with Swear Words: Feminist Intervention in the Gezi Park Protests. <http://councilforeuropeanstudies.org/critcom/resist-with-tenacity-not-with-swear-words-feminist-interventions-in-the-gezi-park-protests/>



The Gezi movement was indeed a moment when concerns of the relatively micro autonomous movements like the urban movement, the LGBT movement and the women's movement were embraced by the protesters of all sectors of the society and incorporated into life in Gezi Park and following park assemblies.

LGBT movement was also present in the Gezi park from the very first days of the encampment. Erdaş Demirdag, from the *Foundation of Social Policies, Sexual Identity and Sexual Orientation*, also states that one of the most significant successes of the Gezi mobilization was the fact that various movements and organizations which had not previously had the chance to know each other encountered in the park and in the assemblies. With the help of this encounter, Demirdag states, people got to say, 'well then, they are not from Mars.' He also states that eating together in Gezi, struggling for common goals, resisting together behind barricades, helped the left, alternative organizations and citizens who had never met with LGBTI individuals get rid of their prejudices<sup>20</sup>.

The Gay Pride 2013 which coincided with the Gezi mobilizations in the aftermath of the forceful eviction of the Gezi Park witnessed an unprecedented level of participation. It was indeed true that the Gay Pride 2013 became a Gezi protest. The common opinion was that people were longing to be on the streets and happily

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<sup>20</sup> Demirdağ, E., in Kaymak, Ö. 2014. Toplumsal Hareketler ve Gezi Direnişi (Social Movements and Gezi Resistance) <http://bianet.org/biamag/siyaset/156089-toplumsal-hareketler-ve-gezi-direnisi>

attended to any call of action coming from the components of the Gezi mobilization. A drag queen holding a placard saying, ‘So, we heard that they were planning to build an opera house in the Gezi Park and here we came,’ groups of activists holding a placard saying, ‘We are all soldiers of Freddy Mercury,’ mockingly referring to some of the nationalist Gezi protesters’ militarist slogan, ‘we are all soldiers of Mustafa Kemal,’ sex workers marching with the placard, ‘we are pretty sure that we are not the ones who gave birth to these politicians’ criticizing the protestors’ swearing the politicians saying ‘sons of bitches,’ were among the scenes of the 2013 Gay Pride.

The visibility of the LGBT movement continued during park assemblies in neighborhoods populated by LGBT individuals as Kadıköy, Kurtuluş, Cihangir. Demirdag underlines the fact that this encounter also paved way to more structural changes at the level of local administrations. Studies were initiated to promote the representation of LGBT people in local administrations. There were also campaigns addressing LGBT people in the local elections after the Gezi Movement. Some municipalities (three in Istanbul from the main opposition party CHP) also signed under “LGBT friendly” local administration protocols<sup>21</sup>.

As underlined by above activist accounts, anti-sexism and anti-homophobia introduced by the women’s movement and LGBT movement were adopted by the remaining activists as among the common values of the mobilization in general. As we will see below in the section on park assemblies, these values persisted in the

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<sup>21</sup> *ibid.*

assemblies, it was customary that the assemblies that were started to be made in Abbasaga Park in Istanbul then to be propagated to the other parks in Istanbul and other cities were kicked off with a brief statement by a rotating moderator that sexist, militarist, homophobic, racist discourses were unacceptable during the assemblies.

All in all, the identity of the Gezi movement was constructed within the trajectory of the mobilization through the collective selection of certain values and anti-sexism introduced and problematized by these movements and activists was an indelible component of this identity. Selime Büyükgöze, from *Istanbul Feminist Collective* underlines, in this vein, that “Gezi was, on one hand, a practice to imagine a common future for us all. It was especially underlined that this future should not be militarist, nationalist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic<sup>22</sup>.”

### **2.3.3. Earthmeals: “The coalition of the Street<sup>23</sup>”**

*Earthmeals*, communal *iftar* dinners in public parks held in the month of Ramadan, were started to be organized by a network of activists affiliated to the *Emek ve Adalet Platformu (Labour and Justice Platform)* in the Ramadan of 2011. The first *Earthmeal* was organized as a protest against the commercialization of *iftar* dinners on the 6<sup>th</sup> of August in the Ramadan of 2011 in a park facing Conrad Hotel where a

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<sup>22</sup> *idem*.

<sup>23</sup> From an interview of Ihsan Eliacık, one of the spokespeople of the anti-capitalist Muslim. <http://www.birgun.net/haber-detay/eliacik-yeryuzu-sofralari-sokagin-koalisyonudur-83014.html>

luxurious, ostentatious iftar was organized.<sup>24</sup> On the same year, two more *Earthmeals* were organized this time in Gezi Park, witnessing the participation of around 600-700 people<sup>25</sup>. Therefore, sharing food in Gezi Park as a means to protest the consumerist appropriation of the Islamic practice of fasting dates back to two years before the eruption of the Gezi uprising. During 2012, *Earthmeals* were continued to be organized under the name of ‘*iftar* of peace and fraternity’ with the homeless people, workers, immigrants and finally Kurds in 2013<sup>26</sup>. As part of the Gezi mobilization, we witness that this practice introduced by the anti-capitalist Muslims to underline the fact that fasting was a religious practice of humility and not opulence and consumerism was embraced and willfully adapted by all Gezi activists.

Right after the forceful eviction of Gezi Park in 2013 came Ramadan and on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July around 15 thousand people organized an *Earthmeal* in Istiklal Street. Gezi Park and Taksim Square were under police seizure and luxurious *iftar* dinners started to be organized by the government, while there were ongoing marches, protests and clashes with the police in Istiklal Street. Right behind the then almost permanent police barricade at the intersection of Taksim Square and Istiklal Street, facing the emptied Gezi Park, the activists spread newspapers on the street, sat on them, served

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<sup>24</sup> Ongun, S. 2015. Interview with İhsan Eliaçık. İhsan Eliaçık : Kuran’ın İbadet Dediği Namaz, Oruç, Hac Değil, Çünkü (What Qoran calls praying is not namaz, fasting or visiting Mekka, Because...) <http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/300973/ih-san-Elia-cik-Kuran-in-ibadet-dedigi-namaz-oruc-hac-degil-cunku...html>

<sup>25</sup> *idem*.

<sup>26</sup> Retrieved from the official web page of the Labour and Justice Platform <http://www.emekveadalet.org/biz-kimiz/>

food they cooked at home or bought from restaurants that were in solidarity with the Gezi resistance so as to make a long line reaching out throughout Istiklal Street. The activists, regardless of whether they were practicing Muslims or not, joyfully shared their humble food with one another with a defiant look in their face. *Earthmeal* thus became a practice of the Gezi mobilization. İhsan Eliaçık, one of the prominent figures of anti-capitalist Muslims refers to this process as the ‘spiritual expansion of Gezi:’

Ramadan happened to be in July right after the Gezi encampment. *Earthmeal* was once more announced as the ‘spiritual expansion’ of the Gezi Movement both in Turkey and around the world. Around 15 thousand people came together from Tunel to Taksim throughout Istiklal Street. We witnessed it all together that people really liked this reunion. People got rid of their titles and batches and sat on the pavement with nothing but the names given to them by their parents. This was very appealing to them. There was no sponsor. No hierarchy, no flag. Since then, every year during the Ramadan, citizens meet in Earthmeals, accepting invitations coming autonomously and spontaneously from different circles<sup>27</sup>.

It is indeed true that Gezi activists really liked Earthmeals. Later on, they were started to be organized by all park assemblies through the country. It can aptly be said that *Earthmeals* were among the practices that were consistently selected and repeated by Gezi activists and they marked Gezi protests and the protests that inspired the Gezi Movement. In that sense, since Gezi, we have witnessed that *Earthmeals* were

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<sup>27</sup> Ongun, S. 2015. Interview with İhsan Eliaçık. İhsan Eliaçık : Kuran’ın İbadet Dediği Namaz, Oruç, Hac Değil, Çünkü (What Qoran calls praying is not namaz, fasting or visiting Meqqa, Because...) [http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/300973/ihsan\\_Eliacik\\_Kuran\\_in\\_ibadet\\_dedigi\\_namaz\\_oruc\\_hac\\_degil\\_cunku....html](http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/koseyazisi/300973/ihsan_Eliacik_Kuran_in_ibadet_dedigi_namaz_oruc_hac_degil_cunku....html)

organized in a wide range of settings from the encampment to prevent the destruction of Kamp Armen, an Armenian orphanage, to neighborhood gatherings.

The *Earthmeal* which represented share, solidarity, humility, reaction against the prevailing consumerism under the capitalist rule of an 'Islamist' political party became an indispensable part of what we come to call the Gezi mobilization the values and identity of which was established during the course of the action through the selection and repetition of certain practices and discourses. A practice which was introduced in and around Gezi Park two years before the eruption of 2013 Gezi mobilization by an autonomous organization of anti-capitalist Muslims was thus collectivized by the entire opposition of the country. Gezi as a social movement was, in that sense, an interstice in the making whose course and identity was constantly in construction through the selection, repetition and collectivization of certain practices which were already experimented by respective autonomous organizations. *Earthmeals* indeed referred to the Gezi encampment in the sense that it was about physical presence in public places in ways challenging the authority based on the very experience of share and solidarity around basic bodily requirements as food and water.

The anti-capitalist Muslims who introduced *Earthmeal* to the Gezi mobilization made it clear that Gezi was a means to build a common life space against the plunder of the capital in the press releases they made during the Gezi encampment. They contributed to the common life in Gezi by living in the park with other activists, sharing their food and labour and turning religious practices like *salaat* into collective action. On

Fridays, they made open calls in Gezi Park to make *salaat* all together with other protesters. *Salaat* thus turned into a bodily performance of dissent that reinforced solidarity among activists with different lifestyles. While some were making *salaat*, the others made human chains around them to protect the practitioners from possible police interventions. It also served as an efficient means to counter the government's attempt to create a polarization between Gezi protesters and the rest of the society based on the division between conservatives and secular non-practitioners. The very presence of Anti-capitalist Muslims opposed this polarization and underlined the fact that the protesters, either practicing Muslims or seculars, were all in favor of making a common life space against the capitalist plunder.

The press release of the Anti-capitalist Muslims before the Friday *salaat* on the 6th of June goes as follows:

We are here to call them to account for all these; those who plundered each and every piece of the country and served them to capital groups; those who made giant building to show off their power and wealth; those who ignore that the nature is the common life space of all living beings and humans and smother it with cement and tear gas; those who make millions of our worker friends work under the hunger threshold while constructing these coarse building<sup>28</sup>."

*Earthmeal* was in that sense a practice that performed the construction of this life space based on the values of share, solidarity, respect for all living beings, modesty as opposed to the plunder of life spaces, capitalist consumerism, exploitation of both

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<sup>28</sup> Atlan, Z. 2013. Chapuller Group performed the salaat in Gezi. <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/147355-capulcu-cemaat-cuma-yi-gezi-de-kildi>

nature and human labor. We will see that such values and concerns will persist during the park assemblies.



## CHAPTER 3

### **Park Assemblies: *All parks are ours, let alone Gezi... We are the seeds of a tree that grew up in Gezi Park*<sup>29</sup>**

As already stressed, the Gezi mobilization was the sum of a rich action repertoire including dissenting actions as sit-ins, human chains, protest marches, demonstrations, barricading, clashing with the riot police, as well as more specific protest types as occupation, encampment and collective life building in the reclaimed public space. The ideological and physical assaults of the government were successfully responded by the activist collective through the introduction and expansion of new protest types. It was what happened on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, right after the violent expulsion of Gezi Park. While clashes with the riot police continued, a group of activists started to assemble in Abbasaga Park with the invitation of Carsi, the fan group of Besiktas football team. Soon, thousands exhausted by the riot police assaults around Gezi Park came together in Besiktas Abbasaga Park. The group decided to make an assembly to discuss the new course of events. Right afterwards, others also started to swarm the parks of their neighborhoods. The other day, there were already 32 assemblies in Istanbul, followed by Ankara (10), Izmir (2), Antalya, Bodrum, Kocaeli and Eskisehir<sup>30</sup>. The assemblies kept on propagating throughout the

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<sup>29</sup> An activist on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July in Sinop Assembly located in Sinop, a city by the Black-Sea, retrieved from the assembly minutes.

<sup>30</sup> Ertan, M. (2013). On some Possibilities for the Sustainability of Gezi Resistance. <http://bianet.org/biamag/siyaset/148239-gezi-direnisine-sureklilik-kazandirmanin-imkanlari-uzerine>

country, while the university students also started to hold assemblies in their campuses with the kick off of the new semester on September<sup>31</sup>. “Gezi activists, upon leaving Gezi Park, withdrew to their own life spaces and turned the parks of their respective neighborhoods into a small Gezi Park,” states an observer on the 6<sup>th</sup> of July in Bianet. It was indeed true that the new slogan of the Gezi Movement was, “All parks are ours, let alone Gezi.” As such, assemblies which were introduced at the very beginning of the ParkWatch by the urban activists and were held once again in seven different parts of Gezi Park right before its forceful evacuation were brought to the neighborhoods throughout the country and abroad so as to mark the new course of the mobilization.

An efficient way to counter the physical force inflicted by the government, the assemblies sustained the resistance by decentralizing it and made it possible for the activists to voice their dissent against both micro and macro politics of the government. They were also significant in formulating the consistency of concerns and values brought forward and persisted throughout the country and abroad. The insistence on abiding by the strict formal structure of the assembly which prohibited sexist, racist and nationalist discourses and favored equal participation and accessibility, contributed to further sustain such values as anti-sexism, anti-racism, anti-nationalism introduced to the Gezi population by the rich autonomous movement tradition in Turkey.

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<sup>31</sup> Resistance Assemblies Relocated to Universities. <http://everywheretaksim.net/tr/sendika-org-direnis-forumlari-universitelere-tasindi/>

The assemblies started at 21h with the delegation of a moderator. In Yogurtcu Park Assembly (Kadikoy) and Abbasaga Assembly (Beşiktaş), the biggest assemblies in Istanbul and in Turkey, the previous moderator used to ask someone among the participants to become the moderator. If the previous moderator was a man, women were encouraged to become the new moderator. After the moderator, a clerk was delegated to take notes about the agenda, discussions and proposals. The moderator then used to kick off the assembly with a brief speech about the red lights: Sexist, racist, homophobic and nationalist discourses would not be allowed; the speeches would be restricted to 2-5 minutes; she would give word to the activists who hadn't spoken before.

At the beginning, assemblies were mostly composed of free speeches on the meaning of the Gezi encampment, critics towards local, national and foreign policies of the government. Later on, when the assemblies got more organized around working groups, most of the assemblies started to organize thematic meetings on particular topics and conduct activities and discussions regarding their local agenda. In Yogurtcu Park Assembly, for instance, in time, the first word was started to be given to participants who had announcements to make, then, the agenda of the evening's assembly was collectively determined and free speeches were made around the agenda. Within the first week of the assemblies, working groups were started to be established to work on specific issues. A coordination group was also established to

enhance the communication among the assemblies. In Ankara, Ankara Resistance Network was established.

In the assembly notes of the park assemblies, we see that this structure was adapted by other assemblies, with minor changes introduced later on regarding the days to have assemblies, when to discuss on the agenda and when to make free speeches and the activities concerning the local agenda of the neighborhood. Ankara Anitpark Assembly, for instance, shares the decision they have taken on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July in their minutes as follows: “So, the assembly approved the proposal of Cem from the previous week. We are going to discuss the agenda in the first half an hour of the assembly, then come the free speeches, later on the working groups will come together and work for 45 minutes and share their decisions in the last 15 minutes.”

Throughout the summer and autumn of 2013, assemblies were thus held every evening or 2-3 times a week in parks around Turkey and in some European and North American cities like London, Kassel, Berlin, Brussels etc. Working groups on various issues such as communication, culture, urban transformation, solidarity with detained activists, infrastructure, and art were established, as well as women’s assemblies led by Yogurtcu Park and Macka Assemblies. There were also various workshops conducted by the assemblies, as the urban transformation workshops, being one of the main concerns of all the assemblies, politics workshops which sometimes had a particular theme which was, in the case of Kucukcekmece Assembly, ‘a workshop on

socialism', theatre workshops, media workshops, workshops on economic boycott and workshops with children or on issues related to child care.

In the assembly minutes, it is noteworthy to see that a wide range of activities were conducted by the park assemblies that started to be organized as neighborhood solidarity organizations. Demonstrations were made to protest the planned and ongoing urban transformation projects in respective neighborhoods. Kucukcekmece Assembly decided on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 2013 to march towards AKP town administration headquarters and protest the government's urban transformation projects, just as they marched in Kanarya district a month ago on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July against 'plundering transformation' as they call it. Similarly, in Ankara, Ankara 100.Yil Initiative marched on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July against the urban transformation projects. Dogancilar Assembly decided on an action plan with neighboring assemblies against Haydarpasa Port Project planned by the government. Findikli Park in Istanbul also decided on an action plan against the construction of a parking lot in Findikli Park on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July. Although the urban transformation projects which were called 'the plunder of life spaces' were among the main concerns of the assemblies, there were also marches and protests against police violence, the new education system introduced by the government, domestic violence and violence against women, government's foreign policies in Syria, the murder of Medeni Yildirim, a young man killed by the police forces in Lice/Kurdistan in a protest against the construction of fortified police stations called *Kalekol* in the region. All the assemblies participated in the Peace Day march on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2013, as well as the commemoration

of Sivas Madimak Massacre on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July, the murder of 32 people the majority of whom was left wing Alewite intellectuals by a fascist mob that burnt the Madimak Hotel where the group was holding a cultural festival. All these protests either introduced or embraced and collectivized by the park assemblies sustained the ecologist, leftist, anti-fascist and anti-sexist character of the Gezi Movement. Below, we are going to analyze basic concerns uttered by the activists in the assemblies and expressed through their actions (see the first section of the chapter for the methodological choices behind this account).

### **3.1. What Matters: ‘It is not just a question of few trees<sup>32</sup>’**

When we have a look at the main issues both uttered by the activists during the free speeches in the assemblies and expressed and performed through the organized activities and events also discussed in the previous section, we see a very diverse picture of concerns including protests against government’s urban transformation projects, *environmental* concerns like demanding the use of sustainable energy resources, opposing the planned construction of a nuclear power plant in Sinop or hydroelectric power plants being constructed in the Black Sea Region despite the reaction of local populations, *economic* concerns regarding the privatization of the banking system, corruption, consumerism, damage done to small scale business owners and artisans due to the propagation of shopping malls and commercial centers, labor rights, the lack of production in the country as the economy of the country relies

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<sup>32</sup> Anonymous activist in 12<sup>th</sup> of July in Sinop Assembly.

more and more on the construction sector, the reality behind the economic growth discourse of the government, political concerns regarding the foreign policy of the government in Syria, critics against the parliamentary system, concerns over the 10 pct election quota, lack of trust towards the political parties, concerns regarding the mobilization and assemblies to be inclusive and diverse as a means to have direct impact on the government's politics; concerns over women's rights and the rights of LGBTI communities so as to promote anti-sexism and the fight against homophobia. The assemblies indeed witnessed a period when the residents of the neighborhoods had a chance to have a word over what bothered them locally in their respective districts, nationally in the overall country under over a decade long AKP governance and globally under the neo-liberal rule that has had a grip on all aspects of life.

Urban and environmental concerns constituted the main preoccupation of the assemblies and they were accompanied by demands to have a voice over every aspect of life from education and health care system to the issues that concern everyday activities as eating, shopping, cleaning and enjoying oneself, which makes it difficult to separately analyze urban, environmental, political, economic and social concerns of the assemblies. The assemblies indeed voiced a rich constellation of preoccupations that touched upon and tackled all those aspects of life, all around the will to have a direct voice over issues that concerned the everyday life of the collective. Ecological concerns were almost immediately related to political, economic and social concerns that resulted in the search for an alternative politics that would mind the direct participation of local communities on the decision-making procedures. In that sense,

it would be apt to say that the assemblies, in their words and deeds, voiced and worked over concrete and local problems minding their ecological, social, economic and political aspects. Or even better, they performed politics in a way that encompassed a holistic view over the concrete issues at hand and did not lean on such divisions. The minutes of the Small Abbasaga Assembly on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July record an anonymous activist saying, 'Ecology problem is a problem of democracy. There was one thing that united people in the Gezi Resistance: demand for democracy... Now, in Turkey we have both a democracy and ecology problem, which are connected and inseparable. They plan crazy projects without taking our opinion, they implement these projects without taking our opinion, they plunder nature without taking our opinion. That's why ecology problem is a democracy problem.' It is indeed true that the concern over both urban and rural ecology went hand in hand with concerns over direct, participatory democracy based on the principle of inclusion. Hence, the assemblies experimented direct engagement in the organization of life in their respective neighborhoods.

Throughout the course of the summer and autumn of 2013, the assemblies cleaned their neighborhoods (Bozcaada Assembly on the 30<sup>th</sup> of August, Buyukada Assembly on the 10<sup>th</sup> of July), had picnics, Bicycle Tours against the construction of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bridge on the 7<sup>th</sup> of July (the assemblies in Sariyer district of Istanbul), organized alternative summer schools for children in İstanbul and also in Antakya, participated in the protest marches of the organization called 'Solidarity to Defend the Northern Forest' that was established right after the Gezi Park occupation to protest the



destruction of the Northern Forests of Istanbul to construct a third bridge to unite Europe with Asia; they found libraries in their neighborhoods (Ankara 100 Yıl, Izci Park Assembly), voluntary teachers gave open classes to students, conducted exchange markets, organized donations to Rojava, the Syrian Kurdistan (Bozcaada, Eskisehir Ali Ismail Korkmaz, Macka, Uskudar Dogancilar), performed theatre shows, renamed the parks and neighborhoods in their respective districts, made *Earthmeals* during the month Ramadan, visited animal shelters (Buyukada Assembly on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July) and families in need of financial help, had legal support from the activist lawyers, made local collective gardens in Moda, Kuzguncuk, Roma gardens, organized popular music festivals (GazdanAdam, ForumFest), screened movies as *Ekümenopolis* regarding the negative impact of urban transformation projects on Istanbul or *Benim Çocuğum* (My Kid) regarding issues related to having a homosexual child in Turkey, made photo exhibitions on the Gezi Resistance, visited other assemblies either to share experience or participate in protests, conducted open talks and discussions with activists from the organizations that participated in the movement, discussed on alternative economic models to capitalism and boycotted the supermarkets and commercial centers. All these activities organized in all spheres of life and collectivized concerns regarding all aspects of life from education to health, from amusement, art and culture to ecology were accompanied by concerns to have direct voice over issues concerning this very life. As an activist in Yogurtcu Park Assembly stated on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June, it was an attempt for the residents of the neighborhoods to have the means to directly decide on what concerns life they lead in

all its aspects: ‘We need to be in a position that the municipalities cannot even lift a paving stone without taking people’s permission<sup>33</sup>.’

Therefore, a great distress against government’s urban transformation projects, a concern for an environmentally and socially sustainable urban setting accompanied by a generalized concern regarding the damage done by hydro-electric power plants, possible damage of a nuclear power plant planned to be established in Sinop went hand in hand with concerns over the health system, education system, AKP’s foreign policy promoting further distress in Syria and the economy of the country based on construction sector neglecting sustainable production. Concerns which are directly reflected to action, be it a protest march, public declaration or a collective garden or alternative summer school, oscillated between macro and micro scales and touched upon all spheres of life from economy to health and education. *It is not just a question of a few trees*, was among the widely used and collectivized slogans of both the Gezi encampment and park assemblies, defying separating environmental concerns from other aspects of life and envisaging a holistic approach to issues regarding life in general which is also echoed by the use of the term ‘defense of life spaces’ to define the Gezi mobilization. Life spaces encompassed both urban and rural setting as well as the abovementioned issues regarding health system, legal rights, education, situation of stray animals on the streets, agriculture and economic interventions as boycotting commercial centers and opting for a less consumerist, individualist and a more collective way of life.

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<sup>33</sup> <http://parklarbizim.blogspot.com.es/2013/06/kadkoy-yogurtcu-park-notlar-21-haziran.html>

“We are in an energy cloud resembling a newly formed star constellation. We are experimenting how it feels to belong to a city. We are the seeds of a tree that grew up in Gezi Park. It is our duty to keep an eye on these seeds; set back all our divisions and create a local-common language all together,” states an activist on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July in Sinop Assembly located in Sinop, a city by the Black-Sea.

A newly formed star constellation making its way in learning what it means to belong to a city, a new community on its way to create a language that would be both common and local, communit(ies) assembling in the parks to sustain the seeds of Gezi Park were indeed experimenting on belonging to the city through directly engaging in the many ways it is being made. Hence, Gezi can aptly be defined as this very experience of making a community through direct engagement with what would be both local and common at the same time. Below is a discussion on the concerns around which this constellation was being made. Here, I analyze common concerns of the assemblies throughout the country under five categories: concerns regarding life spaces which include but are not limited to ecological, environmental or urban issues in the classical meaning of these terms; concerns regarding the will to execute an alternative democracy mostly called direct or participatory democracy that went hand in hand with a severe critic against the parliamentary or representative democracy; concerns that favor anti-sexism, gender equality and anti-homophobia, concerns regarding anti-nationalism and anti-racism which brought forward serious conflicts that had deep impact on the making of assembly communities and concerns regarding

the principle of inclusion adopted by all the assemblies. All these concerns were inter-related and defense and creation of alternative life spaces went hand in hand with the will to create and experiment on means to have a direct voice on what sustains and maintains these life spaces. The principle of inclusion within the strict constraints imposed by the assembly model prohibiting sexist, homophobic, racist discourses and hate speech and promoting an egalitarian, non gender-biased communication made the grounds for the experience of this alternative democracy, which was also an experience on what to select and sustain among the many political tendencies and practices introduced during and after the Gezi occupation.

### **3.1.1. Defense of Life Spaces**

*Let's Turn Our Parks into Gezi, Let Them be Life Spaces*<sup>34</sup>

With the rise of the park assemblies throughout the country as part of the Gezi mobilization, the ecological, economic and social damage done by government's urban transformation projects were problematized with respect to not only Beyoglu where Gezi Park is located, but also all districts of Istanbul and other cities. The park assemblies discussed state policies and projects within their respective neighborhoods and sought for means to become political actors which have voice over government's and local administrations' decisions on issues regarding *life spaces*.

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<sup>34</sup> The minutes of Bahcelievler Solidarity record an activist saying in the assembly on the 22nd of June.

One of the biggest concerns of park assemblies was indeed possible consequences of the urban projects implemented by the government. By extension, we see that each assembly approached the issue around the local problems they witnessed in their neighborhoods and districts, then to problematize larger scale ecological problems in their region.

In that sense, Selamicesme Ozgurluk Assembly in Kadikoy/Istanbul on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July screened a movie called 'Our Neighborhood,' on the urban transformation of Sulukule, a neighborhood in the European side of Istanbul originally populated by Romans who were forced to leave the district due to increasing real-estate prices, followed by a discussion with the participation of the residents of the neighborhood on urban transformation project of Fikirtepe, a popular, poverty-stricken neighborhood close to central Kadikoy. Free speeches in the discussion started with Fikirtepe residents voicing their concerns regarding the ongoing urban transformation of the neighborhood based on the model of Sulukule. Urban transformation in the discussion is presented both as an ecological plunder and a cultural dispossession process serving the de-characterization and domestication of age-old neighborhoods with residents having strong bonds with one-another. "(The residents) are not only displaced, but they are also disengaged from their culture. The same is going on right next to us, in Fikirtepe. What is your real intention? Do you actually want to raise the life quality of these people or do you want to kick them away from their neighborhood?" the assembly minutes record a participant saying. The discussions on

the urban transformation project in Fikirtepe takes a different turn, this time on the urban projects in Kadikoy in general, when a participant refers to the Gezi Resistance and says, “The Gezi Resistance is a social resistance, not a revolution. We started to be sensitive to issues that were previously of not interest to us. It is as if the revolution blinked us in Gezi Park. What started with a few trees turned into an overall ecological sensitivity. We need to seek for means to strengthen our ecological sensitivity that has thus surfaced.” The moderator then announces that the urban plan regarding the construction of a commercial center in Kusdili meadow was annulled. The assembly applauds with the hand gestures signifying approval when the moderator says, “Kusdili Meadow will remain green.”

Similarly, on the European side of Istanbul, in Atasehir Deniz Gezmis Park Assembly, the minutes record a participant saying, “The Gezi Park protests started as a resistance against urban transformation projects, the same in our neighborhood. They made the construction plan, they separated our neighborhood in four different parts. We found an association, we sued them many times. There are some who want the wealthy people to live in this district, not the laborers. The contractors deceive people with the promise that they would be rich once they sell their houses to them. We can annul all these projects if we act together. We can win if we act organized and united, as we did in Gezi Park.”

Same concerns are also uttered in Zekeriyakoy Assembly in Sariyer district of Istanbul, located closer to the newly constructed 3<sup>rd</sup> Bridge, on the 14<sup>th</sup> of July in a

discussion on the damage done to the last remaining forests of Istanbul by the highway projects binding the city traffic to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bridge. The minutes record, “The potential forest land in Turkey abated from 70 pct to 30 pct, the water potential in Belgrad Forest for Istanbul dropped to 2-3 days, poison leaked into Hamidiye water, cancer cases abounded in Kemerburgaz, water reserve of Belgrad Forest dropped from 180 m to 80 m.” Assemblies held in the islands of Istanbul, on the other hand, voiced concerns over a range of socio-ecological concerns from the privatization of Bosphorus sea shores, pollution in the islands due to uncontrolled tourism to the construction plans in the islands. Buyukada Assembly submits a petition on the 11<sup>th</sup> of July to the local authorities regarding their concerns on the possible adverse consequences of opening Sivriada and Yassiada to tourism, while it is stated in Heybeliada Assembly on the 26<sup>th</sup> of June that, “the use of coasts is a basic human right, which cannot be arbitrarily violated.”

In Ankara, the planned demolition of Ataturk Orman Çiftliği to build a Presidential Palace arose great dismay in park assemblies and Ankara Cayyolu Park Assembly, on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July when the assemblies were recently started to be organized, conducted a special assembly to discuss the situation of the ATO saying, “We have been discussing Gezi for some time. There was a very well justified resistance in Gezi Park. This case also witnessing the participation of the Chamber of Architects and Engineers and vocational organizations united everyone. Each and everyone who felt like a minority, part of an other-ized community assembled. The fact that it was well justified and it was about defending Gezi Park were important. Let’s not discuss with

one another, let's unite around a justified case: AOC case." After a brief information about Baskent Dayanisması (The Capital Solidarity) which, similar to Taksim Solidarity, had been conducting activities to protest the urban project on AOC land since 2004, the moderator proffers, "the political power operates on the plunder of urban lands. Baskent Solidarity is fighting against it for some time. AOC is our common heritage, we need to protect it."

Concerns over the socio-ecologic damage done by urban transformation projects meet with concerns over the ecologic damage done by mining activities around the country, the hydroelectric power plants constructed in the Black Sea region and the potential damage of a nuclear power plant planned to be established in Sinop. Macka Assembly located in Macka Park in the European side of Istanbul close to Gezi Park discusses sustainable energy resources problematizing the need for a nuclear power plant in Turkey, while Sinop assembly, located in Sinop, the city in the northern Black-Sea region of the country where the nuclear power plant is planned to be constructed, once more informs the residents about the protests and actions against the nuclear power plan. Marmaris Assembly, located on the Mediterranean Region, on the other hand, raises concerns over the coal mine in Çamlı village and its adverse impact on the environment.

While the urban transformation projects and the ecological damage done by the government's energy policies constitute one of the most significant concerns of the assemblies around the country, these concerns are always talked up with respect to



concerns over means to have an alternative, non-consumerist and non-individualist economy, concerns over respect to differences and concerns over new means to make politics. Marmaris Assembly, for instance, comes up with a draft manifesto regarding the principles uniting the assembly. The draft includes following principles: “we defend and develop exchange economy; we are here with our differences, that’s what enriches and strengthens us; we believe in the fraternity and freedom of peoples. We are not on the side of the powerful, we like to gain power all together; we are not interested in overturning, we are rather interested in constructing; the most important decision taken in all assemblies is that the name of our organization is humanity in general; we are getting organized around the consciousness to be citizens and our respective rights; one of the most urgent work is to change the election law, we are trying to come up with concrete solutions; (in bold) **we lay claim to our parks, squares, neighborhoods, natural resources, forests, rivers, seas, soil, seeds, public places, artistic spaces; we believe that we would subvert capitalist despotism and immoral plunder economy with this determination**” (Assembly minutes, 4<sup>th</sup> of July).

The part in bold once more purports to the concept of life spaces defended by Taksim Solidarity and embraced by the activists, emphasizing the importance of *laying claim to* all life spaces in a way to go beyond the division between natural and cultural, urban and rural.

Similarly, in Antalya, a Mediterranean metropolis, we see that, apart from the

ecological and urban concerns, critics are raised against the consumerism encouraged by the government, decisions were taken to boycott supermarkets, concerns were raised over violence against women and discussions were held to discuss the political situation of Egypt.

Therefore, concerns over life spaces immediately spoke of concerns regarding the constitution of everyday life around basic consumption habits. Hence, boycotting supermarkets, shopping centers and chains was a protest type adapted by all the assemblies throughout the country. Exchange markets were established in the parks, while *Earthmeals* were made to promote the culture of food share and communal eating practices. Communal gardens established especially in Istanbul were also symbolic protests to defend sustainability and self-organization. While Istanbul Bahcelievler Assembly held an assembly on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July to discuss the problems of small scale business owners, artisans and local shops in the neighborhood, Ankara Cayyolu Park Assembly also discussed on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, boycotting shopping malls and supporting small scale local business owners. Istanbul Atasehir Assembly again on the 25<sup>th</sup> of July, took decisions to protest shopping malls.

Just as it was proffered in the draft manifesto of Marmaris Assembly, the assemblies sustained and furthered the idea of resisting via constructing an alternative. An activist thus averred in an assembly in Ankara 100.Yil Park, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, that the decision of boycott was directly linked to the idea of constructing alternative democracy: “Why do we boycott? We are creating an alternative to something that

already exists, like democracy. Boycott is something that would make us realize the power that comes with this gain. Things will flow from below, once again.” It is clear that the idea of boycott was construed as yet another means to defend life spaces via laying claim on consumption habits. Yet another activist in Ankara 100. Yıl Park Assembly on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June relates the decision of boycott to everyday choices on what to consume and the requirement to change the habits that make us happy: “There are things in our lives, our houses that make us slaves to the capital. For the last ten years, I have been using the same beddings; I used them again and again. There are things in your houses that you never use, yet you keep on buying new things. There is no need to go buy things in those shops, as we cannot see interlocutors to the kids we raised in the institutions serving the media supporting AKP in the Gezi events. No need to go to these shops; we all pay the price of it. Small artisans struggle against the big capital owners and they are forced to grow; you’re obliged to die if you don’t grow. We will not watch the TV shows, we will not watch Survivor. We need to reconsider the habits that have made us happy up until now.” Similarly, an activist in Istanbul Beylikdüzü Assembly puts forward on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July that “Economy is in fact nothing but means to eat and drink. When we reduce economy to covering basic needs, many necessary requirements shall be free. We need to confront this system where everything is more and more buyable and sellable. After Gezi Resistance, this will be the real success of assemblies.”

Hence, reconsidering everyday life choices on what, where and how to consume, which is directly related to problems around the creation of subjectivity, as what

makes one happy, were among the concerns of Gezi protesters mobilized around the objective of defending their life spaces.

### **3.1.2. An Alternative to Representational Democracy**

*'We need to be in a position that the municipalities cannot even lift a paving stone without taking people's permission<sup>35</sup>.'*

As adumbrated by above citations, the assemblies were thought of and constituted as an alternative to the existing means to exercise democracy; the idea to 'constitute,' to 'create an alternative' penetrated both the discourses of the activists and the practices developed throughout the course of the mobilization. The defense of life spaces that include natural resources, urban environment and everyday practices over basic requirements went hand in hand with a call for alternative means to exercise democracy.

A severe critic of existing political parties governed the assemblies. Istanbul Macka Park Assembly minutes record on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June that "someone averted that Sisli municipality was to be included in the process to attract the attention of Sisli residents. However, this proposal is not approved by the assembly. It is said that the assembly doesn't aspire to be on the side of/ under any political party." Again, in Istanbul

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<sup>35</sup> <http://parklarbizim.blogspot.com.es/2013/06/kadkoy-yogurtcu-park-notlar-21-haziran.html>

Esenyurt Esenkent Park Assembly, an activist stated that “the people cannot be contained by the existing political parties. AKP and the opposition parties lost their legitimacy.”

Istanbul Kadıköy Caferağa Solidarity, a neighborhood solidarity evolved from Yogurtcu Park Assembly with a decision taken on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June to establish neighborhood solidarity organizations around the country, also systematically distanced itself from the idea of working under Kadıköy Municipality governed by the republican party (CHP) in the opposition. When the municipality came up with a program to promote grassroots politics under the model of City Councils and proposed Caferağa Solidarity and its squad Mahalle Evi (The House of the Neighborhood) to work under the City Council model, the activists held assemblies to discuss the proposal at the end of which the neighborhood solidarity organization decided to remain autonomous, while at the same time appointing a voluntary activist to participate in the City Council meetings and negotiations. An activist from the neighborhood organization expresses her distrust towards the political parties and Kadıköy Municipality’s getting involved in the neighborhood organization’s activities a year after the eruption of the Gezi movement on the autumn of 2014 as follows:

As far as I know, the municipality is trying to give some space and listen to neighborhood assemblies, through demanding their participation in the City Councils. But, in my opinion, it is up to us to wisely manage this interest in our relationship with political parties. Now, we are negotiating with the municipality and making meetings together, but I believe that we should always be alert, we

should always be careful and never trust them. If we trust in them, they appropriate us and what has happened up until now repeats itself' (Aslı, woman 34, activist in Caferaga Neighborhood Solidarity Organization).

Remaining autonomous, 'not to be appropriated' to preserve what has been achieved via the Gezi mobilization has indeed been a significant concern for the assemblies and neighborhood solidarity organizations that evolved from these park assemblies and Caferaga Solidarity was exemplary in that sense as one of the most efficiently functioning neighborhood solidarity organization that had directly evolved from Yogurtcu Park assembly as a means to sustain the heritage of Gezi.

This explicit distress generated by the existing political parties also addressed the representational democracy in general. While some of the critics were against the undemocratic applications within the parliamentary system that impede the efficient functioning of democracy, as the 10 pct of election quota, there was also great deal of discomfort regarding representational democracy in general. The minutes record that in a discussion on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, regarding possible relations with municipalities and political parties, an activist in Istanbul Cennet Neighborhood Solidarity assembly reacts against the idea of receiving candidates in the assemblies and listening to what they propose by saying, "I am not in favor of the idea to ask candidates willing to govern us to "come and tell us" about themselves. Instead, we shall be the ones to make projects. We want direct democracy and we need to insist on assemblies and not accept to abide by anything to substitute them. Similarly, we should insist on creating ideas and making projects." Just as an activist put forward a month ago in the same

assembly, “It is really wrong to orient Gezi synergy to the parliament. No need to search for candidates, as if we were looking forward to have faith in someone. People have the means to talk up in these assemblies and proceed on common points.”

Most of the concerns regarding undemocratic applications within the system were accompanied by concrete solutions to find possible ways to *intervene in* the election and law enforcement processes. Therefore, assemblies were mostly conjured as means to build an alternative to the existing democracy while at the same time intervening in the existing mechanisms. It would hence be apt to say that the opinions talked up in the assemblies were around being an alternative in the present while not neglecting the parliamentary democracy mechanisms that kept on influencing the lives of the activists.

In that sense, while endless calls were recorded to have an alternative political party, this call almost immediately turned into a demand to find mechanisms to put pressure on the political parties, choosing deputies directly in the assemblies or appointing the candidates in the assemblies. Minutes of Selamicesme Ozgurluk Park assembly (21<sup>st</sup> June) reports discussions on possible interventions in the parliamentary democrac, while yan activist states that “this horizontal organization must put pressure on the political parties” (Cavit) while another (Isil) puts forward that “We shouldn’t be afraid of the word ‘getting organized,’ We already got organized, yet horizontally. Firstly, let’s explicitly warn political parties. Let’s put pressure on CHP (The Republican Party) and say, ‘Heroes of Gezi are women.’ In Italian parliament, the deputies wore

red in the parliament, here they didn't even do that. Let's demand 40 pct of women quota and a decline in 10 pct of quota in general elections. BDP (pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party) shall stop being the party of the order and turn into a party for the whole Turkey. No votes to MHP (Nationalist Populist Party)! The deputies should have been the ones who were tear-gassed on the streets!" While others oppose the idea of getting organized within the system: "Why are we trying to get organized within the system? There are many different groups here and we cannot expect them to be under the same roof!" says Volkan, while Burhan states that "We are part of a revolutionary movement wherein we are trying to understand ourselves and stand on our feet. I propose neighborhood assemblies as an organizational model." Again, in Ankara Anit Park Assembly on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, the minutes record that an activist proposes to put pressure on and changing the existing election system, "When all the mechanisms of the participatory democracy becomes means to put pressure (on the existing system), the local elections can actually function."

It is indeed true that the activists mostly refer to Gezi Park and Park Assemblies experience as horizontal, direct or participatory democracy. The grassroots character of the Gezi Movement is systematically underlined in the assemblies. We witness, on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, in Ankara 100. Yıl Park Assembly a discussion on this character of the Gezi mobilization where an activist indicates that non-representation was what distinguished Gezi from previous movements; "Also in the past, there were times



when we were annoyed by the government, just as in Susurluk<sup>36</sup> event or on issues related to our freedoms and lives or our reaction to the law on alcohol consumption. Up until now, people used to delegate others to tackle with the problems that annoy them. For instance, they used to say, ‘whatever, there is an army anyhow’ and delegated someone else to find a solution to their problems. However, the biggest gain of social movements now in Turkey is that people saw that they couldn’t protect their rights without taking the streets.” A few days ago, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, in the same assembly in Ankara, Progressive Lawyers’ Association made a presentation on the legal character of the mobilization; a lawyer affiliated to the Progressive Lawyers’ Association (ÇHD) stated that “the legal character of these assemblies is full-fledged direct democracy. The primitive democracy model is applied here. I use my rights to democratic action and freedom of speech; this leads us to streets. What we do is legal and legitimate.” Again, in Ankara, this time in Batıkent Assembly, the assembly minutes on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June record that “the proposal to propagate local assemblies is highly supported in the assembly. Even the residencies ready to hold assemblies so as to popularize direct democratic participation and organization. There are widespread opinions promoting the propagation of the movement and proposing means on how

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<sup>36</sup> Known as Susurluk scandal or Susurluk incident, it is among the most significant scandals of the Turkish Republic. A car accident on the 3rd of November, 1996 in Balıkesir-Bursa highway, dark relations of state-police headquarters and mafia were revealed. Right after the accident, public demanded disclosure of illegal relations between the state and the mafia. A civil campaign called “One Minute of Darkness for the Purpose of Illumination” wherein people turned off the lights of their houses every evening for a minute to protest the scandal was launched.

to make use of democratic assemblies in the forthcoming election phase.” Istanbul Yeniköy Assembly discusses again on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June how the assemblies might work as a People’s Assembly; the minutes record that “the anticipation that the assemblies would in time start to function as a real People’s Assembly was discussed. It was stated that anyone and everyone was required to apprehend that s/he was personally responsible in the transition phase from pyramidal governance systems to ‘circular’ systems and get used to work with the others shoulder to shoulder.”

The concerns over ‘not neglecting’ or intervening in the existing parliamentary mechanisms defend the use of assemblies as a means to put pressure on the political parties, municipalities and make democratic amendments in the election system. Therefore, engagement in the parliamentary democracy was conceived as a means of intervention, while there were serious concerns over ‘not being appropriated’ by the system itself, as stated above by the Caferaga Neighborhood Solidarity activist Aslı. This intervention that went hand in hand with the construction of an alternative democracy in the assemblies was construed as a means to ‘keep an eye on’ the mechanisms through which decisions are taken in the name of the citizens. There were calls to ‘keep an eye on’ the ballots in the forthcoming elections, “we shall not neglect the ballots, we should bring lanterns if necessary,” states a protester on the 23<sup>th</sup> of June in Ankara GüvenPark Assembly, which turned into civil autonomous organizations like *Oy ve Ötesi Association (Vote and Beyond)* comprised of voluntaries working as observers at schools during the election day to count the votes and prevent possible attempts to rig the elections.

Hence, the assemblies reflected a distrust towards parliamentary democracy and the idea of representation; they were considered by the activists as mechanisms to exercise an alternative democracy, called ‘circular,’ horizontal, participatory or direct; they evolved in time to neighborhood solidarity organizations which continued to operate through the assembly model; while there were endless discussions on possible means to relate to political parties and municipalities in a way to put pressure on them and intervene in their operations so as to “keep an eye” on them. Securing their own position as organizations independent from the parliamentary democracy and creating a voice from below regarding the decisions over life spaces, while at the same time building relations with the municipalities and the political parties so as to force them to positive amendments in their operations from a certain distance were then the working principle of the assemblies and the neighborhood organizations. The activists are indeed highly eloquent about their distance to the existing means to exercise democracy and their critics against the system in general, just as it was recorded in the Ankara Anit Park Assembly, an assembly known to be mostly populated by people from republican orientations; the minutes of the assembly held on the 24<sup>th</sup> of June records an activist putting this demand forward as follows:

I have been saying the same thing for the last two days. Friends, politics as we know it has ended in Turkey. Since the beginning of the mobilization, we have been trying to learn its general political character. This people’s movement has started due to the void created by the political parties occupied by their election calculations. We wouldn’t have been obliged to take the streets if the existing political parties could have voiced the real concerns of the people. This

movement is also a movement against the system, it targets the establishment (anonymous, Ankara Anit Park Assembly)

Even a member of the Ataturkian Thought Association (an association being statist in its orientations supporting the parliamentary system on which the republic was based) where the republican, Kemalist population known to support the republican party are organized states that “the population who has been on the streets from the beginning were not only against the government or reactive just against Topbas. There is a reaction against the way the politics is perceived, against the way the politics is currently manipulated. I ask representatives of the political organization here in the park to please not to try to get ahead of this unprecedented movement.” (anonymous, Ankara Anit Park Assembly, 24<sup>th</sup> of June 2013). These voices underlining the anti-establishment character of the movement coming from the neighborhoods known to be highly statist and republican in their political orientations further aver that the Gezi Movement was indeed a strong blow on the way democracy was exercised in the parliamentary system.

### **3.1.3. Anti-sexism and anti-homophobia**

#### *Women Raise Purple Card to AKP’s Misogynous Politics<sup>37</sup>*

Since the participation and active intervention of the women’s movement on Gezi encampment, the concerns around creating a non-violent, anti-sexist and anti-homophobic political space were prevailing in all Gezi protests and park assemblies.

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<sup>37</sup> Mersin Park Assembly, 25th June, 2013.

Again, anti-sexism remained a concern that was embraced by Gezi activists since the encampment. This concern was also sustained in park assemblies throughout the country. Anti-sexism in all its aspects from gender based violence and discrimination to equal share of domestic work proved to be among the concerns around which Gezi park assembly communities were made.

In an assembly held on Violence and Discrimination against Women and LGBT in Ankara 100. Yıl İzci Assembly on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July, activists underlined the positive impact of the Gezi Movement on women's movement and women's movement's transformative power on the Gezi communities. The minutes records that a woman activist called Yasemin puts it forward as such: "The feminists are on the streets for a long time now. Last year, they held a big meeting on the right to abortion, but the participation was not at the desired level. After Gezi, people are less hesitant to take the streets, a nice transformation has commenced on the streets," while an anonymous activist is recorded to state that "there was a reaction in Kennedy against the sexist slogans of football fan groups humiliating women and homosexuals. They tried to make them understand that using humiliating swear words make you turn into what you criticize. After a while, the group stopped using those words. It is wonderful to see that things transform on the street, that we learn to stand side by side and go along with the differences. A very beautiful development, it was worth our efforts<sup>38</sup>." Activists from the LGBT movement also refer, in the minutes of Ankara 100. Yıl İzci Assembly, to the positive transformation witnessed during the Gezi Mobilization,

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<sup>38</sup> Retrieved from the assembly minutes.

“There were big transformations also with respect to LGBTs. Prejudices against the LGBT movements, like ‘they only have fun and only think about sex,’ are broken. Why do we use swear words like faggot or bitch to counter the police violence or ecological destruction? Why the ones who we hate the most are faggots, prostitutes? How did it become a constant in language? Using ‘politician’ as a swear word would even be more accurate.”

In this respect, it can aptly be said that the Gezi Movement made the efforts of women’s and LGBT movement visible, while the women’s movement’s and LGBT movement’s interventions made the Gezi Movement an anti-sexist and anti-homophobic mobilization. Being the grounds of an encounter between the women’s movement and other organizations, political parties, football fan groups and individual participants, the alternative space made in Gezi Park and park assemblies resulted in transformative encounters that led concerns of the women’s movement and the LGBT movement to be interiorized by Gezi and park assembly communities.

Park assemblies were indeed alternative spaces where discussions were held on the piercing issues tackled by the women’s movement, from violence against women to gender based division of labor and government’s assault on women, their bodies and life choices. In this respect, one of the biggest concerns were around the government’s assault on women’s bodies that aimed at depriving them of their legal right to have abortion and government’s policy to promote the increase of the population in the Western part of Turkey reflected by the PM Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s statement that

he wanted all women to have at least three children. There were indeed large protests organized by the women's movement right before the Gezi Movement in 2012 against the government's attempt to prohibit abortion. This fury on the side of women were also visible in the Gezi mobilization where women participated in protests with banners against the government's body politics. "Are you sure that you want three kids like us?" "My body, my decision," "Tayyip take your hands off my body," were among the chants and slogans that marked the Gezi mobilizations. Park assemblies also witnessed discussions and protests against government's body politics disregarding women's power on their bodies and reducing them to passive agents that were defined by their traditional maternal and domestic roles within the family. Hence, Ankara Batıkent Assembly minutes records on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June that "the fury of women in Batıkent is very visible. There is great reaction against government's intervention on women's bodies and lifestyles. A middle-aged woman saying that she wants her life partner to stand on her side, not in front of or behind her is enthusiastically applauded by the assembly. The reaction of women against the patriarchal everyday life culture is mostly crystallized in the personality of the prime minister." The minutes of Ankara 100. Yıl Izci Park (5<sup>th</sup> of July) assembly, record that a woman activist expresses her fury on violence against women as follows:

We see how the family privacy act is implemented. Even before the anti-abortion law is legalized, they call the husbands of women having a pregnancy test asking him whether he knows that her wife is pregnant or not. They call women at their 30s to ask them whether they consider having children or not. It is very worrisome even to imagine that this would be legalized. We need to do something."

The minutes of the assembly indicates that gender biased division of domestic labor and women's labor rights are also discussed in the assembly where a woman activist underlines that the Gezi movement is a moment when the gender based division of labor is problematized: "The (equal) division of domestic labor was significant in assemblies and protests. Domestic responsibilities cause women to be excluded from the public space, just as headscarf. A woman in Guven Park said that 'women never felt so safe in the park for years, you own this to us from now on, we want the parks to remain safe forever'" (Ezgi). While another activist calls for action to fight against the gender-based division of labor prevailing even in trade unions:

The rate of registered woman employees is 26 pct, while it is 70 pct in men. The Minister of Labor of this country can even say that we wouldn't have unemployment problem if women did not work. It should also be the responsibility of men to transform themselves. All around the world, women make more domestic work and they are the ones who take care of children. In Turkey, on average, women make six hours of domestic work a day, while this figure is just 30 minutes for men. The trade unions shall create child care facilities. Women work at home, men go to trade union meetings, right? No way!"

The minutes also records that another activist in the wealthy neighborhood of Istanbul Atasehir also problematizes on the 23rd of June the rights of the low class women working as cleaning ladies in Atasehir: "As women in Atasehir, we should do our best to defend the rights of cleaning ladies in Atasehir."

It is indeed true that critics regarding gender-based division of labor and sexism were not limited to the government and they were also oriented towards the leftist



organizations, trade unions, Gezi protests and upper class women. Minutes of the same assembly state that an activist in the same assembly proffers that “it would be naive to think that these problems would be solved once we destroy capitalism. The worker oppressed by his boss, oppresses his wife at home. I believe that we should work against both patriarchy and capitalism at the same time.”

Ankara GuvenPark Women Assembly on Misogyny, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of July was marked by the will of women to express what they want on positive terms. The minutes records that a woman activist starts her word by saying that “we, women, were on the streets throughout the resistance to say what we didn’t want, now is the time to say what we want,” yet another goes on by saying, “during the Gezi resistance, decisions regarding where to put the barricade and how to make it, where to march and where to protest were all taken by our male friends. When we wanted to express our opinions, they slurred over. We invite all women to have a word in decision making mechanisms and express their opinions.” Apart from calls to take more voice in park assemblies, we also witness that women defended their voice over policy-making and protest types to be implemented, “there was a protest of 25-30 people, while the police intervened in the protest with loads of anti-riot vehicles. We decided to dance in front of the vehicles, that was the way we showed our protest. Some reacted against us saying that “women have gone crazy, people are dying, yet they are dancing.” We were also there, we were also scared, we also threw stones to the police, we were also on the front lines, we also ran away from the police! Dancing is a protest type and we invite everyone to resist like a woman,” records the minutes of the same assembly.

Park Assemblies around Turkey took this call seriously and held women's assemblies. Guven Park Women's Assembly minutes records that the assembly decided to discuss local administration in the assemblies and to establish women units in municipalities; the assembly called women to ask their partners to make pastries and share the pictures in the assembly; decisions were taken to hold a social media campaign to protest against the obligation for the women to use their husbands' surname upon marriage; to send books to the arrested June activists; to establish a women library in the assembly. Minutes also records that a medicine was invited to the assembly to inform women about their health issues. On the other hand, minutes also records that women conducted workshops to make a patchwork to convey their demands. Mersin Assembly minutes records on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June that the speech of a LGBT activist saying that LGBT communities were the ones who were the most adversely affected by the dictatorship was frequently cut by applauds of the assembly composed of 400-500 people. The assembly minutes also records calls to be careful on the use of certain swear words that might offend women and LGBTs. Istanbul Yogurtcu Park Assembly minutes on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June also records calls to stop using the word "faggot" and that such calls were enthusiastically supported by the assembly components.

While Istanbul Uskudar Dogancilar Assembly approved on the 15<sup>th</sup> of June to promote the circulation of a statement asking for legal action against the father of Ahmet Yıldız who murdered his son on 2008 for being homosexual; Istanbul Cihangir Assembly announces on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July that LGBT Block would conduct an oral history research

concerning the expulsion of LGBT people from Beyoglu. Minutes of Istanbul Maçka Assembly records that the assembly decided on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July to enhance legal support to a homosexual man subjected to violence. The message of the assembly is clear: “we don’t want homophobia in our neighborhood.” The minutes of the Sinop Assembly held on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July reports that racist and sexist discourses were not accepted in Gezi Protests and that should be sustained in all park assemblies. Ankara Üç Fidan Park Assembly minutes record on the 5<sup>th</sup> of July the following article on a written statement about the assembly principles: “Üç Fidan Park Assembly rejects all types of violence against women and accepts that women, their bodies, identities and honor are not public entities; the discourse of the assembly is based on gender equality; it raises its voice over all regressive state politics targeting women’s body and labor, while at the same time supports all types of positive discrimination that would make women more visible in public life.” The park assemblies indeed expressed a determination to sustain the anti-sexist and anti-homophobic character of the Gezi encampment. This determination in return became a dominant concern in the making of assembly communities which evolved into neighborhood solidarity organizations. An activist in Istanbul Sarıyer Assembly thus compares, in the minutes, the diverse character of their assembly which was predominantly composed of women to the male character of the municipality: “The mayor and the members of the municipality were wondering in the park, as there would be an opening of this very park in a few days. The difference between the old, suited male population of them and our assembly populated by people of all ages where men were outnumbered by women clearly depicted the character of the resistance.”

The presence of women and LGBT activists, as the above activist stated, was indeed constitutive to the character of the Gezi movement which witnessed new anti-sexist and anti-homophobic communities being made around concerns over the defense of life spaces. In that sense, it can aptly be said that the defense of life spaces also included the defense of women's body and labor against the attempt of the government to reduce the feminine body to its maternal and domestic usages.

#### **3.1.4. Anti-nationalism, anti-racism: Medeni Yıldırım, a Gezi “martyr”**

As indicated in the previous section, the Gezi movement was a contention in process that witnessed the constitution of an unprecedentedly heterogeneous community Gezi Park around common problems that required practical solutions regarding the maintenance of life in the public space. It also witnessed creative translations in the adopted protest types, the most significant of which was park assemblies. Park assemblies were indeed significant in sustaining the mobilization, expanding its focus on the defense of life spaces to the entire country, translating basic features of the Gezi encampment into the local context of each city, district and neighborhood and further consolidating basic concerns around which assembly communities were made. Given the fact that Kurdish problem remains the most piercing political conflict in the country which also defines the distance among political organizations, the stance adopted by Gezi communities therein during the course of the movement has also defined their composition and character.

As already underlined, Gezi Park hosted activists from a very wide range of political backgrounds, including those from nationalist and right wing political parties. The main opposition republican party (CHP) voters with strong nationalist and statist political affiliations outnumbered others with more leftist orientations. Nevertheless, we see that ideas proffering nationalism and a centralized state have not been consolidated during the mobilization. Although the republican activists used a republican discourse in the Gezi encampment and park assemblies, this remained at the level of a wish to defend Ataturk, the founder of the republic, the republic itself and republican values as secularism.

While Kurdish movement was at first hesitant in showing an institutional participation in the movement due to this explicit nationalist presence, activists pertaining to the movement were on the streets at an individual level and the Kurdish movement was also present in the Gezi encampment with the flag of Kurdistan and a poster of its imprisoned leader Abdullah Ocalan side by side with the nationalist political parties as CHP (the Republican Party), MHP (Nationalist Movement Party) and IP (Labour Party). There were marches and protests in all Kurdish cities to support Gezi protests, the biggest of which took place in the Kurdish capital Diyarbakır (Amed) witnessing the participation of ten thousands of people with the banners, “Amed is Taksim,” “Amed Supports Taksim.” One of the outstanding figures of the first days of Gezi protests in Istanbul Gezi Park was Sırrı Sureyya Onder, the Istanbul deputy of BDP, the political party representing the Kurdish movement in the parliament, who blocked

the dozers uprooting the trees in Gezi Park. Although small scale conflicts arose within the park and during the mass protest marches between the nationalist activists and the activists within or close to Kurdish movement, such conflicts were resolved with the help of the mediating leftist activists. The CHP voter majority was reactive against the use of Kurdish flag and posters of Abdullah Ocalan, while activists from Kurdish movement and the radical left of the country were uncomfortable with the use of the Turkish flag. Yet, both continued to be used during the Gezi encampment. There were activists willing to put a Turkish flag in park assemblies, but this was not accepted in Abbasaga and Kadıköy Yogurtcu Park, the biggest assemblies in Istanbul. While the attitudes of park assembly communities regarding the use of Turkish flag and nationalist discourses mostly depended on the political tendency of neighborhood residents, the fact that an openly anti-nationalist attitude was adopted in Abbasaga and Kadıköy Yogurtcu Park assemblies, the biggest ones in scale and influence, located in neighborhoods mostly populated by republican CHP voters, is exemplary on the stance of Gezi activists with respect to the representation of Kurdish movement. A milestone in the consolidation of anti-nationalist and anti-racist values in the Gezi mobilization happened right after a young Kurdish activist, Medeni Yıldırım, was killed by the state special forces in Lice/Amed in a protest against the construction of fortified military outposts in the region. Starting from Abbasaga Park assembly, the assemblies organized marches against the murder of Medeni Yıldırım and declared him to be one of the Gezi martyrs, an expression used to define the protestors killed by police forces during the Gezi mobilization.

With the advent of park assemblies, the nationalist political parties, especially the Labor Party (IP) militants tried to impose their nationalist and racist discourse on assembly communities, but the participants of the assemblies and the assembly structure not letting similar indoctrinating thoughts to be repeated over and over during the assemblies did not allow it. In Abbasaga and Kadıköy Yogurtcu Park, the moderators and assembly participants were reactive against political parties trying to impose their agenda on the assemblies. In that respect, an activist in the 18<sup>th</sup> June assembly in Abbasaga Park that was held on the peace process between the government and the armed organization PKK is recorded in the minutes to state that IP militants tried to prevent Kurds from speaking in Sariyer Assembly, while “the assembly platform didn’t allow such interventions.” Although some assemblies were mostly populated by nationalists, park assemblies witnessed an historical moment in the country in the sense that many previously unutterable issues and unspeakable taboos were openly discussed. Assemblies witnessed discussions on Armenian genocide in a political setting when even the use of the word ‘genocide’ was –and even more so now- considered as a terrorist act, just as the use of Kurdish flag and posters of Ocalan or stating that PKK was not a terrorist organization, despite the ongoing peace negotiations with the organization. The ongoing peace process, whether to support imprisoned republican and nationalist politicians in Silivri as part of the Ergenekon investigation<sup>39</sup> and protests against the murder of Medeni Yıldırım killed in Lice were the grounds for fierce discussions in the assemblies. While organized

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<sup>39</sup> An investigation opened by the governing AKP against nationalist republicans that acted as a state-within-the-state.

members of nationalist political parties had rigid opinions on the issues that they aspired to impose on others, the young non-organized CHP voters were mostly open and willing to listen to opposing opinions. In Yogurtcu Park Assembly and Abbasaga Park Assembly, Kemalist and nationalists stopped participating in the assembly in time, just as the militants of IP who previously attempted to dominate the assembly. Therefore, it can aptly be said that anti-nationalism also proved to be a significant value that was picked up and consolidated by park assemblies and it became a matter of concern and conflict that had a significant impact on the making of them.

The attempt to dominate the assembly on the side of the nationalist IP and the assembly's reaction to it was clear in Abbasaga Park assembly that was held right after the Lice protests in the neighborhood<sup>40</sup>. Right at the beginning of the assembly, an activist from the nationalist Labor Party (IP) took the stage and started to read a political statement against Kurdish movement, calling PKK a terrorist organization and its imprisoned leader a baby-killer and rapist. The statement which had a highly statist language and which already took 4 minutes was started to be criticized by the assembly participants who were showing their discontent by raising their arms crossed at the speaker. At some point the moderator intervened and cut the speech by saying that the speaker ran out of time. Then, other militants from IP started to ask for word and take the stage one by one just to repeat the same discourse. One of them was a young boy saying that his brother was killed by PKK during his military service. The participants of the assembly once more reacted and the moderator asked the

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<sup>40</sup> Following episode is retrieved from my field notes.



participants to take the stage only and if they had a different opinion to defend. Then, a young Kurdish boy took the stage. He started his speech by offering his condolences to the IP militant who lost his brother to PKK guerilla. He said that he was deeply sorry for all the soldiers who were forced to fight in the region and who lost their lives, adding that he was sharing his pain, as Kurds lost even more to this war and there was practically no Kurdish mother who hadn't lost a son or daughter. He stated that PKK was not the cause of the war, but it was a result of age old discriminations and injustice to Kurdish people. At this point, IP members in the assembly started to yell and loudly protest the boy -defying the assembly rules that ordered to show discontent or content only through hand gestures-, and asked the moderator to cut his speech. He was forced to stop, while a man in his forties took the stage and said, "I want my young friend to speak up, he was saying very interesting things. I have been a Kemalist and national throughout my life. I learned everything related to the Kurdish conflict via the state TV channel, TRT. It's the first time in my life that I have the chance to listen to a Kurdish. I don't want to listen to those who keep repeating the same TRT discourse. I already know it and I am fed up with it. I want to listen to something different, to what this boy has to say." The assembly participants enthusiastically applauded the man by raising their arms, fingers pointing up and wiggled. The moderator asked the assembly whether they agreed on giving the word to the Kurdish boy again, the assembly once more approved by up twinkles and the boy continued his speech and said that the leader of the movement was in prison for the last 16 years and he was not in a position to kill or rape anyone. At that moment, he asked the IP militants to follow the ongoing lawsuits and investigations of Turkish

soldiers who were accused of gang raping Kurdish women in the region, if they were really sensitive to the issue. The assembly was ardently applauding the boy with up twinkles, while the man who asked him to speak up approached the boy after the assembly to further share opinions. It was the last time when IP militants participated in Abbasaga Assembly.

Istanbul Yogurtcu Park Assembly was also careful in not allowing groups to impose their nationalist discourse on the assembly, while the assembly minutes of other parks also records similar reactions to nationalist discourses. Ankara Eryaman Assembly minutes on the 16<sup>th</sup> of July reports a conflict among participants when “a group of people affiliated to a political party” decided in the name of the assembly to make a “Turkish Flag March” without actually taking the opinions of assembly components. The spokesperson of the group is recorded to have verbally assaulted the pro-Kurdish BDP and averred that “they would make the march in any case” and “those who opposed them could leave the assembly”. Then, two speakers are recorded to take the stage to indicate that the group was imposing itself and the assembly didn’t take any decisions to make a protest march called “the Flag March.” Then, assembly minutes indicate that the first group physically assaulted the speaker, attempted to make an announcement with a megaphone and the assembly was suspended. However, the rest of the assembly composed of fifty neighborhood residents is recorded to have reacted against the assaulting nationalist group of twenty people and the latter group was made to leave the assembly. The assembly continued with the remaining majority of neighborhood residents who were recorded to state that “the assaulting group had

similar attempts in other assemblies”, while “revolutionary people who believed in real democracy and who were willing to share stayed in the assembly.” Free speeches continued in the assembly witnessing residents stating that “they needed to fight the fascism inside” and “not allow racism and hate speech and fight against sexism, homophobia and speciesism.” The assembly minutes of the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, two days after this conflict, records that the assembly decided on not to attend the Flag March. In a discussion again in Ankara on whether or not to support Ergenekon prisoners, the moderator of Batıkent Assembly, located in Batıkent district of the capital having a highly nationalist and republican population, records on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of June that “Kemalist and nationalist discourse is highly dominant among the speakers in Batıkent assembly. The assembly witnesses highly nationalist discourses that can offend others. On the other hand, there are, though few, speakers saying that “I want to be human, not Turk or Kurd” and they are supported by the assembly.”

Assembly minutes of Istanbul Abbasaga Park Small Assembly records on the 20<sup>th</sup> of June that a discussion on Kemalism was ignited by a young woman activist Nesrin who asked, “Please, can someone explain me what Kemalism and nationalism is? Why is there such a big reaction against Ataturk? It’s just that I want to know and learn if he actually did something bad.” The minutes record heated discussions on Kemalism, nationalism and minorities in the country. The discussions are finalized by a statement averring that “each and every one is in ‘pain’ and that pain stems from our own past. In order to get organized, first and foremost, we need to listen, understand and share these past pains.” Then, minutes records that speakers started talk about

their experiences on past massacres against Zaza Kurds in Dersim<sup>41</sup>, Alawites in Maraş Massacre when a state supported lynch campaign was launched against the Alewite population of the city and the 1980 Coup witnessing the crash of the strong leftist movement of 70s.

Park assemblies hence distanced themselves from nationalist and racist discourses and created a space where the Kurds and pro-Kurdish activists had a chance to have a face-to-face discussion with the rest of the population who hadn't previously had the means to have access to different ideas. Ankara Üç Fidan Assembly minutes records on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of July a discussion on the murder of Medeni Yıldırım in Lice and the Kurdish problem in general. A speaker repeats the statist discourse by saying, "Lice is an underdeveloped place which is highly influenced by the terrorist organization. It is open to provocation. Although I don't believe that what happened in Lice was related to terror, I just wanted to add that. I hope that it never happens again." Afterwards, another speaker takes the stage and responds to him as follows: We don't need to use the statist language concerning Lice. The state institutions also said many things about Gezi park, but we understood what actually happened through our own perceptions and experiences." Yet another activist added: "In 1980, we, the socialists, were also called terrorists. There is a minority of sovereigns and they want to sustain

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<sup>41</sup> Dersim Massacre occurred when the newly founded republic launched a military operation in the previously autonomous Dersim region resulting in the death of ten thousands and the execution of the leaders of Dersim Resistance.

the system, just because it serves them. It's normal that anyone who is different or who risks the sustainability of this system is called a terrorist.”

Again, in the Social Peace assembly organized by Abbasaga Assembly to discuss the ongoing peace process and negotiations with PKK, the assembly minutes records that residents of the neighborhood had a chance to exchange ideas and share opinions directly with Kurdish and pro-Kurdish activists. Therefore, the minutes records a resident asking what the assembly participants thought about the tribal chieftan system in the region, referring to what he had heard in the media and adding that “he didn't know” whether it was true or not, while a Kurdish participant is recorded to have responded by telling how the sociological composition in Kurdistan had changed, yet another participant, affiliated to the pro-Kurdish Woman Initiative for Peace (BIKG) uttered concerns of Kurds regarding the peace process. Social Peace assemblies of Abbasaga Park hence became a space for the participants to discuss the concerns around the peace process with the participation of Kurdish and pro-Kurdish activists, both organized and non-organized, serving the need to listen to the concerns of Kurds directly from themselves. Assembly minutes records that this need was uttered by a participant in the assembly as follows: “We listen to what Kurds say from others. We need to listen to the statements of KCK<sup>42</sup> instead of the (mainstream) media. In case of Palestine-Israel conflict, we listen to all parties involved in the conflict. However, when it comes to kurds, we don't to the Kurds. We need to make amends.”

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<sup>42</sup> Kurdistan Communities' Union.

An unprecedented moment as it was, the Gezi encampment and the following park assemblies proved to constitute an alternative space in which the communit(ies) in the making systematically embraced anti-racism and anti-nationalism as constitutive principles in their practices. This insistence had a direct impact on their composition. The nationalist political parties as the Labour Party which systematically attempted to impose their nationalist agenda on assemblies and neighborhood residents who had nationalist ideas ceased to attend to the assemblies in time. The assemblies therefore in their discourse and practices insisted on making a space where the previously marginalized minorities could speak up and new encounters could take place among different segments of the country's left willing to embrace anti-sexism, anti-racism and anti-nationalism in their politics. Hence, the defense of life spaces went hand in hand with a politics of encounter provided by the structure of the assembly that foregrounded different voices to be spoken up as long as they were not racist, sexist or nationalist. There was an explicit will and attempt to be diverse, open, inclusive and accessible which was carefully executed within the limits of the assemblies in which above principles of anti-sexism, anti-nationalism and anti-racism drew the boundary of inclusivity.

### **3.1.5. Inclusivity: Everyone is welcome, but...**

*We should aspire to the equality of non-equals*

An activist in Sinop Assembly<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Retrieved from the assembly minutes on the 12th of July, 2013.

Accessibility, inclusivity and diversity were constant concerns of park assemblies. The Gezi movement, as a mobilization-in-process launched to defend life spaces on which the maintenance of daily life depended, created an acute consciousness of the ways in which activists from varying political and socio-economic backgrounds depended on each other in their struggle to have a word on the decisions that directly affected their lives. The active presence of all segments of the country's opposition was considered by the components of Gezi as the power of the mobilization and activists were careful in preserving this diversity. Hence, the call of an anonymous activist in Abbasaga assembly recorded in assembly minutes on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August can be taken as a token to summarize the general stance of assembly components: "We have had the chance to stand side by side, meet and talk with people whom we never had a chance to come across with. It's very important to be side by side with our differences, to come to (the assemblies) not to change others, but to be changed. We need to systematically discuss what brings us together."

The ideological warfare launched by the government aiming at dividing the components of the movement into peaceful environmentalists and violent organized radical leftists or coup plotters aspiring to overthrow the AKP government was partially successful towards the end of the encampment when a campaign was launched to remove political party symbols and flags from the whereabouts of Gezi, then to be accompanied by the evacuation of Taksim Square populated by the stands and tents of political organizations and political parties, while Gezi Park was left

untouched for a couple of days. Nevertheless, after the evacuation of Gezi Park, park assemblies once more continued to witness the participation of the entire opposition of the country. The general principle of the park assemblies was to be open to participation from all segments of the population, including AKP voters, as long as there wasn't an organized attempt to dominate the course of the assembly or make a propaganda of political organizations. The organizations were welcome to make announcements regarding their activities and protests and call the assemblies for solidarity. It was, on the other hand, up to the assembly to decide on whether or not to participate in these activities and protests. When there was not a consensus on whether to attend to a protest call or not, it was customary to announce that the individual participants could attend to the call, but not in the name of the assembly or the neighborhood solidarity organization in question.

Park assemblies were meticulous in their attempts to preserve this heterogeneity and be accessible to all segments of the society. Solidarity and trust among the existing components of assemblies were highlighted via ongoing calls to understand and respect one another and not to 'otherize' (*ötekileştirme*) certain components of the mobilization, such as the anti-capitalist Muslims, LGBTs, Armenians or Kurds and those who are not regarded as part of the mobilization, i.e AKP voters. *Ötekileştirme* which can be translated into English as *otherizing* or *othering* is indeed a common word recorded in assembly minutes.



The moderator of Istanbul Besiktas Abbasaga Assembly reports in the assembly minutes on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June that “Everyone agreed on how to approach AKP-voters. We should never degrade them. We should never keep underlining the fact that we are more educated. We should never *otherize* any one. We’re here because we were *otherized*. We are here because the government ignored us and said, ‘we already took a decision, whatever you do won’t change it,’ when we democratically searched for our rights on Gezi Park. We shall not do the same to others.” It is indeed true that constant calls are recorded in assembly minutes around the country inviting assembly components not to be condescending towards AKP-voters and instead they should try to gain them. The minutes of the Istanbul 4. Levent Sporcular Park Assembly records that *othering/otherizing* was not accepted in the assembly: “We insisted on the fact that we needed to clearly put forward that our assembly was not *otherizing* anyone and our door is open to each and every one.” Again, in Istanbul Yenibosna Assembly on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July, the assembly minutes records that an activist makes a case for the importance of not being afraid of ‘the others’: “We should be critical to the parties we vote for. We should also understand many women with headscarves who do not vote for AKP, but who couldn’t come to Gezi for many reasons. We shouldn’t be afraid of that which is ‘other’ to us.” Again in Ayvalık Yunus Emre Park, located on the Mediterranean coast of the country, assembly minutes records calls to avoid ‘*otherizing*’: “we need to be careful about our language. We need to talk softly and give messages that would unite us and not ‘*otherize*’ anyone. In Ankara, Yüzüncü Yıl Park Assembly holds an assembly on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July on solidarity and inclusivity and the minutes records that the assembly was finalized with a play on empathy and

empathic conversation: “At the end of the night, a play was staged by the assembly theatre on how to think and argument by putting ourselves on the shoes of others who have different opinions.” Again in Ankara Kugulu Park, one of the most influential assemblies of the capital city, the minutes records on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June the assembly’s sensitivity to the inclusion of minorities: “*One of the speakers underlined the fact that this movement should orient towards real democracy; the rights of the minorities should be considered vital and they should be defended.* The assembly agreed on this opinion. Besides, it is also underlined that, as a result of the movement, we should aspire to *the equality of non-equals.*” The call for the equality of non-equals, alongside with the objective to have real democracy taking the minority rights into consideration seems to speak for equality and solidarity among those who are discriminated by the ruling system in the country. Hence, it speaks for the heterogeneous composition of the Gezi movement which became grounds for the expansion of minoritarian discourses to larger groups of people defiant to government’s political agenda. The term ‘equality of non-equals’ might also be conceived as a tool to understand what inclusivity means within the context of Gezi assemblies. The call for equality already leans on an asymmetry evoked by the term ‘non-equals.’ Therefore, it implies that there is already a non-equal distribution at work within the existing constellation of the population. An equality taking this non-equal distribution of rights into consideration requires that the principle of inclusivity is always regulated by mechanisms that would keep the exclusive distribution of rights and inequality at bay. Therefore, the assembly structure based on consensus and above concerns around anti-sexism, anti-racism, anti-homophobia and an alternative (direct, participatory)

democracy worked as a regulative mechanism to provide a space to experiment the minoritarian politics of the equality of non-equals. As an activist in Ankara Anit Park Assembly states in the assembly minutes of the 24<sup>th</sup> of June, it proved to be a space where people from different opinions actually listened to each other: “For the first time in years, we are listening to one another.”

By extension, assembly minutes around the country record lengthy discussions on how to preserve the diversity of the assemblies and attract the attention of people who haven't yet participated in Gezi protests. Accordingly, assemblies decide to take measures so as to become more visible and accessible to larger populations of their districts. Most of the decisions regarding inclusivity orient towards making better use of all available communication channels, as obstacles on accessibility and inclusion are regarded as a problem of communication. “We are still very few, but we can reach more people. We need to be better organized, we lack communication,” says an activist in Istanbul Bahçelievler Yenibosna Assembly minutes on June 25<sup>th</sup>. Accordingly, it is witnessed in the assembly minutes that the assemblies are engaged in various communication activities, both online and offline, to include more people in their activities. Marmaris Gençlik Parki Assembly decides on the the 1<sup>st</sup> of July to prepare a video about their activities and broadcast it in villages in conflict with the state due to various environmental problems; making assemblies in village cafes and being in contact with the press, NGOs and political parties. They explain their motives as follows:

We have decided to conduct activities to reach larger groups of people and promote participation of people from all segments of the society. Therefore, we have decided to make a video and broadcast it in villages in conflict with the state for various environmental problems; to conduct free speeches like assemblies in village cafes to promote the participation of village residents and give them an opportunity to raise their voices, shoot these assemblies and use them in the video. We also discussed on being in contact with the press, associations, political parties and NGOs.” (Marmaris Gençlik Meydanı, 1<sup>st</sup> of July.).

Istanbul Yogurtcu Park Assembly similarly ponders over means to include all residents in Kadıkoy in the assemblies and decides to distribute small leaflets in the neighborhood by directly visiting residents in their houses. Minutes records that on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June, Çamlık Park Assembly also comes up with extensive solutions to the problem-at-hand, i.e. promoting the participation of larger groups of people in the assembly process: “putting posters in the district, distributing leaflets in the neighborhood, explaining people the necessity of the assembly, inviting neighborhood residents to the assembly via megaphone, organizing street communities to conduct these activities, making cultural-artistic activities via a culture-art commission, sharing the events on Facebook, setting a stand in the bazaar of the neighborhood or in the park where the assembly is held, writing a statement on the reasons why the assembly is held, visiting the neighbors in their houses.” The minutes of Istanbul 4. Levent Sporcular Park Assembly reports that, apart from distributing leaflets in the neighborhood and putting posters in the park, the assembly decides on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June on making Standing Man protests in neighboring districts. Apart from Standing Man protests, leaflets, posters, stands, neighbor visits, marches and artistic-cultural

activities to promote the inclusion of more participants, the assemblies regularly held *Earthmeals* where food sharing served as a means to strengthen community bonds.

The assembly minutes records that the use of online communication media is also promoted as part of the concern to include more participants in the assembly process. Online media practices, as opening blogs, websites and FB pages of the assemblies and neighborhood solidarity organizations, posting on FB and Twitter, sharing videos on Youtube were all applied, alongside with abovementioned offline activities, as a solution to the problem created by the concern to be inclusive and accessible to larger groups of participants.

Such online and offline activities organized around the concern to be inclusive and accessible to promote the participation of more people in the assembly process, as mentioned above, were realized within the limits of other concerns regarding the widely shared aspiration to make anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-homophobic communities exercising an alternative (participative and direct) democracy. Hence, ‘the equality of the non-equals’ requires the non-inclusion of mechanisms, practices and speeches that would reproduce the exclusive dynamics of the existing system leaning on sexism, racism, homophobia and undemocratic implementations of parliamentary democracy. Istanbul Maçka Assembly records on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June that the assembly rejected a proposal suggesting the ‘inclusion of Şişli municipality’ in the course of the assembly to promote the participation of Şişli residents majority of whom vote for the republican party in the opposition: “Someone suggested that the

municipality shall be included in the course of the assembly to promote the participation of Şişli people, but this idea is not approved in the assembly. The assembly averred that it didn't want to work under any political party.” Therefore, the concern to include more people in Maçka Assembly is limited by and bounded to the concern to work outside the mechanisms of the parliamentary democracy. The same goes for anti-sexism and anti-racism. As stated in the previous section, the concern to be anti-racist and the concern to give voice to minorities kept the nationalist discourses and practices at bay. In Kadıköy and Beşiktaş mostly populated by the republican party voters, the nationalist residents were complainant about the ‘non-inclusivity’ of the assembly which could have been, according to one of them, “more appealing to the majority of the residents, if it had a clearly nationalist stance.”

Hence, the concern to be inclusive was not a populist call to reach the greatest number of participants. The inclusivity of “the non-equals” was rather bound to a space where the exclusive mechanisms operative in the society as sexism, racism and homophobia were evaded. As such, Gezi communities of park assemblies were composed around the concern to defend life spaces, a very extensive concept that includes *parks, squares, neighborhoods, natural resources, forests, rivers, seas, soil, seeds, public places, artistic spaces*, as well the female body, as the concern around anti-sexism demonstrates, while the limits of inclusion were drawn around the concern to keep a distance from existing exclusionary mechanisms in the society. Hence, the definition of this newly formed community by the activist recorded in the minutes on the 12<sup>th</sup> July in Sinop Assembly located in Sinop: “an energy cloud resembling a newly

formed star constellation... experimenting how it feels to belong to a city... the seeds of a tree that grew up in Gezi Park... (whose) duty (is) to keep an eye on these seeds; *leav(ing) behind all our divisions and creat(ing) a local-common language all together*<sup>44</sup>. The concerns over inclusivity went hand in hand with the concern to leave behind all divisions that were used as exclusionary mechanisms against sexual minorities, women and ethnic minorities and the *local-common* language attempted to be created all together was around the overall goal to defend the life-spaces.

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<sup>44</sup> <http://parklarbizim.blogspot.com.es/2013/07/sinop-forumu-notlar-12-temmuz.html>

## CHAPTER 4

### Body and technological mediation in the Gezi Movement

#### 4.1. Dissident Bodies in Contentious Action

*Those days, I mostly felt like we were a body or an organism that moves and breaths together. With thousands of people...” (İrem, queer, 29, LGBT activist)*

The embodied and material character of the Gezi mobilization involves different axes that are intrinsically related to one another in a way to underline the priority of body and affects in the constitution of Gezi communities throughout the mobilization. First, is the significance attributed to the communal reproduction of an alternative life around basic requirements. “(In Gezi) all previously theoretical problems became problems of the life itself. It was the realization of the materialism of bodies,” states Sinem from a Marxist-Autonomous organization in order to underline the importance attributed to the maintenance of an infrastructure that would sustain an alternative relationality. It is indeed true that the encampment in Gezi park used to be called the “Taksim Commune” and deliberative means to cover basic requirements as food, shelter and cleaning became political issues around which the new Gezi communiti(ies) were constituted.



Another axis that is intertwined with the first involves an *acute realization of interdependency and appreciation of diversity* as power. In the assembly minutes, one of the participants of Çamlık Park Assembly puts it forward in an assembly on the 17<sup>th</sup> of June right after the evacuation of Gezi Park: “We have seen that we can have an impact when we collectively do things that we cannot alone accomplish, that’s why we are here.” Heterogeneity and diversity were indeed one of the most significant concerns of park assemblies. “How could LGBT people, people from all political opinions, women and men from all ethnicities come together? What has changed? Before, when women used to take the streets for their rights, men were not there for them. Environmentalists took the streets, they stood alone, etc. From now on, we will be with all those who take the streets for their rights,” says an activist on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June in Ankara 100. Yıl Park Assembly. Being accessible and inclusive, finding means to reach more people especially from among AKP voters are the recurrent themes that appear in assembly notes from around Turkey. Decisions to make use of online media through the use of mail groups, blogs, web-sites and social media mostly come forward as a response to such concerns regarding the need to reach more people. Hence, decisions on online practices in park assemblies are made in order to find solutions to real-life concerns as the need to have a space to collect assembly notes and make the assemblies accessible for the greatest possible number of people. Opening blogs and web-sites of park assemblies and making use of social media like Facebook and Twitter responded to these concerns simultaneously with off-line practices like distributing leaflets in respective neighborhoods, preparing and distributing small scale newspapers like *Hemzemin* and *Gezi Postası*, visiting people

at their houses and informing them about assemblies, organizing concerts and performances in the neighborhood etc. Therefore, it can aptly be said that decisions taken around the use of internet and social media were not in themselves determining over the course of the assemblies, but they were rather solutions to a recurring concern of activists: to convey their word to a greater population and to make the assemblies open and accessible to everyone.

The third axis involves *a bodily urge* to participate in the mobilizations. Here, I present an anecdote that I retrieved from my field notes to depict this bodily obligation. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, in Taksim square under a heavy gas cloud above us and constant noise of blast bombs, a young woman approached me and said: “You look like you are experienced in these things. I have never been on the streets before. Can you please tell me whether we would be like Egypt? I am so afraid. I am pretty sure that they will open fire on us, I mean they will kill us. Then I say to myself, whatever, never mind go home, do what you regularly do, but then I cannot sleep, I cannot eat, I cannot stay away from Twitter or Facebook checking what the hell is going on here. I have to be here, I cannot NOT come, do you understand?”

On many occasions, activists state that they were drawn to the square. The participants of Gezi mobilization state clear changes in their bodily state. They, for instance, refer to an accelerated bodily rhythm as well as less requirement to sleep. They also record the prevalence of positive emotions like hope, joy and care. They indicate that people were much more open to talk about subjects that were previously deemed taboos –the Armenian genocide, Kurdish issue etc.

Gezi was indeed a moment where the bodies, their needs, affections, their power and fragility came to the fore. In many occasions activists refer to their experiences in Gezi in terms of finding themselves in situations where they did unexpected things. An artist activist conveys the following anecdote when he ‘found himself’ blocking the traffic:

“We were trying to arrive at the square with a friend. We were very close to Taksim square when the police drove us back with teargas. We were terribly gased and beaten and we turned towards Kurtulus. We were very angry, I mean, we had to run away. We started to chant a slogan. There were just the two of us. All of a sudden, people started to applaud from their windows. They started clattering pots and pans and chant with us. We passed by Kurtulus street and turned to Tatavla street. There were some people there and we decided to block the traffic. I don’t know why and how, we just felt confident all of a sudden although we were just two. I don’t know where this confidence came from. We blocked the traffic and people applauding us from their apartments started to join us. We were ten thousand within minutes!” (Muzaffer, male, 62, part of a leftist activist network).

Gezi was a collective action of bodies who *found themselves* in situations/problems that required immediate and almost inevitably risky solutions. Risky, as the body on the streets in a contentious protest can be hit, hurt, even killed, even more so in Gezi mobilizations just as the above cited young woman rightfully expected: “I am pretty sure that they will open fire on us, I mean they will.” The bodies on the streets were coughing, sneezing, vomiting bodies under a thick cloud of tear gas, they were bleeding and sweating bodies that were under the risk of being killed or injured.

Activists were there as flesh that could and indeed would have hurt. Such was the atmosphere when I rushed at Taksim square on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June. The police had already retreated from Taksim Square while clashes continued in Dolmabahce/Besiktas and in Ankara. Thousands were in the square and Gezi Park and the number reached at hundred thousands towards the set of the sun. The crowd looked like one giant monster breathing in and out through oscillations of endlessly floating groups of people. A group was going towards Dolmabahce to clash with the police, while another group, this time of injured ones, approached Taksim Square to get medical help by activist health personnel. There were mobile groups of health personnel with make-shift clinics around the square to help the injured. Gezi was the action of bodies that constantly needed health care. It was the first time when I saw bodily presence of our lives that visible, if I don't count the morning of the day when my home-town was hit by an earth-quake and the days spent at the hospital where my mother worked as a nurse. Yet, despite the great risk involved in participating in Gezi movement, it was impossible to compare it to an earth-quake or a hospital setting in any other way, which points at the third bodily axis of the mobilization: its almost euphoric *affective charge*.

All Gezi accounts refer to feelings of happiness, solidarity, hope and care. It is indeed true that the life in the park had a transformative and healing effect on the participants. The Association of Psychologists for Social Solidarity, one of the organizations which actively participated in Gezi Park mobilization stated, in its report on the shifting psychological status of activists before and during the movement, that before the movement, activists reported feelings of panic, fear, depression, alienation,

pessimism, hopelessness, insecurity, while these negative emotions shifted to happiness, enthusiasm, excitement, hope, energy, peace, trust and security within the park (Report of TODAP, September 2013). Indeed, a feeling of optimism, joy and empowerment was prevailing in the park. Later on during one of the neighborhood assemblies, an activist would explain this by saying, “before Gezi Park, I was feeling disengaged from politics and kind of scared while passing in front of police officers in Taksim. But, now I feel powerful. My shoulders are squared upon passing by the police officers now.”

Activists mostly convey such highly positively charged emotions when it comes to the life in Gezi Park during the occupation. “I think there was a strange thing going on there, everyone was so understanding and caring towards one another, weirdly. I mean, you live together, you wake up together, go to bed together and you are neighbors of course... Somehow, everyone was living in harmony,” says Zeynep (34) who has loose connections with a socialist organization. Again, an activist organized in the organization, *Anti-capitalist Muslims* conveys having felt similar emotions: “There was an incredible solidarity. People were struggling to share something with one another. We had the list of the things we required. There were exchange markets... We learned that people did not resort to more than they needed when they felt secure, when they had something to eat and a place to stay. One needs to have been there, in order to understand what I mean.” Indeed, the activists, when referring to their emotions and experiences in Gezi park, keep saying that one needs to have been there to understand what they mean: They have troubles in finding words to explain an embodied knowledge that is directly inscribed in the body.

The protestors, both during the protests and in the interviews afterwards, state that it felt different to be there. Just as it is stated in the graffiti that became one of the symbols of the movement: ‘Stop crying, nothing will ever be the same again,’ the protestors felt like witnessing historical times when the meaning of street action considerably changed. Sevinç (30) indicates that “before Gezi, going to demonstrations, being politically active and revolutionary were deemed silly, it was useless effort, stupidity. With Gezi, tables are turned, being on the streets became fun.” The affective charge of what ‘taking the streets’ meant changed with Gezi. “What I felt it Gezi was like, people experienced the pleasure of being desired, everyone made himself/herself visible... being there became something desirable,” Sevinç adds. It is indeed true that, as stated in the above anecdote, from the first time in a long time in the Turkish political history, the streets became attractive to larger populations and demonstration went hand in hand with joyful effects, humour and a carnival-like atmosphere.

An LGBT activist uses the etymology of the word, ‘peace’ to explain this embodied experience of being there she defines as ‘contact’:

Those days, I mostly felt like we were a body or an organism that moves and breaths together. With thousands of people... There was also something that we lacked in our daily lives. People were in contact with one another. I remember holding hands with many friends and walking like that in order not to be get lost amongst the crowds. It was like that, we used to touch each other more, hug each other more. Personally, this contact made me feel so good, and the confidence that comes with it. On the other hand, everybody was in contact in other ways, as well. It was not only physical but also intellectual. Everyone was disclosing her own life and trying to

understand the lives of others. Lastly, I learned that the word peace in Turkish, *barış* comes from the noun *arrival* and to make peace is *to arrive*, meaning that people go to others' houses. There was a peace in that sense. Of course, we did not live together, but everyone was in other's houses, in a constant visit (İrem, queer, 29, LGBT activist).

The Marxist-autonomous activist Sinem uses the word 'encounter' to explain this constant visit and mentions the positively charged affections it created:

Different generations encountered, people who would otherwise never come together were together. It was true that people with Ocalan flags encountered people with Turkish flags. Do you remember that photo of a housewife standing right beside a gay activist? They were dancing together. The crowd was also hybrid, they were dancing in Balkan music. Normally, in our ordinary lives, also in classical political terms, we live so cautiously. There are codes determining the social relationships, you act accordingly, we are relating to one another always through these alienating codes. These codes were not there in Gezi. It was a process of taking our codes off. In our daily lives we are so harsh on one another. City life makes one a bully. In Gezi, in all moments, in the parks, behind the barricades, people were so caring. It is what the British people call "care." It was so great. Everyone was so caring! It was wonderful. You see that something you know from your own body becomes socialized. It was so amazing!" (Sinem, woman 34, Marxist-autonomist).

As İrem states, 'space is not space in itself, it is always there with respect to relations' and the process of making an alternative space also involves making an alternative relationality.

Space, the practices of production/consumption and mechanisms of relationality all go hand in hand and the making of a space with alternative production/consumption practices (collective production/consumption, donation, exchange) create alternative

relationalities. That must be the reason why the activists frequently state that ‘one needs to be there to understand’ when they refer to the way they perceived the life in Gezi. This refers to a very bodily knowledge bound to this intertwined relationship between the production of space, practices of production/consumption and mechanisms of relationality. “There was a community being made there, a community was experiencing to inhale and exhale together,” as an anarchist activist puts forward (Özlem, woman 27). The highly bodily language used by the activists to define the experience in Gezi also refers to the prevalence of this relationality. The LGBT activist İrem, in defining the life there as a carnival, reminds us of the etymological origin of the word that comes from ‘carne’ (flesh) and underlines the significance of the ‘flesh’ in the construction of a community: “it had a carnival-like atmosphere. Then, when we consider the etymology of the word, it comes from *carne*, flesh and makes you think of how one has a relation with his own *carne*, the flesh of ceremonies and rituals.” The very construction of the daily life in Gezi was indeed an attempt to make a community in its flesh and bones.

The Gezi Movement which was a symbolic attempt to make an alternative communal space was thusly a movement where the flesh, the bodies with their basic requirements, fragility, interdependency and affections came to the fore. Technics and technologies, as the social media, were assembled in this flesh to find multiple solutions to problems the activists tackled in this lived experience. Any account that fails to notice this vital aspect of the movement would have the risk of subtracting disembodied accounts from the unique experience we call Gezi.



## 4.2. Technological Mediation in the Gezi Movement

*Social media is a very controversial space, but we take it seriously.*

*(Doğukan, male, 28, Communist Party member)*

The protestors express mixed feelings and opinions when it comes to the use of social media during the mobilization. On one hand, they acknowledge the significance of the social media, while on the other hand, they indicate a certain distress regarding Gezi accounts that describe it as a Facebook or hashtag revolution.

As to the significance of the use of social media in the Gezi Movement, activists mostly refer to activist reporters and the opportunities provided by the social media to share and have access to “accurate” information at the practical absence of the mainstream media. As an activist posits, “We teach one another journalism... Everyone becomes a journalist, it becomes a life practice for you. You find yourself in a situation and you come up with the most urgent way to solve it” (Bilge, woman, 31, feminist), while another activist, with respect to the censorship of traditional media channels, stresses the fact that, “It is valuable, it is the only media where we can share our word. It is the unique way to share information. There is no other media.” (Haydar, male, 24, non-organized). This is indeed true, considering the fact that “the political polarization and demonization of social media information, coupled with absolute control of mass media, led to striking results. According to a Pew poll, 49% of citizens of Turkey did not use social media to get news and information about the anti-

government protests, in a striking parallel, this was almost identical the percentage who were dissatisfied with the country's direction (51 pct) (Tufekci 2014. p.8).

One of the interviewees, an urban planner working in Kadikoy Municipality states that underlines the importance of the social media as follows:

The propagation and share of knowledge is very important. In that sense, I believe that this has an impact on mobilizations. I also believe that social media was very important in overcoming fear. With respect to my old party, ODP, for instance, you could only have information about peripheral activities when a party member visited the headquarters. With e-mails now, all types of information flow rapidly and easily. Therefore, you more rapidly have access to information... then comes the production of ideas and the production of action... With respect to horizontal organization, it distributes knowledge more equally" (Ikbal, woman, 42, non-organized).

There is indeed a consensus on the significance of the use of social especially when it comes to citizen activism. Nevertheless, the interviewed activists anonymously share various concerns over the use of social media in political contention and make reference to the priority of face-to-face relations and being on the streets. The great majority of the protestors do not attribute horizontality or deliberation to the use of social media. Only one of them, the above urban planner stated that the wake of internet and social media has a determining impact on horizontal organization, although she adds that, referring to David Harvey, "We know that the thing we call internet causes a *time-space compression*. David Harvey states that. When you are

chatting with someone in the USA, the USA gets closer to you, but maybe you haven't seen the face of your neighbor for a year. The USA is so close to you, while downstairs gets very far. Therefore, the virtual world compresses the space and the time. You can consider the occupations of public squares as the explosion of this time and space compression. We do not yet know the consequences of this phenomenon.”

One of the significant concerns uttered by activists regarding the use of social media during street action is on the lack of safety in the social media and its openness to manipulation and state control, a concern which is also observed by Tufekci who reveals that “the Turkish government employed a significant campaign of social media demonization” which also includes “flooding the space with supporters and sometimes paid “trolls” (Tufekci 2014, p.6). An activist organized in the Communist Party posits it as follows.

Social media is a very controversial space, but we take it seriously. Do you remember, during Gezi, we had this thing: “police is coming.” In the park, some people used to appear regularly shouting, “police is coming.” We thought that they themselves were the police. We need to use social media very carefully. We need to ponder over how to use social media, there can also be organized interventions on it. It is not completely safe. We should never trust in something whose switch is not in our hands” (Dogacan, male, 25, communist party member).

Doğacan, in fact, summarizes the mixed feelings of the protestors towards the use of social media. An attentive and critical distance is prevailing in the protesters' approach to the social media: acknowledging its significance, critically assessing its restrictions

and problems, yet at the same time searching for possible means to *intervene* in and experiment with it.

The phenomenon called “slacktivism” or “the tendency to click on links or like posts rather than taking concrete actions and steps” (Morozov 2011 2014. p.8) is also among the significant concerns of activists, as one of them avers that “social media dampens people and makes them vast their energy in a wrong way. The struggle is on the street. You cannot do it only by sending messages here and there in front of your screen. This might be misleading, it can create inertia.” (Omer, male in his 60s, part of the Kurdish Movement).

Apart from above concerns related to the use of social media in a political contention, the majority of the interviewed protesters (18 out of 20) underline the priority of space specific, transformative encounters that took place within the park. One of the interviewees, an activist affiliated to the Marxist Autonomist organization called Otonom, among others, makes this point very clear:

It has nothing to do with internet. Internet of course changes the way we become affective, but I see it as a tool to our body-to-body encounters. It was how it was used in Gezi. Gezi did not happen thanks to internet. It is not the case, but on the other hand, it is true that many things happened thanks to it. It was a good opportunity. It created many opportunities, we were also ready to use it, though (Munevver, woman, 41, Marxist-autonomist).

Here again we see a critical acknowledgement, an emphasis on intervention and

experimentation. Münevver underlines that it makes a difference in our ways of becoming affective, hence its agency, yet she also makes emphasis on the readiness of the protestors to experiment with it.

As stated in the previous section, all the interviewed activists anonymously refer to the affection of care and solidarity as the prevailing characteristic of the mobilization, some stating that internet under normal conditions serves the opposite. As we have seen, this is indeed of utmost importance in enhancing transformative communication among diverse actors and organizations involved in the mobilization. “Normally, feminists are always “the bad ones,” that are not liked. In Gezi, it was like we were just another color,” says a feminist activist (Bilge, woman, 31, feminist), while another activist indicates that communication in social media does not have a similar transformative affect: “

Social media, especially Twitter, does not produce a word which has a strike power, it can, on the other hand, have a word and expand it at the discursive level, but I do not think that it has a correspondence in the society. It cannot organize anything that has a strike power. *If a Gezi activist with 300 followers have a twitter account, 299 of them would be activists themselves, I might be an Aktrol, but I don't think so. So, I tell my word to you, you tell your word to me. We speak to each other the same story. Nothing changes.* That's why I don't think that it can produce a word. It is not true to think that something was found on Twitter and then Gezi happened. Nope, it is not the case. The action comes first and then it is defined. This is the nature of materialism. The protest came first and then people defined it in Twitter” (Haydar, male, 24, non-organized, *emphasis is mine*).

Here, Haydar shares a common concern among protestors: attributing the lion's share in the new social movements like the Gezi Movement to the use of social media. He,

rather, underlines the fact that social media expanded the word and the action that took place on the streets. Hence, he underlines the dependency of the online media on the offline action.

The protestors are indeed careful in underlying the importance of the occupied space, practices and emotions they experimented therein. They also do justice to the material and infrastructural issues around the use of smart phones in the square. Hüma (woman, 22, became an LGBT activist after the mobilization) for instance, states that it was really difficult to find a place to recharge the mobile phones in and around Gezi Park. It is indeed true that the hotels around Gezi Park put extension cables in their lobbies so that the protestors could recharge their phones. It was yet another struggle to have a wifi connection. The protesters forced cafes and restaurants in Istiklal Street and Osmanbey to share their wifi passwords. Those which rejected this demand were boycotted. The protestors also put pressure on Turkcell, one of the 3/4G internet servers of the counter to install mobile base stations around Istiklal Street, as there were jammers located around the park to prevent internet use. Daily routines of the protestors included visiting their houses or the houses of others living close to the park to cover their personal needs, which included recharging their mobile phones. Therefore, the use of online media was not a given fact, but a daily struggle. This struggle took place at various levels depending on the technical limitations -as some of the protestors recorded not having smart phones-, infrastructural limitations regarding the material support of the use of online media or the lack thereof and technological limitations –the access to 3-4G or wifi connection.

Hence, the technological mediation in Gezi mobilization involved all these above-mentioned dimensions. It was as contested as enhanced and online and offline media were intertwined around these technical, technological, infrastructural dimensions.

In the light of the previous discussions, it can aptly be said that the technological mediation through the savvy use of social media was not straightforward or unilateral. It was not given, but reclaimed and reshaped at each and every moment of the mobilization.

## SECTION II

In the first chapter, I gave a brief introduction to the Gezi Movement and situated my research question based on the existing theories in the literature that are developed to elucidate certain aspects of the Movement. In the second, third and fourth chapters, I presented a Gezi Movement account around the question of *how* Gezi communities were constituted, leaning on the contention of Lorenzo d’Orsi that “the Gezi protests, moreover, had a non-teleological trajectory: it materialized in the same moment it was born and was characterized by a sharp aporia. Therefore, the question is not to merely analyze the reasons that led to dissent and grievance. Instead, by shifting the analysis from the why to the how, it is possible to observe new mechanisms triggered by the participation in the movement itself (d’Orsi 2015, p. 17). This understudied aspect of the mobilization orienting towards the *emergence* of new mechanisms within the course of the movement led me to track the introduction of protest types (encampment and occupation, park assemblies, Earthmeals, feminist corrective action, standing man, human chains etc.) decision- making mechanisms (assemblies) and values (anti-sexism, anti-nationalism, horizontal or participatory democracy, inclusivity, defense of life spaces) throughout the course of the movement. The above-mentioned protest



types, practices and political values that had been experimented within the existing networks of the autonomous left in the country were actually new to the majority of the protesters who were not previously involved in these networks. As such, the Gezi Movement was a process of *transformation* for its components. This transformation was an embodied and affective process in which performative protest types like human chains, standing men, feminist corrective action and protests that are based on day-to-day bodily needs like eating, cleaning, maintaining a life space (Earthmeals, encampment, collective eating, cleaning, praying and autonomous health care services organized by voluntary physicians and veterinarians) went hand in hand with an affective atmosphere of joy, care and empowerment. Collective life/space and protest-making practices with the accompanying positive affective charge of the event were also intertwined with a sense-making process in which political values as anti-nationalism, anti-sexism, inclusion, grassroots defense of life space and non-representational horizontal politics came to the fore. Throughout the empirical chapters, we have seen that the Gezi Movement was a dynamic, embodied and affective process of community/space/sense-making that had a transformative power on its participants. It opened a space-in-between where previously unutterable issues like the Kurdish issue or Armenian genocide could openly be discussed. One significant consequence that I draw from the empirical account of the Gezi Movement is that such an openness that had significant transformative power on the protesters was directly related to the bodily axes that I discussed in the last/fourth chapter of the first section. Hence, the Gezi Movement witnessed the emergence of new communities-in-the-making at the intersection of infrastructural, material, somatic,

affective and technological registers. Its transformative power thus stems from the fact that it endowed bodies with new capacities to feel, act, relate to one another, take decisions.

As such, as I stated in the first chapter, two important aspects indeed come to the fore when elucidating *how* Gezi communities were assembled in the occupied public spaces: a. *emergence* of new communities around solutions to problems posed within the course of action –solutions being practices, mechanisms, protest types and values introduced by components of the movement then to be embraced by the larger Gezi communities and interiorized as features of the Gezi Spirit; b. the role of the *body* in the mobilization, as most of these practices were highly bodily in nature.

Below, I will outline the conclusions of the empirical part:

- The Gezi communities were not pre-given or already organized groups of activists. They were assembled through a direct encounter in occupied spaces among very heterogeneous populations including all segments of the organized left as well as some adherents of the right-wing Nationalist Party, the autonomous movement networks of the country including the women's movement, LGBT movement, urban activists, anti-capitalist Muslims, fan clubs of leading soccer clubs, and the larger groups of previously non-organized or non-politicized people.

- The agency in the movement was *distributed* in the sense that an individual protester or collectives at times introduced their/his/her performative contentious action (in the case of duranadam) or protest type (Earthmeal, assembly, Gay Pride, barricading) which was in time selected, reiterated and became a fundamental part of the ‘Gezi Spirit’. The Gezi Movement as such was the sum-total of all these protest types, practices and accompanying concerns that were repeatedly selected and adapted throughout the course of the movement. It was a movement in-the-making wherein all protest types introduced by individuals or collectives were tested in time and experienced by the larger groups of participants.
- Most of the protest types (Earthmeals, assemblies, anti-sexist corrective-acts, encampment in the public square) and accompanying values and concerns (horizontal decision-making processes, anti-sexism, anti-homophobia, inclusive, participatory democracy as an alternative to representational, parliamentarian democracy) that ‘held’ in time were the ones that pertained to the autonomous movement networks of the country.
- Practices around which Gezi communities were assembled were related to life-making activities within the occupied Gezi Park most important of which were food-sharing, collective cooking and collective eating practices. Collective praying, collectivized health-care services both for human and non-human dwellers of the Park (stray dogs and cats) were also among common practices.
- The concerns that held Gezi communities together and that were consolidated in park assemblies included

- concerns regarding life spaces which include but are not limited to ecological, environmental or urban issues.
  - concerns regarding the will to execute an alternative democracy mostly called direct or participatory democracy that went hand in hand with a severe critic against the parliamentary or representative democracy.
  - concerns that favor anti-sexism, gender equality and anti-homophobia.
  - concerns regarding anti-nationalism and anti-racism which brought forward serious conflicts that had deep impact on the making of assembly communities.
  - concerns regarding the principle of *inclusion* (ruled by the previous principles of anti-sexism and anti-nationalism) adapted by all the assemblies.
  - concerns to promote decision-making and discussion structures that aimed at including everyone who would abide by the principles of anti-sexism, anti-racism, anti-nationalism.
- The Gezi Movement was a highly bodily and affective movement and this aspect of the movement had different repercussions:
- The protest types that ‘held’ in time were highly bodily and performative just as *Earthmeals* that was a collective-eating practice performed by long lines of people sitting on streets to have a collective *iftar* dinner, *assemblies* that were bodily experiments with alternative engagements in the public space.

- *Interdependency*: The feeling of interdependency came to the fore throughout the mobilization with respect to both the need take care of one another during clashes with the police and the acknowledgement that the movement's strength depended on its heterogeneous composition including protesters of very diverse backgrounds.
- *A bodily urge to be 'there' on the streets*: Most of the protesters refer to a bodily urge to be out there on the streets. There is indeed an emphasis on 'being there' and the protesters repeatedly state that 'one needs to be there in order to understand what they mean.'
- *Emphasis on bodies finding themselves in unexpected situations*: The protester accounts are replete with a feeling of 'surprise' or a sense of 'being taken away' by the movement.
- *Transformation through encounters with differences*: Activist accounts are also replete with references to how they changed throughout the course of the movement with direct encounters with people who were not thinking like them. It is indeed true that issues that were previously considered as taboos (like the Kurdish problem or the case of Armenian genocide) could openly be discussed and people were more open to the stories and perspectives of others.
- *Positive affective charge*: Protester accounts define their lived experiences in the occupies space with respect to positive affects like joy, care, empowerment, solidarity.

- The social media is considered by protesters as an important milieu mostly to diffuse information at the absence of mainstream media channels that were censored by the government. On the other hand, the protesters believe that being out-there on the streets and in the reclaimed public space was more important than the social media during the course of the movement. The main discussion and decision-making mechanisms of the park assemblies were assemblies and the assembly communities were against having controversial discussions or taking decisions on online media. The *social media practices* of park assemblies were mostly involved in having blogs, FB and Twitter accounts to diffuse information about their activities. In the minutes of park assemblies, it is seen that decisions to have a blog or open a Facebook page result from the will to be accessible for greater populations and inform them about their activities.

In this section, I will try to dwell on the conceptual part of this concern to account for the making of the Gezi communities. In that sense, I will be discussing on the above-mentioned two features (emergence and embodiment) that come to the fore in discussions around how dissident communities are assembled in social movements with respect to above conclusions that I draw from the empirical data. As such, below chapters will present philosophically-informed discussions of above issues around the search for conceptual means to account for the lived experience of the Gezi Movement. The main theoretical question will then be whether the concept of network having such a wide usage in Occupy analysis can duly account for above aspects of

the Gezi Movement that can be taken into consideration as part of the general concern to elucidate emergence as embodiment in the Gezi Movement. This section will then be the more philosophical contribution of this interdisciplinary endeavor. Through an analysis of the concept of network from networked social movements of Castells to ANT's take of the term, I will shift the attention of the reader to the concept of assemblage. It is indeed true that the concept of assemblage within the larger philosophical project of Deleuze and Guattari foregrounds affects, as bodies capacities to act. Becoming, hence emergence of novelty (including novel communities/relationalities) is then directly related to an increase in bodily capacities to affect and be affected by others. It is proffered that his line of thought, as we will further see, better explained the afore-mentioned bodily aspects of the Movement than the concept of network.

As already stated, the concept of network has been widely used in the literature on the Occupy Movements in order to account for the making of dissident communities. Therefore, in the fifth chapter, I am going to visit this concept so as to see whether it can adequately account for emergence and embodiment in Occupy Movements. Going through the use of the concept in the networked social movements theory of Castells and the Actor-Network theory (ANT), I will underline some problems of the concept of network to account for both emergence and embodiment in social movements and propose to dwell on another concept, that of assemblage (*agencement*) that has already been in circulation in both ANT and social movements theory. Stating that the current use of the concept in both ANT and some sections of

the social movements theory, although doing justice to the feature of emergence, doesn't deal with its potential to suggest a better account of body and embodiment in recent social movements, I propose that revisiting the concept within the political philosophy of its inventors, namely Deleuze and Guattari, would provide us with an understanding of emergence and becoming that is first and foremost bodily and affective.

The sixth chapter dwells on the concept of body –and assemblage as body- leaning- on the affect politics developed by the philosophers. It is indeed true that the political philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari provides us with valuable tools to come up with a bodily conceptualization of social movements. Once we consider *emergence* within the scope of the role of the virtual in all assemblages and relate it to the question of *becoming*, the utmost revolutionary objective in the political philosophy of Deleuze & Guattari, we see that becoming is always an embodied and affective issue pointing to a positive change in the capacity of bodies to act. Hence, politics becomes affect politics. As such, the concept of assemblage, through this Spinozist conceptualization of the concept of body, provides us with tools to consider the question of emergence in recent social movements as a question of becoming, the latter being an affective and bodily issue.

In the seventh chapter, I give an account of the political philosophy of Deleuze and Deleuze & Guattari so as to better locate the concept of assemblage and the social movements within the larger political concerns of the philosophers and their analysis



of capitalism. The chapter also provides a materialist conceptualization of emergence in social movements leaning on the materialism of the encounter of Althusser, the latter known to have a deep impact on the political philosophy of Deleuze & Guattari.

## CHAPTER 5

### **Accounting for the Making of a Dissident Community: From Network to Assemblage**

In this chapter, I am going to briefly explain prevailing theories which attribute the lion's share to new communication technologies, especially social media in the emergence and organization of the recent wave of social contention. The idea is to find adequate conceptual tools to explain the making of dissident communities

Manuel Castells, with his analysis of the network society and particular forms of social contention therein, is the main reference for such accounts. Therefore, the concept of network and its use to account for the new cycle of contentious action in various lines of thought will first be analyzed. This analysis will also introduce critics coming from authors who approach the network accounts with a grain of salt, questioning the limits of elucidating these space specific movements by giving the lion's share to the use of communication media. In that sense, it is a continuation to the discussion introduced in the first chapter regarding the place of online and offline communication in the Gezi Movement.

After a discussion on the concept of network, I will proceed to the main critic of the thesis against such accounts: the tendency of *disembodiment* that they somehow foster to account for mobilizations that are otherwise highly embodied and bodily in nature. The main argument of the thesis that is interested in how Gezi communities are assembled, hence the question of emergence in social movements, is that *the Gezi*

*movement leans on a wide range of bodily and embodied practices as well as an affect politics which requires a concept, other than network, to be duly elucidated.* After this brief presentation, I will introduce the concept of assemblage as an alternative to the concept of network.

### **5.1. Accounting for the making of a dissident community: the concept of network**

As it is explained in the first section, the Gezi mobilization witnessed the making of a dissident community around common problems regarding the alternative life created in the reclaimed Gezi Park. The practices, values and protest types experimented by a heterogeneous group of protesters are also preserved throughout the subsequent phases of the mobilization. This encounter in the public space was also one among various elements of very different nature, including the new communication media that forms the basis of many network accounts. How can we duly account for such an encounter that amounts to the emergence of a new community that sustains itself first through the prefiguration of an alternative life in the public space and then through the translation of protest types and deliberative practices experimented in Gezi in the subsequent phases of the mobilization? Can the concept of network be a useful tool for this purpose? Can it also be useful to do justice to the embodied nature of this protest that is presented in the first section? Let's take a closer look at the recent use of the concept of network in the social movement literature to be able to respond to these questions. Here, we are going to make reference to Escobar and Osterweil's analysis (Escobar & Osterweil 2012, pp. 194-201) on the use of the concept of network

to elucidate social movements.

Escobar and Osterweil indicate that there are two kinds of theories of network, one in which “the concept of network fits into an existing social theory” and the other in which “social theory is re/constructed on the basis of the concept of network” (2012, p. 194). They posit that the term of network used by Manuel Castells and Diani & McAdam is of the first kind, while the term of network as it is used by the Actor-Network theory and network theories influenced by assemblage theory and autopoiesis constitute the second type (p. 195- 201).

Below I am going to discuss Manuel Castells’ use of the term network to exemplify the first kind of networks. We will also introduce the concept of the logic of aggregation developed by Jeffrey Juris in his analysis of the Occupy movement and Chesters & Welsh’s complexity theory informed reading of alter globalization movements so as to point to a logic that attempts to go beyond that of the network. Then, we are going to introduce the use of the concept of network in the Actor-Network theory so as to elucidate an alternative approach to the concept of network in social movement studies.

Escobar and Osterweil underline certain problems in the use of the concept (Escobar & Osterweil 2012). Here in this chapter we are going to try to locate these problems in our discussion of the concept of network with an emphasis on one particular problem: *disembodiment* and *dematerialization* tendencies implicit in certain network

analysis of social movements.

The first problem that is located in the work of Castells, is the tendency to underestimate the role of place in the analysis of social movements (p. 194). This problem is aggravated especially in the analysis of Occupy movements, as they are characterized by the significance attributed to reclaiming public spaces. As we will see below, although Castells tries to make justice to the significance of the occupied space in his analysis of the recent social movements –including the Gezi movement– the emphasis is clearly on the autonomy of communication in digitalized networks.

The second problem they detect is the lack of an analysis on power in most network accounts (p. 198). This aspect of the critic is outside the scope of the thesis. Therefore, I will suffice it to say that the concept of assemblage that is proposed in the thesis as an alternative to network suggests a return to its original use by Deleuze and Guattari and thus provides us with the means to conceptualize power relations in capitalism. In the last chapter, I will briefly dwell on this subject with respect to the Deleuze-Guattarian analysis of the capitalist axiomatic.

The third problem is related to the informationalist stance of many network theories that “assume networks are about information above all else” (p. 199). This point, just as the first one, is directly related to my main concern in the thesis: the abundance of disembodied accounts of social movements whereas network analysis renders a lifeless expression of what is otherwise a highly bodily, affective and lively moment

of social contention. Escobar and Osterweil put it as follows: “In this modernist view, information is often seen as disembodied, and one could argue that there are many embodied aspects to both knowledge and networks” (p. 199).

Below I am going to track the use of network in the studies of social movements keeping in mind above concerns. Later on, I will introduce the concept of assemblage as a conceptual tool to overcome abovementioned problems in network accounts. Special emphasis will be put on the capacity of the concept to account for the bodily and affective aspects of occupy movements in general and the Gezi Movement in particular.

### **5.1.1. Social Movement Networks**

#### ***5.1.1.1. Occupy as a Networked Social Movement***

Manuel Castells’ network society is, without doubt, one of the most influential concepts in analyzing the new social movements. Castells, in the *Rise of the Network Society*, proffers that since the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, a new era characterized by informationalism has begun. Pointing to a transition from the industrial age to the information age, Castells avers that digitalized networks are mainly responsible for the “new social structure in the making” (Castells 2010, xviii). Although networking is not a new aspect of social relations, Castells claims that digital networking technologies pertaining to the information age amounts to the rise of digitalized, virtual networks. Such networks, both in economy and administration, become the

locus of power, while at the same time constantly contesting the state power and place-specific forms of institutions and organizations. The rise of the network society, according to Castells, is very much related to “the technological transformation of finance that provided the basis for the constitution of a global financial market around global computer networks” (p. xix-xx). Therefore, the constitution of a global, decentralized financial market is mostly related to the technological transformation rather than being a new stage in the accumulation of capital, as construed for instance by Negri and Hardt (Negri & Hardt 2000). Castells states that this goes hand in hand with significant transformation also in work and employment (Castells, 2010, xxii). Accordingly, this transformation includes “the growing flexibility of labor” (p. xxiii) resulting in “a new division of labor” (p. 260) and an unequal distribution of resources between “the self-programmable labor” and “generic labor” (p. xxiii). As such, the network societies operate through an inclusion/exclusion paradigm. The work force that can be attached to the network either as a networker (“who set up connections on their initiative” (p. 260) or as a networked element (“workers who are on-line but without deciding when, how, why or with whom” (p. 260)) attain higher importance, while the “switched off” labor (p. 260) that cannot be directly attached to a network, but covers its material requirements can easily be discarded. This inclusion/exclusion paradigm works at a global level creating a “space of flows... that are the material support of simultaneous social practices communicating at a distance” (as opposed to the “space of places” (p. xxxi) that are switched off from the network. Global cities are also conceptualized according to this spatial analysis based on the inclusion/exclusion dynamic around space of flows and space of places. Accordingly,

“from his globalocentric perspective, power resides in flows and strategic nodes, while the structural meaning of people and places disappears” (Escobar & Osterweil, 2012, p. 195).

Transformation of communication, on the other hand, is the “realms where society has been most profoundly modified” (p. xxiv). Computer networking, open source software and the wireless communication all lead to the propagation of networking practices in all spheres of life. He calls them “*horizontal* networks of communication” (p. xxviii) that require the direct participation of users in a digital network that can also be called “the social spaces of virtual reality” (p. xxix). This new communication media is conceptualized as “mass self-communication” based on “self-generated content, self-directed emission and self-selected reception” (p. xxx). Castells makes due emphasis on the transformation of communication in his book, the *Communication Power*, that would be the basis for his analysis of the new social movements in his book called the *Networks of Rage and Hope* (2012, 2015).

Castells, in the *Communication Power*, conceives social change as “structural change in the values institutionalized in a given society” (Castells 2009, p. 300) and argues that they “are formed by communicating messages of rage and hope” (p. 301). The main arguments he proposes with respect to social change via social movements is that “specific structure of communication of a given society largely shapes” the new social movements as the “politics is media politics.” (p. 302). That’s why reconfiguration of dominant media becomes the main objective of social change. As,



according to him, the new era is defined as the internet age, hence the new society a network society, the analysis of the recent social movements dwell mostly on the impact of social media and their capacity to promote horizontal and participatory politics prevailing in occupy movements. The power in the network society lies at the hands of those who are capable of “programming and switching networks” (Castells 2015, p. 9). As such, counter-power to be exercised by dissident networks shall be “enacted by reprogramming networks around alternative interests and values and/or disrupting the dominant switches while switching networks of resistance and social change” (p. 9). It is in this context that Castells analyzes the networked social movements of the information society: they constitute a networked society that diffuse, share and reproduce feelings of discontent against power by means of horizontal communication in online media that is autonomous from the state and corporate control. The networks thus constituted take the streets in a series of contagious protest waves.

In *the Networks of Outrage and Hope*, Castells state that “networked social movements may well be the social movements characteristic of the network society, the social structure of the Information Age” (Castells 2015, p. x). He thus evaluates main world-wide mobilizations in this new cycle of contention with respect to the autonomy enhanced by the active use of internet. The book includes a wide range of movements from Spanish *indignados*, Occupy Wall Street and the so-called Arab revolutions, while the second print also includes valuable data on the Turkish Gezi Park Mobilization, 2013 Brazil anti-corruption protests, Mexico’s #YoSoy123

movement and the student movement in Chile. According to Castells, all these movements are networked social movements that “began on the internet social networks, as these are spaces of autonomy, largely beyond the control of governments and corporations that had monopolized the channels of communication as the foundation of their power” (p. 2). He proffers that affects like sorrow, hope and rage are shared in the online media, networks are established and streets are taken (p. 2). Thus, mobilizations are stated to be networked, organized and deliberated online, *then to be* materialized in occupied spaces (Fuchs 2012a, p.780). As underlined by Fuchs, there is an emphasis on the mobilization capacities of internet and an implication that it is *necessary*, though not sufficient component of collective action (p. 780-781).

Castells, therefore, points to a hybrid offline and online space and underline the role of the occupied space to a. create community, b. have a symbolic power to demonstrate control over one’s life against the assault of “real estate speculation and municipal bureaucracy” and c. make a political space to exercise deliberative practices (p. 10-11). Here, Castells does not refer to the division between the spaces of flow and spaces of place that he resorts to in the *Rise of the Network Society*. Therefore, the relationship between the offline/ online, onsite and online media is not developed with respect to the often conflictual relationship between the space of flows and space of places. Although the importance of occupied space is underlined, it is presented as hybrid space which seems to go beyond the distinction between the networked space of flows and striated space of place, which lies at the heart of the definition of a network society. The occupied space is celebrated as an ambiguous, hybrid, mixed

space. Therefore, we witness an elliptic movement: social movements begin through “a process of autonomous communication” (p. 9) provided by digitalized networks whereby feelings of rage, hope, sorrow are shared, then comes the occupation of the public space that serves the creation of a community that “gives a sense of togetherness” and creates meaning (p. 10-11). A hybrid space is created which is again “a space of autonomous communication” (p. 11). Castells doesn’t explain the difference between the autonomous communication in digitalized network –that are conceived as the motor of social movements that create the network of activists which would occupy the physical space- and the autonomous communication exercised in a hybrid space composed of digitalized networks and physical material, “persons in their material flesh and minds” (p. 13). The characteristics of horizontality and autonomy are attributed to communication in digital media and it is presumed that the digitalized networks that are *per se* horizontal thanks to digital media occupy a public space and *materialize* the horizontality they exercised in space of flows. Nevertheless, the encounter of *persons in their material flesh and minds* include all types of communication, both traditional and digitalized. It is indeed true that in the Gezi Park encampment, both traditional media (in the form of daily newsletters like *Hemzemin*, *Gezi Postası* and leaflets, posters, wish trees) and digital media (in the form of citizen journalists broadcasting online and Çapul TV based in the park to broadcast online and on radio frequency) were highly used.

Nevertheless, the protest types chosen and deliberative practices experimented were highly bodily in nature based on practices of communal eating, as well as bodily

exposure and performance (Butler 2014a). The bodily presence had a communicative power that was of a very different nature than the communication in online media. It was direct, lived, embodied and affective that was embedded in the practices that constituted the life in Gezi Park and park assemblies. Let's just take a pause and think about the performance of the standing man, its propagation and transformation into a protest type in itself. The very act of standing in an evacuated public space controlled by the police forces gives a direct and symbolic message that challenges the capacity of the power to have total hegemony over the public life. The same can be said about the significance of food sharing in the encampment and Earthmeal protests. Bodily presence is at the heart of *the commonality of feeling* defended by bell hooks (hooks 1990). It is where the collective is experienced and felt in its flesh and bones as opposed to the individual presence in the online media.

Furthermore, online communication on the streets, in the Gezi Park encampment and in park assemblies was not a given fact, but rather it was subjected to an ongoing struggle over infrastructural facilities. Activists put pressure on nearby restaurants and cafés to share their wifi passports and provide electricity to recharge their mobile phones. They even made Turkcell, one of the mobile servers of the country, put mobile base stations on streets surrounding Gezi Park as a means to overcome the jammers located by the government. It was not so easy to recharge the mobile phones in the park and on the streets, as the protesters were mobile depending on where the next police assault led them to. As I explained in the fourth chapter, the communication in online media was not always deemed autonomous, as police was quick to infiltrate in

Twitter so as to misguide the activists about the location of make-shift clinics or clashes. Online media was not also considered to be a horizontal space to exercise deliberative politics, either. Gezi Park community and the subsequent park assembly communities preferred not to take decisions in online media. Rather, the decisions were taken on assemblies, a particular deliberative decision-making mechanism that is based on inclusivity and bodily presence.

Therefore, Castells' use of hybrid networks composed of digital media and the occupy space bear significant issues regarding the unproblematic role attributed to digitalized media to enhance horizontal and autonomous communication. It also presumes an unproblematic access to digital media obfuscating the fact that it requires a parallel struggle to reclaim digital media and necessary physical infrastructure that sustains it. Digital networks are largely supported by material and infrastructural facilities which are getting even more difficult to access in a contentious action.

#### *5.1.1.2. Critics of Castells' networked social movements*

There is indeed a growing literature in the discipline that underlines the one-sidedness of such assumptions that overrate the role of digitalized networks and the autonomy attributed to them in recent mobilizations. Fuchs, having a critical stance against the premises of Castells, challenges his ideas by positing that “only 34.3 pct of world population use the internet” (Fuchs 2012a, p.776). Tena Reiff (Reiff 2012 p. 5), in the context of 15M, also underlines the fact that the use of television is still far ahead of

that of internet and the use of internet for political purposes in Spain is even less (online political participation, contact with politicians 5 pct; political participation through webs, blogs or forums 20 pct). In this respect, giving a constitutive role to a communication channel in the explanation of social movements seems one-sided, also considering that it is still less widely used when compared to more traditional media. Reducing the emergence of a social movement to the use of certain communication channels also ignores “that technology is embedded in the society... and technological determinism ignores the political economy of events” (Fuchs 2012a, p. 781, Fuchs 2012b, p. 387).

Sassen similarly criticizes a certain tendency in the literature “to conceptualize these technologies in terms of technical properties and to construct the relation to the sociological world as one of application and impacts.” (Sassen 2002, p.365). She, on the other hand, proposes to avoid purely technological interpretations and recognizes the *embeddedness* of ICTs in their respective social contexts. Underlining the need to avoid either/or categorizations and purely technological readings orienting towards “the applications” and “the impacts” of newly developed technologies, she argues that “we cannot take the distributed power and hence the democratizing potential of digital networks as an inevitable feature of this technology, as it is often the case in utopian readings” (*ibid.* p. 367). Far from ignoring the importance of the electronic space for new forms of civic participation, Sassen mostly claims that “what happens in electronic space is deeply inflected by the cultures, the material practices, the imaginaries that take place outside electronic space” (*ibid.* p. 368). Digitization is

mostly involved in the liquidification of what is not liquid, hence a hypermobility gained by the object (p. 369). However, presenting this object as hypermobile essentially endowed with certain positive implications (horizontality, democratization, participation etc.) would be a partial representation, as it makes emphasis only on the de-materialized characteristics of the object and makes an ethically essentialist interpretation of this de-materialization, while “some of its components remain physical” (p. 369).

Veronica Barassi, criticizing the intrinsic technological determinism of network analysis in social movement studies, states that such analysis, a typical one being that of Castells, “fail to address a fundamental aspect of social movement networks: *their lived experience.*” (Barassi 2013, p. 50). In her studies on the Cuban Solidarity Movement in Britain, Barassi objects arguments that one-sidedly orient towards only positive features and capacities of the use of social media. She instead makes emphasis on the negative aspects of the use of social media (leaning too much on individual participation) (Barassi and Fenton 2011, p.180; Barassi 2009, p.6) and the remaining importance of traditional media channels in social movements.

Alice Mattoni, in her studies on the Euro May Day Parade (EMP) also emphasizes that “the development of the protest campaign on the internet does not mean that institutional and non-institutional actors tend to abandon other, more traditional communication tools. On the contrary, the parallel use of both online and offline means of communication establishes these protest campaigns as a hub through which

disparate publics interconnect” (Mattoni 2008, p.105-106). Mattoni also underlines that such channels also have risks involved, the most important one being the creation of new inequalities through the exclusion of populations that do not have access to them. A similar conclusion is also drawn by Rasmus Kleis Nielsen on the occupation of the Zucotti Park in New York as part of the Occupy Wall Street demonstrations (Nielsen 2013). Nielsen argues that, in a society with limited internet and social media penetration, “relying too heavily on tools and techniques that some but not others are comfortable with, over time, will influence who are recruited into the movement... raising the risk of social exclusion (p. 175-176).

Mattoni, in her analysis, detects that “both at the national and transnational level, ICTs strongly contribute to the organization of the protest campaign, *though they do not predetermine an upward scale shift nor do it predetermine its organizational pattern.*” (p. 121). Such data coming from studies on social movements undermine certain presumptions of Castells’ network analysis that tend to unproblematically attribute qualities as horizontality and autonomy to digitalized networks.

Therefore, it seems indispensable to come up with means to conceptualize technological mediation in social media in ways that would not promote disembodied accounts through an uneven emphasis on information and ICTs that a. obfuscate the significance of the physical occupied space, place-specificity and embodiment especially in occupy movements, b. abstain from analyzing the negative aspects brought forward by the mediation of social media, c. occult the equally important



struggle over the infrastructure that sustains digital communication, d. unproblematically attribute positive characters of the mobilizations like horizontality and deliberation to digital networks ignoring decades old offline deliberation practices that are mobilized in the reclaimed public space.

#### ***5.1.1.3. From the Logic of Network to the Logic of Aggregation***

Mostly leaning on Castells' insights on the network society, Jeffrey Juris presents an illuminating and beautifully written network account of anti-corporate globalization movements based in Barcelona in his book *Networking Futures* (Juris 2008). Acknowledging the significant role played by digital networking in the organization of “a transnational network of movements against corporate globalization”, Juris relates direct democratic models experimented in these networks to the “emerging networking logics” (Juris 2008, p. 3).

Nevertheless, as stated by Williams, Juris avoids adopting “the typical approach of network analysts who study nodes, ties or dyads” (Williams 2009, p. 616). Rather, he relies on “the traditional craft of the anthropologist: long-term participant observation within and among activist networks themselves” (Juris 2008, p. 5). Juris justifies the use of this methodology by referring to his interest in the way networks “are built in practice” (p. 5). Therefore, it can aptly be said that Juris deploys the concept of ‘network’ as a conceptual tool, yet he resorts to ethnography, participatory observation and interviews so as to account for *practices*. His account is indeed lively

and much more embodied than classical network analysis. He also underlines the fact that “networks are not *inherently* democratic or egalitarian,” while suggesting that “their distributed structure does suggest a *potential* affinity with egalitarian values – including flat hierarchies, horizontal relations, and decentralized coordination- which activists project back onto network technologies and forms” (p. 17). He is again careful in underlining the fact that digital networks also tend to include “various degrees of centralization and hierarchy” (p. 17) also underlining that the lack of formal hierarchical structures might even encourage informal hierarchies (p. 18). Therefore, although the language of Juris might at times suggest a direct causal relationship relating deliberative models experimented in anti-corporate globalization networks to the potential horizontality in digital networks, he attempts to be cautious in not attributing democracy, horizontality and egalitarianism to digital networks. The tension between the two perspectives is also visible in his analysis of the Occupy Wall Street movement in Boston.

In his article, *Reflections on #Occupy Everywhere: Social media, public space and emerging logics of aggregation*, Jeffrey Juris emphasizes the place-specificity of the mobilizations, while at the same treating this spatial character of the movement as the materialization of the virtual community created through internet. He thus refers to occupations as “the physical and communal *embodiments* of the virtual crowds of individuals aggregated through the viral flows of social media.” (Juris 2012, p. 269). He identifies a different logic in the Occupy Wall Street movement when compared to the previous cycle of global justice movements governed by the logic of network.

Accordingly, while the logic of network is operated among already politicized activists, the Occupy movement witnesses another logic, a *logics of aggregation* “which involves the assembling of masses of individuals from diverse backgrounds within physical spaces,” (p. 260; Gerbaudo 2012, p.11). Therefore, while the alternative globalization movements he meticulously analyzes in *Networking Futures* (Juris, 2008) relies on a logic of network whereby a self-generating network enhanced by new technologies like Free and Open Software (FOSS) development process “becomes a powerful model for (re)organizing society based on horizontal collaboration, participatory democracy and coordination through autonomy and diversity,” (p.17) the new social movements characterized by the occupation of public squares rely on a logic of aggregation whereby a large number of people are at first organized via social media, then to be embodied on the streets.

This requirement, on the side of an anthropologist who has ample experience in both alter-globalization movements and Occupy movements, to develop a new conceptual tool to account for the emerging occupy movements evinces the limits of the concept of network to account for the assembling of large number of individuals and collectives from very different backgrounds in the public space. It is indeed true that “network has a connotation of fixed lines of communication or connection bounded in closed conduits. Network analyses typically represent findings diagrammatically depicting linkages and frequencies of interactions between identified and known parties” (Chesters & Welsh, 2006, p. 20).

Nevertheless, Juris attributes this new characteristic of occupy movements to the *viral flows of social media*, while at the same time, subordinating the occupations to the *embodiments of virtual crowds* aggregated through them. This wording implies that the relation between the online and offline space is construed as a unilateral materialization of that which is virtual/online. This suggests a concept of embodiment which is reduced to the actualization of an online crowd. Especially in movements like Occupy where we witness a very rapid increase in the number of protesters, it is dubious to assume the existence of a ‘virtual crowd’ that preceded the encounter of these heterogeneous individuals and collectivities. In the Gezi Movement, while it is true that the majority of the participants were informed about the incident via social media at the absence of traditional media coverage, their first reaction was to swarm the park and be a part of the communities that are being made *therein*. Therefore, it would be difficult to assume that a virtual crowd preceded the communities that are being made on the streets via embodied life sharing practices. Moreover, the social media was mostly used to be ‘informed’ about what was going on in the streets and to share information (hence, for the purposes of citizen activism) while it wasn’t particularly used to organize life in Gezi Park. Also in the subsequent park assemblies, the use of social media is construed as part of a more general concern to be inclusive and transparent.

#### ***5.1.1.4. Accounts based on a more hybrid relationship among online-offline networks***

Nevertheless, there are also more nuanced stances on possible complex interactions

between the streets and the social media. The logic of connective action developed by Bennett and Sederberg, for instance, proposes a more complex picture of “differing logics of action that underpin distinct kinds of collective action networks” of which the more traditional collective action either gives way to or co-exists with the new logic of connective action characterized by “personalized action formations” (Bennett and Sederberg 2012, p.743). Being in direct communication with the social movement theory, Bennett and Sederberg propose a model that gives space to a range of hybrid (collective and connective at differing levels) formations in between two poles of traditional collective action –as it is defined by Olson- and the new logic of connective action where “co-production and sharing are based on personalized expression” in digital media (p. 752). They define ‘occupy network’ and more specifically 15M as an ideal example of connective action. Although they depict a more nuanced and complex picture of contentious action where “different forms layer and overlap,” the logic of connective action gives an overly individualist explanation of the social movements in question that is merely based on personalized action formations in social media.

Again, Monterde et al., propose a systemic approach to collective identity in recent mobilizations in an attempt to overcome a potential split in the literature between more informationalist approaches and approaches leaning on the collective identity. They thus refer to the concept of multitude developed by Negri & Hardt to define the prevailing identity in the recent wave of social contention as ‘multitudinous identity’ being “the result of processes by which a dynamic network of recursive interactions

among heterogeneous, autonomous actors emerges and differentiates itself, as a microscopic unit, with respect to its environment, showing high degrees of distributed cohesion, transversal participation and transient adaptive poles of reference” (Monterde et al. 2015, p. 933, p. 944). Although it develops a useful notion for network studies on the recent occupy movements, this approach doesn’t cover a significant aspect that the multitude originally defined by Negri and Hardt entails: its embodied and embedded character. Adapted from Spinoza, multitude refers to a subject formation, a social body specific to the era of bio-politics in which the life itself becomes the target of power, which in turn implies that in this era, all politics becomes body politics revolving around certain technologies of self (see chapter 6). That’s why others inspired by the concept of the multitude like Bratich aspire to seek “for a genealogy of dispositives of subjectivation from the perspective of resistance” and analyze “an amalgamation of mediated processes of subjectivation including memes, meme-platforms, Anonymous operations” in Occupy Wall Street activists with respect to body politics as “apps for emergent subjectivities as part of the constituent power of an erupting body” (Bratich 2014, p.64, 67).

Such a bio-political approach construing technological mediation channels as apps for emergent subjectivities of a constituent power of an erupting body is also congruent with the findings of Derek Gregory regarding the mobilization in Tahrir square/Egypt. Also referring to the data from Mona El-Ghobashy and Helga Tawil-Souri, Gregory underlines that “the conventional means of communication and the physical presence of the people in places like Tahrir Square” had overriding importance (Gregory 2015,

p.237). For him, what counts is “the materiality of the square and the corporeality of its occupants,” it is where the space is produced, as “the urban space where ‘newness’ might enter the world does not pre-exist its performance.” (ibid. p. 240). Similarly, Tejerina et al., while stating that “the embodied, territorialized political praxis associated with these occupations was indeed combined with the intensive and savvy use of social media,” add the fact that “it was however the physical encounter with others that actually gave birth to the movement.” (Tejerina, Perugorría, Benski, Langman 2013, p.7). It would then be relevant to criticize the disembodied stance of approaches regarding the technological mediation in the recent wave of social contention (Gerbaudo 2012, p.11; Berardi, 2013) and the disembodied rendering of concepts like multitude.

These accounts seem to account for the material encounters realized in the occupied public space as secondary to the organizational capacities provided by the use of internet and social media. They instead attribute the organizational characters of the movement as horizontality, transparency and participation mainly to the possibilities enhanced by certain communication media. The material encounters realized within the reclaimed territory of resistance are presented as the materialization of the capacities provided by the internet. In the very phrasing of the relation between the virtual and the material, there is an open prevalence attributed to online organization which is *then, from there* brought to the square as *the physical and communal embodiment* of the first. Nevertheless, in the case of the Gezi Movement, as we have seen in the fourth chapter, this is at odds with the protester accounts on their

engagement with the social media. Although they all acknowledge the significance on the social media –especially with respect to sharing information (activist reporting) at the absence of the traditional media channels- they tend to react against accounts that overemphasize the role of the social media in the organization and enactment of the mobilization. It's indeed true that park assemblies were careful in not conducting political discussions or taking decision in their online communication channels (blogs, web sites, social media pages). Assemblies were the main decision- making and discussion mechanisms during the park assemblies. As stated in second, third and fourth chapters, most of the protest types were highly embodied and the maintenance of the daily life in Gezi Park was based on bodily and affective exchanges in the collective (like food sharing, communal cooking practices, community gardens, communal praying rituals) which might otherwise be impossible to attain in the highly individualized online media. Similarly, the concerns that have come to become the 'values' of the Gezi Movement emerged out of these practices and protest types and as such they are highly embedded in the bodily enactments that constituted the movement in its totality. Therefore, we need an account on technological mediation in the Gezi Movement that would do justice to this bodily and performative aspect of the movement. Below, I present some theories that put the concept of network in perspective and provide a more balanced approach to the connection between online and offline media in social movements.



## 5.2. Network in perspective

### 5.2.1. Chesters and Welsh's complexity-informed network account

Chesters and Welsh in their book named *Complexity in Social Movements: Multitudes, at the Edge of Chaos* (2006) point to a requirement of new conceptual tools to study social movements that have become complex global events. In order to account for Peoples Global Action (PGA) and the World Social Forum movement (WSF), they make use of a rich conceptual package deploying concepts of Melucci (planetary action systems), Deleuze & Guattari (rhizome) and Bateson in a dynamic dialogue with the complexity theory.

Chesters and Welsh conceive the alter-globalization movement as a strange attractor that mobilizes a “process of reterritorialization’ through the deployment of a heterogeneous group of actors “ranging from classically conceived pressure groups, SMOs, to social movements and networks actors such as PGA” (p.7). Their use of the Deleuzian concept of reterritorialization indicates the potential of the alter-globalization movement to actualize an alternative to the capitalist axiomatic through grass-roots action. Here, they use the term translation to elucidate the process through which particular interests of each components are rendered common around a common enemy and certain symbolic concerns (p. 7). They define the relationship between network actors like PGA and established networks as *rhizomatic*, being yet another Deleuze-Guattarian concept used to depict a relational domain characterized by the principle of connection and heterogeneity wherein new connections can be

made at any moment between elements of different nature (biological, physique, semiotic etc.) (Deleuze-Guattari 1980, p. 13). Therefore, we witness in the work of Chesters & Welsh two different types of network, one that characterizes the established ones and the others that characterizes new, rhizomatic bonds with the emerging networks like PGA. Here, it is clear that the concept of rhizome is introduced by Chesters and Welsh to account for the *emergence* of new ties among heterogeneous actors that have different levels of organization ranging from more hierarchical to more flexible and horizontal. Indeed, as stated in the above section on the logic of aggregation, they point to the restrictions of the concept of network when it comes to conceptualize emergence and novelty.

Alter-globalization movements thus established through rhizomatic bonds between established networks, classical organizations, interest groups and PGA networks are “predicated upon both virtual and face-work interaction which when combined constitute global flows through the agency of multiple actors” (Chesters & Welsh 2006, p. 8).

It is indeed true that the work of Chesters and Welsh makes due emphasis on the importance of both offline and online interactions. Although underlining the role undertaken by CMCs in the establishment of such rhizomatic bonds, they are careful in assessing that “the representation of the virtual domain as inherently democratic smooth space is an over-extension ignoring not only issues of network access but also the constraints imposed via system architecture through search, access and

surveillance protocols embedded in ‘the machine’ (p. 20). As such, their analysis includes a complex and dynamic relationship between the online and offline media that constitute main forces responsible for the *reflective framing*, i.e. sense making practices of the actors (p. 9).

Chesters and Welsh introduce the concept of *reflective framing* so as to come up with a complex sense-making activity that would include both cognitive capacities of expression and an affective domain. This includes a certain sensitivity towards aesthetic registers that become visible in pre-figurative performances on the street. “Reflexive framing addresses the ontological nature of cognition by recognizing the importance of aesthetic primacy” (p. 9-10). Such an analysis, consequently, does justice to both the role of CMCs in the framing processes and the bodily performances on the streets that constitute the pre-figurative aspect of the alter-globalization movements.

Our strong case is that the AGM has exercised such power against the institutions of global neo-liberalism through an effective siege of the signs utilizing play, theatrical performance and the mundane presence of CMC constitutive of plateaux of resistance maintained through an ecology of action which introduces, amongst other things, an iterative element to the framing process (Chesters & Welsh 2006, p. 16).

Therefore, the concept of reflexive framing presents a strong argument with respect to the dynamic relationship between online and offline media in contentious action. The underlined *aesthetic primacy* has the capacity to account for the bodily aspects of

the mobilizations duly depicted in the first chapter of the book. Here, they underline the significant role assumed by *carnavalesque street parties* and *dramaturgical presence on the streets* in the reterritorializing force of the mobilizations: “Entering such spaces is a step into another world, a world where symbolic coding inverts the meaning and sign value of the familiar” (p. 33). In this respect, they make reference to Melucci’s emphasis on the symbolic value of social movements in the creation of new cultural codes<sup>45</sup>. *Symbolic coding inverting the meaning and sign value of the familiar* through repetitive street performance and its simultaneous expression in online and offline media has a transformative effect.

Chesters and Welsh introduce a reading of the complexity theory through Deleuzian concepts like *becoming* a. to avoid attributing an ‘origin’ to social movements so as to come up with a non-teleological and genealogical historic line that invites analysts to direct their attention towards emergence and translation at each moment of the mobilization. The dictum averring that “the initial conditions of a process or event are ‘irrecoverable’ but shape subsequent paths and expressive forms” (p. 8) is translated to the analysis of social movements in a way to foreground *becoming*. Hence, “founding moments are myths” (p. 8) and social movements are events composed of a lineage of self-differentiating contentious action. b. to foreground ontology in the

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<sup>45</sup> “For Melucci a pre-occupation with the impact of movements upon prevailing political systems and policies diverts attention away from their role in the ‘production of cultural codes’ which ‘is the principle activity of the hidden networks of contemporary movements’ (1996a: 6)” (Chesters & Welsh 2006, p.18).

processes of knowing and observation and c. to underline the importance of “feedback, particularly iterative forms, enabling a system (social or otherwise) to fold over on itself permits the exhibition of emergent properties and *new* forms of organization” (p. 9). Here, we see that, Chesters and Welsh make use of the complexity theory so as to elucidate social movements as open systems that sustain themselves through feedback mechanisms folding over themselves so as to render consistency to self-differentiating initial conditions. Such a reading makes room for emergence and novelty, while at the same it endows us with tools to track the lineage of a particular social movement. In the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter, I will adopt a similar stance in the reading of social movements, this time mobilizing the opportunities provided by the Althusserian materialism of the encounter and Deleuze-Guattarian concept of event.

Although they suffice it to say that network analysis is a tool suitable to better evaluate the bonds that already exist among individuals and collectivities, a new concept, that of rhizome, is required to account for emerging collectives, Chesters and Welsh do not mobilize a criticism towards the concept of network as it is used in the social movement studies. Furthermore, they state that “the notion of rhizome advanced here is at once redolent of the contemporary use of network society (Castells 1996) and the embodiment within this term of a number of previous terms such as social network analyses and actor network theory/ies (Latour 1996, 1999, 2004, Law and Hassard 1999)” (p. 20). Therefore, it can aptly be said that Chesters and Welsh’s tentative to make use of new concepts like rhizome besides that of network also falls under the category of theories that situate the concept within an existing social theory of

network. Chesters and Welsh do not further discuss on what grounds their use of the term network is redolent with its use in network society accounts and ANT's actor-networks, although there are significant differences among the latter two theories. As stated by Escobar and Osterweil, the term network in Actor-Network theory is mobilized so as to challenge the existing theories of the social. As such, the concept of network in ANT, far from fitting into an already existing social theory, points to an alternative perspective to what constitutes the social as we know it. Below is a brief analysis on the notion of network as it is deployed by the Actor-Network theory.

### 5.3. Network in ANT: A material-semiotics

In a keynote speech in the International Seminar on Network Theory: Network Multidimensionality in the Digital Age, Bruno Latour elucidates his use of the term network as such:

You see that I take the word network not simply to designate things in the world that have the shape of a net (in contrast, let's say, to juxtaposed domains, to surfaces delineated by borders, to impenetrable volumes), but mainly to designate a *mode of inquiry* that learns to list, at the occasion of a trial, the unexpected beings necessary for any entity to exist. A network, in this second meaning of the word, is more like what you record through a Geiger counter that clicks every time a new element invisible before has been made visible to the inquirer (Latour 2010, p. 5).

Here, it's already clear that the notion of network has the form of a philosophical *inquiry* on the ways through which what we perceive as a substance comes to exist as such via the support of many entities to which it is attached. Being thus an inquiry on

the substantiality of a thing aspiring to grasp the process through which that particular thing is constituted, network in ANT shifts the attention away from the substance to that which sustains it. “Or, rather, what takes any *substance* that had seemed at first self-contained (that’s what the word means after all) and transforms it into what it needs to *subsist* through a complex ecology of tributaries, allies, accomplices, and helpers” (p. 5). Therefore, the network in ANT comes to the fore “whenever action is to be redistributed” (p. 2). As the action is always redistributed along a wide array of material and symbolic supports that make it possible to act, the concept of network provides an almost microscopic perspective that reveals a thick web of relations that surround even seemingly unproblematic actions as eating, sewing, speaking.

In the classical *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, Bruno Latour calls it “a very practical world-building enterprise that consists in connecting entities with other entities, that is, tracing a network” (Latour 2005, p.103). Hence, a network is about the ways and means through which entities are connected to other entities. Totalizing entities as the subject, the society etc. come to be constituted in networks, i.e. traces of redistributed actions through which entities connect to one-another. Once we move from the substance to the ways it is substantiated, sustained and supported, the very definition of the social equally changes. “Every time A is said to be related to some B, it’s the social itself that is being generated” (p. 103). This is why Escobar defines ANT as a theory of network that doesn’t fit into already existing social theories, but that challenges them: “The social has never explained anything, the social has to be explained instead” (p. 97).

Such a concept of network indeed requires a new approach to the social that would deem it a particular way of assembling things. As such, the social is thought not in the mode of a substantive but an infinitive: a *translation*.

Therefore, the network makes visible a complex field of relations that sustain what is perceived as substances. The task of the sociologist is thus mapping a network via tracing those relations and practices that make a world. Such an act of tracing requires translations of all sorts as a world is simultaneously constituted by *associations* at different and heterogeneous levels. The work of a translator requires *symmetrization* that would flatten the field that is otherwise striated (Deleuze & Guattari 1980) by way of actively dismantling binary oppositions that sustain the illusionary autonomy of a lawful social domain having rational subjects as its main actors. The ANT shifts the attention from a law-governed social domain –almost always defined through its opposition to a natural domain- to the *network*, the domain of the redistributed action that occurs in a hybrid (both natural and cultural) smooth space. Here, we see the revolutionary touch of ANT in its redeployment of the concept of network: *Network* in infinitive –which is not defined as something that ‘is,’ but something that ‘has’ (Latour 2010, p. 7) as such takes the place of the ‘social,’ while the task of the sociologist becomes following associations that make a difference in action: (...) to use the word social for such a process is legitimated by the oldest etymology of the word *socius*: ‘someone following someone else,’ ‘a follower’ an ‘associate’ (Latour 2005, p. 108). the Gezi Movement account presented in the first section of the thesis is therefore influenced by this call of ANT to follow what makes a difference in action



and how communities are constituted around these translations and the issues they bring forward (see the section on methodology in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter). It is indeed true that social movements as the Gezi Movement that leans on world and life-making practices directly enacted in the public space reveal the fact that the social as a category or a well-codified fixed entity is in fact already in a process of assembling and de-assembling. The alternative occupied spaces and alternative relationalities created out there through collective cooking, cleaning, food-sharing practices, performative protests as human chains, standing man, Earthmeals, collective praying practices etc. show that social is not a self-sustaining substance but a collective-in-making. Such exemplary moments of contentious action are indeed act as labs to see a community-in-the-making via the process of assembling heterogeneous entities in novel arrangements.

If the action is ‘dislocated (...) borrowed, distributed, suggested, influenced, dominated, betrayed, translated’ (p. 46) and network is what accounts for this type of action, then the ‘actor’ ceases to define a Subject endowed with intentionality. Rather, the actor “is what is made to act by many others’ (p. 46). This refers to the symmetrization move of the ANT: all that makes a difference from the situation A to B is an *actant*. *Actant* borrowed from the study of literature (Latour 2005, p. 54), more precisely from the semiotics of Greimas and Courtes (Tirado § Lopez p. 2012, p.3) is deployed to account for heterogeneous elements that make a difference from one situation to another. *Actant*, in that sense, is any element that has a function or activity in a narrative structure (p. 3) the significance of which resides in the fact that there is

no distinction between humans, non-humans or individuals, collectives. Hence, the most significant contribution of ANT both in science and technology studies and other disciplines where its conceptual and methodological premises are mobilized: the importance of tracking *actants* of all sorts through the ways an action is translated. We will see that the theory/method is also used in social movement studies to account for the action of both human and non-human actors.

Thus, the ANT has opened up the field of science and technology studies, and other disciplines as sociology, economics and more recently social movement studies, to a vibrant field of *actants* of different natures that have come to assume agency. Construed as such, the network of ANT with its strong ontological claim of symmetrization takes on the Tardian task of following *the non-sociological grounds of sociology*, the principle of difference that precedes any given social order (Toews 2010, p. 81). The interest of ANT in controversies, conflicts, tensions and borders in the constitution of communities, scientific discourses and hypothesis is emblematic in that sense. We have seen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter on issue-formation (Marres 2007) in the Gezi Movement that borders in the constitution of Gezi park assembly communities were always constituted and re-constituted in a dynamic way and in-time certain concerns came to be prominent and defined the so-called Gezi Spirit. This process included controversies, conflicts, as well as agreements. The Kurdish issue, as we have seen in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter, was one of the most important factors in the issue-formation process of park assemblies. It radically shifted the communities involved in this new phase, this new translation of the mobilization. Protests organized by

Abbasaga Park Assembly, then to be followed by others, against the massacre of the Kurdish Medine Yıldırım by the police forces in Lice/Diyarbakır indeed changed the course of the action and had significant impact on the definitions of the borders in the constitution of park assembly communities.

The production of knowledge –be it scientific or not- is also an ongoing translation among technics, technologies, objects, discourses and believes coming from a heterogeneous array of disciplines and professions with the tensions and controversies that they bring forward. It is a controversial and often conflictual space where different worlds collide and new ones are made. Problematizing the way ‘scientific facts’ are being assembled –and treating the assembling of the social in a similar manner-, therefore orienting towards the ‘how’ question has indeed had a demystifying force revealing what a great deal of effort is required to maintain and sustain certain ‘world-making’ practices that are otherwise naturalized.

### **5.3.1. Critics against the use of the term of actor-network**

Nevertheless, John Law alerts us on how this demystifying, destabilizing force of the ANT is under the risk of being undermined with its wide acceptance and propagation in time (Law 1999). Bruno Latour also points to the fact that the term of network, especially with the rise of the world wide web, somehow lost its critical power and turned into a commonplace term, a ‘pet notion’ that “now means transport without

deformation, an instantaneous, unmediated access to every piece of information” (Latour 1999, p. 15). Tim Ingold also underlines the fact that the translation of the French *acteur-réseau* into English as actor-‘network’ somehow changed the original meaning of the word which “can refer just as well to netting as to network- to woven fabric of the spider’s web, for example, quite unlike those of the communication network.” (Ingold 2011, p. 85).

Directing the critical stance peculiar to ANT this time against the way it has come to be deployed in time as a somewhat well-defined and fixed strategy, Law reminds us of the values defended by ANT: “displacement, movement, dissolution and fractionality” (p. 3). Similarly, Latour reminds us of the critical import of the term when it was first started to be utilized by underlining the fact that it meant first and foremost “*transformations* that could not be captured by any of the traditional terms of social theory” (Latour 1999, p. 15).

So as to amend certain misinterpretations around the concept of actor-network, John Law, in his revision of the significant contributions of ANT, avers that ANT is first and foremost a. semiotics of materiality and b. performativity (p. 4). The semiotics of materiality, as defined by Law, points to the prevalence of relations over substances (we will see in the next and last chapters that the concept of assemblage proposed by the thesis as a means to read Occupy movements also leans on the prevalence of relations over substances). A strictly anti-essentialist stance is thus mobilized by ANT. Also called ‘relational materiality,’ (p. 4), this *semiotics of materiality* – of

*materiality*, as it doesn't limit itself to linguistic enunciations- proffers that what has come to be an entity is not so by means of some inherent qualities, rather it is a certain arrangement that has come to be endowed with a certain level of fixity<sup>46</sup>.

Hence, the second characteristic of ANT: performativity. Performativity is about how certain entities, discourses, things come to have more or less durability and fixity. How certain relations hold in time is indeed an important question once it is said that there is no inherent rule nor an essential principle that guarantees that. Bruno Latour, in line with his dissatisfaction regarding the popularization of the term to point to an unproblematic access to information in digital networks, deems it necessary to insist on the fact that “the expansion of digitality has enormously increased the *material* dimension of networks: *the more digital, the less virtual and the more material* a given activity becomes” (Latour 2010, p. 7). It's clear that Latour's aim, in his insistence on the material and local dimensions of digital networks<sup>47</sup>, is to oppose the aforementioned popularized use of the term network that disregards the complex material-semiotic bonds interwoven in actor-networks and associates network to

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<sup>46</sup> We will see, in the last chapter, that Althusser, in a similar vein, criticizes the logic of the accomplished fact that forgets that what 'is' is not a fixed entity, rather it is the result of a certain constitution. This relational ontology is indeed common between ANT and Marxism, despite the differences of the two disciplines (Kirsch and Mitchell, 2004)

<sup>47</sup> “Whenever an action is conceived as networky, it has to pay the full prize of its extension, it's composed mainly of voids, it can be interrupted, it is fully dependent on its material conditions, it cannot just expand everywhere for free (its universality is fully local). (...) I hope you now understand that if we accept to talk about a network revolution, it is because of the coincidence between the conceptual notion of network (action is radically redistributed) and the *rematerialization* allowed by digital techniques” (Latour 2010, p.7, *emphasize is mine*).

unproblematic access to information, a problem that can also be detected in Castells' use of the term. Latour's rematerializing attempt is indeed a timely intervention on the perception of the concept network with the rise of digital networks.

Having said that, there appear to be other issues to be attended to and most of the critics against ANT revolve around them. It is indeed revolutionary to shift the focus from macro-level entities whose arrangement is never really questioned towards the ways through which they are assembled at micro-level. Flattening or rather smoothing the field so as to attribute agency to the entire actor-network made up of heterogeneous elements both material and discursive in nature is also a revolutionary move to undermine the anthropocentric weight of intentionality attributed to the human Subject. Nevertheless, is ANT endowed with tools to account for the uneven distribution of assembling capacities? Is it rather flattening the field without paying due attention to the fact that some actors are more privileged than others in their power to assemble entities? John Law states this critic regarding the limits of inclusivity mobilized by ANT with respect to Leigh Star's remark that "heterogeneity is quite different for those that are privileged and those that are not" (Law 1999, p. 5). Then comes the question about the place of Otherness as pure difference (p. 5). How can otherness be conceptualized in the symmetrical ontology of ANT? The critic in Law's terms states "that the approach effaced whatever could not be translated into network terms, so failing to recognize its own role as an intellectual technology of Othering (Lee and Brown: 1994)" (Law 2007, p. 11). This is also related to the role of difference in ANT accounts. As such, it speaks to another critic that concerns the role of orderings that are not managerial, strategic or engineering (p. 5). As is stated by John

Law “it was argued that (the studies of ANT) were often centered, managerialist and even military in character, attending to the powerful, sometimes in functionalist and masculinist mode (Star: 1991)” and “that it was not very aware of its own politics, and in particular of the political agendas of its own stories (Haraway 1997)” (Law, 2007 p. 11).

Ignasio Farias further expands the critic that is also related to the insufficiency of ANT to ponder over exteriority in the form of the ‘other’ and proffers that ANT is not endowed with conceptual tools to account for *differenciacion*, hence the virtual (Farias 2012, p. 304).

All of these questions, as we will see, shape the revisions of the actor-network ‘theory’ which, as stated by John Law, is more an approach than a theory in its classical sense<sup>48</sup>. The new directions in ANT period thus attempts to provide solutions to above issues with a highlighted emphasis on questions around *material-semiotics*, *performativity*, *topology* (Rodriguez-Giralt 2012, p. 368) and *politics*. The fact that some actors are more privileged than others in their capacity to assembly entities and orderings that fall short of the classical managerial and strategist heterogeneities are especially tackled by feminist science and technology studies.

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<sup>48</sup> “The actor-network approach is not a theory. Theories usually try to explain why something happens, but actor-network theory is descriptive rather than foundational in explanatory terms, which means that it is a disappointment for those seeking strong accounts. Instead it tells stories about ‘how’ relations assemble or don’t.” (Law, 2007, p. 2).

With respect to the question of virtual as the motor of becoming or the lack thereof in ANT, Farias deploys the concept of virtual in Luhmann by also taking into account the role of the same concept in Deleuze and Guattari with respect to the question of becoming. Hence, Farias makes a dear contribution to discussions regarding the role of the ‘outside’ as the motor of differentiation, novelty and change. In the 7<sup>th</sup> chapter, I am going to further dwell on this issue when it comes to analyze the concept of assemblage introduced by Deleuze and Guattari and its potential to foster better accounts of social movements as the Gezi Movement that require conceptual tools to account for novelty and emergence. Indeed, the concept of assemblage when considered as part of the Deleuze-Guattarian pragmatics in which it is originally situated provides us with better tools to account for embodiment in social movements as it leans on a politics of affect which is directly related to the event’s openness to the virtual.

Thus far, I tried to explain the concept of the network as it is developed by the Actor-Network Theory. Then, I underlined some problems raised by this deployment that marked the new directions therein. Below, I am going to dwell on these issues so as to show the new course of discussions around issues tackled by ANT scholars and their critics. Here, we will see that territoriality, material-semiotics, locality come to the fore. This has paved the way for a fertile ground for feminist critics to make valuable interventions on the question of power in the unequal distribution of capacities to assemble worlds and conceive other heterogeneous orderings that make



more justice to embodiment, affects and bodily practices. As I already stated in the section on methodology in the first chapter, it is this intervention of the feminist science and technology studies that introduces the practice of “care” in knowledge-making activities with a keen interest in the role of affects and bodily practices in world-making practices. This intervention of the feminist science and technology studies in the use of the term of network in classic ANT accounts paves the way for a shift from matters of concern to matters of care (Puig de la Bella Casa 2010) and directs a keen eye towards the role of body, affects and affective community making practices in our world making activities. Below, I am going to underline the new directions taken by the ANT in its aftermath mostly as a result of these critics, then I will discuss the use of the ANT in social movement studies so as to question whether the concept of network as it is deployed ANT is still a fertile ground to study social movement communities.

### **5.3.2. The ANT in its aftermath: New Directions**

In this period, we observe that a new emphasis is made on the materiality of relations. John Law even proffers that we can instead use the name material semiotics to refer to what we have come to call ANT (Law 2007, p. 2). Law underlines the fact ANT “is a sensibility to the messy practices of relationality and materiality of the world” (p. 2). The materiality of the material-semiotics gives precedence, as stated above, to the relationality over the terms it is composed of. The terms, in this account, come to be endowed with certain qualities as part of their interactions within this relational

space, i.e. network. What appears as substance is an effect of these relational space in which certain relations gain a certain level of durability. Therefore, ANT is interested in ‘how’ these networks, these relational domains are established and how they sustain themselves by taking into consideration the fact that this process owns much to material components. As stated above, Tim Ingold, also underlines the fact that originally the term ‘network’ or *réseau* in fact mobilizes this shift from substances – points- to relations unlike the common usage of the term that leans on connections between already existing points, hence a separation between substances and their connections, i.e. relations (2011 p. 70).

This project is made possible only if we can conceive space from a different perspective. For that reason, John Law foregrounds the possibility of plural ‘topologies’ as among the tenets of ANT. Waging war against Euclideanism (Law, 1999, p. 6-7), ANT is an exercise to ponder over different spatial forms and network is proposed as “an alternative topological system” (p. 6). In this topological system objects, entities, things as well as discourses hold in time thanks to the durability of the relations that compose and assemble them. That’s why ANT accounts also orient towards relations that do not hold and networks that are dispersed. The fragility, failure and dispersion are integral parts of what may happen to a network (Law 2007, p. 7; Law 2008, p. 5<sup>49</sup>). Murdoch, for instance, analyzes the new spatial possibilities

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<sup>49</sup> “Material semiotics attends to much the same messy laboratory realities. It starts, like SSK, with a story about the assembly of heterogeneous materials. Then it notes, again like SSK, that this is often, indeed perhaps usually, a process beset by uncertainty. In most labs and most of the time, at the experimental cutting edge entropy is constantly threatening. Experiments don’t work. The signal to noise ratio is too low, a vital input isn’t available, the software has crashed, or the experimental rats

opened up by ANT and detects two of them: *spaces of prescription* and *spaces of negation* (Murdoch, 1998, p. 357). As it is also stated by Rodriguez-Giralt, it is indeed true that the social topology had a significant contribution in the development of the concept network in ‘post-ANT’ period (Rodriguez-Giralt 1999, p. 370). With the help of this contribution, ANT proposed new conceptual tools to elucidate heterogeneous, fluid and complex spatial forms (p. 370).

Apart from a new emphasis on topology as a means to ponder over spatial forms that cannot be accounted for in Euclidian space, there appears a new emphasis on the role of politics or political repercussions of ANT accounts. As a response to the above-mentioned critics as to the political implication of ANT, John Law clarifies the political stakes of the famous case studies realized by ANT scholars: to “deconstruct power by ‘studying up’ rather than ‘down’” (Law 2007, p. 11)<sup>50</sup>. AnneMarie Mol also

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are anomalous. Then it says (and again this is close to SSK) that laboratory science is all about ordering (in) an uncertain environment. It is about lining materials up for long enough to get them to hold in a particular way. It is about creating assemblages that will hold sufficiently well to allow an experiment to take place. But at this point it starts to part company from SSK.”

<sup>50</sup> “First, Latour’s work on Pasteur shows the latter to be a network effect rather than a shaping genius. Law’s managers are similarly treated not as heroes but products of multiple and decentred discourses. In both studies the authors are trying to deconstruct power by ‘studying up’ rather than down. Second, Latour’s laboratory ethnography is an explicit attempt to reject the Othering of French colonial anthropology by applying its techniques (which he originally applied in the classrooms of the Cote D’Ivoire) to high status scientific knowledge. More studying up rather than down. If there is a difference between the West and the Rest it is, Latour tells us, not because the Rest is radically Other, but because the West has accumulated a series of small and practical techniques that generate cumulative advantage (Latour: 1990).”

makes ample reference to the ontological politics of ANT (Mol 1999, p. 74-90). Mol states that her interest is about “the ways in which ‘the real’ is implicated in the ‘political’ and *vice versa*” (p. 74). According to her, ANT is among the theories that undermined the division between the two, i.e. the real and the political. Yet, it is unclear what that might mean for political action.

The term, *ontological politics* implies, as part of the lineage of ANT, that the domain of being, of the real is political, thus changed, modified and contested. According to Mol, this is in line with ANT’s preoccupation to depict ‘how’ certain entities to which a substance position is *apres coup* attributed are in fact constituted and sustained by micro-level relations with other material and semiotic entities. Therefore, the question ‘to be’ goes hand in hand with the question of what sustains beings. The term *ontological politics* thus refers to the fact that reality is constituted, it is *local* and *multiple* (p. 75). The reality is nothing but certain relations that hold in time through subsequent performance. Thus, enactment comes to the fore in the explanation of what type of networks endure in time (p. 77; Law 2007, p. 12). Here, Mol clearly refers to

Judith Butler's theory of performativity<sup>51 52</sup> and queer and lesbian sub-cultures' capacity to create alternative realities (Mol 1999, p. 87; Law 2008, p. 6).

The afore-mentioned interest in the political stakes of ANT, as well as a keen interest in materiality, is clearly in convergence with the interventions made by feminist STS studies on the concept of objectivity. Both Law and Mol use the terminology directly coming from Haraway's analysis on situated knowledge and Strathern's partial connections. These concepts provide us with valuable analysis on how to account for the aforementioned uneven distribution of assembling capacities. As stated above, one of the most important critics to ANT comes from Leigh Star and avers that ANT

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<sup>51</sup> Once the bits and pieces have been successfully assembled and bolted together it is taken to have a form, and everything else being equal it will continue to hold that form. But material semiotics does not share this assumption. Instead it assumes that knowledge and realities are being continuously enacted or performed. This talk of performance does not lead us to Goffman, for Goffman assumes that people are resourceful actors on a stage with more or less fixed props. Instead it takes us to the kind of non-humanist and post-structuralist world imagined by Michel Foucault or Judith Butler in which human subjects are being enacted and given form in relational practices just as much as anything else.

<sup>52</sup> Here, Mol assumes that there is a convergence between the concept of performativity in Judith Butler and in material-semiotic accounts of the post-ANT period. However, this leads to serious conceptual problems as to the role of materiality in Butler's theory of performativity. Whether the material conceived in Butler's theory of performativity aligns with that of material-semiotic accounts of ANT requires to be further studied on, as there are serious critics against Butlerian performativity and the way the 'material' therein is reduced to passive matter (Bell, 2007; Braidotti, 2002, Barad, 2007). An analysis on the analytical explanation of the concept of performance and enactment in ANT is beyond the scope of this thesis. Nevertheless, I will suffice it to say that a direct reference to Judith Butler's theory of performativity brings forward questions on the conception of materiality in both traditions that are not throughoutly accounted by ANT scholars as Law and Mol.

disregards the fact that “heterogeneity is quite different for those that are privileged and those that are not” (Law 1999, p. 5). In that sense, it can aptly be said that the situated knowledge of Haraway (1991) and Strathern’s analysis (2004) on partial connections that take into consideration the unequal distribution of assembling capacities have been taken into consideration by ANT scholars. Studies on care ethics and the concept of care in science and technology studies are also influenced by above discussions and they keep on influencing post-ANT scholars. Below is a brief analysis of both concepts that have made serious contribution in recent revisions and reorientations of ANT. Then, I will discuss the concept of care in Annemarie Mol and Maria Puig de la Bellacasa.

### **5.3.3. Situated Knowledge, Partial Connections**

The concept of situated knowledge developed by Haraway as a means to ponder over the question of *objectivity* in science has indelibly influenced the ANT scholars in the so-called post-ANT period. It is a means to account for the differentiated positions actors assume in their world-making activities. Hence, it is about acknowledging privileged and asymmetrical positions when it comes to assembling heterogeneous elements. Thus, Haraway’s is a most valuable contribution to science studies in particular and social sciences in general to account for power, asymmetry and privilege inherent in the way we make science, i.e. assemble a world. Driven by the need to go beyond showing “radical historical contingency and modes of construction for everything” (Haraway 1991, p. 187), Haraway assumes the responsibility to make reality claims. Distancing herself from radical social constructivist accounts that fall

short of accounting for active materiality in reducing everything to a text mediated by language and normative power, Haraway avers that the feminists can no longer leave the task of making science and attesting for its objectivity to dominant masculine world-makers. Rather, “feminists have stakes in a successor science project that offers a more adequate, richer, better account of a world, in order to live in it well and in critical, reflective relation to our own as well as others’ practices of domination and the unequal parts of privilege and oppression that make up all positions” (p. 187). A sensibility to the questions of domination, privilege and inequality in the heterogeneous world-engineering activities, consequently, has to go hand in hand with claims to assemble better worlds. A keen eye to the fact that all knowledge claims are historically constructed via means that are by no means bereft of power asymmetries coupled with claims to have a word over the reality<sup>53</sup>... This is indeed a project that foregrounds difference, locality and multiplicity of knowledges and worlds thus constituted without falling into radical relativism or a cynical withdrawal away from reality claims.

How would it be possible to have reality claims while at the same time acknowledging their partiality, historical contingency? The answer would be by disclaiming any knowledge claim that assumes an all-encompassing, transcendental, neutral relation

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<sup>53</sup> “So, I think my problem and ‘our’ problem is how to have simultaneously an account of radical historical contingency for all knowledge claims and knowing subjects, a critical practice for recognizing our own ‘semiotic technologies’ for making meanings, and a no-nonsense commitment to faithful accounts of a ‘real’ world, one that can be partially shared and friendly to earth-wide projects of finite freedom, adequate material abundance, modest meaning in suffering and limited happiness” (Haraway, 1991, p. 187).

to the world it thus creates. The project would be saving *objectivity* from the omnipotence and neutrality that is traditionally ascribed to it and putting it back on its feet. Objectivity is only possible when it is well located.

Haraway reclaims objectivity by reclaiming vision. “Vision can be good for avoiding binary oppositions” (p. 188) as long as it is not the vision of an ubiquitous, disembodied God-like eye, “a gaze from nowhere” (p. 188). Objectivity has come to mean the vision of this gaze that marks ‘other’ bodies while assuming a neutral subject position for itself, as such obfuscating its historical position. Reclaiming objectivity would therefore signify at first demystifying the neutrality and universality claims of this *conquering gaze from nowhere*. This in turn requires situating it in its historical and embodied context: white and male in “late industrial, militarized, racist and male dominant societies” (p. 188). No vision is disembodied, let alone devoid of history.

*Situated knowledge* therefore reminds us of the fact that there is no disembodied, ahistorical vision and any claim for it is a colonizing and mystifying move. Science-making is a world making activity in heterogeneous orderings that tackle embodied ‘yet not strictly organic’ (p. 199) visions that pertain to real-life bodies that are made and re-made in material-semiotic constellations. Hence, “objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment, and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility (...) only partial perspective promises objective vision” (p. 190). Strathern, in her quest for an anthropological practice of connections that would concern “more than one person (...) more than a person (...) making connections with others in a partial manner” (Strathern 2004, p.



29) refers to Haraway and the way she uses the metaphor of vision to attest “the possibilities of a finite view” (p. 31). Such a stance that is “simultaneously situating itself within the discourses to which it is party and retaining the participant’s right to passionate criticism” (p. 32) is emblematic, according to Strathern, in the endeavors of both feminists and anthropologists. The key is to make partial connections with different disciplines and partially connecting oneself to the relations one adheres to as *more than a person*, just as the figure of cyborg evokes. Being more than a person implies never being a complete person. The figure of cyborg, being the surface of heterogeneous partial connections, guides the task of science-making in Strathern’s work, as it signifies an embodied (yet technologically mediated), well positioned yet non-complete, thus non-Subject position that opens the possibility of further connections. In this constellation, the descriptive outcome of the anthropologist’s sense-making endeavor would be a cut in the network that would serve as an openness to the possibility of further connections, hence diffraction. Therefore, networks of partial connections presuppose first and foremost *situatedness*, hence *embodiment*. Yet, this embodiment, this body would also be a surface of multiple, non-complete, technologically mediated connections that escape all organistic metaphors where the relation between the whole and the part is conceived in terms of the transcendence. This is close the understanding of embodiment and body implied by the concept of assemblage (see 6<sup>th</sup> chapter). This conception of embodiment goes hand in hand with a principle of organization based on the idea that the whole is not transcendent to its parts. As such, it grants each part a wholeness and a capacity to make –n connections. As we will further elucidate in the thesis, this idea of embodiment is also seen in the

Deleuze-Guattarian concept of assemblage. Indeed, with its Spinozist touch, the Deleuze-Guattarian body is conceived through affects. As such, the connections it makes are affective in nature, which opens up whole new possibilities on the conception of body politics and embodiment. Nigel Thrift, in that sense, adds that affect also “addresses real issues about fundamental understandings of what constitutes the 'social', and, indeed, whether the 'social' is an adequate descriptor of the work of the world” (Thrift 2006, p. 221). Foregrounding embodiment and affect in the constitution of world(s) is thus an indispensable stance for any claim of objectivity.

As stated above, these interventions on the question of objectivity in science studies has considerably influenced post-ANT studies. John Law, for instance, defines the work of Haraway within the lineage of ontological politics (Law, 2008, p. 11)<sup>54</sup>. Accordingly, hers is a strategy to make ontological politics by introducing “subversive tropes that bend material-semiotic matterings in novel ways” (p. 11). We also see that the ‘how’ question that come to the fore in ANT studies so as to account for the construction of realit(ies) is presented as a study on partial connections (Law, 2007, p. 13). It is indeed true that the post-ANT period witnesses new connections with feminist techno-science studies. One of the most fertile connections is in care studies.

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<sup>54</sup> Technoscience writer Donna Haraway works in this way when she mobilises the radical, anti-racist, feminist trope of the cyborg to interfere with its militaristic and masculinist predecessor project – and more recently, she does something similar by re-imagining human-animal relations in her notion of ‘companion species’

Studies around the concept of care indeed dwell on other heterogeneous orderings that are neither strategic nor managerial. Care, as such, appears as an ethico-political ordering in which the *ontological politics* finds a fertile ground to flourish.

#### **5.3.4. Assembling with Care**

Maria Puig de la Bellacasa makes an intervention on to the concept of ‘matters of concern’ which is developed by Bruno Latour as a means to underline the embeddedness of objectified things and the way they are assembled into the world-making activities of scientists. ‘Matters of fact,’ as such, are shifted into ‘matters of concern’ as part of a larger discussion on social constructivism (Latour pp. 88-93). Similar to the above-mentioned insights of Haraway, Latour also indicates that social constructivism might at first prove to be a useful standpoint to emphasize on the historical contingency of things<sup>55</sup>. It’s, in the end, about stating that we need to better account for how things are assembled in a certain way which implicates that it could have been done in multiply different ways. Nevertheless, it comes with a price. Emphasizing on the social construction of something, Latour indicates, has come to ignore its real, material character (p. 90). As Haraway posits, social construction came to reduce everything to textuality, rhetoric or narration. As to Latour, this has

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<sup>55</sup> “Using the word ‘construction’ seemed at first ideal to describe a more realistic version of what it is for anything to stand” (p. 89) (...) This is why it was with great enthusiasm that we began using the expression ‘construction of facts’ to describe the striking phenomenon of artificiality and reality marching in step (p. 90).

amounted to a division between facts and fabricated, artificial things (p. 91). Although the very intention of ANT in underlining the ‘social construction’ of facts was to make emphasis on their materiality and on “the number of heterogeneous realities entering into the fabrication of some state of affairs (p. 92), the use of the same term in social sciences has come to indicate the otherwise. Therefore, given the opposite implications of the use of the term social construction in STS and social sciences, a new question arises: how is it possible to aver that anything and everything is made, constituted and assembled within the networks they are embedded in while at the same accounting for their reality, objectivity?

When we put it as such, we might see that, Latour’s notion of ‘matters of concern’ has a similar objective in mind to that of Haraway’s *situated knowledge*. Every matter of fact is first and foremost a *matter of concern*, meaning that there is no division between a ‘fact’ and a ‘fabricated,’ ‘artificial’ thing to begin with. The term, ‘matters of concern’ thus amounts to shifting the attention from objects to *gatherings* (p. 114). Rather than objectifying things, it underlines the fact that everything is a result of certain gatherings. Such an empiricism (p. 114-115) does not lean on the division between a subject and an object. Rather, it posits that both positions are effects of the overall relationality they partake in. Furthermore, there is no division between a fact and a fabricated, artificial thing, as there is no division between social and cultural, natural and cultural. Everything is a *gathering* of heterogeneous components. Latour’s move in introducing the term ‘matters of concern’ is, as such, a move similar to that of Haraway’s: the more constructed, the more ‘real’ a thing is, the more we know about its very construction, being historically contingent, fragile, i.e. *supported* and

*sustained* in material and symbolic means, the more objective our knowledge becomes.

According to Puig de la BellaCasa, the introduction of the term ‘matters of concerns’ within this context signifies “a vision of STS’s knowledge politics” (Puig de la BellaCasa 2011, p. 88):

First, an aesthetics: the way STS presents things doesn’t split affects of concern and worry from the staging of their lively existence. Second, a thingpolitics: its representation of things gives them a voice as embodied concerns in the ‘we’ of the democratic assembly. Third, a respectful ethos of knowledge production: its critique when *explaining* things doesn’t reduce technoscience to a struggle for domination. In this sense to account for concern is a material-semiotic gesture of inseparable thinkpolitics and thingpolitics (p. 88).

Being an inseparable thinkpolitics and thingpolitics that is concerned about the not taken-for-granted construction of facts, matters of concern shift the emphasis from an illusionary division between facts and fabricated things; natural/real and derivative/artificial/ less real to what is at stake in all scientific endeavors: the fact that *gathering* in a certain way and always in hybrid grounds is an affective, political and ethical issue. “Exhibiting entangled concerns at the heart of things increases the affective perception of the worlds and lives we study beyond cartographies of interests and practical engagements. In this sense, the staging of a matter of fact or a sociotechnical assemblage as a MoC is an intervention in its ethico- political becoming” (p. 89).

Puig de la BellaCasa nonetheless requires another concept, that of care, to further

these affective and ethical stakes with a stronger emphasis on “a notion of doing and intervening” (p. 89), or rather *material doing* (p. 90). As such, care would mean “an affective state, a material vital doing, and an ethico-political obligation” (p. 90). Here, we see that care is introduced by Puig de la Bella Casa to bring to the foreground the ethical and political aspects of thinkpolitics/thingpolitics. Consequently, it can aptly be said that hers is an intervention to equip ANT with further analytical means to renew itself in line with the feminist critics that warns ANT to mind the privileged positions adopted by different actors in heterogeneous world-making activities. Puig de la Bella Casa asserts that care as an ethical doing is not incompatible with matters of concerns, but it has additional attachments (p. 91). These attachments indeed concern the feminist critic against ANT: care minds that there are asymmetrical positions and privileges involved in world-making activities. Therefore, care studies involve a keen eye on “*who* will do the work of care, as well as *how* to do it and for *whom*” that goes hand in hand with “attention and worry for those who can be harmed by an assemblage but whose voices are less valued, as are their concerns and need for care” (p. 92). Care politics indeed not only questions the unequal division of care work in different sectors (for instance Suchman 1995; Murphy 2015) but also provides an alternative heterogeneous ordering that would not be neither strategist nor managerial. An example of the latter type of intervention is the way AnneMaria Mol accounts for the logic of care involved in the treatment of diabetes patients (Mol, 2008). The logic of care developed by Mol stands in opposition to the logic of choice and citizen that single out patients as individual clients and health care solution as products or commodities. It rather involves affective practices among components (new

technologies, diabetes patients, doctors, relatives of the patients etc.) within a relational web of interdependent factors interacting in a context-bound, hence non-generalizable, local situation. Care politics, therefore, constitutes a vivid example of ontological politics that mobilizes conceptions of alternative orderings and world-making practices that mind difference, embodiment, interdependency and ethnical engagement.

As such, these interventions on the side of feminist care theorists in STS in general and ANT in particular pave the way for the revision of the theory in its aftermath.

Above, I discussed the basic premises of actor-network theory, the way ‘network’ therein is conceived as a critic and alternative to existing social theories, the critics against it and significant revisions made in its aftermath. Below, I am going to dwell on how science and technology studies in general and ANT in particular contributed to social movement studies so as to see to what extent the concept of network as it is construed in ANT can be useful in analyzing contentious action.

### **5.3.5. Social movements as actor-networks: contributions of the ANT to the analysis of social movements**

There is a growing literature around the use of the premises of ANT in social movements theory. These accounts of social movements make use of ANT’s symmetrical approach and flat ontology (Escobar & Osterweil 2012, p. 189) for the purpose of coming up with thicker accounts of social and environmental movements

by including the role and agency of non-human components of an actor-network.

Marrero- Guillamon similarly analyses the urban movement in Can Ricart, Poble Nou that emerged against the gentrification of the neighborhood in 2005 through the premises of ANT which enhance him to “analyze the coming together of a collective identity focusing on the mundane and often neglected materials and practices that led to its structuration, stabilization and territorialization or lack thereof” (Marrero-Guillamon 2013 p. 408).

Lockie, contends to deeply relational accounts of agency developed in science and technology studies literature to examine the collective action in Australian land-care movement (Lockie 2004). He makes use of non-linear causality to overcome the dichotomy between macro and micro asserting that “patterns so often identified as ‘social structures...’ are the generative outcome of network interaction and not their cause” (p. 50).

Israel Rodriguez-Giralt (2011, 2015) makes use of ANT’s conception of social action and collective to explain the controversy caused by 1998 Donana environmental disaster. Analyzing the disaster setting and the dispute around the environmental pollution in the complex and heterogeneous panorama composed of ‘experts,’ environmentalists with affective ties to the land in question, migratory birds which internationalized the problem –other countries were also included in the controversy due to the possibility of the expansion of pollution through the migration routes of birds- and ‘ringing’ networks that sketched the migration routes, Rodriguez-Giralt provides a symmetric narrative on how an assemblage of activists, birds and the



technology of “ringing” emerged around an environmental disaster and set the framework of the environmental dispute (Rodriguez-Giralt 2011, 2015).

Consequently, it can aptly be said that ANT has become a useful tool to account for social movements to explain the agency of non-human actants and to overcome the problem of scale that can be debilitating in the elucidation of contentious action. In these accounts, we see that the collective mobilized around contentious action is a web of technologies and actors of all types –animals, non-humans, humans and collectives. It is also true that the material, mundane practices come to the fore in such analysis that rely on a relational ontology wherein relations precede substances.

The social movements and the contentious action similarly contribute to the basic premises of ANT, as it redefines the very meaning of ‘collective’ (Rodriguez-Giralt 2011, p. 19-20) which is now construed as an actor-network of elements of diverse nature. Especially alter-globalization movements and occupy movements that lean on pre-figurative politics that aspires to enact a proposed alternative to existing social relations serve as laboratories to observe that the social as substance is nothing but the becoming-social of certain practices that hold in time. Each of above examples demonstrate that controversy and contention that arise in social movements constitute an integral part of the collective. Social movements as enacted alternatives to existing community-making practices point to the difference at the heart of the ‘social.’

Therefore, it can aptly be said that the use of the term of network in ANT-informed accounts of social movements is rather different than the accounts influenced by the

networked social movements of Castells. While the latter attributes an uneven significance to digitalized networks through the use of social media, the ANT informed accounts underline the fact that heightened digitalization results in re-materialization of networks. Furthermore, the network accounts analyze the relations among already existing elements, ‘points’ in terms of Ingold (2011, p. 89), hence they can only explain connections between already existing points and nodes (Juris 2012, McFarlane 2009, Lockie 2004, Chesters & Welsh 2006, Ingold 2007, 2011). As such, they cannot duly account for the question of emergence of new elements, new relationalities. Whereas, the term of *réseau* in ANT conceives the primacy of relations over substances and as such it is rather different than the common usage of the term (Ingold 2011, p. 89). It can thus better explain emergence of new elements through novel configurations and arrangements.

The course taken by ANT scholars in the latest period of the approach also leans on materialism, ontology and politics. Consequently, ANT scholars aspire to find better ways to account for materiality, embodiment, enactment and performance and ponder over the re-materialization of networks actualized through digitalization.

This tendency in the post-ANT period, as we have seen before, led scholars to look for other concepts (material semiotics, assemblages) to substitute network, as the term have come to be very much associated with digital networks and lost its critical stance. The revisions made in ANT especially with the help of the critics coming from feminist techno-science studies also underline the fact that the new line of approach is towards further studies on embodiment, materiality and affect in material-semiotics.

Rodriguez-Giralt (2015), in his Donana disaster account (2007, 2011), borrows a term from Ingold (2007, 2011) and refers to the agency of birds as a 'line' which, in Ingold's terms, is "an ever-extending trajectory, a flux of activity that constantly enmeshes with and spills out into the world" as opposed to the limited and fixed nature of relationality evoked by the concept of network that only analyzes the connections among already existing points (Rodriguez-Giralt 2015, s. 163). Here, he avers that this concept is a useful tool to go beyond the limitations of the concept of network in early ANT accounts criticized for being cold (Philo 2005), pointillist (Doel, 1996) and often anorexic (Latour 2011) (*idem.*).

Tironi and Rodriguez-Giralt (2017) apply to care politics as a means of rendering political activism in the 'un-cared' land of Puchuncavi Chile visible. Highly intoxicated by the ENAMI copper smelting plant founded in 1964, the town of Puchuncavi can sustain nothing but a 'toxic life,' (Tironi and Rodriguez-Giralt 2017, p. 90), while the activists organized under the Ecological Council of Puchuncavi undertake 'practices of care,' which in return become political in a setting of 'complex production of un-production' (p. 91). In their analysis, Tironi and Rodriguez-Giralt, resort to the concept of care developed by Puig de la Bellacasa (2012, 2017), Haraway (1991) and Mol (2008) so as attend to the affective and bodily aspects of activists' new world-making practices in an already undone world in which they were left along to take care of their highly intoxicated bodies and environment. Accordingly, "domestic practices of healing and nurturing" (p. 100), affections of solidarity brought

forward by both self-caring and mutual support come to the fore in the becoming-activist of Puchuncavi people, while at the same care as an ethico-political world/knowledge making practice on the side of the researchers serve as an epistemological tool, an “analytics to enunciate problems and make connections” (p. 104).

The analysis of the Gezi movement presented in the first section of the thesis is redolent to this orientation in the post-ANT period. This analysis is an account of the Gezi Movement based on the diffractive translations the protest types and action repertoires went through throughout different phases of the mobilization. At the same time, it points to the indelibly significant role of encounters, affect and bodily practices in the Gezi mobilization that speaks to the concept of care deployed by the feminist science and technology studies. Therefore, as already stated in the 1<sup>st</sup> chapter, it is methodologically influenced by the premises of the ANT to track the action through its translations and orient towards concerns and controversies that constitute a community, while it takes a step further and leans on feminist science and technology studies’ methodology to foreground body, affects and bodily practices in the making of Gezi communities. In the second and third chapters of the first section, I both track various translations the protest types went through during the course of the mobilization while at the same account for the issues and concerns around which new communities of contentious action were made. In doing that, I pay special attention to *practices* –that are mostly bodily and embodied in nature- as food sharing –which then takes the form of almost ritualistic *Earthmeals*- human chains, standing man and assemblies.

The concept of network, as shown above, seems not to be equipped enough to account for this character of the new wave of contentious action characterized by the occupation of public spaces. An uneven emphasis on the role of digital networks somehow obfuscate the bodily, affective *lived experience* on the squares.

Although the actor-network theory's use of the term is based on a material-semiotic understanding of communities, it has difficulties in escaping the setbacks introduced by the mainstream use of the term. Furthermore, in line with Farias's above-mentioned critic (p. 170-171) concerning the lack of an analysis of differentiation, hence a virtual domain, a domain of becoming in actor-network approaches, it could be useful to return back to the concept of assemblage to account for emergence, encounter, transformation and becoming, characteristics that are inherent parts of social movements like the Gezi Movement. Here, I proffer that it might be useful to re-visit the concept of assemblage that is also in circulation in ANT theories, this time within the political philosophy and ethology of Deleuze-Guattarian philosophy. I propose that such a re-reading of the term, as it is originally developed by the two philosophers, might be situated in the aforementioned direction of the post-ANT studies that orient towards material-semiotics, ontological politics, ethics, affect, embodiment and differentiation. I proffer that it will also help us better account for the bodily aspects and affect politics of the occupy movements in general and Gezi in particular.

### 5.3.6. From Actor-Network to Assemblage

As we have seen before, In ANT literature, the term network is used interchangeably with that of actor- network to describe the type of relationship specific to the process of translation. However, network in that sense is more akin to the concept of assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980) or meshwork (Ingold, 2011) than the implications of its classical usage. Throughout his book, *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to ANT*, we see that Bruno Latour makes an abundant use of the concept of assemblage without explaining it or referring to Deleuze-Guattari –the inventors of the term. In this book, the concept of assemblage is used to define heterogeneous gatherings of components of very different nature. Hence, the point underlined by Latour is that not every assemblage is made up of social material and indeed the social material itself is an assemblage of elements that are not necessarily social in character. In his article, *The Materials of STS*, John Law makes use of the term in a similar sense without further explaining it (Law, 2009). Nevertheless, in his paper called Actor-Network Theory and Material Semiotics (Law, 2007), he proffers that ANT can be considered as “the empirical version of Gilles Deleuze’s nomadic philosophy adding that he considers that “there is little difference between Deleuze’s *agencement* (awkwardly translated as ‘assemblage’ in English) and the term actor network.”

We are offered an historical account of particular translations through time rather than a diagnosis of an epochal epistemic syntax. Even so the logic is not far removed from Foucault’s. It can also be understood as an empirical version of Gilles Deleuze’s nomadic philosophy (Deleuze and Guattari: 1988). Latour has observed that we might talk of ‘actant-rhizomes’ rather

than 'actor- networks', and John Law has argued that there is little difference between Deleuze's 'agencement' (awkwardly translated as 'assemblage' in English) and the term 'actor-network (Law: 2004). Both refer to the provisional assembly of productive, heterogeneous and (this is the crucial point) quite limited forms of ordering located in no larger overall order. This is why it is helpful to see actor-network theory as a particular empirical translation of post- structuralism (Law, 2007).

Here, it is clear that John Law interchangeably uses the terms actor-network and assemblage (*agencement*). It would indeed be useful to once more underline this affinity between the two terms, considering the fact that the term of network has started to be overly charged with references to digitalized networks or networks that refer to connections or nodes between existing, fixed points.

I will once more emphasize two of the above critics to the concept of actor-network that are significant for the purposes of the thesis: Farias' critic that the concept of actor-network lacks the realm of the 'virtual,' hence differentiation. It can indeed trace translation in action in a given network, but it doesn't have a conceptual framework to consider novelty and surprise and the possibility of them. Nevertheless, the concept of assemblage within the broader political philosophy of Deleuze and Deleuze & Guattari is open to the realm of the virtual, i.e. becoming which paves a fertile ground to discuss *emergence*.

The second critic against the concept of actor-network that matters to our concerns comes from the feminist science and technology and states that classical ANT accounts remain managerial, centrist, even military in their character (Law 2007). Haraway's critic is that ANT remains too timid in its invitation to follow the actors and we need a methodology that assumes responsibility for its own interventions in

assembling not this but that elements for the purpose of being an active part of the world that we wish to assemble (Haraway 1997). As an alternative to “the agonistic, struggle- and war-framed metaphors that characterize the actor-network approach to science studies found in the work of Latour (1987, 1999)” (Schneider, 2002, p. 466), Haraway calls forth a methodology that would situate *yearning* (a communality of feeling) for (an) alternative world(s) at the basis of all knowing acts. As such, agonistic accounts of ANT that calls forth ‘only describing or following the actors’ lack this yearning or care to actively take part in a world-making activity. Finally, Puig de la Bellacasa asks us to consider *matters of care* that assume the affective and ethico-political implications of the knowing and world-making activities (Puig de la Bellacasa 2011, 2012). Hence, we see that the feminist science and technology studies call for a more engaged, assertive methodology that would foreground the affective, bodily and ethico-political character of knowing activities.

When we have a look at these two critics, we see that both of them (one on the importance to account for emergence via the virtual) and the other that leans on caring accounts that would intervene and make a difference –diffract (Haraway, 1991; Barad 1995) - and mean something for the world(s) we wish to assemble) foreground *differentiation* in affective terms. I aver that this is the main difference between the concept of actor-network and assemblage as it is developed by Deleuze-Guattari. Although Latour and Law use the two terms interchangeably, the concept of assemblage in the broader political philosophy and ontology of Deleuze and Guattari refers to body and affects politics (more on this in the second section) and emergence as a bodily capacity to act and be other than that is. As stated by Müller and Schurr,



“ANT would benefit from the attention to the role of affect and desire in bringing socio-material relations into being, which is so central in assemblage thinking” (Müller & Schurr 2016, p. 218). We see that the capacity of the concept of assemblage to conceptualize emergence is already mobilized in the social movements’ theory.

In the literature of social movements theory, there is indeed a growing interest to define collective action as assemblage, rather than network, the latter said to refer to the type of interactive relationality only between stable and fixed entities (McFarlane 2009, Lockie 2004, Chesters & Welsh 2006, Bennett 2005, Razsa & Kurnik. 2012) lacking means to account for emergence and novelty. The concept of assemblage originally coined by Deleuze-Guattari –philosophers known to have deeply influenced Latour- to describe the relationship between the whole and its parts (Deleuze, Guattari, 1980) has a conception of action as event in translation and points to the transformative communication between the whole and its terms. According to Deleuze-Guattari, assemblage defines the relational space created by the encounter of bodies. This relational space comprised of all types of bodies, be it human, environmental, technical etc., is distinct from those bodies themselves, paving the way for transformation each time when a new element is included in the relationship. When a new element is assembled in factor A which is already an assemblage of multiple effects, it is translated into factor B which is nothing but another assemblage. In this sense, the concept of assemblage serves to conceive both a non-linear causal lineage between events and a dispersed agency (McFarlane 2009).

Colin McFarlane, attempting to develop “an alternative account to that of the

'network'" coins the term 'translocal assemblages to define "composites of place-based social movements which exchange ideas, knowledge, practices, materials and resources across sites" that, according to McFarlane, goes beyond the implications of nodes or points suggested by the term 'network' in the sense that assemblage "unlike network.... does more than making emphasis on a set of connections between sites in that it draws attention to history, labour, materiality and performance. Assemblage points to reassembling and disassembling, to dispersion and transformation, processes that are often overlooked in network accounts" (McFarlane 2009, p.566). In that sense, according to McFarlane, the term assemblage implies "spatiality and temporality... distributed agency, emergence and power as plurality in transformation" (562). Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh also underline this character of the concept of network saying, "network has a connotation of fixed lines of communication or connection bounded in closed conduits. Network analyses typically represent findings in diagrammatically depicting linkages and frequencies of interactions between identified and known parties. The rhizomatic differs in that it operates by variation, expansion, conquest, capture, offshoots" (Chesters and Welsh 2006. p. 21). Therefore, agency in movements like Gezi witnessing the assemblage of many new elements (social media, mobile phones, the imaginary of the occupied public spaces etc.) to the already existing network of actors can better be defined as assemblage.

The concept of assemblage indeed proves to be useful to describe collective action as emergence and transformation. Jane Bennett, benefiting from the ideas of Deleuze-Guattari on assemblages, refers to this function as "the power of expression... the

ability of bodies to become otherwise than they are, to press out of their current configurations and enter into new compositions of self as well as into new alliances and rivalries with others” (Bennett 2005, p. 447). Stengers and Pignarre define it as 'becoming-child of the event' (Stengers, Pignarre 2005 p.10) which implies a certain modesty of letting oneself to be transformed by the event, instead of assuming the position of its spokesperson or prophet. It is indeed “a becoming-other-than-one-now through encounters with difference” as referred to Direct Social Work's activities during Occupy Slovenia (Razsa & Kurnik. 2012, p. 240). This becoming-other-than-one-now is highly akin to the disidentification process at work in politics according to Ranciere (Ranciere 2000. p. 64) As underlined by Keith Bassett investigating on the relationship between Ranciere's opinions and the occupation movements, “occupations materialized people power through a subversion of the 'normal distribution' of police spaces, 'detourning' this spatial logic for political effect” (Bassett, 2014. P. 893) mobilizing a redistribution of the sensible, being the condition of political subjectification.

In all above definitions of the term, the emphasis is on *becoming*, the bodies' capacity to become other-than they are and collective's capacity to make a difference through self-differentiation in contentious action. It is indeed true that the concept of assemblage, with respect to the larger material semiotics deployed by Deleuze-Guattari around the term, endows us with better conceptual tools to account for emergence as becoming, as an assemblage is always open to a virtual domain. It also provides us with a 'thick' concept of body that cannot be reduced to neither an organism nor its anatomy. The material-semiotics of the term *assemblage* leans on a

materialism of encounter and affect in which bodies are defined according to their capacity to affect and to be affected. Politics is therefore related to the question of *becoming* through directly engaging in practices that would change the way bodies are affected.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the concept of assemblage in the philosophy of Deleuze & Guattari underlining the fact that an assemblage is an affective body. Hence, I will underline this understudied aspect of the concept of assemblage in the social movement theory with respect to data coming from the Gezi Movement.

## CHAPTER 6

### Embodiment and Body Politics in Gezi Assemblages

#### 6.1. Reading Gezi Communities via the concept of Assemblage (*Agencement*)

“The whole is superior to the sum of its parts.” Once you are there, social theory is finished, sterilized for a whole century: you have parts, and you have a whole. And then the only remaining question is to find a possible solution to combine or reconcile the parts with the whole (...) (Latour 2010 p.9)<sup>56</sup>

At the end of the last chapter, I introduced the concept of assemblage (*agencement*) as a possible conceptual tool to overcome the limitations of the concept of network. We have seen that the concept has started to be used also in social movements’ theory to account for emergency, transformation and contagion in the making of dissident communities. Here in this chapter, I will further dwell on the concept of assemblage as it is originally developed by Deleuze & Guattari and situate it within the lineage of materialism outlined in the previous chapter. The objective of the chapter is to proffer that an analysis of the concept of assemblage within the larger work of Deleuze and Deleuze & Guattari especially with respect to the conceptualization of body would endow us with further insights to elucidate material and embodied accounts of Gezi

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<sup>56</sup> <http://www.bruno-latour.fr/sites/default/files/121-CASTELLS-GB.pdf>

movement that I tried to underline in the first section. It is indeed true that the contagious character and transformative power of recent social movement assemblages own much to the affirmatively changing affective states of bodies and bodily practices involved therein. As I discussed in the fourth chapter, the Gezi Movement had many bodily axes including the significance attributed to *interdependency*, a positive affective charge, a bodily urge to participate in the movement that highlights the agency of the body and its affects. Therefore, Deleuze & Guattari's Spinozist turn in defining bodies through their affective capacities has significant potential to better grasp the accentuated bodily and spatial features of such movements. Here, I propose a re-reading of the concept of assemblage as body defending that it proves to be a worthy analytical tool to conceptualize the bodily account of the Gezi Movement presented in the first section.

As I will further dwell on in the next chapter, since his earlier writings, Deleuze is interested in conceptualizing reality as a non-linear relational domain composed of both material and immaterial components. The concept of event developed in *Logique du Sens* (1969) serves the purpose of construing a relational domain *exterior to* its corporeal and incorporeal component terms, yet causally depending on them. The exteriority of relations to their terms guarantees the autonomy of each component in its capacity to assemble a new relationality –hence, introduce novelty-, while at the same time it assures the autonomy of the overall relational domain to change the component terms, -hence mobilize becoming. As such, Deleuze wages a war against the above-cited dictum, “the whole is superior to its parts” which, according to Latour, is responsible for the end of social theory.

The concept of assemblage developed a decade later by Deleuze, this time with Guattari, in *Mille Plateaux* (1980) further contributes to this lineage of thought.

As stated by Manuel de Landa who develops a theory of assemblage to be applied to the social realm, there is not a ‘theory’ of assemblage in Deleuze and Guattari and the concept is used throughout *Mille Plateaux* in a dispersed manner always in communication with other concepts like *territorialization*, *deterritorialization*, *becoming*, *rhizome* etc. (de Landa, 2006, p. 3) This situation makes it difficult to track the concept. Nevertheless, it also opens multiple possibilities to relate the concept with other concepts developed within the larger corpus of Deleuze-Guattarian work. I will try to make use of this capacity of the concept so as to read it with the concept of body in *Mille Plateaux*. As such, I will make use of the concept not only to underline emergence and contagion, -characteristics specific to occupy movements attracting large segments of society and drifting ever growing numbers of citizens to public squares-, but also to do it as part of the affect and body politics developed in *Mille Plateaux*. When we situate the concept of assemblage within the original context in which it is developed by Deleuze and Guattari, we actually see that it also refers to a certain conception of body: *a body that is defined through its capacity to affect and to be affected by others*. This, in turn, is directly related to how the politics is conceived by Deleuze & Guattari: becoming-minor. Becoming minor is indeed an affective matter. Just as May 68, social movements as events point to an affect politics through which reclaiming a public square is above all *desired* and being present in the occupied public space, making an alternative space through bodily practices amount to affective changes and transformation in protestors. Throughout the empirical part

of the first section, we have seen that activists indeed recorded a certain desire, a bodily urge to be on the streets and the way they changed throughout the process. The desire involved in the becoming-attractive of seizing a public space and the *becoming-protester* of its participants require conceptual tools to account for *differentiation*, *transformation* from a perspective to accounts the role of affects, bodily practices and performace in social change. The concept of assemblage, as a liminal space between a virtual body without organs and an actualized, codified social realm, also endows us with the analytical capacity to elucidate *differentiation* as becoming. As such, the concept of assemblage as body conceptualizes emergence as embodiment. Thus, emergence of Gezi communities shall be construed as *embodiment* wherein an assemblage of heterogeneous terms constitute a relationality, an event, which in return transforms them and their bodily capacities to affect and be affected by one another.

Below, I am going to discuss the concept of assemblage in *Mille Plateaux*, then to move towards the concept of body therein so as to present assemblage as body.

### **6.1.1. Assemblage and the exteriority of the relations to their terms**

*Agencement (assemblage)* introduced by Deleuze-Guattari (1980) to conceptualize the relationship between the whole and its parts so as to avoid the superiority traditionally attributed to the former presents a conception of action as event in translation and points to the interactive and transformative communication between the whole and its terms. According to Deleuze-Guattari, assemblage defines the relational space created by the encounter of bodies. This relational space comprised



of disparate types of bodies, be it human, environmental, technical etc., is distinct from those bodies themselves, paving the way for transformation each time when a new element is included in the relationship. When a new element is assembled in factor A which is already an assemblage of multiple effects, it is translated into factor B which is nothing but another assemblage.

As I stated above, in *Mille Plateaux*, the concept of *agencement* (assemblage)<sup>57</sup> appears throughout the book in a dispersed manner always in communication with other concepts. It has an ontological status, as the reality is deemed a hybrid relational domain composed of both natural and cultural components. It would be better to postulate that there is no division between the natural and the cultural, as Deleuze-Guattarian pragmatics is a material semiology that aspires to conceive reality at the intersection of an intertwined and complex relationship between a form of expression (be it language or semiotics registers or sound, sight etc.) and a form of content (material component) (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 140). Both social and natural world(s) are conceived as assemblage, amounting to a flat ontology (Escobar & Osterweil, in Jensen et al., 2012, p. 189) that goes beyond the division between a social/cultural and natural domain.

*Assemblage* is thus a relational domain that constitutes reality where heterogeneous elements, of both semiotic and material nature, interact in-between two vectors: one acting on the strata to distribute territorialities, relative deterritorializations and

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<sup>57</sup> The original French word for the concept of *agencement* signifies both agency and relationality. Nevertheless, this meaning is lost in its translation into English as *assemblage* that mostly refers to gathering without accentuating the agency of the relationality.

reterritorializations, the other acting on the destratifying domain where it conjures the processes of deterritorializations (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p.181). To put it more succinctly, Deleuze-Guattarian ontology conceives being as a liminal domain of molar entities<sup>58</sup> that are actualized through the capture of virtual molecular intensities and flows. Hence, the real is composed of both a virtual and an actual domain. At the edge of the virtual, there is the body without organs, the Earth (p. 53) as a plain of consistency composed of unstable, non-formed flows, free intensities or nomadic singularities (p. 53). The domain of the non-actualized flows, this virtual is as real as the actualized matter. Through the process of stratification, these flows are captured and turned into matter; the molecular flow is thus turned into molar entities; the intensities are stabilized (p. 54). The stratification, accordingly, occurs through codification and territorialization of molecular intensities (*idem.*) According to de Landa, this is translated into the social theory as such: the “processes of territorialization are processes that define and sharpen the spatial boundaries of actual territories. Territorialization, on the other hand, also refers to non-spatial processes which increase the internal homogeneity of an assemblage, such as the sorting processes which exclude a certain category of people from membership of an organization, or the segregation processes which increase the ethnic or racial

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<sup>58</sup> In Deleuze-Guattarian thought molar entities refer to actualized and coded substances, whereas molecular refers to the virtual –not actualized but equally real- flows, singularities and desire that, in turn, are territorialized and actualized to constitute molar entities. Therefore, molar entities, i.e. substances cannot be taken for granted based on their identities to themselves. Rather, there are virtual flows that keep traversing them and causing them to differ from themselves. The virtual as such is responsible for differentiation. Difference is thus the primary principle, while it is captured within molar entities and presented as identity within the constitution of a molar entity.

homogeneity of a neighbourhood (de Landa 2006, p. 13). Nevertheless, the de-territorializing forces are always active within actualized territories and they work to destabilize the homogeneity of a given entity.

Hence, the reality has both a virtual and actual axis and each molar, actualized entity is open to becoming-other than what it is. The virtual constitutes the exteriority, the outside of all molar entities, thereby introducing differentiation and novelty as the indispensable qualities of the real. The virtual as the outside and absolute exteriority has utmost importance also in the political philosophy of Deleuze-Guattari. The reality of a virtual domain is the guarantee of differentiation, becoming, novelty and transformation.

The political concern in Deleuze-Guattarian philosophy is directly related to dismantling privileged molar identities by getting involved in practices that would promote dis-identification with these privileged subject positions. Such practices – that are always collective- mobilize bodies in novel configurations and promote *becoming* –against being which is molar, codified and territorialized- of the components that are assembled to constitute these bodies. Assemblage, therefore, is a liminal relational space which is located in between a virtual domain –body without organs- and a stratified, codified and territorilized actual domain. Each assemblage is both a material (the form of content) and semiotic (the form of expression) relationality that is actualized and codified. Yet it is open to be differentiated from itself, as the virtual is also a force acting on it. Deleuze and Guattari thus define assemblage in-between two strata, one face turned towards the strata (being as such

an *inter-stratum*) and another turned towards the body without organs, i.e. the plain of consistency (being as such a *meta-stratum*) (p. 4). Hence, the exteriority of this meta-stratum that acts as a virtual domain of intensities and flows guarantees that there is always something that escapes stratification, that cannot be turned into a molar entity. There is a virtual relational domain that cannot be absolutely captured, codified and territorialized. The concept of lines of flight, thus, signifies that which escapes from being captured and stratified. The exteriority of the relations to their terms guarantees the precedence of becoming over being, the molecular over the molar. As it will be discussed in the next chapter with respect to Morfino's reading of the materialism of the encounter, the exteriority of relations is vital for a materialist account of reality that aspires to dismantle the totalizing power of the whole over its parts (Morfino 2012, p. 62). Again, social movements as the Gezi Movement, thus mobilize lines of flight wherein new relationalities are experimented in the occupied public spaces. As an assemblage, the Gezi Movement would thus refer to this liminal space between an actual territory –let's say existing social order and urban setting as it is assembled by the state apparatus and capitalist and neo-liberal ordering- and a virtual domain of new relationalities to be experimented within the occupied alternative spaces. Experimenting novel forms of relationality through directly getting involved in collective life-making activities which transform the capacities of bodies to act, the Gezi communities hence make an alliance with the virtual within the existing social relations. As such, they serve as interstices wherein alternative sociabilities would be experimented and actualized. When the whole –let's call it the 'social' this time for the purpose of clarifying our point- is deemed superior than its

components, there remains no room for change, transformation, emergence and novelty. The Gezi communities in all their bodily, affective life and protest-making practices, once we read them as assemblages, constitute the movement itself, while the movement in return establishes a meta-relational domain that cannot be simply reduced to these terms that constitute it. As such, the meta-relationality becomes an event-agent that has a transformative impact on its participants.

De Landa also makes this point in his attempt to present a social theory of assemblage based on a re-reading of Deleuze-Guattari's use of the concept (de Landa, 2006). Stating that an assemblage is "the *synthesis* of the properties of a whole not reducible to its parts" (p. 4), de Landa underlines the fact that an assemblage, as such, is against the totality of the whole as well as essentialism. He makes particular emphasis on the social entities as assemblages:

(...) assemblages, being wholes whose properties emerge from the interactions between parts, can be used to model any of these intermediate entities: interpersonal networks and institutional organizations are assemblages of people; social justice movements are assemblages of several networked communities; central governments are assemblages of several organizations; cities are assemblages of people, networks. (p. 5).

De Landa's theory of assemblage is thus developed to account for the social as a hybrid relational space, although, in the above citation, he fails to include the non-human, technic and technological components social justice movements or institutional organizations.

De Landa makes due emphasis on the fact that an assemblage is composed of relations of exteriority. Any theory based on the rule of *relations of interiority* would, accordingly, end up postulating that the whole is bigger than the parts (p. 9). This, in turn, would amount to asserting an organic unity that rules over the components of the whole (*idem.*). As Latour avers, the social theory ends here, just because any possible relation among the parts would then be subsumed to the rule, law or principle of unity of the organic whole.

The solution of Deleuze to this problem is to posit assemblages as wholes whose properties “cannot be reduced to those of its parts” (p. 11). As such, “they are the result not of an aggregation of the components' own properties but of the actual exercise of their capacities. These capacities do depend on a component's properties but cannot be reduced to them since they involve reference to the properties of other interacting entities” (*idem.*) Here, we see the problem of the *logic of aggregation* proposed by Jeffrey Juris to account for the difference of recent occupation movements when compared to previous alter-globalization movements. Aggregation implies new components' being added to an already existing whole, a network. In that account, the existing network's previous qualities are maintained, while it grows in number. In this logic, the *differentiation* of the existing networks and newly aggregated protesters and collectives cannot be amounted to. Nevertheless, according to the assemblage theory, the newly assembled populations swarming reclaimed public spaces change the assemblage, while at the same, the assemblage as an emerging new whole establishes a meta relational space that cannot be reduced to the terms involved therein, as such equally affect them. Hence, the heterogeneity of the

components of the Gezi Movement, the changes they went through during the course of the mobilization through multiple encounters are better explained. As the Gezi Movement account presented in the first section has averred, the assembled components of the Gezi movement –women’s movement, anti-capitalist movement, LGBT movement, anarchist etc.- all introduced their protest types and mobilized further translations of action during the course of the Gezi mobilization. It was not mere aggregation that ruled the relationship among different components of the protest. Furthermore, Gezi in itself, as a meta relational space, developed its own values (expressive qualities reflected on both the decisions taken during assemblies and the translations of contentious action) and material deliberative practices (assemblies) that, in turn, affected the components involved in it.

Therefore, the concept of assemblage provides us with better tools to understand the composition of Gezi communiti(es) as it is elucidated in the first section. It can both account for the heterogeneity of the components and the ways through which their assemblage made a difference in the overall composition of the movement. It can also account for the force of the movement, being a meta-relational space, upon its components. As stated in the first section, the components of the movement were all open to experiment on novel means to make politics and they were moved by the feeling of interdependency. As such, this account of assemblage that presents it as a better means to explain emergence, contagion and novelty in social movements is redundant with the current use of the concept in social movement studies (McFarlane 2009, Lockie 2004, Chesters & Welsh 2006, Bennett 2005). Nevertheless, I assert that the concept of assemblage can also help us better construe the bodily aspects of the

movement that are specified in the first section. Indeed, the above-mentioned capacity of the assemblage to help us construe the relation between the whole and its parts from a materialist axis that gives precedence to differentiation goes hand in hand with another significant aspect of the concept: its embodied and material character. However, this requires further explanation on the concept of body, embodiment and materialism within the larger corpus of Deleuze-Guattarian work. Below, I am going to dwell on the material semiotic pragmatics of Deleuze-Guattari to further this aspect of the concept of assemblage. Later on, I will discuss the concept of body in their philosophy so as to make my point on the worth of using the concept of assemblage in studying the Gezi movement: the affect politics that is implied by the original use of the concept in the broader corpus of Deleuze-Guattari's work can be a significant tool to explain the bodily character of the Gezi Movement.

### **6.1.2. Material Semiotics and the concept of assemblage**

As stated above, Deleuze and Guattari use the concept of assemblage in a dispersed manner. Nevertheless, there is a chapter in which they present a larger discussion on the concept by situating it within the context of a discussion against semiology: *Sur quelques regimes des signes* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980). Here, Deleuze and Guattari criticize classical semiotics and aspire to find means to account for the materiality of relations that cannot be reduced to linguistic expressions. It is thus repeatedly underlined that an assemblage is comprised of an expression and a *content*. The concept of assemblage is thus introduced as a means to develop a material ontology



that would both escape the self-referentiality of the regime of signs –and the priority given to linguistic enunciations therein- and account for the irreducibility of the material to the linguistic, semiotic or symbolic. It is, as such, a material semiotics that insistently underlines that language is but one of the regimes that constitutes the reality of the assemblages. The significance of the *content* –being the material aspect of any assemblage- is equally important.

Therefore, it is clear that the origin of the concept of assemblage in Deleuze and Guattari is concerned about accentuating the irreducibility of the *content* to its expression, thus underlying *the material basis of reality*. In the *Logique du Sens*, the same concern leads to the introduction of the concept of event as sense that has bodies and their mixtures as its cause and other incorporeal events as its partial causes. Hence, presenting two regimes, one material (the bodies and their mixtures) and another semiologic (incorporeal effects that are caused by the bodies and their mixtures, but that cannot be reduced to them) to explain the event as yet another incorporeal domain, Deleuze tries to avoid making an ontology around the self-referential propositions. Both the concept of event and assemblage are thus developed by Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari to *conceptualize a materiality that never forgets the activity of the fleshy matter, yet never reduces the body to anatomy or organism*.

As stated above, given these concerns, Deleuze-Guattari underline the fact that *assemblage* has both a form of expression and a form of content (Deleuze Guattari, 1980, p.140). *Assemblage* is thus a relational domain where heterogeneous elements,

of both semiotic and material nature, interact in-between two vectors of stratification and deterritorialization (p.181). Therefore, *assemblage* is a means to account for a complex material and semiotic relational domain that both actualizes and territorializes flows and introduces lines of flight within existing molar entities.

The emphasis on the form of *content*, inseparable yet independent from its expression -and defining the expression as both discursive (territorialization) and non-discursive (coding) (de Landa in Thoburn & Buchanan, 2008, p. 169)- is central to Deleuze-Guattarian materialism which undermines the priority attributed to linguistic expressions or to the regime of signification by structuralism. The pragmatics, in that sense, is a means to come up with a new materialism which aspires to account for the complex relationship between the regimes of signification (semiology) and a form of content that is both inseparable and independent from the first. This emphasis on the inseparable yet independent position of a material content is of great importance in construing embodiment in assemblages. Therefore, it can aptly be said that, returning to the origins of the concept of assemblage in Deleuze and Guattari inevitably evokes further concerns on embodiment in this particular material semiotics.

Construing the Gezi Movement as an assemblage, an incorporeal event upon which the bodies and their mixtures actively act might help us elucidate a central yet understudied characteristic of the movement: *its materiality at the intersection of affective, somatic, corporeal and incorporeal forces*. It is indeed this materiality that might help us construe the construction of new alliances with the help of which bodies are endowed with new capacities to affect and be affected. Our data from different phases of Gezi protests evince the role of bodily practices, affect, interdependency

and encounters in the becoming-activist of large populations swarming Gezi park and park assemblies in the summer and autumn of 2013. Gezi was perceived as a moment when activists discovered new bodily capacities and experienced what their bodies could do under new settings, which had immediate translations in their affective states. Affirmative affects, care and humor, despite the risk brought forward by the “exposure” of bodies in public space (Butler, 2014) marked life in Gezi. Yet, as Nigel Thrift puts forward there is little place for affects in urban studies (Thrift, 2008, p. 57), just as in political sciences and social movement studies. This is thus an attempt to introduce a concept that has otherwise come to be used to define new social movements with respect to their heterogeneous composure amounting to emerging activist communities. Nevertheless, I put forward that this potential of the assemblage could not be thoroughly grasped without taking into consideration the kind of materiality implied in the concept which postulates an intertwined relational domain between the material and semiotic components. It is a materiality in which the body is also construed as an assemblage among heterogeneous elements defined by the way it affects other bodies and is affected by them. As it is claimed by Brians, Deleuze and Guattari “suggest that ‘the body’ is always more than its biological parts or fleshy boundaries. By opening the body beyond the limits of the flesh, to include its social and cultural codings, Deleuze and Guattari displace the body from what we traditionally think of as the ‘material’ realm, that of biology, while precisely insisting on its materiality” (Brians, in Guillaume and Hughes *et al.* 2011, p. 134). It is indeed a specific materiality that does not reduce the body to anatomy or organism. Rather, the body is conceived in a Spinozist way through the way it is affected and it affects

other bodies. As such, it is also a material semiotic assemblage of heterogeneous elements.

I claim that such an understanding of body intrinsic to the concept of assemblage can also help us account for the highly bodily and affective aspects of the recent social movements in general and the Gezi movement in particular. Below, I am going to present a brief outline of the concept of body in *Mille Plateaux*.

## **6.2. What can a body do? Assemblage as Body: Some Thoughts on Embodiment in Social Movements**

It is a requirement to account for embodiment and materiality in recent social movements so as to better conceptualize the significance of the bodily aspects of such mobilizations which is supported by growing data in the discipline (Butler 2011, 2014; E. Happe, 2015; Gregory 2013; Perrugorriá, I., Tejerina, B. 2013, Protevi in Conio 2015; Federici 2014, d’Orsi in Özkırımlı 2014, Gambetti in Özkırımlı 2014). As stated above, the concept of assemblage can be of use in understanding collectivities in such movements which are situated at the intersection of technological, technical, infrastructural and symbolic registers. Apart from its capacity to conceptualize this heterogeneity, the concept can also better explain embodiment and body politics in occupy movements. Below, I will briefly analyze the concept of body developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *Mille Plateaux* through the

Spinozist conception of body and proffer that it presents a type of body politics that is opposed to the state body politics or bio-politics.

According to Rosi Braidotti, a feminist philosopher who is deeply influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, modernity is marked by a new regime of power, i.e. biopolitics where “the bodily material has been situated at the heart of the techniques of control” (Braidotti, 2011, p.177). The bodily material refers to body as a resource of productive forces on which multiple governance techniques are inflicted. Subjectivation is thus rendering productive and useful of this bodily material for the purpose of the continuous reproduction of the power as a de-centralized and diffuse dispositive (Foucault 1978, p. 470, 1977 p. 299). Therefore, the body as it is represented in modernity is nothing but *organs without body* whose “heart is empty and dead” (Braidotti, 2011, p.178). Influenced by the discourse of bio-sciences, body as a functional unity of organs, an organism, becomes the dominant conception (*idem.*), while body as the assemblage of living forces is silenced and subjected to a certain function. It thus becomes subjected to the realm of the exercise of power. Therefore, the body becomes both absent and excessive in the modern discourses according to Braidotti, absent as the productive forces of the bodily material are totally obscured – Deleuze and Guattari, here, particularly refer to the regime of *visagéité* where the body is obscured (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p.144, 284)- excessive in the sense that it keeps on being active in unexpected domains of resistance where the axioms coding capitalist life -as it is reduced to a scene for the exercise of power- dissolve. Occupied public spaces and the very act of the production of space can best be construed as such moments when the codes and norms governing the subject (as a subject formation

resulting from the disciplining and regulation of the bodily material) dissolve to open up space for the construction of alternative subject formations. The body being the surface effect of a certain constellation of disciplining and surveillance mechanisms already refers to an assemblage of technologies of the self. These technologies of self-regulating and producing life as it is encoded and territorialized in certain temporal and spatial dimensions to serve the needs of the neoliberal seizure of resources, be it labor, nature or technology, become devoid of their normative character in the setting of the occupied public space. A new assemblage, as body, is therefore established in excess of the already established codes of urban life-giving way to unexpected encounters and in-depth transformations which, if sustained, might lead to new and alternative subject formations.

Hence, body politics shall be endowed with conceptual tools to elucidate the active force of bodies that escapes the capture of bio-politics. The body as assemblage provides us with a concept of embodiment that does justice to the active force of the corporeal materiality, while at the same time refusing to reduce it to the biological image or representation of body that have dearly served the bio-politics of the power (Gatens, 1999, 21-25). Below, I am going to explain the concept of body as assemblage.

Deleuze and Guattari don't present a throughout conception of body in *Mille Plateaux*. Just as the term of assemblage, the concept of body is also distributed throughout the book and, from time to time, used interchangeably with the former. A body is an assemblage, an assemblage is a body. What is a body then? The answer of this

question will pave the way for a different conception of assemblage: apart from being a horizontal, rhizomatic arrangement of heterogeneous elements, an assemblage as body is a composition of multiple bodies and it is determined through the way it affects others and is affected by them.

Deleuze and Guattari develop their theory of body as opposed to conceptions that define it with respect to a determining form, a substance or determined subjects (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 318). Rather, their definition of body construes it as a whole made up of material and semiotic elements that belong to it under certain relations of rest, velocity and slowness (longitudinal) and as a whole composed of intensive affects that it is capable of under a certain level of power or degree of *puissance* (power)<sup>59</sup>. Such a definition is against construing body as an unity of organs or through the functions these organs exercise (Buchanan, 2008, 157). A body is rather defined through affects and local movements at differential velocities. Manning indicates that it is “the body before the subject, in advance and towards subjectivity, the body as the complexity of imminent collectivity, the body as resonant materiality,

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<sup>59</sup> Un corps ne se définit pas par la forme qui le détermine, ni comme une substance ou un sujet déterminés, ni par les organes qu'il possède ou les fonctions qu'il exerce. Sur le plan de consistance, un corps se définit seulement par une longitude et une latitude: c'est-à-dire l'ensemble des éléments matériels qui lui appartiennent sous tels rapports de mouvement et de repos de vitesse et de lenteur (longitude); l'ensemble des affects intensifs dont il est capable, sous tel pouvoir ou degré de puissance (latitude). Rien que des affects et des mouvements locaux, des vitesses différentielles. Il revient à Spinoza d'avoir dégagé ces deux dimensions du Corps, et d'avoir défini le plan de Nature comme longitude et latitude pures. Latitude et longitude sont les deux éléments d'une cartographie (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 318).

the body as the metastable field before the taking-form of this or that... The body, more assemblage than form, more associated milieu than being” (Manning, 2010, p. 118). It is, as such, the active force of body to which Braidotti refers. There is indeed a conception of body in Deleuze and Guattari which refers to active materiality and a *metastable field* preceding the mechanisms of capture, or subjectivation in Foucauldian terms. It is “at the virtual-actual juncture” where “the force of affect resides, activating the body-becoming” (p. 117). Due to its direct alliance with *becoming*, such a conception of body has serious political implications.

Body conceived as such has direct references to the Spinozist body. It is indeed true that Deleuze-Guattarian concept of body, hence assemblage, rests on their take of the Spinozist conception of body. Accordingly, returning to the original development of the concept of assemblage in the larger corpus of Deleuze-Guattarian work points to a particular conception of embodiment and body as affect. This will further have ethico-political implications in our analysis of the body and affect politics in the Gezi Movement.

Moira Gatens, in her analysis of the concept of body in Spinoza, reminds us that the Spinozist body is a “complex individual made up of a number of other bodies (...) (which) can be composed, recomposed and decomposed by other bodies” (Gatens, 1999, p. 110).

The body and mind are modes of the two attributes –extension and thought- of the one and only substance, i.e. Nature (Gatens, 1999, p. 110). The relationship of the mind to the body is immediate and it is exercised by the faculty of imagination (p. 12). It



consists of the production of ideas of bodily changes. Therefore, an idea is always an idea of affective changes, an “awareness of bodily modifications” (p. 12). It can aptly be said that in this conception of body, ideas are always embodied, they are embedded in bodily modifications. As such, “reason is thus not seen as a transcendent or disembodied quality of the soul or mind; rather, reason, desire and knowledge are embodied and dependent, at least in the first instance, on the quality and complexity of the corporeal affects” (p. 110). As stated by Jane Bennett, the Spinozist notion of affect “refers broadly to the capacity of any body for activity and responsiveness” (Bennett, 2010, xii). These corporeal affects depend on the encounters bodies go through. Through encounters, bodies *are composed, recomposed and decomposed by other bodies* and their capacities to affect other bodies and be affected by them change accordingly. Here, affect<sup>60</sup> refers to “states of awareness of bodily transitions in activity and passivity- transitions in bodily power and intensity” (Gatens, 1999 p. 51).

The relationship between the body and the mind is that of representation, meaning that neither of them can determine the other (p. 111). The mind is an idea of the body. Hence, we cannot know in advance what a body is capable of doing. The capacities bodies are endowed with depend on their encounters and under new compositions bodies can come to have different capacities to act. For this reason, Gatens underlines

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<sup>60</sup> In the *Ethics*, Spinoza uses two different notions: *affectio* (affection) and *affectus* (affect). Deleuze, in *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy* (1988) explains the difference as follows: the *affectio* refers to a state of the affected body and implies the presence of the affecting body, whereas the *affectus* refers to the passage from one state to another, taking into account the correlative variation of the affecting bodies” (p. 49).

the fact that “Deleuze understands Spinozistic reason, at its most fundamental level, as ‘the effort to organize encounters on the basis of perceived agreements and disagreements’ between one body and the next” (p. 112). Agreements with other bodies cause joy and increase the capacity of the body to act, while disagreements cause sadness and decrease this power (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 313-314)<sup>61</sup>. Therefore, the affects are categorized within the range of sadness on one hand and joy on the other hand, according to their impact on the power of the body. Such a conception of body acknowledges the embeddedness of thought in bodily affects. Hence, it would also have serious implications on the way politics is conceived. Politics would become embodied affect politics that gives precedence to practices and encounters that would increase the capacities of bodies to act.

If the bio-politics, as a body politics, reduces the active force of the body to raw material to be put to work, such an affect politics would envisage new encounters in which the bodies would be composed in ways that would sparkle joy and increase their power to act. Joyful changes in bodies’ capacity to act will therefore be a political concern. As Deleuze and Guattari state: “Affects are *becomings*” (*idem.*). Hence, becoming is an affective affair. The politics as a practical concern of *becoming-minor* is thus an affective affair. Becoming, as such, is embodied and embedded in the body

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<sup>61</sup> Il y a un autre aspect chez Spinoza. A chaque rapport de mouvement et de repos, de vitesse et de lenteur, qui groupe une infinité de parties, correspond un degré de puissance. Aux rapports qui composent un individu, qui le décomposent ou le modifient, correspondent des intensités qui l'affectent, augmentant ou diminuant sa puissance d'agir, venant des parties extérieures ou de ses propres parties.

assemblage as the force to affect others and capacity to be affected by other bodies.

Deleuze and Guattari claim that such a *minor* conception of body is at odds with identifying the body with molar entities, such as organism, organs, species or genus (*idem.*). As stated above, molar entities are established via the capture of non-molar intensities. Only once they are established, one starts to conceive them as accomplished facts. It would be erroneous to start the analysis with the accomplished fact, as this would ignore the problem of *its constitution*. As ANT scholars would aver, what's important is to know how molar entities have come to be assembled and what supports them. As such, just as Haraway, Deleuze and Guattari wage a war against identifying the body with the organism. Spinozist body provides them with a dear conceptual toolbox as it defines bodies as multiple and multiply open to composure and re-composure. In this conception, "each body exists in relations of interdependence with other bodies and these relations form a 'world' in which individuals of all kinds exchange their constitutive parts – leading to the enrichment of some and the demise of others" (Gatens, 1999, p. 101). *Interdependency* among bodies of all kinds is therefore the key to understand this inter-relational domain.

Accordingly, a body made up of multiple bodies –amounting to a world- is defined according to its capacity to act –which is directly related to the ways it is affected and the ways it affects other bodies. Deleuze and Guattari will thus aver that "there are more differences between a racing horse and a workhorse than a workhorse and a beef" (*idem.*). Both being horses, they manifest radically different capacities to act, just as they wouldn't have the same affects.

An assemblage, in that sense, is required to be conceived as a body that is composed of multiple bodies. It is a body of multiple other bodies that are above else affective. “Those affects circulate and transform themselves throughout the assemblage,” state Deleuze and Guattari (p. 315). These multiple, affective interactions will thus define what a body can do.

Considering the Gezi movement as an assemblage, hence an affective body, could then help us better construe protestors’ bodily accounts presented throughout the Gezi account in the first section. Making themselves a new body within the larger body of the Gezi movement as event, protestors entered in new encounters accompanied by joyful affects (see. Chapter IV). Throughout the second, third and fourth chapters, I tried to give an account of the course of the movement through significant translations in the protest types adapted by the protestors. I explained that such consecutive translations, as an ongoing process of selection and reiteration, constituted the movement as such. The components, both collective and individual, human and non-human, affected the event in its totality, while similarly the event as a meta relationality, an assemblage and a body acted on the former and transformed them. These translations were accompanied by new encounters and positive affects as care, solidarity, interdependency and joy. Indeed, the joyful affective registry of the movement presented in the fourth chapter shows that Gezi encounters increased the power of bodies to act. This also explains the accounts of the protesters regarding the fact that everyone was open to discuss political issues that are otherwise deemed taboos, such as Armenian genocide or the Kurdish problem. Accordingly, it can aptly be said that their capacities to be affected significantly augmented. We can indeed talk

about the constitution of a body, an assemblage, that significantly transformed the capacities of its constituents to think and act.

If “there are more differences between a ricing horse and a workhorse than a workhorse and a beef,” there would definitely be differences between the capacities of a person to act in an office setting and the capacities she would be endowed with behind a barricade on the streets, sharing food in the park or discussing her concerns over life spaces in a park assembly. We have seen in the second and third chapters that the protesters experienced these new bodily capacities and the accompanying affects:

“We are in an energy cloud resembling a newly formed star constellation. We are experimenting how it *feels to* belong to a city. We are the seeds of a tree that grew up in Gezi Park. It is our duty to keep an eye on these seeds; set back all our divisions and create a local-common language all together,” states an activist on the 12<sup>th</sup> July in Sinop Assembly located in Sinop, a city by the Black-Sea.” (12<sup>th</sup> of July, 2013. Sinop assembly)<sup>62</sup>.

If bodies are defined according to their capacities to act, prefiguration in reclaimed public spaces would amount to new bodies with new capacities to act. Such accounts, as I have shown in the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> chapters, refer to the very *experience* of making new communities and the *feeling* this experience evokes in Gezi registers.

Construing the Gezi Movement as an assemblage, in accordance with the concept of body presented in *Mille Plateaux* which clearly refers to Spinozian ethics, thus helps us to develop an account that also does justice to the *embodied* aspects of these recent

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<sup>62</sup> <http://parklarbizim.blogspot.com.es/2013/07/sinop-forumu-notlar-12-temmuz.html>

mobilizations.

### **6.2.1. Spinozist Affect politics against representation**

The Spinozist politics based on this conception of body has significant points in common with the politics exercised in the reclaimed public spaces. Feminist theorists as Hasana Sharp and Moira Gatens aver that Spinozist politics is a good alternative to the liberal representational politics (Sharp 2011; Gatens 1999). This is in resonance with the political concern of the Gezi movement to present an alternative to representative democracy. As I have shown in the second, third and fourth chapters, non-representation, therefore using assemblies to exercise deliberative democracy has been among the most significant concerns of Gezi communities. Assemblage as body and the body/affect politics it implies also refer to this concern. Assemblage as an affective body thus foregrounds a body and affect politics based on experimenting concrete life-sharing and decision-making practices through which bodies are endowed with new capacities to relate to one another.

Hasana Sharp makes use of the Spinozist conception of body and affect so as to propose an affective politics against representational politics or the politics of recognition (Sharp, 2011). She calls it the *renaturalization* of politics that aspires to situate action in its relation to non-human forces (p. 6). Resonating with the concern of Haraway to go beyond social constructivism and produce useful accounts of reality, Sharp proffers that the *denaturalization* of social constructivism must now be coupled

with or considered within the scope of *renaturalization* so as to be able to situate human action within a larger perspective. This larger perspective involves non-human forces, bodies and an affective component. Accordingly, Spinozist conception of nature “names the necessity of ongoing mutation and inescapability of dependence among finite beings. Rather than serving to prescribe the entelecheic unfolding of a thing’s essence, Spinoza’s nature affirms the variability intrinsic to relational existence. To be a relational being is to undergo a history of constitutive affections and transformations in response to encounters with other beings, human and nonhuman (p. 8). Here, we see that the emphasis is on a conception of relationality and materiality that would foreground a conception of body assembled by both human and non-human forces through encounters. Renaturalization, as such, gives priority to interdependency and a well-situated perspective of human action. “Being natural means being situated within a particular time, place, and causal nexus” (p. 6).

Renaturalization, as such, has an *extrasocial perspective* (p. 9) and it undermines the modern division between nature and culture. Nature, as above definition postulates, can be deemed an assemblage, the larger body made up of multiple bodies. Spinozist “‘nature’ must not be understood to imply whatever is nonhuman. It should already be clear that Spinoza challenges all of our usual distinctions between mind and body, “man” and nature, culture and wilderness, artifice and adaptation. (...) cyborgs, landfills, and leviathans are just as natural as tides, forests, and flocks of birds (...)” (p. 9).

According to Sharp, such an approach, has clear political implications. That type of

an *impersonal perspective* (p. 13) to politics and ethics minds interdependency of different factors, human and non-human, and brings our reality as affective and corporeal beings to the fore. She contends that impersonal or affective politics has a different orientation than that of politics of rights and representation in that it is “a project of composition and synergy” (p. 13). The example she gives is resonant with Melucci’s claims regarding the symbolic stakes of recent social movements, while at the same time, it takes a step forward and underlines the transformative experience of joyful affects in augmenting the capacity of bodies to act:

Let me offer an example. A group of five hundred thousand people assemble on the National Mall to protest a bill being considered by Congress. They gather, sing, chant, present their signs, and socialize. They receive disappointing media coverage and the opposed bill passes easily. From the perspective of strictly personal politics, the rally failed. The demands of the protestors were not represented to a larger public, nor did they come to be reflected in the law; the contours of the legal person and mass understandings of freedom were not altered. From an impersonal political perspective, however, the primary sites of concern are different. Rather than a concern with whether representations were contested or confirmed, an impersonal lens is trained upon the affects that concretely determine individual and collective power. Insofar as individuals were exhilarated and forged connections pregnant with unknown futures, this event contributed to the agency of those involved, engendered the basis of new forms of shared power, and thereby “succeeded.” Such connections may not have taken the form of email addresses exchanged or future meet-ups established but may be nothing other than a coagulation of joyful affect that enabled ambient bodies and minds to think and act more effectively or, in Foucault’s words, to engage in an “art of not being governed quite so much” in their everyday lives (p. 13-14).

Here, I claim that the data presented in the second, third and fourth chapters requires that Gezi shall be construed from this perspective, as a moment when bodies came to exercise novel capacities to act, to assemble and to make themselves visible in ways that cannot be accounted for in representational politics. Although most of the



demands of Gezi protestors have not been ‘recognized’ as part of institutional politics, Gezi amounted to an unprecedented moment of empowerment for the entire opposition of the country. We definitely need new perspectives to politics so as to better explain such movements that fall short of classical political explanations based on recognition of certain identities or demands. The real success of the Gezi Movement was indeed its capacity to mobilize components of different nature, collective and individual, human and non-human bodies around affections of joy. As we have seen in the third chapter, one of the biggest concerns of Gezi was to experience or pre-figurate, deliberative democracy in assemblies. Presence, as opposed to representation, and active, bodily and affective participation in the making of an alternative public space came to the fore.

As stated above, politics is a matter of becoming, hence affects, in Deleuze-Guattarian thought. Directly relying on Spinoza in their account of body and affects, Deleuze and Guattari are interested in machinic assemblages in which bodies would be endowed with new capacities to act and to become. Nicholas Thoburn, in that sense, indicates that “Félix Guattari’s lament that there is ‘no description of the special characteristics of the working class that established the Paris Commune, no description of its creative imagination’ conveys a sense of his concern with the *affective, imaginary and libidinal properties and dynamics of political subjectivation* (Guattari 1984: 35)” (Thoburn & Buchanan, 2008, p. 98, *emphasis is mine*). Classical descriptions of political subjectivation that lack the affective aspects involved therein indeed fall short of explaining movements like the Paris Commune, May 68 and occupy movements that were strictly non-representational, pre-figurative and deliberative.

Nigel Thrift, an author deeply engaged in the affect theory, thus underlines the significance of “the affective realm of political feeling” (...) “the ‘motivational propensity’ or ‘disposition,’ the means by which masses of people and things primed to act.” (Thrift, 2008, p. 220).

Protevi confirms that “Deleuze and Guattari do have a corporeal/Spinozist notion of affect involved with the encounter of bodies” adding that “they also have what we could call a ‘milieu,’ or ‘environmental’ sense of affect. Here affect is ‘in the air,’ something like the mood of a party, which is not the mere aggregate of the subjective states of the party-goers. In this sense, affect is not emergent from pre-existing subjectivities; emotional subjectivities are crystallizations or residues of a collective affect” (Protevi in Thoburn & Buchanan, 2008, p. 89). Jane Bennett, defending the significance of affect politics, also refers to this milieu as such: “if a set of moral principles is actually to be lived out, *the right mood or landscape of affect* has to be in place” (Bennett, 2010, xii, *translation is mine*). The carnivalesque character of Gezi encampment was a significant element sustaining the affect of joy ‘in the air.’ Let’s return back to İrem’s (29) statement about the party-like atmosphere of Gezi encampment:

It was as if you make a party in your house and many people attend, much more than you anticipated. It was like this. I talk about party, it looks like I do not acknowledge the seriousness of the matter, but many others say that it was like a carnival. Not that I want to talk of it as a TV show, but on the other hand, it had a carnival-like atmosphere. Then, when we consider the etymology of the word, it comes from *carne*, flesh and makes you think of how one has a relation with his own *carne*, the flesh of ceremonies and rituals” (İrem, queer, 29, LGBT activist).

Chesters & Graham also refer to this carnivalesque character of –alter-globalization– social movements and define their ‘milieu’ as such: “Entering such spaces is a step into another world, a world where symbolic coding inverts the meaning and sign value of the familiar” (p. 35). The carnivalesque atmosphere, the ‘milieu,’ or the site of these moments has indeed a significant effect on the *becoming*-activist of the protestors and the making of alternative communities.

Thrift accordingly claims for a theory of being ‘non-representative’ which signifies an interest in the everyday life (Thrift 2008, p. 5) play (p. 6) performance, practices (p. 8) and encounter. Acknowledging the influence of the writings of Deleuze-Guattari on assemblages, he calls it “a *material schematism* in which the world is made up of all kinds of things brought into relation with one another by many and various spaces through a continuous and largely involuntary process of encounter, and the violent training that such encounter forces” (p. 8). Thrift also does due justice to affects in the Spinozist sense of the word (p. 13). Just as the others, for Thrift, the emphasis on the affective aspects of the encounter refers to an impersonal domain.

We see the repercussions of this collective affect in the activist accounts presented in the second chapter: “I think there was a strange thing going on there, everyone was so understanding and caring towards one another, weirdly” (Zeynep, 34). The affects of care, solidarity and joy were indeed ‘in the air’ stemming from the collective action that occurred in the inter-relational occupied space. In that sense, Protevi, in his analysis of Occupy Wall Street, proffers that The Occupy movement shows us how the semantic, pragmatic, and affective – meaning, action, and feeling – are intertwined

in all collective practices” (p. 88). The way Hüma (22) describes what occupy means to her is a good example on how semantic, pragmatic and affective are intertwined in the practice of occupation:

That was how I felt myself in Gezi, when we occupied the square. Streets pertain to people, this space is already ours. State is something that we create. Before, such things were lingering on thin air, people actually could not understand them. Back there, during the occupation of square, we saw it concretely. I think that one realizes that the streets actually pertain to her in the occupation. Sorry, but it is not true that you only possess a place through a rental contract, while the rest is the state property. Everywhere belongs to us, state is us, *you cannot understand it thoroughly without actually sitting there, occupying that space*. It is also an act that makes the governors understand it, it’s like saying, sorry to remind you of the fact that this place is ours. I believe that it is a very effective and strong method” (Hüma woman, 22, urban activist network, *emphasis is mine*).

Here, we see that occupation was an action, a statement, a claim and a feeling of empowerment all at the same time, something which “*you cannot understand thoroughly without actually sitting there, occupying that space*.” Protevi calls it the *bodi(ies) politic* (p. 90; Protevi 2001, 2009) delving into “politically shaped and triggered affective cognition” (Protevi 2009, p. 33). Referring to the collective affective charge of the human microphone in Occupy Wall Street and the entrainment (the falling into the same rhythm) by collective bodily movement (Protevi 2008, p. 91), Protevi underlines that “such collective rhythms produce an affective experience, a feeling of being together, an *eros* or *ecstasis* if you want to use classical terms, the characteristic joy of being together felt in collective action” (p. 91).

With respect to Occupy Gezi, we see that the prevailing affections of joy, care and solidarity are produced through daily routines of maintaining the reclaimed public space –collective cooking, eating, food sharing, collective cleaning- and bodily practices as human chains, barricading, concerts, collective dinners etc. Food sharing became particularly significant as it turned into a ritualistic practice in the *Earthmeals* of the month Ramadan. The *Earthmeal* of the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2013 which gathered hundred thousands of people laying their tables throughout Istiklal street was indeed charged with affections of joy, solidarity and empowerment at the wake of the forceful eviction of Gezi park. Ten thousands of people kneeling down and serenely waiting for the azan reconstituted the feelings of togetherness in times when the forceful eviction of the encampment caused indignation and distress among the protestors. As such, *Earthmeals*, among other bodily practices of collective share like human chains, street parties, concerts, the piano recital of Davide Martello on the 12<sup>nd</sup> of June 2013, as well as assemblies contributed to the creation of a common body, an assemblage around joyful effects. This explains well why people were more open to be affected by one another's opinions in the occupied public places. In the first chapter, I mentioned the feminist corrective acts. When the feminists started to intervene in the sexist language of the swear words used against the prime minister and the government, the emergent Gezi communities respected this demand to use a non-sexist language and quickly non-sexism became one of the concerns of the movement in general (as discussed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter on the concerns that assembled park assembly communities). The same happened when the LGBT communities of the movement demanded a non-sexist language that doesn't include demeaning words for

LGBT people. Similarly, as I showed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter, people in park assemblies were open to listen to Kurdish protesters when it comes to the on-going peace negotiations with the armed Kurdish Worker's Party (PKK). The atmosphere or the milieu of the movement had a directly transformative impact on the protesters and their capacity to listen to one another. The *interdependency* created by the emergence of a new dissident community out of very heterogeneous components (here I mostly refer to heterogeneity with respect to political and institutional affiliations) amounted to in-depth transformations in the way bodies related to others that come from different classes, ethnicities, sexual orientations etc.

Guisseppina Mecchia refers to this body as *anthropos*, “understood as the body carrying the constantly mutating unconscious, machinic investments theorized by schizoanalysis” (Mecchia, in Thoburn & Buchanan, 2008, p. 85) and claims that it is “one of the most powerful practico-theoretical figures for our understanding of the emergence of the Occupy groups” (p. 84). The emphasis on the ‘practical’ component of the theory is all the more important, given that “an understanding of political subjectivity fully engaged in the materiality of the minds and bodies actually living in a certain social milieu is necessary (...) these occupational practices do indeed occur, and they do so because the affective investments of the *anthropos* are never fully exhausted by the powers encroaching on them” (p. 85). Below, I will further dwell on one of these occupational practices that dearly contributed to the creation of this social milieu: park assemblies.

### **6.2.2. Park Assemblies: the milieu of the contentious action**

At the end of the next chapter, I will further refer Gezi assemblages as war machines, in line with the Deleuze-Guattarian reading of Occupy movements presented by the authors of the book *Occupy: A People Yet to Come*. War machines, assemblages that actualize lines of flight, are assemblages mobilized to experiment with new relations to space and time. Considering the bodily character of the mobilization with respect to the concept of assemblage as body, such experiments are to be seen as experiments that endow bodies with new and unexpected capacities to act. As stated above, the affect politics goes hand in hand with a ‘milieu’ marked by new relations to space. The reclaimed Gezi Park served as a ‘milieu’ in which the newly formed Gezi communities experimented new relations with each other. Similarly, once the Gezi Park was forcefully evacuated by the police, the park assemblies served as the ‘milieu’ of the movement and contributed to the propagation of Gezi practices, affects and values to the entire country.

Adolfo Estalella and Alberto Corsin Jimenez (2013, 2016) in their analysis of the assemblies of Spanish 15M movement, point to the experimental character of the mobilization and the way assemblies served as sites to sustain and enhance it. Theirs is an analysis based on the role of assemblies as novel means to “sense the city” (Estalella & Jimenez, 2016, p. 147) and relate to it. Referring to Rancier’s argument that there are “aesthetic and sensory conditions to politics” meaning that experiencing the world leans on a certain distribution of the sensible, they situate politics within the

lines of “a conflict for competing worlds” rather than “clashes over different values or confrontations over representations of the world” (p. 148). Hence, political action based on a novel distribution of the sensible mobilizes a dis-identification process with the existing aesthetic and sensual order of things (Ranciere 2000, p. 64). As underlined by Keith Bassett who also reads Occupy movement with respect to Ranciere’s idea of politics, “occupations materialized people power through a subversion of the 'normal distribution' of police spaces, 'detourning' this spatial logic for political effect” (Bassett, 2014, p. 893). This emphasis on the sensual and aesthetic character of politics also leans on a highly bodily repertoire of action. Indeed Estalella & Jimenez aver that “the assemblies put into practice what we call a politics of (pre)occupation, characterized by an anticipation of the senses that is worked out in its material practices of urban engagement. (Estalella & Jimenez 2016, p. 148). Assemblies thus signify more than deliberative practices, rather they are novel means to organize our sensibility.

Bodies having new capacities to act indeed go hand in hand with an infrastructure through the help of which the sensible is redistributed. They dwell on the experimentation with the *listening* practice which amounts to the slow pace of assemblies (p. 159). The slowness, in that sense, is related to the concern for making a new space endowed with a novel relation to others. The politics of preoccupation, as they call it, leans on experimenting with a new pace of collective arrangement around common issues. As such, it is related to making space through ‘slowing down’ the normal course of interaction, actively listening to the others and not representing anyone. A new temporal arrangement in the occupied public space is accompanied by



a new bodily and sensory rhythm. This all amounts to a new engagement with the urban life. Hence, assemblies are described “as an urban organon whose gatherings in the street are not only oriented to intervene through direct action or reach consensus through deliberation but also occupying the distribution of the sensible by assembling the sensory organon of its own politics” (p. 148).

In the third chapter, I tried to give evidence to the emergence of park assembly communities around various concerns including, the defense of life spaces, anti-sexism, anti-nationalism and a keen interest in what the protesters called participatory, direct or horizontal democracy. As such, park assemblies translated, translocated and distributed the concerns of the communities that were created in the Gezi encampment. The assembly structure, as evidenced by Estalella and Jimenez in the case of 15M assemblies, paved the way for an alternative engagement with common issues. This engagement gave priority to speaking less, listening and taking into consideration what one says. As stated in the third chapter on park assemblies, Kadıköy Yoğurtçu Park assemblies were initiated each night at 21 pm with the moderator of the day warning the speakers not to use a sexist, racist and offensive language. The speakers were asked to make their statements in two minutes, while it was the task of the moderator to give the floor to speakers who had not talked before and pay particular attention to giving voice to otherwise underrepresented people, such as women, LGBT people, Kurds, Armenians etc. Therefore, listening and speaking became experimenting with an openness to new worlds, “the proliferation of worlds, and not only the representations of them” (Estalella & Jimenez, 2016, p. 157). This experimentation with a new rhythm and pace of collectivity went hand in

hand with the affections of solidarity, care and joy and significantly augmented the capacity of openness to different worlds. As stated in the third chapter on the concern of park assemblies to be non-sexist and non-racist, park assemblies as *the sensory organon* of a new politics witnessed an increase in the capacity of its participants to accommodate new world-views and perspectives coming from bodies assembled under different conditions. The anecdote concerning Abbasağa Park Assembly's interest in the opinions of the Kurdish young man (see chapter 3, section a. IV) evince the transformation that the neighbor-protesters went through in their engagement with assembly politics.

Slowing the pace so as to make space for a different sensibility and sociability; experimenting with new rhythms and paces of acting in occupied spaces prove to be difficult processes that require patience and constant engagement. Redistributing the sensible, in that sense, can amount to an overwhelming transformation process. Aslı, a young architect who started to be involved in the activities of Caferağa Neighborhood Assembly after the Gezi Movement states that it is a troublesome process to get used to the slow pace of assemblies:

At the beginning, I did not go to the assemblies, I just attended to workshops. Because direct democracy is really difficult and it takes a lot of time. I attended to some forums at the beginnings, but I got overwhelmed by the longitude of the discussions. I am so used to living fast! Also in my work, in extra hours, I am so used to organize things as fast as possible and to be drifted in life without giving much thought about it. I felt a bit tired of long discussions, the objective to have a consensus and giving voice to minorities. I was not used to such concepts. I was just thinking that everything was too slow and that it was impossible to proceed in lifelike this. That's why I told to myself, 'ok I will go to workshops where there are concrete things to

be done.’ It is really difficult for me to ‘stand’ it and I think it is the right expression to define it: I could not stand it. That’s why I was firstly involved in workshops. And also, at the beginning, in the concrete things I did in workshops, I was really inconsistent. Normally, in my work life, I am a very hardworking person. I am hardworking when I am working to pay my rent or when I am working for my boss... But, apparently, we get lazy when we work for ourselves. We always postpone things we need to do for ourselves and for the collective good. So, I used to most of the meetings, I used to skip things to be done, when there was something to be done like preparing a banner, I used to do it at the eleventh hour (Aslı, woman, 34, Caferağa Neighborhood Solidarity).

Here, Aslı sincerely describes the difficulty involved in organizing life around assemblies. The sensible distribution of the ordinary urban life has a different, faster pace and rhythm and a new distribution of the sensible is difficult to ‘stand.’ Not being able to stand it refers to a very bodily resistance to change. Nevertheless, she adds that experimenting with the life in the occupied space sparked happiness and courage:

A friend of mine from Yeldeğirmeni Neighborhood Solidarity took me to Don Kışot (a squat occupied at the wake of Gezi) at the first weeks of its occupation. They were working together, eating together. I remember that I was impressed by that happiness coming from doing, achieving something all-together. That’s something we forgot. We forgot the excitement to make things collectively and for the good of the collective. Well, I saw that happiness and it touched me. I believe, occupation is the justification of self-governance, self-defense, uprising. In fact, our lives are very much occupied, we are submitted to extra working hours and we say nothing. Even now, I hush to many injustices. Occupation gives you the grounds to put your feet on, of course occupation is not everything, but gives you the grounds to come together and start working together (Aslı, woman, 34, Caferağa Neighborhood Solidarity).

Therefore, participating in assemblies in the occupied spaces refers to changing the bodily pace and opening oneself to experience new affects. The pre-occupation

politics developed by Estalella and Jimenez refer to this affective atmosphere surrounding experiments with new bodily rhythms and paces. Therefore, the making of new dissident communities in Gezi assemblies around common issues regarding the ‘defense of life spaces’ refers to this highly sensible, affective and bodily aspect of the politics of preoccupation. Deliberative practices, as stated in the third chapter, always go hand in hand with assembling bodies under new affective and sensible constellations. Lorenzo d’Orsi, in his embodied analysis of the Gezi Movements, also refers to this aspect of park assemblies, this time with respect to the affective significance of sharing stories in the reclaimed public spaces.

The many forums which arose in Istanbul’s districts after the evacuation of Gezi Park represented a significant moment of mobilization, both as a practice of reappropriation of urban space and as a place where the stories of people became part of the political action. During the meetings, in the evenings of July, the participants started to tell their experiences of dissent, and sometimes their lives, transforming their personal stories into an expression of a new politics of visibility. As many people involved stated, telling about themselves and speaking together against the power represented not only a way to affirm themselves but also a way to rearticulate a new relationship among the Self, the others and the perceived social constrictions” (d’Orsi 2015, p. 26).

As such the Gezi encampment, following park assemblies and neighborhood assemblies constitutes *the milieu* of dissident action where the bodies “more assemblage, than form” (Manning 2010, p. 118) were endowed with novel capacities to act. As stated by Catteral, “What is evident is a change in mentalities, the relation to others, the infusion of vitality, the feeling of fusion through ‘the energies of being so closely together’ if not to the cosmos, at least to something much larger than political inanities and ‘the banalities of mainstream media, vitality, elan, surprise”

(Catterall 2013, p. 420).

Butler, in her latest analysis of Occupy assemblies, also refers to the significance of enactment via assembling as opposed to the speech of a subject through “a vocalized proposition” (Butler 2015, p. 156). Indicating the importance of non-linguistic expressions and bodily enactment in Occupy assemblies, Butler underlines that this amounts to a new conception of politics. “At issue for us the question of how politics changes when the idea of abstract rights vocally claimed by individuals gives way to a plurality of embodied actors who enact their claims, sometimes through language, sometimes not” (p. 157). She situates the politics at work in occupied spaces in opposition to the ‘right to assembly,’ the latter presuming the idea of abstract rights vocally claimed by individuals. The *enactment*, verbal or not, the *expression*, linguistic or material, mobilized through the assemblies reconfigure the question of right and the subject position presumed therein. Neighbors (not subjects or citizens) become the new political actors in a “process reinventing classical urban topoi” (Jimenez & Estalella 2013, p. 151). Here, a new politics prevails that cannot be reduced to representation. Popular assemblies, in that sense, situate themselves within the “dissonance between enactment and representation” and they precede any ‘right to assembly’ guaranteed by any state or government (Butler 2015, p. 163). They are, as such, “extraparliamentary” (p. 162). Neighbors refer to a certain relation with the urban space that cannot be reduced to a citizen that is defined by its preordained rights. Neighbor, in that sense, is situated in this extra-parliamentary relationality that refers to a new relation with the city, or *the life spaces*.

### 6.3. Material Semiotics Revisited: struggle over ‘life spaces’

This struggle is against all the practices that expropriate our coasts, forest and public spaces. It is against the hydropower, nuclear and coal plants that destroy nature. It is against the profit-oriented projects that target not only Taksim Square and Gezi Park, but also Göztepe Park, Kusbili Meadow, Haydarpaşa Train Station, Atatürk Forest Farm and a variety of other commons. It is against the 3<sup>rd</sup> bridge project for which the groundbreaking ceremony was shamelessly held today, which will destroy all the forests and dry up all the water resources in Istanbul. It is against the 3<sup>rd</sup> airport project that will serve the customers for the 3<sup>rd</sup> bridge and will pave the way for the rent-generating construction in northern Istanbul. It is against the New Istanbul Project that will ruin all natural resources... The struggle here is for all our people whose houses and living spaces<sup>63</sup> were confiscated... Reclaiming Taksim, the memory of struggle and solidarity, means reclaiming not only the square and the park, but also all these values and rights. For all these reasons, we call upon everyone who wants to stand up for the rights and liberties, city, living spaces and future to come to Taksim’s Gezi Park.

(Taksim Solidarity Press Release, May 29, 2013 in Akbulut 2015, p. 227).

As I stated in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> chapters, it was common for the protesters to describe the Gezi movement as a defense of ‘life spaces.’ The term life spaces seem to be an overarching word that include urban and rural space, as well as body. Concerns regarding life spaces included but were not limited to ecological, environmental or

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<sup>63</sup> Living spaces is the translation of the author for the Turkish “yaşam alanları” which I preferred to translate as “life spaces” throughout the dissertation.

urban issues in the classical meaning of these terms. Concerns regarding the will to execute an alternative democracy -mostly called direct or participatory democracy- went hand in hand with a severe critic against the parliamentary or representative democracy; concerns to promote anti-sexism, gender equality and anti-homophobia; concerns regarding anti-nationalism and anti-racism. All these concerns were inter-related and the defense and creation of alternative life spaces went hand in hand with the will to create and experiment on means to have a direct voice on what sustains and maintains these life spaces.

Let's return to the manifesto of Marmaris Assembly for a more in-depth discussion on life-spaces:

we defend and develop exchange economy; we are here with our differences, that's what enriches and strengthens us; we believe in the fraternity and freedom of peoples. We are not on the side of the powerful, *we like to become more powerful all together; we are not interested in overturning, we are rather interested in constructing;* (...) **(in bold) we lay claim to our parks, squares, neighborhoods, natural resources, forests, rivers, seas, soil, seeds, public places, artistic spaces; we believe that we would subvert capitalist despotism and immoral plunder economy with this determination.**"  
(Marmaris Assembly minutes, 4<sup>th</sup> of July )

This manifesto is exemplary in order to reveal the overarching use of the term life spaces by Gezi protesters. As claimed by Butler, "protesters were petitioning to save trees there, the forests in all the parks and the water, that is, all those natural resources that have to be sustained for life to be livable and, so, part of a broader political ecology" (Butler 2014b).

The life spaces indeed come to include urban spaces like parks, squares, public places, neighborhoods, natural resources as forests, rivers, seas, soil and seeds. An emphasis on the defense of life and life spaces is indeed a prevailing concern of the Gezi movement. Let's once again see the manifesto of Taksim Solidarity published in its official web site on the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, 2013: "Gezi Park is life: we continue to defend our life and rights over our lives (yaşamsal haklar) in all circumstances," says the statement and refers to the fight between 'those who assume their park and their lives' and 'those who want to bury them under a block of cement' (*betonlaştırmak*). The protesters, as such, refer to a defense of life against forces that aspire to replace it with cement. The 'life' is defended via experimenting with different relationalities in 'life spaces,' the latter referring to both the natural and the urban setting. It is interesting to observe how the defense of 'life spaces' incorporate the urban space, including the technical and technological infrastructure that sustain it, as well as what is traditionally conceived as nature including forests, seeds, rivers etc. Reclaiming life spaces goes hand in hand with aspiring to have a word on decisions taken on public spaces as well as internet, urban infrastructure and forests. The emphasis on life thus refers to all life-sustaining spaces, activities and relations.

The bodily practices, i.e. enactments (Butler 2015, p. 156-157) prevailing in the Gezi Movement (human chains, *Earthmeals*, standing man, barricading, assembling, encampment, occupation) thus resonate with a conception of 'life' embedded in physical spaces, material infrastructure and bodies. This is a conception of life that is



both natural and cultural, material and symbolic that goes beyond the organization of cities in the capitalist urbanization.

Here, I will finish my arguments on the embodied character of Gezi assemblages by claiming that this conception of life prevailing in the Gezi Movement is an integral part of the bod(ies) and affect politics of the movement. Life, as it is conceived from the perspective of assemblages rather than molar entities as subjects, substances and forms, is lived at the intersection of what is otherwise abstractly divided into natural, cultural, social, urban, material, semiotic. Life, as a lived experience, occurs in a hybrid space, i.e. assemblage of elements in mixed registers. Reclaiming a life via direct bodily enactment is thus reclaiming this lived experience. In this mixed registry, the defense of seeds goes hand in hand with the defense of public squares. Hence, the now classic argument of ANT: everything can be conceived as actor-networks or assemblages made up of heterogeneous elements in material-semiotic registers. With our brief visit to the original use of the concept of assemblage in the work of Deleuze and Guattari, we can now say that assemblages are affective bodies wherein becoming is an embedded process that occurs through experiments with different paces and rhythms of activity amounting to different affects –both in the sense of *affectus* (force) and *affectio* (capacity) (Watkins in Gregg et al. 2010, p. 270). Bodily enactments in the occupied spaces mobilize such moments of becoming when the bodies are endowed with new forces and capacities to act. Assemblage as body is embedded in a mixed registry wherein there is no division between nature and culture, artifact and organic.

Hence, Gezi bodies are technical, infrastructural, technological, affective and natural all at the same time. The technological mediation via the savvy use of social media is neither the necessary condition nor the tool of the mobilization. It is rather one of the elements assembled in and around the reclaimed experimental space of the mobilization. It is yet another life space to be reclaimed through constant interventions. As stated in the fourth chapter, the use of social media in the Gezi movement shall be seen as a critical intervention and engagement in what has already become a part of the assemblage. It is rather *reconfiguring* this relation around common concerns and problems, *redirecting* it to solve issues regarding the defense of life spaces, *reclaiming* a vital aspect of what has already come to constitute life, among other things. In terms of Puig de la Bellacasa, we can aptly describe this relation as caring for social media, once we understand care in its infinitive mode, as an intervention and a material doing (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2010, p.90). The protesters, although having mixed feelings regarding the use social media in contentious action and are critical to its capacities to organize a protest, do engage in it, reclaim it and struggle to have necessary infrastructure to make use of it (putting pressure on Turkcell to install mobile base stations in the square, sharing wifi passwords of nearby cafes and restaurants etc.). They, in that sense, “engage properly with the becoming of” social media, in trying to assemble it within the overall body of the protest (p. 90).

The body politics presented in this chapter thus provides us the means to conceive technological mediation as an integral part of an assemblage. With Puig de la

Bellacasa, it can aptly be said that the relation to technology is also an affective one. The Gezi Movement indeed proves that “*the more digital, the less virtual and the more material* a given activity becomes” (Latour 2010, p. 7). The assembling of social media in the contentious action thus enhances, and not mitigates the materiality or corporeality of the contentious moment. If the life defended in the Gezi Movement amounted above all to an experimentation with new spatialities, temporalities, relationalities and bodily rhythms and paces, it was because it was related to “the force of life that courses along the virtual realm to infest the body-becoming with living-beyond-life. Living-beyond-life is the resonant field of life’s outside, of the more-than of human life where the body is but one verging surface on the field of experience, where the body is always more than One” (Manning 2010, p. 118).

## CHAPTER 7

### Accounting for *emergence* in social movements: Gezi, an Actor-Event

Most putative versions of natural reality never make it past this stage of visibly messy heterogeneity. A few, however, start to become more robust. Doubts about the context in which they were generated, worries about noise in the detectors, or the reliability and integrity of the scientists involved, start to disappear. More data appears because the experimental rig holds together. Then data resonates with a theoretical hunch, or rumours about findings coming from another laboratory. And as this goes on and the network of relations reconfigures itself, particular representations of the real start to lose their qualifications. And if the process goes all the way, then those representations of reality are purified of all their qualifications. They come to stand not for the messy and heterogeneous social-cum-natural-cum-organisational-cum-methodological process out of which they emerged with all the built-in qualifications and doubts. The relations are reconfigured so they come to stand, instead, for a reality that by virtue of this process, has become a feature of the natural world. *But only afterwards. Only at the end of the process.* (John Law 2008, p. 6, *emphasis is mine*).

First comes the encounter. The Gezi Movement is first and foremost an encounter at various levels. It is an encounter between a public park and antagonistic forces that aspire to reclaim and deterritorialize it. A violent encounter between the state law enforcement forces with their tear gas, water cannons, plastic bullets and vomiting, hurting, bleeding bodies on the streets with their gas masks, barricades, stones and smart phones. An encounter amongst the organized collectives that have their respective disparate protest practices, cultures and ideologies and an encounter between the organized groups and individual activists from a very diverse background ranging from white-collared workers to homeless kids and stray dogs and cats.

The Gezi movement was indeed mobilized by an unprecedented encounter of a highly heterogeneous population of activists within plural public space(s), both virtual and material, at the intersection of streets, squares, parks and online media. Gezi Park became a 'strange attractor' (Chesters & Welsh 2016) for the entire opposition of the country. Members of the political parties in opposition including the ultra-nationalist MHP and Kemalist CHP, socialist and Marxist-Leninist organizations, women organizations, LGBT organizations, urban activists, activists from the Kurdish movement, anarchist organizations, supporters of the three biggest football clubs of the country, dissident individuals all swarmed the park. Therefore, there was no common identity among the protesting individuals prior to the encampment. The resulting community of activists that came to occupy the park and build an alternative life therein did not preexist this blooming dissident moment. Gezi communit(ies) came to be constituted within the course of the movement as part of this complex panorama of political affiliations. This encounter of collective and individual activists of varying political backgrounds -that are often in conflict with one-another- within the occupied Gezi Park and the parks where the assemblies were held throughout the summer and autumn of 2013 went hand in hand with the emergence of a novel dissident community that cannot be reduced to the individuals and collectives that partook in it. Hence, Gezi accounts require adequate theoretical baggage to account for the *emergence* of a novel community around common issues.

Considering the Gezi Movement as an experience of pre-figurative democracy conducted in the public space in a way to turn it into a space of *encounter, emergence*

and social *transformation* brings forward issues regarding the making up of a dissident community.

Throughout the second, third and fourth chapters of the first section, I intended to account for the means through which a dissident community is established in Gezi Park, which were further reframed in park assemblies. Here, I apply the word ‘translation’ to discuss significant shifts in the action repertoire of the Gezi Movement which seriously contributed to the making up of this community. Collective action taken as translation gives priority to the process through which a collective of heterogeneous actors problematizes a concrete situation and find solutions to resolve an issue at hand. Hence, a Tardian stance that gives precedence to questions in the making of the social prevails in this account. Such an understanding of collective action is clearly at odds with the use of the term in the collective action theory in which collective action is evaluated based on categories used to define individual behavior and protests are considered as irrational moments deviating from the normal functioning of the society (Rodriguez-Giralt 2009). At odds with this approach that takes for granted the superficial identity of a given society to itself, action as translation underlines the fact that what we come to call social endowed with the quality of normality is already assembled and constituted in certain ways. Considering action already in translation thus hints a Deleuzian approach that gives priority to difference over identity, becoming over being, process over stagnancy (Deleuze 1968). Read relates this quality of the social to the Deleuzian idea of the virtual: “Common sense reifies sociability, it displaces the practice, the process of the

constitution of social relations, with the product. In contrast to this, in moments of upheaval and disruption, there appears a sociality that exceeds any actually existing society, a virtual society that is always in excess of any existing social order” (Read, 2009, p. 83). The virtual society, as such, amounts to becoming, process and transformation. Moments of upheaval thus create means to relate to this virtual society, mobilize novelty and becoming, all pointing to moments when bodies are endowed with new capacities to act.

Therefore, rather than a deviance from the normal functioning of a society, dissident moments reveal the difference of a society to itself in a way to underline the fact that the social is never a given entity and that it is already assembled in material and semiotic planes that can be –and indeed are- remade under different settings. Nevertheless, this problematization process that makes up communities and worlds is by no means an instrumental and calculative cost-benefit account realized by a pre-given interest group, as construed by the resource mobilization theory (Rodriguez-Giralt 2009, p.13). The community-to-be is constituted within the course of the movement through the very act of the problematization in question. Problematization is rather tackling with problems that constitute the plane of consistency of a given moment; it is never an unproblematic, smooth process. As I amply illustrated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter, disaccord and conflict are common, which lead to new translations and a constant re-making of the community. For instance, the protests organized by park assemblies against the assassination of Medeni Yıldırım (the Kurdish protester shot to death in Lice/Diyarbakır while he was protesting against the establishment of

fortified police stations in his town, see Chapter 3) acted as a milestone in the Gezi Movement which directly resulted in the assembling of more pro-Kurdish people and disassembling of more nationalist sectors of the population. As such, a significant translation occurred in the Gezi Movement whereby the concern of anti-nationalism and anti-racism was more strongly sustained. The same is true for the feminist corrective action that directly intervened in the sexist language of the earlier days of the encampment. Earthmeal introduced by the anti-Capitalist Muslims as a protest type based on collective share of food was also a significant translation that led to assembling larger communities with the affects of joy stemming from the performance of collective eating.

The account of the making of Gezi communiti(ies) presented in the previous section thus aspires to take into consideration these problematic moments when a new protest type is required to be performed as a solution to an emergent problem. The emergent qualities, practices and protest types that would constitute the identity of Gezi movement are selected in these problematic moments. They endure in time and gain a certain consistency. Hence, we see that *communitarian life-making practices, protest types and decision-making processes that give priority to what the protesters call participatory/ horizontal/ direct democracy (which stem from the autonomous movement networks' tradition of the country) are consistently chosen and reiterated throughout the Gezi movement, although the majority of the people who swarmed the park during the first days of the protests were not familiar with such mechanisms and practices before.* Therefore, Gezi account presented here avers that the Gezi



Movement can be depicted as an encounter that holds and that results in the creation of a community which proves to be capable of reproducing itself –though for a limited span of time- through successful translations in its protest types.

Neither deviations from the normal functioning of the society nor rational cost-benefit calculations, social movements are rather construed as prophets (Melucci 1985, 1996) that bear a transformative potential. In Stengers' terms they put violence to the present so as to introduce novelty (Stengers & Pignarre 2005, p.10). Especially the latest wave of social contention based on the performance of an alternative sociability and relationality in the occupied public space serves as a lab where dissent takes the form of a creative engagement with virtual becoming(s). Endowed with an aesthetic component, resistance takes the form of creation (Chesters & Welsh 2016).

Below, I will further dwell on the issues of encounter, emergence and prefiguration in social movement studies in general and the Gezi movement in particular. An account of the Gezi movement aspiring to elucidate the emergence of a dissident community out of a peculiar encounter in public space(s) through at once critical and creative protest actions in translation requires the clarification of significant conceptual tools that would be of use to further define the logic prevailing in this mobilization: *the agencement (assemblage)*.

What follows is a further elucidation of the conceptual and theoretical background of the Gezi account presented in the previous section. This background leans on

Althusserian ‘materialism of the encounter,’ Deleuze-Guattarian material semiotics that provides us with minor politics and valuable concepts as event, assemblage and war machines. I proffer that this conceptual background might be of use to further contribute to the new orientations of the post-ANT period discussed in the fifth chapter, this time with respect to the social movements. It is indeed true that John Law refers to a wide range of disciplines that have a similar stance with regards to the question of the social (Law 1999). Visiting some of them would help us to further the valuable insights of the ANT and propose solutions to its critics.

The materialism of the encounter can also serve as a theoretical tool to overcome the debilitating opposition between the so called spontaneous action and organized action. I will thus proffer that collective action as translation is both spontaneous and organized, since an encounter that endures is becoming organized (sur-prise, surprise in English and ‘taking hold of’ in French) of that which seems to occur spontaneously. Hence, the question will rather be what type of an organizational logic would help us better account for an event like the Gezi Movement which comes as a surprise, but which imposes itself as necessity once it is actualized.

## **7.1. Beyond ‘Spontaneity versus Organized Action’: Aleatory Materialism and the Gezi Movement as an Encounter**

### **7.1.1. Continuity in social movements: Spontaneous versus organized action**

There has been debates over the spontaneous character of Occupy Movements in general and the Gezi Movement in particular in the literature of social movement continuity. Sancar, for instance, defines Gezi protests as a spontaneous reaction to the authoritarian rule of the government (Sancar 2013). According to her, the establishment of park assemblies around the country after the forceful evacuation of Gezi Park is again a form of spontaneous creativity (*ibid.*). It is indeed very common in the country to define the movement as spontaneous whether it is regarded as an advantage –the ability to attract popular attention is associated with the movements so-called spontaneous character that makes it accessible for larger groups of people- or disadvantage –lack of classical leadership statuses was deemed responsible for the temporary character of the movement.

Nevertheless, there is also a growing literature that underlines the role of the mostly invisible, day-to-day work of autonomous movements in the emergence of such specular moments of insurgence. Fominaya (2015), for instance, counters the claims that 15M/indignados movement that took place in Spain in 2011 was a spontaneous or novel movement. She rather avers that it was the meticulous work of the rich autonomous movement tradition –autonomous in the sense that it clearly situated

itself outside the institutional politics realized at the hands of the political parties and trade unions- that gave way to the specular 15M mobilization (*ibid.*) She regards 15M as “a continuation and evolution of autonomous political practice in Spain” (*ibid.* p. 144) emphasizing that the protest types and horizontal practices in 15M were already experienced by the rich autonomous movement tradition in Spain. Referring to Melucci who criticizes the “myopia of the visible that concentrates exclusively on the measurable features of collective action” (*ibid.* p. 148), she claims that this makes it impossible to see the continuity between the deliberate practices widely used by the autonomous movements in Spain since the 1980s and the 15M. Fominaya invites scholar to pay more attention “to the(ir) latent activity during periods of abeyance or less visible mobilization” and recognize “processes of movement continuity between peaks of visible mobilization” (*idem.*)

Taking a closer look at the political background of the first settlers of Gezi Park, a similar account can also be made regarding Gezi protests. As I discuss in the second chapter, the group of protestors that kicked off the first encampment in Gezi Park were all activists pertaining to the autonomous movement networks in Istanbul. They took part of the urban activist network of Istanbul which was engaged in alter-globalization mobilizations in Istanbul and Ankara (from anti-NATO gatherings in Istanbul in 2004 to anti-IMF protests in 2009 organized by a network of activists called DirenIstanbul (Resistanbul). Especially DirenIstanbul was a very well-prepared mobilization that clearly situated itself as part of the global alter-globalization movement in Europe. Adopting the carnivalesque protest repertoire of the European alter-globalization movement network, DirenIstanbul organized a week of protests against the planned

IMF meeting in Istanbul on 1-8 October 2009.

The organizers and participants of these mobilizations were also involved in urban movement organizations that paved the way for the establishment of Beyoğlu Kent Savunması (Beyoğlu Urban Defense) and Taksim Solidarity. IMECE (urban planning for the sake of society) was an organization that was mainly composed of city planners and architects who wanted to raise awareness on the socio-ecological damage done by urban transformation projects. Found in 2006, it was actively involved in neighborhood struggles against the gentrification projects of the government in popular neighborhoods like Başbüyük, Sulukule, Ayazma, Fener-Balat, Gülsuyu-Gülensu, Tarlabası, Tozkoparan. Situating itself as an autonomous movement, IMECE avers that “urban planning is the organization of social, physical and economic space. Therefore, it requires a space open to the participation of the people<sup>64</sup>.” Among the activists that established the first settlement in Gezi Park were IMECE and Beyoğlu Urban Defense activists who organized *Emek Bizim İstanbul Bizim Initiative* (Emek is Ours, İstanbul is Ours). This initiative organized a spirited protest against the planned demolition of Emek Cinema mobilizing residents, actors/actresses, national and international directors –including Costa Gavras- and script writers. Many Gezi activists refer to Emek Cinema protests as an important milestone that paved the way for the Gezi mobilization.

Therefore, there is a clear continuity between the alter-globalization network and the

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<sup>64</sup>[http://www.toplumunsehirclikhareketi.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=4&Itemid=4](http://www.toplumunsehirclikhareketi.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=category&layout=blog&id=4&Itemid=4)

urban activist network in Turkey. Furthermore, these networks have always been in close communication with women's movement and LGBT networks. They have exchanged militants, practices and protest types and it has been pretty common that same activists take part in one or more of these networks. Thus, it is indeed true that paying more attention to the "latent activity during periods of abeyance or less visible mobilization" (*idem.*) would present a more accurate geneological account of specular movements like the Gezi. It would also better explain why, in the case of both Gezi and 15M, practices, protest types and political values pertaining to these autonomous networks (deliberative politics foregrounding mechanisms that enhance equal participation of all, anti-sexism, anti-nationalism etc.) endured, although the majority of the participants were not previously familiar with them. It is clear that these collectives which have ample experience in deliberative politics acted as 'soft leaders' introducing participatory, horizontal political mechanisms to the greater majority of the activists.

Saying that, it is nevertheless noteworthy to be able to account for the *surprise* character of such movements. The activist accounts clearly posit that the Gezi uprising arrived as a surprise, unprecedented and unexpected encounter and it is not only the previously disengaged activists who state that. Even the activists coming from the aforementioned urban activist network who have ample experience in both alter-globalization mobilizations and urban struggles against gentrification projects state that 'they could have never anticipated an event like Gezi' (Hatice, woman, 34, urban movement network). Bob Catterall, the editor-in-chief of CITY journals also points to that 'surprise' by citing an e-mail he received from Kevin Robins on the 7<sup>th</sup> of June,

2013:

‘I just came back from Gezi Park. . . There is a sense of wonder when one beholds an event of this kind, an event being an occurrence that was not anticipated, that seemed, at least, as if it came out of the blue. . . An event suddenly triggers off new lines of thinking - it somehow surprises. New insights are being developed through the energies of being so closely together - through openness to the advent of surprise - developed out of inanities of the prime minister, through the banalities of mainstream media, which can be inflected in a new counter-hegemonic spirit. . .

‘[A]t the present time, people’s moods are different, as are their perceptions and insights, their ways of thinking. Nobody I talk to fails to surprise me.’ (Catterall, 2013, p. 420).

Fominaya’s account, while doing due justice to the geneology of 15M, cannot explain the *difference* of 15M, or the Arab mobilizations of the same year, within its respective line of continuity: a *surprise* encounter among heterogeneous elements. Definitely, 15M or Gezi communities went beyond the previous autonomous movement networks and witnessed a novel arrangement among components of very disparate actors: collectives and individuals from all political backgrounds, be it institutional or autonomous, as well as material and technical components. Unlike mobilizations organized by the autonomous movement networks like *DirenIstanbul* or *Emek Cinema* protests which attracted the attention and participation of activists who were already part of the existing networks, the Gezi Movement made a novel arrangement. This novel arrangement created a new community that *includes* previously assembled autonomous movement networks, but *cannot be reduced to* them. The surprise character of Gezi was indeed related to an unprecedented encounter that made perfect

sense *once it took place*. Jeffrey Juris who has ample evidence on the networked character of alter-globalization movements also makes it clear that the occupy movements has a different logic (Juris 2012).

As already stated in the first and fifth chapters, aside from the previous cycle of global justice movement governed by the logic of network among already politicized activists, a logic of *aggregation* “which involves the assembling of masses of individuals from diverse backgrounds within physical spaces,” (p. 260; Gerbaudo 2012, p.11), according to Juris, is what characterizes the new occupation movements. The new social movements characterized by the occupation of public squares rely on *a logic of aggregation* whereby a large number of people are at first aggregated via social media, then to be embodied on the streets. Although recognizing the fact that occupy movements differed from the previous mobilizations organized by the autonomous left, Juris seems to proffer that it is a matter of quantitative difference. Relying on the role of online media in the aggregation of larger masses within the public space, he doesn’t analyze the qualitative difference created by such an encounter, hence what makes a new community out of the encounter of the newly aggregated masses and the already existing activist networks. Juris, while seeing something different in occupy movements, mentions the quantitative difference – an aggregation- and does not account for the qualitative difference of this surprise encounter.

In the light of the above discussion, it can be averred that we need theoretical tools that would both account for the surprise character of such movements and make



justice to their geneology that goes back to the autonomous movement culture of the respective country. Is there means to go beyond the division between spontaneous and organized action? Is there better means to define collective contentious action without falling prey to an either/or account that would one way or another miss significant features of such uprisings? Is there space for contingency and surprise in continuity? Are there means to account for the qualitative difference created by this surprise encounter? Previously I stated that the concept of assemblage is presented as a conceptual tool to account for emergence *as* embodiment in new social movements. In order to further detail this discussion, I will go deeper into the political philosophy of Deleuze and Deleuze and Guattari, this time in its own line of continuity that goes back to Althusserian materialism of the encounter. The reader can conceive this chapter as a more detailed appendix to the aforementioned discussion on the role of the concept of assemblage to account for novelty and emergence, all significant features of Occupy movements.

The materialism of the encounter presented by late Althusser and the Deleuzian concept of event –having similar concerns to that of the concept of assemblage, namely accounting for surprise and novelty of the events and doing justice to their bodily and material character- are further fruitful theoretical tools to account for both the geneology and the surprise character of Gezi movement. It is indeed true that these concerns prevailing in the concept of assemblage (emergence and embodiment) can well be traced back to these discussion in the heritage of the Deleuze-Guattarian thought. Hence, this discussion will give a more detailed theoretical background on

the heritage of the political philosophy of Deleuze-Guattari and help us better situate the concept of the assemblage.

### **7.1.2. Continuity from a Different Perspective: Materialism of the Encounter**

The late essays of Althusser edited under the name, *Philosophy of the Encounter*, include writings of the philosopher from 1977 till 1987. Althusser, in those essays, attempts to construe the geneology of a materialism that is completely devoid of teleology, anthropocentrism and any forms of totalism and logocentrism. Covering philosophers pertaining to an ‘underground current of the materialism of the encounter,’ Althusser aspires to account for the materialism of the contingent as opposed to the established history of the “materialism of necessity and teleology, that is to say, a transformed, disguised form of idealism” (Althusser 2006, p.168). It can then aptly be claimed that the materialism of the encounter is the final battle of Althusser against the long shadow of idealism falling on the materialist traditions attributed to Marx, Engels and Lenin.

Althusser dates this tradition back to the ontology of Epicurus and names philosophers like Spinoza, Nietzsche, Marx, Heidegger within the lineage of this thought. Nevertheless, for the purposes of the present argument, we will not dwell on the ontological part of his thesis<sup>65</sup> and suffice it to say that Althusserian aleatory

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<sup>65</sup> For a critical approach to the ontological arguments of Althusser regarding the materialism of the encounter, see Sotiris. Sotiris criticizes the use of Epicurian ‘void’ as it seems close to the conceptualisation of an absolute beginning, although he underlines the fact that any materialist emancipation theory must be able to novelty, hence it must be a philosophy of events (2013, p.27-

materialism is a means to consider novelty and emergence making reference to neither an origin nor a telos.

According to the Althusserian aleatory materialism, at the beginning, there is an encounter, there is nothing that guarantees that encounter to take place. However, once it happens and endures, it becomes irrevocable, hence necessary. This is a move against the dominant rationalist and historicist traditions that rewrite the history *apres coup* to subsume that which has happened under ‘the rule of reason, meaning, necessity and end’ (*ibid.* p.169). Here the target is Leibnizian principle of pre-established harmony and Hegelian historicism, both introducing fertile means to conceptualize relationality, yet subjecting it to the reign of the Concept. As such, the history is seen through the perspective of the accomplished fact, making it impossible to account for the very emergence of that which is *apres coup* considered as ‘accomplished.’ Accounting for the *emergency* requires including the efficacy and work of the contingency and considering necessity as becoming-necessary of that which is contingent. Therefore, it requires demystification of a paralogy that takes the result as the cause.

Rather, Althusser states that “there has been an encounter, and a ‘crystallization’ (*prise*) of the elements with one another (in the sense in which ice ‘crystallizes’) (*ibid.*170). In this particular account, therefore, what is important is to see in what

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ways an encounter endures, what makes an encounter persist in time just enough to be a term in yet another encounter.

In that sense, André Tosel makes emphasis on the priority given to practice, experience and event and proffers that this account “criticizes that kind of theory which aims to guide practice without genuinely appreciating its irreducibility” (2013, p. 11-12). According to him, the practices and the process of experimentation comes to the fore in the materialism of the encounter (*idem.*). Rather than imposing the rule of Truth or Reason, hence a historicist order on the sequence of events, materialism of the encounter is interested in the *event* itself. “The materialism of the encounter thus prepares the possibility for worlds. It is a laboratory which enables the dismantling of the nuclear constellation which obstructs – as the invariant of its variations – the opening of the event” (Tosel 2013, p.12). Therefore, the issue is to do justice to the novelty of the event while at the same time considering it as the effect of an encounter which doesn’t refer to an origin or a substance, but yet another encounter. Such a conceptualization that gives room to contingency guarantees the opening of the event, the novelty, the *sur-prise*. It provides us with tools to construe continuity as a question of the reproduction of an accomplished fact which calls forth other encounters, surprises. It is in that sense a translation in as much as we consider translation as the reproduction of that which differs from itself. There is no whole, no concept, no social that precedes the way an encounter is arranged. These are the terms one comes up with to analyze or conceptualize an accomplished fact retrospectively, obstructing the process, the particular encounter and the ways it is reproduces and crystallized. The Gezi account presented in the second chapter clearly shows that an

emergent dissident community was constituted through *practices* that emerge as solutions to the problems confronted by the protesters throughout different courses of its action. The first decision to make an encampment in the park is taken by the activists in the park via an assembly as a practical solution to the problem at hand: preventing the demolition of the park. Once the park is re-gained after days of intense clashes with the police (see Annex 1 for the chronology of the events), the encampment automatically leads to occupation as a solution to problems brought forward by long-term encampment in a public space. Daily practices like eating, accommodation, cleaning etc. and the need to take decisions on them lead to the idea of occupation and the organization of an alternative life therein. All those problems that make up the Gezi communities and the Gezi Movement in general *arise* within the course of the action as a response to real-life questions. The encounter, as such, shall be the very object of study, especially in occupy movements wherein new communities arise and are mobilized around life-making practices.

Althusserian materialism of the encounter, just as the conceptualization of history in Nietzsche, is an attempt to give priority to the question of novelty. Given the fact that he considers theory as an intervention (similar to Haraway's situatedness), it is no surprise that he is interested in the very effect of totalizing concepts that are created *apres coup* based on the 'accomplished' character of the facts. It is indeed true that the ways the past is construed and ordered are by no means innocent. History writing is an active intervention. We see this tendency in the so-called impact theory in the social movement studies. Once a social movement becomes an accomplished fact, it is sometimes retrospectively deemed 'unsuccessful' according to criteria that give

precedence to the capacity of the social movement to make visible changes in the institutional politics, as changes in state policies, the rise of organs that would represent the movement in the parliamentary mechanisms etc. Such a reading which is generally accompanied by arguments regarding the limited ‘success’ potential of ‘spontaneous’ movements, obstructs, as Melucci would aver, the symbolic significance of the contemporary movements (Melucci 1985, 1996). Melucci, stating that ‘the medium, the movement itself as a new medium, is the message’ (1985 p. 801) and proposing both a synchronic (with regard to the stakes of antagonistic conflicts) and diachronic (with regard to the actors’ participation in the movements) (p. 797) account, as such, attempts to overcome the historicism prevailing in the social movement studies tradition. Here, Melucci refuses to evaluate the success or failure of a social movement, as an accomplished fact, in the light of politics construed as having an impact on the institutional, representative mechanisms intrinsic to the parliamentary democracy. He is rather interested in what it calls forth, i.e. the ‘prophetic function’ (*idem.*) that can only be tracked in the practices and experimentations. Therefore, in his account as well, we see an interest in the practices and a need to account for novelty. Indeed, according to him, “through what they do, or rather through how they do it, movements announce to society that something ‘else’ is possible” (*ibid.* p. 812). This interest in novelty and the possibility of something else to occur, which he shares with Althusser, come from the fact that Melucci considers that we are passing through “an era of transition” of which the new social movements are a symptom (Melucci 1996, p. 101). Therefore, it can aptly be claimed that a certain theoretical aspiration to find conceptual means to account for novelty,

shared by both Althusser disillusioned by the communist party politics<sup>66</sup> and Melucci interested in accounting for an era of transition, informs their fight against historicism.

We see a similar stance in Deleuze-Guattarian critic of historicism. When they make reference to the Nietzschean intemporal (*l'intempestive*) to criticize the History-memory and identify deterritorialization with anti-memory, or again Nietzschean *l'oublie*, forgetting, Deleuze and Guattari (Deleuze-Guattari, 1980, p. 360-361) also aspire to come up with the conceptual means to theorize *emergence* and novelty. Here, *the forgetting* –as opposed to memory- acts as a crack (*felure*) (p. 243), a rupture (p. 244) in the *History*. This is the Deleuze-Guattarian way of introducing contingency and surprise in the picture so as to oppose Hegelian historicism. *History* in that sense acts as a *capture* machine. Garo underlines the continuity between the thought of Deleuze-Guattari and Althusser when it comes to the conceptualization of contingency (Garo 2011, p. 359). In Deleuze-Guattari, we see a conceptualization of the social machine as a strata between a flow of desire and a negative force of coding; an encounter so-to-say that endures through its own reproduction via certain codes and axioms.

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<sup>66</sup> Isabelle Garo relates late Althusser's return to the problem of materialism to the crisis of Marxism the latter reclaims in a colloque in Venice in 1977 where he claims that Marxism is in need of a Marxist analysis this time from the perspective of its failure. Therefore, it is not a surprise to see that Melucci faced with the task of conceptualizing new forms of political contention that considerably differ from the practices of communist parties requires means to ponder of novelty 'in an era of transition.' Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc (2013), just as Isabel Garo, avers that the micro-politics introduced in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* shall be situated within the Marxist thought as a response to the crisis of marxism in 1960-1970 (Sibertin-Blanc, 2013, p. 8).

As Garo aptly underlines (Garo 2011, p.224-225), Deleuze-Guattarian thought revolves around the question of revolution not as a seizure of power by a class –less a pre-ordained and defined social group-, but as a question of ‘minoritarian becoming’ that would mobilize a *decodage* of the axioms around which a given society is organized. The social is thus not a substance, it’s rather a machinic construction that codifies the production of desire. Accordingly, the flow of desire always precedes the social machine. Hence there is always something that escapes this codification and Deleuze and Guattari will ground the possibility of novelty and subversion on moments of becoming that would put violence to the ‘present,’ (Stengers & Pignarre, 2005, p.10) to the current state of affairs. It is the force of ‘the outside’ (*dehors*) that is mobilized in revolutionary alliances or war machines that are “pure forms of exteriority” (*ibid.* p. 438). The question of *the people yet to come* (*ibid.* p. 426-427) is directly related to this understanding of revolution as becoming-minor that occurs in moments of contact with ‘the outside’. (As I already elucidated in the previous chapter, this becoming is a bodily, affective process relying on the transformative encounters in the cracks of the existing, codified social structures). Similar to Deleuze-Guattarian concept of the *people yet to come*, a subjectivity to be constituted within the course of such revolutionary events, *the prophetic function* attributed by Melucci to the new social movements highlights the potential of becoming mobilized within the cracks of the existing order.

## **7.2. Relations not reduced to their terms: Doing Justice to the Event**

Vittorio Morfino has a particular reading of Althusserian materialism of the encounter



in that he underlines the primacy of the encounter over form and relates it to “the primacy of relations over elements that is at the center of Althusser’s texts of the 1960s” (Morfino 2012, p. 62). We see that Althusserian materialism as a means to ponder over radical relationality that doesn’t rely on the primacy of totalizing concepts as the social, substance or subject is again in line with the Deleuzian concept of the event which is developed in *Logique du Sens* of 1969 and the Deleuze-Guattarian concept of assemblage developed in *Mille Plateaux* of 1980.

In this book that lies at the intersection of Stoic ontology of relations, Leibnizian perspectivism, Nietzschean eternal return and Lacanian psychoanalysis, the event is presented as an incorporeal effect of the actions and passions of bodies (Deleuze 1960 p.115). Thus, being *a result* of the actions and passions of bodies, the event yet has a different nature from what constitutes it (*idem.*) This irreducibility comes from the fact that the events are subject to a double causality: on one hand, they refer to the mixtures of bodies as their causes and on the other hand, they refer to other events as their partial-causes (*idem.*). As already stated in the previous chapter, this account of the event as sense that has bodily causes and incorporeal partial causes provides us with a materialism that goes beyond the two extremes we often fall prey to in our conceptualization of bodies: social constructivist accounts that reduce the body to a passive material to be shaped by the categories of the normative power and naturalist and functionalist accounts that reduce body to anatomy. It is rather a material-semiotic account that conceptualizes event/sense within both corporeal and incorporeal registers. We have already seen that the concept of assemblage has a similar material-semiotic character. Besides, just as the Althusserian aleatory materialism, the

materialism of the event/sense also makes room for the aleatory, the contingent as non-sense. Here, we see that non-sense plays the role of ‘the outside’ that interferes in the process of sense/event-making as yet another partial-cause. Deleuze calls it the aleatory point that ‘guarantees the autonomy of the effect’ (*ibid.* p.116). Therefore, the contingency acts as that which mobilizes the openness of the event to its outside. As such, the event/sense as pure relationality that cannot be reduced to its terms remains open to novelty. Morfino describes this openness as such:

Every encounter is aleatory, not only in its origins (nothing ever guarantees an encounter), but also in its effects. In other words, every encounter might have not taken place, although it did take place; but its possible nonexistence sheds light on the meaning of its aleatory being. And every encounter is aleatory in its effects, in that nothing in the elements of the encounter prefigures, before the actual encounter, the contours and determinations of the being that will emerge from it (Morfino 2012, p.65).

The autonomy of the effect underlines the fact that the results of the mixture of bodies and their encounters with partial causes cannot be pre-ordained. This type of causality provides us with means to track the causes, both material and incorporeal, of the events and treat events as effects once they’re accomplished, all at the same time making room for surprise and novelty.

Similar to the Althusserian materialism of the encounter, Deleuzian materialism of the event doesn’t refer to a Subject or an individual, all of whom are rather constituted within the event. “[T]he materialism of the encounter is the materialism, not of a subject (be it God or the proletariat), but of a process, a process that has no subject,

yet imposes on the subjects (individuals or others) which it dominates the order of its development, with no assignable end” (Diefenbach *et al.* 2013, p.12). Deleuze talks about the will of the event that turns us into signs, partial causes of that which produces itself in us (Deleuze 1969, p.174). One of the particularities of the Gezi Movement, as the Gezi account presented in the first section avers, was the *bodily urge* to participate in the movement and the bodily sensation that the protesters were part of something bigger than them, a situation in which they found themselves into wherein they took unexpected actions. It can aptly be said that they made themselves the partial causes of that which (the Gezi Movement as event) produced itself in them. The contagious character of the movement is very much related to this bodily agentiality.

According to the Deleuze-Guattarian logic, first come the singularities, impersonal and pre-subjective, then the mixture of bodies encounters with partial causes; the event, at the intersection of both, is mobilized by the force of the outside, i.e. the non-sense –Deleuze insists that the happening is accidental- and establishes an incorporeal relational domain that itself becomes an effect. The actors who have a good sense of humor (against resentment and guilt) –we have seen the role of humor and joy in the Gezi Movement- make themselves partial causes, signs of the event, will it and thus will their becoming as part of it. Here, we see the Deleuzian scheme of *counter-actualisation*, which will take the form of becoming in later writings. It’s highly Deleuzian to talk about tyranny, wars and resistance, i.e. Guernica amidst an ontological discussion. The politics is interwoven with ontology, as it is a question of being-other-than-one is (Bennett 2005). Hence, above conceptualization of the event

can aptly be reconsidered with respect to a particular event, May 68.

Isabel Garo underlines the fact that the politics in Deleuze revolves around the question of May 68 (Garo 2008, pp. 54-55). Garo avers that the way Deleuze construes the spectacular mobilization in May 68 is not a commentary or a description, rather it takes the form of pondering over “its potential renewal” (*idem.*) Hence, it is related to the question of continuity, of the ways in which May 68 can become an effect, a partial cause of further mobilizations. It is as such a diffraction (Haraway 1997, Barad, 2007), an active intervention of a theory in the world-making activities. When we take a look at the way Deleuze conceptualizes revolutionary moments, it is clear to see traces of his materialism of the event and a highly Althusserian critic of History as the history of the accomplished fact:

In historical phenomena such as the revolution of 1789, the Commune, the revolution of 1917, there is always one part of the event that is irreducible to any social determinism, or to causal chains. Historians are not very fond of this point: they restore causality after the fact. Yet the event itself is a splitting off from, a breaking with causality; it is a bifurcation, a lawless deviation, an unstable condition that opens up a new field of the possible. In physics, Ilya Prigogine spoke of states in which the slightest differences persist rather than cancel themselves out, and where independent phenomena inter-resonate. An event can be turned around, repressed, co-opted, betrayed, but still something survives that cannot be outdated. Only traitors could say it's outdated. Even ancient, an event can never be outdated. It is *an opening onto the possible*. It enters as much into the interior of individuals as into the depths of a society (Deleuze and Guattari 1984, p. 233-234).

The materialism of the event conceptualized as ‘an opening onto the possible’ can then be considered as the solution of Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari to the question of

continuity of social movements as May 68. It requires, just as in Althusser, a radical relational ontology that makes room for the accidental encounter of heterogeneous elements that is backed by a conception of materiality that would do justice to the agency of bodies, their mixtures while at the same forging an incorporeal –yet material- domain that cannot be reduced to them. The ‘openness’ of the pure event, the novelty and surprise, indeed depend on the irreducibility of the event to the terms that constitute it, be it bodies, other events or elements of the encounter that themselves become effects/partial causes in their involvement in the event (counter-actualization). Continuity in this scheme, can be construed as surprise, –the ‘happening’ of the event is always accidental- novelty – ‘openness to new possibilities’- while at the same time the genealogy of particular events can be traced back to others that become re-actualized as effects in each new revolutionary encounter. Akin to Melucci’s ‘prophecy function,’ Deleuze and Guattari call it “a visionary phenomenon” (p. 210), a quest for the possible which “does not pre-exist, it is created by the event.” Hence it is, in itself, the possibility of the novelty: “The event creates a new existence, it produces a new subjectivity (new relations with the body, with time, sexuality, the immediate surroundings, with culture, work)” (*idem.*) What is important in an event like May 68, according to them, is the creation of these new relations, new subjectivities that are both symptoms of and effective alternatives to the current state of affairs. It is also a question of the efficacy of these events with the new relations they create. What matters is the diffraction that they actualize, the intervention they make. It’s then no surprise that Deleuze and Guattari also refer to the Paris Commune and other revolutionary moments that once more become active

in May 68. Similarly, the sociologist Pınar Selek refers to May 68 and the Paris Commune in her analysis of Gezi protests: “The winds of protest blowing in Istanbul carries the voices of 1871 Paris Commune, the songs of 1968 and the slogans of the Arab Spring. Personally, in Gezi, I hear the rhythms of the alter-globalization movement of 1999 Seattle and protests of 2013 Paris for the legalization of gay marriage<sup>67</sup>.” The continuity of an event, being a problem of its efficacy, can then be construed as its capacity to become active in subsequent events as a partial cause.

May 68, just as the Paris Commune and the tradition of alter-globalization movements become parts of Gezi’s heritage as incorporeal effects, as actor-events attaching themselves to the constellation of the new relationality constituted in the Gezi park and park assemblies. ‘A new relation to time,’ as it is proffered by Deleuze and Guattari can thus be considered as the event’s capacity to mobilize past events so that they can fold over its ‘present’ and actively act on it. In the Gezi Movement, a new relation to time is activated and past events are re-animated in the imagery of the protesters. As we have seen in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter, once the encampment turns into an occupation, the first kiosk to distribute food to protesters is called ‘revolution’ and the protesters start to call the lieu as “Taksim commune” directly referring to Paris commune. The anti-capitalist Muslims refer to the Taksim commune as the Medina, under the Medina contract of the prophet Mohammed, wherein Muslims would co-

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<sup>67</sup> <http://everywheretaksim.net/tr/fransanin-mayis-68-hareketini-andiran-bir-hareket-turkiye-sivil-toplumunu-ele-gecirdi/>

exist in peace with non-Muslims. This new relationality in the occupied public space thus activates a new relation with time wherein the past events are brought to the present of the mobilization. The new, or the future, thus becomes a modality activated within the present of the event when the pure past takes part and becomes effective in the incorporeal scheme of this new relationality. Seen from this perspective, there appears to be no dichotomy between spontaneous and organized action. Both are different levels of the same process that leads to the emergence of an event.

Spontaneous part of the action is the accidental, surprise element of the encounter (that the encounter happens is accidental) while the many ways through which it endures, the collectives, relations and new subjectivities created therein are possible solutions to the problem of its day-to-day reproduction. Hence, this can be considered as a proposal to reconsider the concept of actor-event (a sister-term to that of assemblage) as an alternative to the concept of actor-network in the post-ANT period. Both assemblage and event thus deploy a diffractive logic (Haraway 1997, Barad 2007) in a way to turn the knowledge-making process an active intervention in the world(s) that are assembled as such. They foreground difference over identity and do justice to the material, bodily and affective elements of the assemblages. As such, they are valuable terms to discuss Occupy Movements as ruptures, cracks and interstices, i.e. alternative world and community making experiments. In the case of the Gezi Movement, it does justice to both the novel and surprise character of this encounter of heterogeneous components in Gezi space(s) and relate it to the heritage of the autonomous movements' tradition of the country. Indeed, it is among the significant

conclusions of the empirical part of the dissertation that the practices, protest types and concerns repeatedly selected and thus sustained throughout the course of the movement are those that have been experimented and introduced by the autonomous movement networks of the country (feminist movement networks with their corrective actions, LGBT movement networks, more recent anti-capitalist movement networks with their Earthmeal, urban movements network that introduced the assemblies, pro-Kurdish networks and Kurdish and Armenian movement networks that introduced concerns of anti-nationalism, anti-racism etc.). Such an understanding can thus both present the Gezi Movement as a surprise encounter and a *lived, hence bodily and affective experience* and relate it to a certain heritage without defining it *either* as spontaneous *or* organized action.

### **7.3. Assembling a dissident community**

#### **7.3.1. The critic of the ‘social’ as a substance: Social as an Assemblage**

Above, I discussed the creation of new communities in dissident events with respect to three main references, a. Althusserian materialism of the encounter, b. Deleuze-Guattarian event –that is situated within the lineage of the concept of assemblage in the later *Mille Plateaux*, and c. Melucci’s emphasis on the symbolic stake in new social movements. The three of them share an interest in their attempt to conceptualize new means to make politics in times of crises. They also endow us with the means to further the material-semiotic accounts of social movements in line with the concerns of the post-ANT period I outlined in the first chapter. The concerns of Althusser that



led him to the materialism of the encounter are similar to the concerns of Latour when he posits that they “don’t want to confuse the cause and the effect, the *explanandum* with the *explanans*” (Latour 2005, p. 63).

Althusser, disillusioned by the decline of the Communist Party politics, Deleuze-Guattari, undertaking the Althusserian Marxist tradition, so as to conceive revolution as an ongoing becoming minor akin to Rancierian dis-identification and Mellucci pointing to a crisis of the institutional actors to respond to the demands of the growing wave of dissent in the post-Fordist era that is endowed with a prophetic function to actualize certain aspects of a future yet to come.... All three share the requirement to account for the emergence of novel communities and alternative relationalities. As such, this line of thought might be of use to better account for *differentiation*, novelty and change in assemblages, being one of the weak points of classical ANT accounts (Farias, 2012).

In all these accounts, we see that the main concern of ANT prevails: the term ‘social’ is not conceived as a preordained domain of relations awaiting to be analyzed. Here, the social is rather considered as a non-totalizing relationality that is always in construction, hence open to novel arrangements. Sotiris underlines this character of Althusserian materialism of the encounter as such:

On the one hand, it is obvious that the notion of the encounter is a new attempt by Althusser to think the (non-)ontology of a relational conception of social reality in the sense of an absence of both a

teleology of social forms and any form of social ‘substance’. This is, indeed, a major question of any materialist social theory: how to think the effectivity of social relations, the way they combine social practices and their agents and reproduce themselves, while at the same time acknowledging that there is no ‘deeper’ social substance that guaranties this process and its reproduction (Sotiris 2012, pp. 32-33).

Coming up with a conception of *the effectivity of social relations* without substantializing any given social formation has indeed been the task of the materialist thought. Althusser, already in *Pour Marx* (1968), assumes this task in a way to question the idealist tendencies within Marxism. Therefore, the materialism of the encounter is his ultimate stop in a life-long intellectual quest. Deleuze and Guattari who read Marx through Althusser and thus whose Marxism is post-Althusserian keep on fighting against idealism, the reign of identity over difference. Therefore, earlier writings of Deleuze focused on the conceptualization of the primacy of difference over identity (Deleuze 1968) and sense as event (Deleuze 1969) can also be considered within the wider political concern of foregrounding creativity and novelty over the conservative tendency to justify the rule of the same. In times when the crisis of classical party communism, that according to Althusser falls prey to the idealist tendencies within Marxism, is openly declared, the theoretical quest for a materialism that would account for emergence without relying on a deeper substance comes to the fore.

Within the historical-machinistic materialism of Deleuze-Guattari (Sibertin-Blanc 2013), we see that the social appears as a particular stratum over which the desire is calcified and codified. Hence, it is no surprise that the term society in *Mille Plateaux*

is discussed alongside with the *History*, the milieu of the accomplished fact (Deleuze § Guattari 1980, p. 24). The society, deemed substance, is an abstraction that serves the obfuscation of its *genese* for the sake of the rule of the *History-Memory*. Yet, any social formation is an encounter that endures long enough to realize its own reproduction. It is a dynamic relational domain over which certain axioms are registered. It is a stratum among many, so long as the strata is defined as “the habitual and ‘striated’ orderings of all productive processes as they become actualized in the world” (Fuglsang et al. 2006, p. 2). A social formation is formed through the stratification of productive forces, the intensities. As such, it is always a dynamic and “liminal” space open to both territorializing and deterritorializing forces (ibid. p.1). Its consistency is not given, but always depends on its capacity to reproduce itself through a certain persistency in the codification and stratification practices or technologies. A liminal space between a plane of immanence populated by intensities (the molecular/ the virtual) and an actual relational plane on which these intensities are territorialized (the actual, the stratified), any social formation refers both an openness to be other than what it is (through destratification, deterritorialization) and a structural ordering that reproduces itself through reiterated practices and mechanisms that capture the flow of intensities in certain ways.

It is in that sense that an assemblage “is turned towards the strata which makes it, without doubt, an organism or a signifying totality, or a determination that can be attributed to a subject. Nevertheless, it is also turned towards *the body without organs* which does not stop undoing the organism, which enhances the non-signifying

particles, pure intensities to pass through and circulate it<sup>68</sup>” (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, p. 10, *translation is mine*).

Here, we see that the social, as an assemblage, is a. a liminal experience, among others, that is situated in a dynamic state of flight and capture between *the body without organs* and its stratification in the axes of i. an organism, ii. a signifying totality and iii. a modality with respect to a subject. In the previous chapter, I dwelled on body and organism in Deleuze and Guattari so as to elucidate the embodiment in an assemblage. Within this perspective, the social, as an assemblage, refers to the ways through which the intensities pertaining to the plane of immanence, i.e. body without organs are codified in both physical, material and symbolic registers so as to be structured as an organism, a signifying totality and a modality that can be attributed to a subject. Here, it is clear that these stratified wholes –organism, signifying totality and subject- are not substances in themselves, but rather they are the final results of an active stratification and codification process. Needless to say that this codification can, at any time, be destabilized. The pure events are such moments when the codes that constitute the social are deterritorialized so that bodies are endowed with new capacities to act. Thus, the new enters the world. Therefore, the social, as an assemblage, is always open to rearrangements. Such an understanding of the social, being in line with the deconstruction of the social by ANT, also provides us with an

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<sup>68</sup> “Un agencement machinique est tourné vers les strates qui en font sans doute une sorte d'organisme, ou bien une totalité signifiante, ou bien une détermination attribuable à un sujet, mais non moins vers un *corps sans organes* qui ne cesse de défaire l'organisme, de faire passer et circuler des particules asignifiantes, intensités pures (...)” (*translation is mine*.)

analysis of capitalism as an axiomatic. As such, in the post-ANT period which is nurtured by new material-semiotic accounts of the world(s) taking into consideration the politics involved in their making, it also presents an analysis of capitalism as well as the dissident machines waging a war against it. Such an account, furthering the insights of ANT regarding the assembled character of the social, can be useful in construing the anti-capitalist character of occupy movements in general and the Gezi movement in particular. Below is a brief analysis on how the social is re or rather de-assembled in the capitalist axiomatics. Here we see that the concept of assemblage, also provides an analysis of ‘power,’ the latter that is said to be lacking in ANT accounts (Escobar and Osterweil 1991). It is deeply embedded in the political philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari that considers the capitalist machine as a means to assemble ‘the social’ via constant, violent deassembling forces that captures and reduces the active force of bodies to raw material. I will then finalize the chapter with an account of the Gezi Movement as a war machine, a particular assemblage that mobilizes lines of flights within this capitalist axiomatics. As such, I aspire to duly dwell on the capacity of the concept of assemblage to account for both emergence, (hence, novelty and surprise -its diffractive character) and embodiment within the context of the larger political philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari that present us a picture of the role of Occupy movements within the power structure peculiar to capitalism.

### **7.3.2. The Axiomatic: The social (de-)assembled in capitalism**

Deleuze-Guattari analyzes the particular way the social is assembled by capitalism in

*Capitalism and Schizophrenia I and II* (1979, 1980). Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc, in *la Politique et L'Etat chez Deleuze and Guattari* (2015), situates the contributions of Deleuze-Guattarian thought to the political philosophy within the lineage of significant political debates both within and outside Marxist tradition: presenting an analysis of state that would desidealize the Keynesian capitalist social state (Sibertin-Blanc 2013, p.10, *translation is mine*), presenting a re-reading of the Marxist literature around the problem of the “immanent limits” of enlarged accumulation and the rate of profit imposed by the crisis of overproduction and the new economic and monetary forms that it assumes (p. 11). As such, the reading of Sibertin-Blanc presents a full-fledged analysis of the political thought of Deleuze-Guattari that introduces “a conceptual re-translation of the Marxist program that envisages a critic of the economy politics” with an analysis of neoliberal *assaults on life* including “unprecedented forms of ‘interior peripherization’ and a reactivation of the predating tactics of primitive accumulation within the very “center” of global capitalism” (*idem.*) Commodification of the urban space that is opposed by movements like the Gezi (see Annex II for the literature on the Gezi Movement that consider it as a reaction to the commodification of the urban space) is thus one of the *assaults on life* -congruent with the language of Gezi protesters that define their action as the *defense of life spaces*- that constantly re-creates the position of the center and the periphery in the urban setting and uses construction sector and urban transformation projects so as to accumulate wealth.

According to him, the central question of this political philosophy is the question of violence within the political domain formulated through an analysis of the state power,

the power of war (referring to the war machine exterior to the state apparatus) and the capitalist power, the violence imposed by the capitalist axiomatic (*ibid.* p.12) that codifies and arranges the social so as to abstract labor force from the living labor, life itself. Sibertin-Blanc presents all these operations as a theory regarding the various means through which the politics is destroyed (*idem*). It can then aptly be said that the analysis of capitalism in Deleuze-Guattarian is a means to conceptualize a certain arrangement of the social in which the politics is constantly aspired to be annulled.

The axiomatics is a concept that Deleuze-Guattari make use of since the 1972 so as to define how the social scene is axiomatized in capitalism. More precisely, it is “the particular form that the capital bestows upon the “social relations” (*ibid.* p 150). The particularity of the capitalist axiomatics is defined by Deleuze and Guattari through its destructive character that goes hand in hand with the deterritorializing force that it imposes over its very conditions (absolute decodage) and a particular encounter of all the deterritorialized elements. Contrary to the previous social formations that are based on “extra-economic codes” and defined through the autonomy of economic codes to that of social ones, the capitalist mode of production and social formation is founded on an “economy that destroys even the possibility of the anthropology of collectives; the capitalism is an an-economy, it defines itself as economy only by redefining the economy through its opposite and through the denial of all non-capitalist social economies. To sum up, the capital doesn’t dominate “the social relations” without changing the very meaning of them and the way they make a society; which is realized firstly through the destruction of the “social” character” (*ibid.* p. 152). Here, it is clear that Deleuze and Guattari make reference to the

Althusserian reading of primitive accumulation introduced in *Reading Capital* (1965), a concept developed by Marx to elucidate the emergence of a capitalist social formation and mode of production through a. the absolute decodage of previous social bonds and production types and b. an encounter between a people who has nothing else but their labor to sell and others who put them to work in exchange of money. As such, the emergence of –not transition to- capitalism also involves a violent encounter that endures at the intersection of various conditions under which the previously saturated social bonds are deterritorialized. Therefore, the question of violence is intrinsic to capitalism whose very existence depends on a constant destruction of non-capitalist social relations and production types. This account of the emergence of capitalism as an encounter that endures through violent dispossession practices assumes that the primitive accumulation, as the intrinsic logic of the capitalist axiomatic, has an ongoing character and acts as the privatization of productive and active forces in life.

Therefore, the particularity of the capitalist social formation is that it constantly undoes its own conditions by means of which it also systematically undoes the existing social ties. Whereas the codes are extra-economic regulators of the previous social formations, an axiom is ‘immanent’ in the sense that it “destroys extra-economic codes or allocates them a subordinate rank as conditions for the reproduction of social relations” (Sibertin-Blanc 2013, p. 157, *translation is mine*). As such, there appears an “immediately economic capture intrinsic to the process of production” (*idem.*). Hence, capitalism operates through an immediately economic capture of the living labor (abstraction) while at the same time *constantly decoding*



*social bonds, i.e. collectives.* According to Sibertin-Blanc, this is directly related to the Deleuze-Guattarian stance with respect to the question of the internal limit of capitalism –inspiring the crisis theory in Marxism- which goes hand in hand with the concept of ongoing primitive accumulation as the intrinsic character of capitalism. Accordingly, the capital is the internal limit of the capitalist social formation which never coincides with itself and which reproduces –accumulates- itself through constantly replacing this limit (Sibertin-Blanc 2013, p. 159). Against the teleological accounts regarding the “transition” to capitalism, this account avers that capitalism, due to its reliance on constant decodage of non-capitalist means of sustenance and the social bonds related to them, is an inherently archaic axiomatic that reproduces the violence peculiar to the historical phase known as primitive accumulation.

David Harvey also refers to this character of the capitalist social formation as accumulation by dispossession, expanding the analysis to the way urban politics are mobilized for the purposes of capital accumulation (Harvey 2003, Harvey 2010). Accordingly, “capitalist urbanization (...) plays a particularly active role (along with other phenomenon such as military expenditures) in absorbing the surplus product that capitalists are perpetually producing in their search for surplus value” (Harvey p. 20). Similarly, he refers to Occupy movements as mobilizations for the right to city against this tendency of capitalism to seek for further accumulation by means of turning the urban space into abstract space via urban transformation projects that inevitably decode the existing social bonds in the neighborhood (*idem.* Harvey

2014<sup>69</sup>). As discussed in the first section of the thesis, the defense of what protesters called ‘life spaces’ included a struggle against the capitalist urbanization and a renewed interest in defending the social bonds that exist in the neighborhoods. The latter aspect of the defense of life spaces is indeed against “the unimaginable destruction of valued urban fabric but also of whole communities of residents and their long-established networks of social integration” (p. 28). The concept of the defense of life spaces, as I explained in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of the first section went hand in hand with a critic against capitalist commodification of the urban space. As we have seen in that chapter, all park assemblies and neighborhood solidarity movements had an agenda to resist ongoing urban transformation projects of their neighborhoods. This resistance went hand in hand with activities and practices that aimed to strengthen the community bonds in the neighborhoods. Life-making practices that came to the fore throughout the course of the action indeed aimed at collectivizing basic requirements for the reproduction of life. Hence, as I discussed in the first chapter, food-sharing for instance became a very important practice also with respect to strengthening community bonds. The emphasis on life-spaces, as I discussed in the last chapter, clearly situated itself as a defense of *life* against power that aspired to *bury it down under cement*. The above-mentioned political philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari briefly outlined here – and that lies at the background of the concept of assemblage – also serves as a valuable tool to analyze this aspect of the movement and its emphasis on the defense of *life*.

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<sup>69</sup> [http://post.at.moma.org/content\\_items/520-the-crisis-of-planetary-urbanization](http://post.at.moma.org/content_items/520-the-crisis-of-planetary-urbanization)

As such, the occupy movements might well be considered as events that resist against this tendency of the capitalist axiomatic to turn the space into abstract space for capitalist urbanization and decode existing social and neighborhood bonds. This is indeed underlined by Gezi protesters. As we have seen in the first section, the protesters consider urban transformation projects as an assault to existing social ties in a specific ‘milieu’: the neighborhoods. They are clearly opposed to these transformation projects that reorganize the urban space around new consumption sites: shopping centers. They value exchange economy, solidarity, gifts and share against the individualist consumption trends and habits imposed by the new urban setting that is organized around highways and shopping malls. As such, these social movements might well be construed as war machines against the capitalist axiomatic that is based on the decodification of existing social ties (Conio et al. 2015, p. 43).

#### **7.4. Gezi communities: war machines against the capitalist axiomatic**

Conio, the editor and one of the authors of the book *Occupy: A People Yet to Come* which compiles articles presenting a Deleuze-Guattarian reading of Occupy Movement, posits that the Occupy movement is conceived by each and every author of the book as *a war machine* (Conio 2015, p. 43). Just as the internal logic of the capitalist axiomatic is to deterritorialize and disassemble the social so as to reduce the living labor to abstract labor (Read, 2009, p. 85-86) and plunder the urban space for the purposes of capitalist urbanization (Harvey 2010), Occupy movements present themselves as revolts against this character of capitalist accumulation. The emphasis on ‘defense’ of life spaces is not a conservative move, it rather refers to a struggle

against the dismantling of social ties of solidarity in capitalist urbanization. Therefore, Gezi communities present the features of a war machine which refers to a *multitude* in the “a process of change” (Conio 2015, p. 45).

Sibertin-Blanc avers that the concept of war machine has been developed by Deleuze-Guattari since 1973 to “invent modes of organization for revolutionary forces that would not establish their ‘parties’ in the form of the State apparatus and that would not imitate the organization of an apparatus of capture” (Sibertin-Blanc, 2013 p. 73-74, *translation is mine*). In that sense, it is related to an explicit criticism of political parties, which resonates well with the concern of Gezi communities to find means to exercise deliberative democracy away from the established party politics. As quoted from Deleuze by Read, if “it is the fact that every society, every social articulation, can be realized otherwise, can have different relations, and is thus surrounded by a virtual cloud” (Read, 2009, p. 83), Gezi communities can be construed as the embodiment of this virtual cloud, the multitude that bears witness to the making of a contentious relationality against the capitalist axiomatic. Burrows, in that sense, reminds us that a war machine has nothing to do with war as we know it (Burrows 2015). It is rather “a term that refers to a particular occupation of space, an experiment within space and time, an invention of space and time” (Burrows 2015, p. 212). Burrows relates this idea of the war machine to the experience of making a contentious territory that never existed before through relations and affections that are at odds with or opposed to the organization of ordinary daily life under the capitalist urbanization. He posits it as follows:

Deleuze makes this term concrete by suggesting that the way the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) had to invent 'space-time' in the Arab context has been underestimated. To do so, the PLO became a war machine, marking out a territory where previously none existed, opening up gaps and negative spaces in the discourses and organizations of local and international government and the mass media (Deleuze and Guattari 2003). Franco Berardi aka Bifo (2009a) has proposed a similar idea when proposing that communism today is found in the production of singularities (experiments with time) born from the necessity of collective action as means of survival and as the refusal of control and exploitation. Berardi argues that such singularities manifest as 'the creation of an economy of shared use of common goods and services and the liberation of time for culture, pleasure and affection.' Without dismissing Berardi's arguments, the war machine can be defined as similar but different, in that it is not a singular experimentation with time and relations, or merely that, but an illegal or dissenting occupation and use of space and time too; a movement that rejects existing hierarchies or representations and produces its own space and time where none existed before, as a direct challenge to the policing – the management and ordering – of existing space, resources and relations.

As such, a war machine is both *a singular experimentation with time and relations* and *an illegal or dissenting occupation and use of space and time*. The making of its own space and time *challenging the management and ordering of existing space, resources and relations* is indeed the way Gezi communities were assembled in the public space. (İrem, queer, 29), the LGBT protester refers to this temporality as "living in an in-between moment." "Do you know the half-notes in music. It was also like living in a half-moment, an in-between moment. It was as if you jump on a single foot, while not knowing where you would step with the other," İrem adds. Living in an in-between moment and standing on one foot while not knowing where the other would step on, as such, points to a lived experience of novelty, experimentation and becoming.

As stated in the previous chapter, the translations that the contentious action went through throughout the summer and autumn of 2013 all point to experiments with space, time and relations through bodily and affective practices. *Earthmeals*, with its performative and almost ritual-like power that united protesters in the act of sharing food, the feminist corrective action which further contributed to the propagation of an affirmative, humorous expression of common concerns and demands, human chains, and assemblies were all experiments with space, time and relationalities that created communities, i.e war machines against the capitalist axiomatic. Gezi, as a war machine, can then be analyzed according to the mutations these experiments went through. The Gezi account presented in the first section is thus construed as a cartography of these mutations and the ways that they constantly assembled the multitude.



## **CONCLUSION**

It has been three years since I finished gathering data for the purpose of writing this dissertation. Much has changed since then. The government's response to the political possibilities opened up by the Gezi Movement, -which was represented by the ruling AKP's losing its majority in the parliament with the rise of a new left-wing, pro-Kurdish political party, HDP (Peoples' Democracy Party) that adapted the values of the Gezi Movement discussed in the third chapter and got around 13 pct of votes in the entire Turkey- was fierce and violent.

Since the 7<sup>th</sup> of June, 2015 general elections, HDP deputies and co-presidents have been put in prison, while human rights activists, academicians and journalists have been under great pressure. Peace negotiations with the armed PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) were suspended and military operations in the Kurdish cities were once more initiated. 2016 was a year of turmoil also marked by hundreds of deaths caused by ISIS and TAK bombings (a pro-Kurdish organization separated from PKK that conducts terrorist attacks so as protest the military operations and curfews and revenge civilian killings in the Kurdish cities). Then came the attempted coup d'état in the same year, on the 15<sup>th</sup> of July. Since then, the country is governed under the state of emergency. A referendum that would put into question the change of the regime of the country to constitutional presidency was held under these conditions. Despite the oppression against the freedom of speech under the state of emergency



and unproportional resources allocated to the ‘yes’ campaign that favors the change of the regime into a presidential one with excessive rights allocated to the president, the results of the referendum were almost at par, with only 51 pct of *yes* votes.

In hindsight, the Gezi Movement now seems like an utopia to many of the protesters. The euphoric charge of the moment is long gone. This dissertation then also serves as a means to remind us, in these days of political turmoil, of what our bodies were indeed capable of doing.

I started my interrogations in the first chapter around the question of ‘how’ Gezi communities, so diverse in nature, came to be assembled. When we have a look at the literature on the Gezi Movement, we see that much ink has been spilled on the class character of Gezi protesters, their motives, identities and grievances. Urban transformation projects of the ruling AKP government, the role of the constitution sector in the country’s economy, the ecological and social damage of these projects have come to the forefront. Given the abundance of these analysis in the literature on the Gezi Movement, I wanted to orient towards the *lived experience* of being there. Therefore, the question, for me, was to orient towards the actual experience of making a novel community within the occupied public spaces, i.e. Gezi Park, occupied streets, parks and squats. In a contentious action like the Gezi Movement that mostly relied on an *emergent* population of protesters from very diverse socio-political backgrounds, it is indeed significant to have the theoretical and methodological means to duly attend to assembling and deassembling capacities of the protest in its own course. The Gezi Movement, as such, was characterized by protest types and

contentious practices (Earthmeals, assemblies, standing men/women, encampment etc.) that were, once introduced, repeated and consolidated in time. The values that we have come to associate with the Gezi Movement –the defense of ‘life spaces,’ horizontal, participatory democracy, anti-sexism, anti-racism, inclusivity- were all consolidated around the aforementioned practices. Neither of them were given, and they were contested, yet persevered at different phases of the movement.

The first chapter also includes with a brief methodological section that elucidates the methodological choices behind the Gezi account presented in the section. Bruno Latour’s (2005) move to treat ‘the social’ as something that requires to be explained and his proposal to orient towards how what’s otherwise unproblematically called ‘the social’ came to be assembled has been, in that sense, the starting point to question the assembling capacities of a community. The Gezi Movement in particular –and Occupy Movements in general- are emblematic in the sense that they act as laboratories to reveal what is behind the seemingly self-sustained substance that we call ‘the social.’ Such are the moments when ‘the social as such’ is contested and nothing seems as solid as before. Rather, the familiar practices that meticulously make the social as such give way to a community-making laboratory comprised of new encounters at the intersection of alternative means of sustaining a community around highly bodily and material practices. It’s in that sense that Melucci (1985, 1996) refers to new social movements as the prophets of the future replete with symbolic value when it comes to what another world might look like. The Gezi Account presented in the first section of the dissertation thus traces the action repertoire of the movement and follows the protest types and contentious practices introduced at different phases

of the movement in response to practical problems faced by Gezi communities. Doing this provides us a picture of how certain protest types *held* better than others throughout the course of the movement. In turn, we also see that what we come to call the Gezi Movement in retrospect became as such through the consolidation of these protest types, decision-making mechanisms and values that *insisted* throughout the course of the mobilization. Hence, nothing was given and the Gezi Movement was an encounter that *held* in time through the repeated enactment of certain protest types and practices that went hand in hand with the political values of horizontal, participatory democracy as a means of defending life spaces.

The second chapter thus traces basic protest types (assemblies, Earthmeals- the communal iftar dinner ritual introduced by the autonomous movement of anti-capitalist Muslims, feminist interventions to the sexist language hitherto used by some protesters, human chains, standing men/women protests etc.) and practices (food sharing, communal cleaning, assemblies as social gatherings where protesters experimented with new ways to connect to one another) that characterized the Gezi Movement with a special emphasis on their bodily and affective aspects. Hence, it aspires to be a material-semiotic account -dear to both Actor-Network theorists and feminist science and technology studies (Haraway 1991, 1997; Barad 2007; Puig de la Bellacasa (2011, 2012)- that dwells on the matter at hand at the intersection of its material and semiotic components. Or, world making and sense making are entangled. Doing, enacting or performing are at the same time sense-making and framing. Action is always embodied and affective. Hence, the methodology adapted from the Actor-Network Theory that aspires to ‘follow’ the actors throughout various translations the

action goes through goes hand in hand with the concern to forge an account in which sense-making (the concerns dealt with in the third chapters) is entangled with world-making, doing, enacting. Minutes of park assemblies that were conducted nation-wide and in some cities abroad clearly show that values as anti-sexism, anti-nationalism, inclusivity etc. that constituted, in their entirety, the discourse of the Gezi Movement were tested again in the assemblies, street demonstrations and activities of neighborhood solidarity organizations. Third chapter provides vivid examples of such moments of both controversy and accord that ended up consolidating these values.

Fourth chapter more closely deals with the bodily and affective aspects of the movement, alongside with the technological mediation therein, i.e. the use of social media. Although the first aspect is also duly emphasized in the previous chapters, a separate chapter seemed to me a good idea to dwell on it with regard to its different facets. Hence, we see that it shows itself as an acute realization of interdependency, appreciation of heterogeneity as power, a bodily urge to become a part of the movement as an event that is beyond them and a moment charged with positive affections as joy, care, hope, sense of empowerment. What we see is a moment when bodies as such, in their fragility, capacities and presence, had strong agency. Later on in the thesis, in the theoretical discussions around embodiment in social movements around the Deleuze-Guattarian concept of assemblage, we see that this bodily agentiality is at the core of assemblages as bodies that are defined by their capacities to affect and be affected. This agentiality of the body has strong political implications in the type of politics promoted in Occupy movements that is sometimes referred as prefiguration: directly enacting, performing the proposed alternatives. As we have

seen in the third chapter, this type of politics that is at odds with representational institutional politics which is sometimes called the politics of recognition, was also among the basic concerns of Gezi protesters. The dissertation thus concludes that any discussion on prefigurative politics needs to address the various ways through which the agency of bodies (with their affects, performative presence, interdependency) come to the fore in such moments of contentious action based on direct enactment of alternative means to make a community. The sixth chapter will further discuss that the concept of assemblage as body inherent in the concept as it is developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *Mille Plateaux* provides us the means to construe such an embodied and affective politics based on the concept of Spinozist body.

Fourth chapter also dwells on the role of social media in the mobilization. The chapter reveals that protesters, though attributing great importance to the social media with respect to diffusing information (activist journalism) and making themselves and the police violence visible when the mainstream media channels censored the protests, consider that an undue emphasis on the role of the social media to organize such protests was detrimental for the movement. It's indeed true that assemblies were the main decision-making organisms of the movement and it wasn't accepted to make political discussions or organize political activities in their social media accounts. Assembly minutes record that social media accounts of park assemblies were established via decisions taken as a result of long discussions on the means to be transparent and inclusive and they were used mainly to give information about the activities of the neighborhood organizations. Being present in assemblies was indeed a very significant aspect of the movement and the social media is mostly taken into

account with respect to its capacity to diffuse the voices of the protesters. Therefore, this technological mediation in the Gezi Movement also foregrounds hitherto mentioned bodily and material aspects of the movement. A future line of research might further investigate the entanglement of technology and body, or protester communities as *technologically mediated* affective bodies. The scope of the present dissertation allowed me to underline the first with respect to the question of *emergence* of new dissident communities in the movement. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that dissertation, as such, intends to construe a concept of body that would be separated from technology. I rather claim that technological mediation was equally embodied and embedded in what was going on in the material occupied spaces –just as bodies were technologically mediated- as access to internet was in itself a struggle on the streets that led to mass boycotting of certain restaurants that were reluctant to share their wifi passwords and 3/4G connection was regularly cut by jammers. A future line of research based on this entanglement between technology and body politics might further investigate technological mediation in the Gezi Movement.

All in all, the Gezi account presented in the section thus underlines the significance of *emergence* (of new contentious communities around certain protest types, practices and political values that now defines the Gezi Movement) and *embodiment*. Or better, it investigates the question of emergence *as* embodiment. A significant result of the first line of enquiry is that the protest types that held in the Gezi Movement were the ones hitherto practiced by certain collectives pertaining to the autonomous (non-institutional) leftist organizations. Considering the fact that the majority of the Gezi protesters were not previously organized in a political organization and they were for

the first time on the streets, it is indeed noteworthy to see that it was the political practices –and the values that accompany them- of the autonomous left tradition of the country –which was numerically a minority in the streets- that *held* in time. Horizontal decision-making in assemblies, the very experience of assemblies, Earthmeals, anti-sexism, anti-nationalism, inclusion, an emphasis on a holistic conception of life spaces that includes, but goes beyond ecological concerns, prefiguration were all doings/sense-making activities that were –though sometimes merely theoretically- introduced by the autonomous movement tradition of the country comprised of anarchists, urban activists, womens movement, LGBT movement, anti-capitalist Muslim’s movement, some sections of the student movement etc. The emergent dissident communities of the Gezi Movement mostly comprised of populations who haven’t been previously involved in these movements embraced and furthered these practices so as to enact, in return, the most spectacular autonomous –non- institutional- movement of the country’s history. The prevalence of this non-representative politics through direct enactment and performance of alternatives to existing social and political structures has indeed much to do with the aforementioned visibility of the bodily agentiality of the movement.

The second section of the thesis (Chapter 5, 6 and 7) presents a theoretical quest for conceptual tools to adequately account for these two aspects of the movements: emergence and embodiment, or rather emergence *as* embodiment.

The fifth chapter deals with the question of whether the concept of network can be used to elucidate these two qualities of the Gezi Movement. The first reason for me

to discuss the possibility of this concept, in its different elucidations is that Occupy Movements, in general, have come to be characterized by the use of the social media and the concept of network as it is developed by Castells has been largely used to define this character of the mobilizations. Secondly, the Actor-Network theory also makes use of the concept to conceptualize the type of assemblages they refer to when they pose a critic against the classical sociological analysis that tend to deem the 'social' a category in and by itself. Therefore, in this chapter, I visit the concept of network firstly in the networked social movements of Castells. As I have already mentioned in first chapter that Castells (2012, 2015) considers online mediation as the most important characteristic of Occupy Movements. They are, as such, the movements of the networked information age in so far as they are actively attached to the space of networks and thus have the power over digital communication channels. Nevertheless, these movements are also highly characterized by their place-specificity, the latter is considered by Castells to be a feature of the space of places (Escobar & Osterweil 2012). Hence, it is difficult to analyze the very place-specificity of the movements alongside with bodily practices, affections (though Castells talks about rage and hope, they are also immediately related to the virtual networks constituted via the social media that were later on materialized in the occupied spaces) encounters and practical problems witnessed on site via a network analysis that is designed to come up with patterns of communication among already existing and digitalized networks. This is also translated into the difficulty of tracing *emergence* in such accounts.



While, the concept of actor-network makes emphasis on the question of ‘how’ and orients towards how communities (composed of elements that are of different nature) are assemblage and disassembled, recent critics of feminist science and technology studies have also questioned the renown agonistic method’s distance from its subject-matter in its quest for merely following the actors. Donna Haraway (1997) who finds it too timid an endeavor that obscures its own intervention in the assemblage by distancing itself from its own stories –adapting a vision from above- proffers instead that any knowing activity must include *yearning* for the world(s) whose creation the research aspires to contribute to (1991, 1997). An affective mode, *care* as an ethico-political material and affective doing (Puig dela Bellacasa 2011), is then required to be mobilized. In light of these critics to classical actor-network accounts and the new orientations within the post-ANT period, it seemed adequate to me to look for another concept, that of assemblage, to account for the body and affect politics in question. Furthermore, the latter is already used to account for emergence in social movements, whereas the concept of actor-network, as such, is also criticized, this time by Farias, for lacking the axis of *the virtual*, hence becoming and differentiation is not to be found in the conceptual framework of the concept of the actor-network (Farias 2012). This last critic indeed speaks to the first. Haraway offers diffraction, in addition to situatedness, as a method in itself that attends to difference, and intends to make a difference in return (1997). In Deleuzian terms, it makes an alliance with *the virtual*, the realm of molecular and affective becoming so as to actively participate in the world(s) in which it aspires to be assembled. It is indeed true that whenever one starts to speak about the body in novel encounters, affects and becoming –which is highly

bodily in nature- the concept of network seems to reach its limits. It is at this moment that the intimate relationship between emergence (as a question of *becoming*) and body and affect come to the fore. The Gezi account presented here thus posits that the emergence of Gezi communi(ties) was indeed a question related to the encounter of hitherto non-assembled bodies under a positive affective charge of joy, hope and empowerment. It is no surprise the activists repeatedly state that everyone was open to listen to one another and long-held taboos like Armenian genocide or Kurdish problem could be discussed in mutual compassion.

For that very reason, at the end of the chapter 5, I propose that the concept of *assemblage (agencement)*, as it is used in the more general political ontology of Deleuze & Guattari (1990) can be a valuable tool to elucidate these two characteristics of the Gezi Movement by underlining this intimate relation between emergence and body and affects. It is indeed true that throughout *Mille Plateaux* (1980) the concept of the assemblage is presented with respect to its openness to a virtual domain of becoming that is first and foremost affective.

In the 6<sup>th</sup> chapter, I further dwell on the concept of assemblage in the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari (1990). When we take a brief look at the concept with reference to the philosophy of Deleuze & Guattari, we see that it refers to a relationship, an ordering (Müller 2015) “an arrangement or layout of heterogeneous elements” (Nail, 2017, p. 21) between the whole and its parts that doesn’t attribute a transcendental position to the former. The whole doesn’t precede its parts and it doesn’t have neither

logical nor ontological priority over them. Each part entering in the relational domain transforms the overall relationality, while at the same time being transformed by it.

An assemblage is therefore an ever-changing, productive and emerging relationality. While the components involved in an assemblage continue to be effective in line with their power to affect other components and to be affected by them, neither them nor the whole as such are ‘essences’ or ‘substances’ that can be defined by their properties prior to their involvement in the assemblage.

As such, the concept of assemblage proves to be a useful analytical tool to study recent social movements that are composed of heterogeneous components (in terms of both the background of protesters and collectives involved therein and their liminal nature at the intersection of different registers, i.e. *technological* –the savvy use of social media- *corporeal* –the prevalence of bodily performance and exposure (Butler 2014) and *semiotic* –the creation of a common language and identity via online and offline media. Furthermore, the concept of assemblage is not merely an analytical tool to account for social movements. Rather, it can aptly be construed as a type of collective action wherein emerging dissident collectives are constantly and horizontally assembled and disassembled through transformative encounters in reclaimed spaces.

Besides, and more importantly, an assemblage is also construed as body in *Mille Plateaux* (1980). Deleuze & Guattari, in *Milles Plateaux* (1980), repeatedly underline that an assemblage is comprised of an expression and a *content*. The significance of the *content* –being the material aspect of any assemblage- is equally important. Therefore, it is clear that the origin of the concept of assemblage in Deleuze and

Guattari is concerned about accentuating the irreducibility of the *content* to its expression, thus underlying the material basis of reality. The concept of assemblage is thus developed by Deleuze-Guattari to conceptualize a materiality that never forgets the activity of the fleshy matter, yet never reduces the body to anatomy or organism. I thus claim that such an understanding of body intrinsic to the concept of assemblage can also help us account for the highly bodily and affective aspects of the recent social movements in general and the Gezi movement in particular. An assemblage is indeed, apart from being a horizontal, rhizomatic arrangement of heterogeneous elements, a composition of multiple bodies that are determined through the they affect one another (Deleuze & Guattari 1980). Here, we see a direct reference to Spinoza. It is indeed true that the Deleuze-Guattarian concept of body, hence assemblage, rests on their take of the Spinozist conception of body. Accordingly, returning to the original development of the concept of assemblage in the larger corpus of Deleuze-Guattarian work points to a particular conception of embodiment and body as affect. This further has ethico-political implications in the analysis of the body and affect politics in the Gezi Movement. As stated by Hasana Sharp, Spinozist body implies a non-representational politics whose objective is to be recognized (recognition politics) by existing socio-political structures. It rather leans on a non-representational politics that foreground the very act of community-making through empowering encounters in which bodies gain new capacities to act/affect. The Gezi account presented in the first section gives ample evidence on the ways bodies were endowed with novel capacities to act. The protesters repeatedly refer to how they found themselves in situations where they did unexpected things under unlikely alliances. The lived

experience in the Gezi Movement as such can be considered as an experiment with new bodily capacities in a space of empowering encounter. As such emergence of new dissident communities in and around occupied public space is to be construed by means of these embodied encounters. The dynamic assembling capacity of the mobilization, its being a ‘strange attractor’ (Chesters and Welsh 2006) provided a fertile ground for unprecedented encounters of an emergent community.

In the seventh and last chapter, I go deeper in the political philosophy of Deleuze and Deleuze-Guattari to reveal the fact that the question of emergence and novelty out of the existing social constellations was a primary concern for the philosopher since the end of 60s. The concept of event developed in *Logique du Sens* (1969) already shows parallels to the concept of assemblage in that it foregrounds a gathering composed of both corporeal (bodies and their mixtures) and incorporeal elements that would serve as a meta-relationality (event) that in turn acts on its components. In the chapter, I show that the concept of event had deep political implications for Deleuze who defined May 68’ as an *event*. This line of thought owes much to the materialism of the encounter of late Althusser. For Althusser, any ‘social formation’ is the result of an encounter of aleatory forces that holds in time. The concept of assemblage and its political implications dates back to this concern of Deleuze to define a political moment that has much in common with the Gezi Movement (Selek 2013), i.e. May 68’. As such, this chapter furthers the philosophical discussion of the thesis by offering a reading of the Gezi Movement, also as an actor-event. Further in the chapter, I aver how this background might be of use to overcome the debilitating

discussions in the literature of the social movements' theory based on a dichotomy between spontaneous and organized action. A social movement as event is becoming organized of a spontaneous encounter and what matters for us social researchers is to account for this process of becoming. Such an analysis presented in the seventh chapter also underlines yet another significant advantage of the term of assemblage (and event as an important step in the heritage of the concept of assemblage) over the concept of actor-network. While actor-network accounts are criticized for their incapacity to facilitate discussions around the question of power- the role of power in the assembling process- (Law, 2007), both the concept of event and assemblage are embedded in a political philosophy of which discussions on the role of the power are an integral part. The chapter comes to an end by situating the role of power –capitalist axiomatics- and resistances like the Gezi Movements –war machine assemblages. I hope that this chapter gives inspiration to studies in this line of thought with even more detailed political analyzes on the role of such social movements as assemblages in the capitalist axiomatics.

To sum up, the concept of assemblage is already in use in social movements studies mostly as an analytical tool to account for heterogeneous arrangement of components of disparate natures (technological, technical, infrastructural, human, non-human etc.). Such an arrangement foregrounds emerging qualities of newly assembled contentious collectives. Hence, it is a useful theoretical tool to account for social transformation mobilized by the new social movements. Furthermore, it goes beyond merely being an analytical tool and defines a certain type of contentious collective action governed by horizontality, heterogeneity, contagion and becoming. In this

dissertation, I aspire to contribute to this literature with data coming from the Gezi Movement that highlights bodily and affective aspects of the mobilization. As such, I aspire to make further reference to the corporeal and affective aspect of assemblages defending that the concept of assemblage directly refers to body and affect politics via the concept of Spinozist body. Emergence and transformation indeed occur via ‘becoming other-than one is’ (Bennett 2005, p. 55), and “affects are becomings” (Deleuze and Guattari 1980, p. 313-314).

If bio-politics, as body politics, reduces the active force of the body to raw material to be put to work within the capitalist arrangement of the social life, the body and affect politics of the Occupy Movements envisages new encounters in which bodies are composed in alternative ways that would spark joy and increase their power to act. Joyful changes in bodies’ capacity to act is thus a political concern. As Deleuze and Guattari state: “Affects are *becomings*” (*idem.*). Hence, becoming is an affective affair. Politics as a practical concern of *becoming-minor* is thus an affective affair. These multiple, affective interactions thus define what a body can do. Social transformation mobilized by Occupy assemblages cannot be conceived without taking into consideration the bodily and affective experience with new relations to space, time and one-another (Estalella and Jiménez 2013, 2016). The concept of assemblage, and war machine as a particular assemblage, as such, proves to be a useful approach to the growing interest in the social movement studies literature to foreground bodily and affective aspects of Occupy experiences.

## **ANNEX I: The Chronological Deployment of Gezi Protests**

28 May: Gezi Protests kicked off when the police attacked a group of around 50 urban activists who decided to stay in the park to prevent its demolition. Police used tear gas to disperse the activists and burnt down their tents. The famous photo of the “woman in red” that went viral was from the morning of 28th of May.

29 May: Starting from the 29th of May, the size of the protests grew more each day. Celebrities as BDP deputy Sırrı Süreyya Önder, actor Memet Ali Alabora, Şebnem Sönmez and musicians like Can Bonomo also participated in the protests in Gezi Park.

30th- 31st May: Police raided the protesters’ encampments. Nevertheless, even more protesters swarmed the park on the evening of the same day. There was yet another raid on the morning of the next day. Throughout the day there were clashes with the police around the park. Protests also spread to other cities as Ankara and İzmir.

1st June: Protests and clashes with the police continued throughout the day. Thousands of protesters gathered in Kadıköy (Anatolian side of Istanbul) and walked across the bridge to join the protests in Taksim. At around 16.00 police started to withdraw from Taksim square, where the protests continued to be violently crashed by the police forces.

2 June:

The Minister of Internal Affairs Muammer Güler ordered the police to completely withdraw from the square. The protesters seized the park and started to put their tents in Gezi Park. Turkish Union of Physicians (TTB) published a report stating that there were over a thousand injured protesters in Istanbul and Ankara<sup>70</sup>.

While the police left Taksim and Gezi Park, clashes continued in other neighborhoods as Beşiktaş. There were also protests in front of mainstream media agencies as NTV and HaberTürk for not broadcasting Gezi protests.

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<sup>70</sup> <https://indigodergisi.com/2016/05/gezi-parki-olaylari-gun-gun-neler-yasandi/>



Then Prime Minister Erdoğan continued to escalate the tension by saying, ‘Yes, we will also build a mosque. I will not take permission from the president of CHP (the Republican People’s Party), nor from a bunch of plunderers. My electors already delegated me the authority.

Protests and clashes with the police continued in many cities as Ankara, Samsun, Eskişehir, Trabzon, Antalya.

3 June

Clashes continued in many cities as Ankara, İzmir and Antalya. The Stock Market started the day with a sharp decline in prices (7 pct) and it the prices lost 10.47 pct of value at the end of the day. Mainstream media channels as CNN Turk started to broadcast live footage from the protests. The Dolmabahçe mosque hosted the injured protesters and became a makeshift hospital where voluntary physicians served the injured protesters.

The Confederation of Revolutionary Trade Unions of Turkey (DISK) and the Confederation of Public Workers’ Unions (KESK) and the Education and Science Workers’ Union (Eğitim-Sen) announced a general strike to protest the police violence during Gezi protests<sup>71</sup>.

A protester in Antakya, Abdullah Cömert, was shot to death.

4 June

Gezi Park encampment kicked off again, while clashes with the police continued in Beşiktaş/ Dolmabahçe. There was already a festival-like atmosphere in Gezi Park and Taksim Square. Little by little life was started to be organized in the park with make-shift clinics, shops, library and a communal kitchen.

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<sup>71</sup> <http://sendika62.org/2013/06/sendiklardan-grev-cagrilari-basladi/>

Protests and sit-ins continued in other cities as Eskişehir, Adana, Diyarbakır, Rize, Trabzon, Samsun, Antakya, İzmir and Tunceli.

5 June

Trade Unions (KESK, TTB –Turkish Union of Physicians- TMMOB –Turkish Union of Engineers and Architects) went on a general strike in Istanbul, Ankara, İzmir, Antalya, İzmit, Çanakkale, Bursa, Kilis<sup>72</sup>.

11 June

The police re-seized Taksim Square with tear gas, rubber bullets and water canons. Most of the protesters retreated to Gezi Park. Clashes with the police continued throughout the day.

15-16 June

The police evacuated Gezi Park with rubber bullets, tear gas and water canons. The clashes continued in Taksim Square and Gezi park throughout the night. On the morning of 16 June, Berkin Elvan (14) was shot by a rubber bullet. (He died after 269 days in coma. With him, the number of protesters killed by police during Gezi Protests is 12).

17 June

Erdem Gündüz (the standing man, see chapter 2) started to stand still in Taksim Square in order to protest the evacuation of the park. Others joined him during the day and the performance propagated to other cities in the forthcoming days.

A park assembly was held in Beşiktaş Abbasağa Park to discuss the future course of the protests.

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<sup>72</sup> <https://indigodergisi.com/2016/05/gezi-parki-olaylari-gun-gun-neler-yasandi/>

19 June

Park assemblies were started to be held in many neighborhoods of Istanbul. They soon propagated to other cities and abroad.

29 June

Beşiktaş Park Assemblies decided to protest the murder of Medeni Yıldırım by police forces in Lice, Diyarbakır during a protest against the construction of fortified police headquarters.

30 June

The most crowded Gay Pride 2013 was celebrated in Taksim Square. Gezi was the main agenda of the pride, as the LGBT movement was one of the main components of the protests in Istanbul and other cities.

6 July

Anti-capitalist Muslims organized the first Earthmeal in İstaklal Street with the participation of around 15.000 people.

October 2013

The first squat of Turkey, Don Kışot Social Center is opened in Kadıkoy. The squatters stated that it was a part of the heritage of Gezi protests<sup>73</sup>. Many activities, seminars and talks were realized in Don Kışot until its demolition two and a half years later in 2015.

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<sup>73</sup> <http://www.radikal.com.tr/hayat/kadikoyden-bir-isgal-evi-oykusu-don-kisot-1158013/>

January 2014

The second squat of the country is established with the occupation of a historical building in Caferağa Neighborhood Solidarity Organization. The squat was called Mahalle Evi (the House of the Neighborhood) and served as a cultural center for a year until it was forcefully evacuated by the police on December.

## **ANNEX II**

### **Literature on the grievances that led to the upsurge of the Gezi Movement**

The literature on the Gezi movement situates the mobilization as an uprising against the commercialization of urban space and the authoritarian rule of AKP (the ruling Justice and Development Party) (Farro and Demirhisar 2014, Tuğal 2013, Kaynak 2014, Koç and Aksu 2015, Özkaynak et al. 2015, Butler 2014b, Özel in Özkırımlı 2014, Yörük and Yüksek 2014). Özel, in that sense, states that “In its essence, the Gezi protests were an outburst of anger by citizens against rising authoritarianism, deeper infringement on social and private lives by public authorities, the incessant violation of the sanctity of public spaces and urban landmarks as well as the lust for rent seeking, which along with the attending land grab for ever more construction and so-called urban renewal projects complemented another cherished goal of the ruling party’s elites.” (Özel 2014, p. 9). It is indeed true that the Gezi Movement incorporated a wide range of protests against the ongoing urban transformation projects of the government, its belligerent foreign policy in the Middle East, its conservative moves as the newly launched ban on alcohol sales after 10 pm, its misogynist biopolitical policies as the attempted prohibition of abortion two years before the eruption of the movement, the ecological implications of its developmentalist economic agenda based on the promotion of the construction sector etc. The protection of ‘life spaces,’ –as I will further dwell on in the next section- thus encompassed a wide

definition of the term including grievances in all of these aspects of life. As stated by Judith Butler (2014b) “the alliance on the street and square –and in the supporting networks outside the visual field of the media- suggested that a wide range of groups opposed the privatization of the park and the broader implications of privatization, the high-handed authoritarian decision making of Erdoğan, his undue influence over the media and his dismissal of taskforces, commissions, prosecutors and courts that disagree with him” (x-xi). The commercialization of urban space was being –and has been- realized through the so-called urban transformation projects that drastically changed the urban setting leading to total destruction of old neighborhoods like Sulukule, Tarlabası and Başbüyük populated by disadvantaged populations like the Romans, Kurds and impoverished city dwellers. Also called gentrification projects, these projects witnessed a rapid and violent change in the distribution of wealth throughout the urban setting, paving the way for the expulsion of above-mentioned disadvantaged groups from their neighborhoods towards the mass housing projects realized by the government under the name of TOKI (Housing Development Administration of Turkey) in the peripheral districts of cities. The prevailing *mahalle* (neighborhood/ barrio) culture of urban neighborhoods based on social solidarity ties and more communal ways of relating to one-another was thus destroyed for the sake of the promotion of consumerism in the newly constructed mass housing projects around shopping malls<sup>74</sup>. Özkaynak et al. (2015), in their analysis of the Gezi

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<sup>74</sup> Spyros A. Sofos, in the conclusion of the *The Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey: #occupygezi* edited by Umut Özkırımlı (2014) call it the creation of non-places and non-things and eventually non-people with reference to Augé:

Movement, provide us with further information on the commercialization of the urban space through urban transformation projects:

the plans for Taksim Square and Gezi Park should be viewed in context of the process of appropriating and transforming urban space for private and/or business ends, a phenomenon largely driven by rising real-estate prices and speculation in Istanbul. Such transformation projects and urban enclosures are carried out at the national level, usually under the guise of earthquake risk reduction, in accordance mainly with the 2012 “Urban Transformation Act for the Areas under Disaster Risk” and, in many instances, via “urgent expropriation” decisions issued by the ministerial cabinet in Ankara (Elicin 2014). Indeed, the city’s increasingly commodified urban space has already, time and again, been an arena for social and economic contestation (Özkaynak et al. 2015, p. 137)

The Gezi Movement was indeed a reaction against the rapidly shifting urban environment through these urban transformation projects that imposed violent top-down commercialization of the urban space. It is then no surprise that the Gezi encampment promoted communal, solidarity-based ties among protesters, openly opposed to government’s urban transformation projects and called for a boycott against shopping malls.

This reaction went hand in hand with an overall reaction against the growing

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“This diffusion of creativity and inventiveness (of the Gezi Movement) was in stark contrast to the version of urban, and more broadly economic development favored and promoted by the AKP, characterized by the propagation of what Augé calls non-places and non-things, eventually, non-people, that the proces of redevelopment of the broader epicenter of the protest was symbolic of” (p. 137).

authoritarian tendencies of the AKP government that showed themselves as direct assaults on women's liberties and bodies, massive amendments in the national education curriculum that promoted a conservatory and Islamist education program, restrictions on labour rights, restrictions on the protest rights of citizens etc. Even the decision to destroy Gezi Park was an example of the growing authoritarian tendencies of Erdoğan, as the project proposal was actually rejected by the Regional Council for the Preservation of Monuments (*Kültür Varlıklarını Koruma Bölge Kurulu*) (Harmanşah 2014, p. 130). Erdoğan's blatant rejection of the court decision that decreed the rejection of the proposed plan further exacerbated the distress of protesters.

It is indeed true that the unrest caused by the government's growing authoritarian grip over different sectors of social life ranging from education and health services to urban and political liberties had already been widely protested before the eruption of the Gezi Uprising. In this respect, Koç and Aksu in the introduction of their edited book on the movement called *Another Brick in the Barricade: The Gezi Resistance and its Aftermath* (2015) make a long list of some of the incidents that caused social unrest and paved the way for the Gezi Movement some of which include "the ever-increasing neoliberal, totalitarian and Islamist tendencies and policies of the ruling party" (...) "violent crackdown of May 1 celebrations; government's total ignorance and indifference towards grassroots resistance movements against dozens of illegal unjustified and ecologically disastrous hydroelectric plants across Anatolia; arbitrary bans on internet access; police's violent attack on the Emek theatre protesters; the



blatantly open media censorship after the Reyhanlı bomb attacks; the bombing of “smugglers” by Turkish military fighter planes in Roboski in December 2011; the 2009 anti-IMF demonstrations; the Tekel workers’ resistance in 2010; the reckless commodification and colonization of public spaces, such as the Haydarpaşa Garı and the surrounding area and the swift transfers thereof of global capital in a fire-sale manner; Erdoğan’s usual over-confident and obnoxious comments at the ceremony for the third bridge (which the government unilaterally decided to name Yavuz sultan Selim Köprüsü) about commencing the planned destruction of Gezi Park against all democratic protests; and finally, the blunt and violent gentrification projects destroying entire neighborhoods in the name of mega urban transformation projects” (p. 8-9).

The above-listed incidents indeed came to the fore again and again during the Gezi Park encampment and the following neighborhood assemblies. When we have a brief look at the list, we catch a glimpse on the authoritarian rule of the government over women, minorities and labour protests, as well as a reaction against the commercialization of the urban setting. Furthermore, commercialization of the urban space went hand in hand with the commercialization of the rural space. Harmanşah, in his analysis of the Gezi Movement with respect to the larger ecological resistance in Turkey, states that “this civic movement should be understood in conjunction with *and* in the context of the broader and more long-term forms of ecological resistance, especially those that have been carried against the Turkish government’s fury of hydro-electric dam, power plant and mass housing construction projects that

continuously threaten to eradicate the Anatolian countryside and privatize its resources” (Harmanşah 2014, p. 122-123). Hence, the Gezi Movement became a contentious space for a diverse group of protesters to raise their voices regarding a broad range of grievances and protests against the ruthless privatization and commercialization of rural and urban space as well as the authoritarian grip of the AKP government on all spheres of life was crystallized.

Part of the reason for this crystallization was the fact that Gezi Park and Taksim Square had a symbolic role as the center for protests and political opposition to power. As such, what is deemed an assault against the Gezi Park was quickly translated into the language of disparate resistances against all these developments that caused great dismay and indignation on a wide range of population.

Farro and Demirhisar (2014) posit that “the mobilization which broke in late May against the violent police repression and for the preservation of the Gezi Park therefore indicates both an opposition to the government’s urban policies and the reclaiming of a place inscribed in the collective memory which regained its meaning in the context of resistance to contemporary domination...” the symbolic value of Taksim, the center of political life” (p. 177). It is indeed true that Taksim and Gezi Park has been the center of political life in Istanbul since the late Ottoman times. Therefore, the planned destruction of the Gezi Park was the final straw of what was considered by protesters as an assault against their life spaces. We will further dwell on this concept throughout the thesis, but I will suffice it to say that the concept of life spaces was developed

within the context of the urban and neighborhood protests against government's transformation projects as an umbrella term that came to signify, with the rise of the Gezi Movement, a concern for both the preservation of the urban environment against its 'plunder' (a term widely used by protesters to describe the projects in question) by the ruling AKP and reclaiming basic civic rights against the overtly hostile stance of the government towards minorities, women, labour and the opposition. As such, the Gezi Park acted as the physical and symbolic space that crystalized a wide range of concerns that paved the way for the eruption of the Gezi Movement.

The Gezi Park, apart from being located in Taksim Square, the center of the political and contentious action of the metropol, also had a symbolic value for different components of the movement, primarily LGBTs, Republicans, Armenians, the left-wing protesters that identified themselves as part of the lineage of the socialist organizations of the 70s. For Armenians, it was the whereabouts of an old Armenian cemetery (the Surp Hagop Pangaltı Cemetery) that remain buried under the Gezi Park (Murat Mihçı from Nor Zartung Organization which actively participated in the movement puts it as such: "Those trees they attempted to dismantle might have been planted by our ancestors. Gezi meant trees of our ancestors. Maybe it wasn't a cemetery anymore, but we were attached to it<sup>75</sup>." For Republicans, it was the symbol of the secular turn of the country, for the left-wing protestors, it was the political heart of the country. Furthermore, the Gezi Park was also "the gay cruising grounds in recent decades" (Butler in Özkırmılı, xiii). Butler, in that sense, is right to content that

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<sup>75</sup> <http://www.norzartonk.org/hdpnin-gezici-adaylari-7-haziran-yeni-bir-gezi-olacak/>

“part of the case being made at Gezi was, it seems, for the preservation of natural, cultural and political history against the destructive effects of state censorship and privatization” (xiii).

According to Harmanşah, Erdoğan’s move to appropriate the Gezi Park was indeed an attempt to lay claim over this historical heritage and “to appropriate a symbolically powerful and historically contested urban space and transform as well as control the structure of diverse everyday practices on the square (Harmanşah in Özkırımlı 2014, p. 126-127). It was, as such, considered by protesters of diverse backgrounds also as an assault on the heritage and historical charge symbolized by the park.

This brief history of the symbolic value of Taksim Square and the Gezi Park for Armenians, secular or modernist sectors of the society and the socialist left gives us an idea about disparate yet converging stakes around this highly contested urban space.

Another axis in the literature on the Gezi Movement involves considering the Gezi Movement as a ‘defense of the commons’ against the neo-liberal enclosure of the urban space. It is indeed noteworthy to underline this line of thought in the literature on the Gezi Movement because it is mostly produced by the activist-academics themselves who had an active and organized presence in the Gezi Park encampment and park assemblies. Organized in the autonomous platform called the ‘Commons’ (Müşterekler), a network of urban activists and socialists, these activists propagated

the language of ‘life spaces,’ ‘commons’ and ‘enclosures,’ be it urban and rural, and introduced the theoretical discussions around concepts as the right to city (Lefevbre) accumulation through dispossession (Harvey) within the scope of the Gezi Movement. This line of thought is hence significant for its practical engagement in the history of the urban movement tradition in Turkey that paved the way for the Gezi Movement.

Akbulut., in that respect, states that the analysis making emphasis on the authoritarian rule of the government as the main cause of the Gezi Movement would not do justice to the uprising and would mitigate its political promise:

Efforts to adequately analyze the causes and consequences of the events that transpired have been countless –and there are likely to be more. One widespread reading among these analyses has been to cast the Gezi revolts predominantly as a reaction to the ruling Justice and Development Party’s (JDP) Islamist/Conservative policies and authoritarian rule... However, I argue that such an interpretation skirts the larger processes implied by the neoliberal developmentalist agenda/growth strategy intensified especially within the last decade. It also carries immense political danger as it limits the possibilities and potentialities opened up by the revolts by rendering invisible the broader political-economic setting and the reservoir of social opposition that predated and facilitated the uprising at Gezi Park. What I will do here, in contrast, is utilize a political ecology perspective to locate Gezi Park within the spatialization of neoliberal capitalism under JDP rule in Turkey and the different threats of social opposition that have surfaced in response (Akbulut 2014, p. 228)

In light of the above concern, Akbulut (2014), just as Özkaynak et al. (2015) situates the Gezi Park resistance within the scope of the broader environmental movements in the country. She defines ‘the defense of living spaces’ as part of a larger struggle

against urban and rural enclosures that marked the rule of the ruling AKP government, especially starting from its 3<sup>rd</sup> period. Accordingly, Akbulut avers that “Gezi resistance equipped them with a common ground and a shared language that revolves around the enclosure of collective living spaces and translates into urban parks, neighborhoods, squares in the city and forests, rivers, valleys in the country” (p. 237-238). Özakman et al. (2015) also defend the Gezi Movement as a reaction against “the enclosure of a public space by capital and the state, and a nationwide assault on the environment” (p. 99). The Gezi Park and parks where popular assemblies were held are thus conceptualized as models of active interventions in urban spatialization that turned enclosed urban space to reclaimed ‘commons.’ Özakman et al. (2015) thus content that “the day-to-day collective protection of public spaces has spread the commons discourse far beyond what one could have imagined in Turkey. The concept of the commons is well known to academics, and enclosures have always been at the crux of local environmental movements, but the Gezi experience moved these concepts from the margins of the political agenda of the country to the forefront—an important step forward for transformative environmental politics in Turkey” (p. 110).

Adaman et al. (2017), in the introduction of a recently published edited book on the struggle for ‘commons,’ refers to the significance of the Gezi Movement in the struggle for commons:

We witness that both in Turkey and around the world, the discourse of the social movements revolve around defense and/or (re)creation of commons. Both resistances and alternative social imaginaries use the language of commons –defense of commons, reclaiming what is

common, creating commons. Without doubt, the most noteworthy example of these resistances in Turkey occurred in the Gezi Park process. It would not be inappropriate though to claim that defense of life spaces and commoning practices we witnessed in Gezi Park were preceded by ecological struggles and urban movements in the country (Adaman et al. 2017, p. 14, *translation is mine*).

It is indeed true that the discourse on defense of ‘commons’ was widely used during the Gezi process, especially by the activists of the aforementioned platform named our Commons (*Müştereklerimiz*). A press release on the 3rd of June goes as follows:

“The struggle for Gezi Park and Taksim Square has set a new definition of what public space means. Reclaiming Taksim has shattered AKP's hegemony in deciding what a square is supposed to mean for us citizens, because Taksim is now what the Resistance wants it to mean: *our* public square. We have seen the resistance that a single spark can ignite, and we know now that we are fully capable of lighting new sparks and new resistances. We can sense our collective might against the dispossession of our commons because we have had a taste of what resistance feels like. We shall not step back from where we are now. Because we know that we carry more than one spark, more than one struggle, and that it is only a matter of moments before a single spark turns into a fire (Press Release of the organization called Our Commons issued on the 3rd of June 2013<sup>76</sup>).”

As stated by Adaman et al., we see that the press releases and public acts of the organization issued during the Gezi process propagated the concepts around the use, reclaiming and re-creating commons. Hence, ‘dispossession,’ ‘enclosures’ and commons became among the denominators of the neo-liberal assault against life spaces and the struggle waged against this assault. As such, this approach presents a novel framing capacity to the movement so as to unite disparate concerns of this

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<sup>76</sup> Retrieved from <https://www.opendemocracy.net/müştereklerimiz/today-we-are-all-someone-new>

heterogenous population around the defense of commons. Adaman et al. indeed claim that the concept of commons has the potential to constitute a common ground for seemingly fragmented social movements (Adaman et al., 2017, p. 22). The Gezi Movement, in that sense, provided the grounds for an encounter among disparate social movements, political organizations and larger crowds around the concern for defense of commons. This approach also proves to be a fruitful match between political action and conceptual analyses on the concept of commons, i.e. between praxis and theory.



## **ANNEX 3**

### **List of Interviewees**

#### **Interviews conducted on August-September 2014 as part of the participatory observation in Caferağa Neighborhood Solidarity Organization**

1. Asli, woman, 34, architect, participated Gezi Protest with TMMOB (Turkish Union of Architects and Engineers), became an activist in Caferağa Neighborhood Solidarity Organization.
2. Ekin, woman, 28, architect, urban movement network in Istanbul, became an activist in Caferağa Neighborhood Solidarity Organization.
3. Ercan, male, 38, affinities with the Kurdish Movement, became an activist in Caferağa Neighborhood Solidarity Organization.
4. Murat, male, 42, Armenian activist, became an activist in Caferağa Neighborhood Solidarity Organization.
5. Necdet, male, 31, civil engineer, previously member of a socialist political party, became an activist in Caferağa Neighborhood Solidarity Organization.

#### **Interviews conducted on August-September 2015**

6. Hatice, woman, 34, urban movement network of Istanbul, member of IMECE (City Planning for People Organization)
7. Muzaffer, male, 62, artist activist network
8. Özlem, woman, 27, anarchist

9. Hüma, woman, 22, non-organized during the mobilization, became an LGBT activist after participating in the protests
10. Zeynep, woman, 37, lose connections with a socialist political party
11. İrem, queer, 29, LGBT activist
12. Özgür, male, 38, anti-capitalist Muslim
13. Ece, woman, 31, member of a Trochist political party
14. Sinem, woman, 34, Marxist-autonomist
15. Doğacan, male, 28, member of the Communist Party
16. Bilge, woman, 31, feminist
17. Haydar, male, 24, photographer, part of a Marxsist-Leninist organization when the Gezi protests erupted, left the organization during the mobilization
18. Ömer, male, 68, member of the pro-Kurdish HDP (Democracy for People(s) Party)
19. İkbal, woman, 42, city planner working in Kadıköy Municipality
20. Hüma, woman, 26, non-organized
21. Münevver, woman, 41, Marxist autonomist

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