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The Gezi Park movement: a Turkish experience of the twenty-first-century collective movements

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Based on the results of a field study conducted during the summer following the wave of mobilizations in Gezi, this article analyzes the development and the social, cultural, and political meanings of this collective movement, which began in Turkey at the end of May 2013 and has been evolving during the summer. The first part of the article addresses the subject of these mobilizations that are opposed to the planning policy, implemented by the government in a process of neo-liberal economic development. The second part discusses the subjective engagement of the protesters and the meaning they give it, by considering alternatives not only to this policy but to the influence exerted on the individual and social life by the technostructures of the systemic forces. The third part analyzes, on the one hand, the methods of direct and online communication for organizing protests and, on the other, the creation of new living constructs, where protesters experiment with the alternatives to the dominations they contest. It is through protest, but also creative and performative actions, that the individuals try to become subjects of their own lives, against these dominations in which the Turkish dimension is part of a global systemic context.

Keywords: subjectivization; collective movement; dignity; urban revendications; social networks; resistance; direct democracy

1. Indignation wave and urban planning

On 27 May 2013, around midnight, bulldozers and demolition machines enter the Gezi Park, located near Taksim Square, in the city center of Istanbul.¹ The uprooting of the park trees is expected to pave the way for an identical reproduction of the Ottoman barracks² to serve as a commercial center and a large mosque, as part of an urban development project, launched in 2011 under the name 'Project for the pedestrianization of Taksim'.³ Twenty people gather then and decide to start a camp and spend the night at the park to prevent the work. In this way they are directly opposing the implementation of the land management plans launched by the government led by the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, whose party, the Party of Justice and Development (AKP), won the 2011 parliamentary elections, in opposition to the Republican People's Party (CHP), the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and the Party for Peace and Democracy (BDP).⁴

The Gezi Park is an enclave, a small green area of 38,000 m² resisting major development and urban expansion projects undertaken by the government aiming to make

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Istanbul a financial capital city, a symbol of regional and global power. This vision, which provokes indignation and protests, is also criticized by researchers as ‘the current Istanbul, that the government has placed at the heart of its strategy of prestige for 2023, the centenary of the Republic of Turkey, is marked by a sharp contrast between global ambitions and the often difficult socio-economic realities for a majority of the population’ (Pérouse 2012, p. 17).

The government announcement of a series of development projects⁵ carrying this vision, to which is added, in 2011, the renovation project of Taksim Square, led to the formation of a network of organizations to challenge them.

Although having a good organizational framework, the network acts based on the right to the city and environmental values, yet mobilizing few participants. In March 2012, these initiatives issued a joint statement announcing the co-ordination of their actions under the name of ‘Solidarity for Taksim’, whose secretariat is held by the Order of Architects and Urban Planners.

Their joint statement combines both the denunciation of the technical and scientific problems of the development project, and the will to be involved in the politics of the city. The ‘Solidarity for Taksim’ co-ordination also has a mission to prosecute any irregularities in the project and at the same time define alternatives to the urban development projects.⁶

What allowed for the co-ordination of these different groups is especially the ‘Pedestrianization of Taksim’ project. Taksim is a sensitive and symbolic area of Istanbul, modern, open to the world, housing a multiplicity of cultures historically part of the city. It is an attractive home for international tourism and at the same time for the migration from the provinces of Turkey and even Africa or Central Asia. But the importance of Taksim Square is not limited to its attractiveness as an economic and touristic hub. Indeed, it is the symbolic place of convergence of all protests including the 1 May rallies, despite their prohibition since 1 May 1977, the date of the shooting by the counter-guerrilla which caused the death of 34 protesters (Bozarslan 2004). For this reason, the announcement of the ban of the 1 May 2013 demonstration in Taksim Square had already sparked protests violently suppressed by the police. Indeed, the proposed pedestrianization project would also result in the inability to hold political demonstrations in Taksim Square, as announced by the Ministry of the Interior.⁷

The mobilization which broke in late May⁸ against the violent police repression⁹ and for the preservation¹⁰ of the Gezi Park¹¹ 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, as illustrated by the testimony of Ilkay, present since the beginning of the mobilizations:

Taksim was a symbol for a long time, in our memory. The environmental destruction is currently underway, work is undertaken without consulting the citizens, despite its symbolic value. The day after the uprooting of trees in the morning, I was in the Park, so we would be more numerous in case the police came. We are against the urban transformation, because it is a new way of being oppressed. (Ilkay)

But this ‘new way of being oppressed’ becomes a new way of resistance, through the affirmation of individual subjects (Touraine 2013) against the authoritarian imposition of urban projects that affect the protesters, in their personal integrity, disrupts their daily

lives, and threatens a symbolic place of the memory of democracy in Istanbul. Moreover, according to the protesters, far from resolving the problems of the urban reorganization of the city, the government plans merely encourage speculation and social inequalities. They do not consider beneficial the strong and rapid economic growth that would be based on the financial and real estate speculation. During the sociological intervention,¹² Özge, a young student in urban planning, says in this regard:

Growth is based solely in the field of building constructions and hydro-powers. So while we expect that the sector becomes saturated, there are new projects that appear in connection with Istanbul. The cheap workforce, the subcontracting, the precariousness, the insecurity along with the rising unemployment ... From what point of view is prosperity achieved? I'd rather say, who is reaching prosperity? From a socio-economic perspective, the gap is widening, there is a gap. But it must be that prosperity reaches a saturation level. It will be plugged and trends will be reversed. That is not a conception of ecological development. And it deepens social segregation. (Özge)

2. Resisting and existing

2.1. Mobilizing to control one's life

Most of the protesters present in the Park are college and high school graduates. The proportion of women participating in the collective movement is slightly higher than that of men.¹³ The average age is 28 years. It is mainly constituted of active people and students. Among the protesters, one could find liberal professions, civil servants, and other employees in the tertiary sector, while the share of unemployed is very low.¹⁴

For these participants in the Gezi movement, the economic, cultural, social, and political dimensions of individual life are closely related. The subjective affirmation against the dominations affecting all these dimensions is underlying all the protesters' actions. It is an affirmation that passes through participating in collective mobilization that comes with the subjective attempt to control both the course of the emotional, intimate, and the relational aspects of their individual existence, to build certainty, and to control uncertainties.

This is how students as well as employees or professionals consider their participation in the mobilization also as an attempt to assert themselves against the specter of unemployment and precariousness in their work and in their lives. Some students who joined the demonstrations live in fact in a context where the prospect of personal financial autonomy risks being very uncertain after graduating. As highlighted by one of them:

It is difficult to construct your life when you are unemployed. We cannot show our professional or our creative abilities, and we have no income to live with dignity. (Hatice)

But even for the ones working, economic problems also arise when income is not enough, as stated by one:

We work only to pay our rent. It is no longer livable! (Ela)

Work constitutes an important aspect for the construction of individual existence. This is for two main reasons: the first concerns the access to consumption but also its mastery; the second is acquiring the instruments of the new communications technologies, having

the opportunity to travel and access to cultural production – e.g. art covering areas such as music, film, and literature – or related to scientific production.

The lack of economic resources led the protesters to criticize the government policy, particularly regarding the skilled jobs outcomes.

Although both poverty and unemployment decreased in Turkey, the criticism of the government is also mainly understood by protesters as a Turkish neo-liberal approach to economic development. They attack the government which they see as the political vector of a global systemic power, at the origin of the youth graduate unemployment, the increased precariousness of their lives, and hence of the difficulty to control and change their living conditions. This is a general criticism that sees an ephemeral dimension in the Turkish application of neo-liberalism. In this regard, a young student states during sociological intervention:

My economics professor explained that the Turkish growth money mainly comes from abroad. Erdogan's government promotes a development model anchored on the ephemeral expansion of finance applied to urban speculation. (Güney)

At the same time, another protester says:

It is reminding us of the Spanish experience. (Ala)

But for the members of the Gezi movement, it is not only about denouncing the precariousness of the economic living conditions, but also about highlighting how the lack of employment, or its precariousness, is combined with the individual's inability to express creativity through professional activity. The second reason underlining the importance of professional activity in the construction of one's existence relies on the need of the individual subject to control the expression of his/her own creativity.

2.2. Expressing creativity

A graduate in urban planning, protester at the Gezi Park, interviewed during the research, says:

If we graduate from the Urbanism Institute, we would like to work on urban restructuring. We would like to demonstrate that we are able to define and implement land use plans that are in line with the creation of democratic urban spaces and environmental protection. But the precariousness of employment and the fact that we cannot express our creativity in our work practices resulted in our search for autonomous spaces – but also aloof to the achieving of a real professional life – to be able to produce and publicize our work. (Ela)

But, referring to her own professional experience, the same protester says:

Even when we get to find work, for example in the municipality's planning office, we cannot put in practice our creativity as the proposed projects go against the requirements of the financial and real estate speculations. The firing from one's job intervenes then to resolve the matter. At this time, we try to cope with that by turning to associations trying to promote their views for creativity. The best places for that are the professional associations. And what is left for the urban planner is to try to find within the networks of these associations the meaning and practice of his creativity. (Ela)

But there are also among the members of the Gezi movement those who find often precarious work in fields unrelated to their university degrees. During his participation in the sociological intervention, a protester in his 30s with an archeology degree, employed with a precarious contract in a call-center to gain a living, says in this regard:

The neo-liberal economic expansion and the urban speculation neglect even the economic importance of culture. Graduating in archeology is not a way to exercise the archeologist profession, even in a country where history has left lasting traces: Troy, Ancient Greece, the Roman Empire, Ottoman Empire, the different civilizations such as the Kurds, the Armenians settling in the territories of Turkey have left a heritage still to be explored and revealed to humanity. A heritage that can also be a resource for the development of the economy and the employment, and yet, it is not valued. (Ali)

Not being able to practice his profession and being overwhelmed by precariousness, this young man does not resign himself not to feel free to control the course of his life and his public and private attitudes. He also said in this regard, participating in the Gezi movement:

I'm fighting for my dignity. I do not want to be controlled by a condition of employment that does not correspond to my aspirations. But I participate in events because I do not want to be told by the government how I should behave in my private life, how I should behave in the street or when I see my friends. (Ali)

Participation in the mobilizations is not merely the expression of a dissatisfaction concerning the precarious social conditions or economic uncertainty. It is indeed a very personal approach to life that is expressed through participating in these collective initiatives. An approach which is combined with the existential choice of the individual who wants to become the only one controlling the course of his existence and its relations with other subjects, willing to escape the dominations that interfere in their lives through new processes of control or an attempt to restore old values. Hence individual participation in the mobilizations simultaneously carries political, social, and cultural connotations, regarding the affirmation of individual dignity and the search for intersubjective relations as an alternative to those perceived as being controlled by government or the technostructures of the systemic forces of power.¹⁵

2.3. Systemic issues

Most of the Gezi movement protesters are not members of political forces or NGOs.¹⁶ Indeed, the majority of protesters did not relate to the 'political game', still partially marked by the confrontation between the figures of the secular-nationalist Kemalism and those represented by Erdogan and the AKP claiming a moderate Islamism and a protection of democracy¹⁷ against the forces that, according to the government and the AKP, are threatening it. Forces which include some army figures and other members, mostly academics and journalists, were accused by Kemalist elites of trying a coup d'état in 2008 and condemned to heavy prison sentences early August 2013¹⁸ – an event that resulted in the mobilization of the MHP members, in Istanbul and other parts of the country, to defend the convicted, in the name of secularism and the republic against the Islamization promoted, in their views, by Prime Minister Erdogan and the AKP.

But these mobilizations in Istanbul that do not even concern the members of the CHP¹⁹ remain foreign to the Gezi movement. This is not only because in the same period,

in early August, the initiatives became less important and the large mobilizations stopped, but also because the Gezi mobilizations are not interested in the conflict between the Islamization process envisioned by the AKP and the defense of secularism pursued by the promoters of the Kemalist republican tradition. These mobilizations indeed raised some issues that cannot be framed in terms of the political clashes occurring in Turkey during the last decades (Bozarslan 2013). They raise questions about the institutional control of systemic domination controlling the economic as well as the cultural, social, and political articulations of individual lives, questions about a capitalism 'embodied in malls, which became the tangible symbols of the global financial capitalism, escaping the influence of the citizen' (Göle 2013b).

There are also mobilizations in which participants see the opportunity to pursue different, if not contradictory, perspectives, to the pre-eminent ones that leave almost no surviving space to those who do not conform. Hence, the participation in the movement also constitutes a time limit between a *before* and an *after* Taksim, marking an important shift in the individual lives. In this regard a resident of the Taksim area, participating in the mobilizations, says:

Before Gezi, I was desperate. Nothing in my life was going well, neither for me nor for my friends. Working as a graphic designer, it became very hard to find clients. I broke up with my girlfriend too. There was nothing to hope for, in my personal or professional life ... Everything was just blocked. Nobody had a rebellious attitude; I didn't either. There was no way of getting out of this situation.

The day I saw the pictures on the internet, young people and friends of mine, attacked by tear gas, fighting against violence in the streets, I went out to see what was happening. I had nothing to lose, nothing to hope for.

The first tear of gas was the revelation for me. Seeing people helping each other against police and for their freedom ... I thought it was worth living anyway. So I abandoned my suicidal ideas. Thanks to the Gezi Resistance. (Şevket)

Hence, in the Gezi Park, protesters tackle issues as varied as the precariousness of social life, the refusal to be subordinate to authoritarianism, the will to control the course of one's existence and free it from the influence of the dominant powers, besides the questions regarding the control of the economy, urban development, and the prospects of redefining democracy.

3. Networks without leaders

3.1. Communication as mobilization

During the police repression and in the course of the Gezi movement, access to information about the police repression and other issues raised by the movement constituted important factors triggering the personal involvement in the protests. Sometimes the information came from the media and was broadcast by foreign TV, whereas the major Turkish media ignored the events especially in their early stages. Orhan, an educator in his thirties, with a left-wing militant past and a strong sensitivity to ecological issues, said to have been shocked by the police violence and have joined after that the protests from his neighborhood, which was located far from Taksim:

On the evening of May 31, during the major clashes, I was watching the news on BBC World. (Orhan)

Later, his engagement in the mobilizations was also combined with the construction of communication networks in which he was personally involved. He hence enters in a process of activation of interpersonal contacts that corresponds to the construction of the collective initiative of the Gezi movement. Orhan himself explains about this:

One day, a friend called me on my mobile at 3.50 a.m. to ask me to join him in a march on the Bosphorus Bridge of people coming towards Taksim. All my friends were calling me to ask me for news, tell me about the events and ask me to participate in demonstrations or meetings and debates. (Orhan)

At other times the source of information followed other paths. Sevgi, a doctoral student in political science who was never previously engaged in policy initiatives and who became an environmental activist after the Gezi movement, in telling how she became aware of the mobilization and decided to participate, says:

I was studying to prepare for my exams. It is my sister who lives in Belgium who informed me through the internet about the violent police repression. I started watching HalkTV, a television channel that I did not watch before. To follow the events, I opened a Twitter account. In this way I began to realize what was going on at Taksim Square and decided to join the protests against the police repression and to protect the environment. (Sevgi)

Different means of communication are also used by people who consider the Taksim neighborhood transformation and the built environment as neo-liberal violence. Thus, Ferda who lived in the area since his childhood, joined the protests after the police repression. After the apathy previously shown regarding among others the urban changes launched by the government, he felt that finally the situation changed with the movement. He says in this regard:

I saw the photo of the 'woman in red' on Facebook.²⁰ Police violence has both impressed and shocked me even more than the uprooting of trees planned by the government. I was also impressed by the growing participation in the demonstrations. The reason why they wanted to cut the trees was the expansion of the road. In my practice as a citizen, it was normal to see trees cut for stupid reasons and nobody resisted it. (Ferda)

The flow of information from word of mouth or through the various communication means is a constitutive part of the collective Gezi movement. By getting involved in this movement, the individual subjects formulate their critical choices against the authoritarian government seen as a symbol of domination and control that affect the cultural, economic, and social policies of the course of their lives. To cope with this, they assert their individual dignity to control subjectively the courses of their lives.

They not only refuse the government imposition of a framework for urban life marked by a neo-liberal modernism including a symbolism that is both neo-Ottoman and anti-secularist. They also refuse, on behalf of the affirmation of each subject freedom, the domination from which each individual suffers. Therefore, it is not for the members of the Gezi movement to fight against the Islamization of morals in the name of secularism or the Turkish secular tradition. They fight for the respect of the human person (Touraine 1997) and for her right to control her life, even if it is in terms of display of religious symbols in public space (Göle 2003), including in the political or in the academic

institutions. During his participation in the sociological intervention, a young student, Nermin, sharing the views of other members of the group, says:

I am not against Islam. I am for the individual freedom of all. If a girl wants to wear the veil at the University, I fight so that she can do so. I defend her freedom. (Nermin)

This is a vision of personal freedom that the Gezi movement defends against the intentions declared by the Prime Minister to try to impose morals considered characteristic of the Islamic tradition to those who do not want to use it.

Also, this vision of personal freedom is even defended by Muslim believers such as the Muslim anti-capitalists, a group of activists involved in the protests and receiving a lot of attention, even from the media, given the fact that they are opposed to the economic model and to the constraining Islamization pursued by the Prime Minister. In this regard, an activist from this group says:

We hope for a new social life, based on solidarity and not on neo-liberalism imposed by the government. We want to be free, to live our freedom, to have our religion without bothering anybody else, without imposing our beliefs. Everybody has the right to live in a democratic society. (Mehmet)

A matter of individual freedom which is even more directly addressed by the members of the LGTG associations who participate in the mobilization by expressing their rejection of homogenization and their will to resist against the different forms of violence against them. During the sociological intervention, a member of the LGBT association says in this regard:

As a homosexual, I am used to resist. I first had to resist in my family, then I learned to do it in school, then I learned to do in a society in which I fight to assert the right to love without being discriminated. On the other hand, I also defend the Gezi Park because it is a symbol of freedom, a public place where we can show our love. (Hasan)

Indeed, for some protesters, participating in these mobilizations also imply to appear strongly in the public space by expressing pride in their sexual orientation. By participating in these mobilizations Gezi protesters and others also want to assert their freedom and be the creators of a new public space in which everything that was required to remain hidden should no longer be (Göle 2013a).

Such a vision of individual freedom is defended in the Gezi movement through symbolic acts, such as in a march holding and drinking beer; a vision that the members of the movement want to especially affirm, fearing the opening of a process of discrimination against all those who do not abide to the manners promoted by the government circles. During his participation in the sociological intervention a publicist, in his 30s, states in this regard:

I was never really interested in politics. But when I heard the speeches of the Prime Minister and when I view on the internet the images of the police repression in Taksim, I decided to participate in the movement. I said that I had to fight against the discrimination that today could be against me if I'm drinking alcohol, tomorrow against me or other people with tattoos, and after tomorrow against those wearing shorts or short skirts and so on. (Özhan)

Individual subjects formulate their critical choices in participating in a multifaceted communication process whose multiple facets unfold through the use of various sources

of information, platforms, and infrastructure technology. By becoming a constitutive part of this communication, they also become a constitutive part of the mobilizations.

In this context, communication plays a very important role during the course of the Gezi collective action. Indeed this revolves around the integration of both contacts set online and through other technological media, and public events and other meetings involving the physical presence of the participants in the movement. This explains the fact that online contacts increased in number and frequency in the phases where the participation in the movement is also more extensive.²¹

3.2. *Experimenting life*

The initiatives of the Gezi movement primarily revolve around public manifestations, networks of online and direct relations, camps, discussion forums, and other meetings for debate. As discussed above, they are initiatives that are shaped by the participation of subjects who conduct them for the sake of their personal affirmation against dominations. These are also initiatives that are constituted through the construction of intersubjective relations between participants. These relations are established through the agreement between the subjects who choose to experiment with alternative ways to the one proposed by the pre-eminent cultural orientations.

These are subjects who refuse, during demonstrations, to situate themselves on the ground of individualism and competition, leading to a society that denies equality between people. They are subjects wishing to assert their freedom to invent ways of life where the creativity of each could be expressed without being subjected to cultural and social domination from the systemic forces, embodied by the government in the Turkish case. In participating via the internet or in public events or even by being active members in the forum taking place in Gezi Park during the demonstrations,²² these subjects are creating alternative living constructs to the reality of the country, where authoritarianism is being imposed through its combination with the promotion of a development model shaped in neo-liberal terms. A participant in the forums Gezi Park says about this:

I'm living a very important experience. I learnt to talk to others, I don't fear them anymore, I do not need to defend myself, they do not oppress me. We debate in this forum about our freedom to live as we wish to, without being afraid of the rulers. Even if we are afraid of violence. (Gündüz)

Finally, these are also initiatives whose diffusion is configured through organizational channels characterized by an equality in the mobilizations in which none of the participants can hold a higher position or be under the supervision of one or more activists and leaders to achieve specific or general objectives. Although some activists, among which the advocates of the Taksim platform, often play a more significant role in certain demonstrations, forums, and other meetings between the participants, there is no leader that appears in the mobilizations, whose organization is characterized by the practices of direct democracy.

This reveals not only the use of an organizational method that does not allow anyone to impose on others during demonstrations taking place in the internet era, that is at a time where no one can long hold positions of power in the communicative circuits (Castells 2009), which is the case of the Gezi mobilizations. Besides that, the practice of direct democracy also adopted by other movements such as those of the early Arab spring (Khosrokhavar 2012), 15M in the EU, and the US Occupy Wall Street also represents a

new challenge to institutional systems that aspire to be democratic or envision being democratized (Castells 2012).

Conclusion

The Gezi Park is not only a symbol of resistance to the expansion at the local and national levels of the built environment, an expansion led by the government and the Prime Minister's party pursuing a neo-liberal approach to modernization. It also implies for the protesters both a more general criticism of the neo-liberal approach that has emerged in Turkey as in other parts of the world over many decades and an opposition to authoritarianism, hence simultaneously aiming at the construction of a new democracy. These mobilizations focus on the subjective affirmation of individuals who conduct them to oppose the domination that control the course of their social, economic, professional, cultural, relational, and political individual existence. With these mobilizations, these participants want to assert their subjective control over the evolution of their very existence. They do not delegate to anyone the control of this subjective path.

They do not have leaders for their mobilization, while having different organizational structures to ensure continuity. They do not recognize themselves in the field of the traditional opposition between the secular and the Islamic bloc. They contest the authoritarianism of the government and the new Mr Erdogan power elites who want to impose their control on every aspect of people's lives.

The Gezi movement announces the formation of new collective movements that denounce the precariousness of individual life and the fragmentation of social life and raise new challenges for the reconstruction of a social life free from the control of neo-liberal and financial speculation, affirming the human dignity of individuals aiming at their subjective assertion in the context of a new democracy. The challenges of the Gezi Park are hence announced in the same terms as the others that were launched at the beginning of the Arab Spring in Tunisia and Egypt or the Occupy Wall Street movement in North America and the 15M movement in the EU (Farro and Lustiger-Thaler 2014).

Notes

1. The field-work was prepared and conducted between early June and early August 2013 in Istanbul. It comprised: (1) the collection and analysis of scientific publications, statistical data, and documents related to the evolution of the political system in Turkey, the economic growth, making Turkey one of the largest emerging countries in the early twenty-first century, the issue of the urban expansion in Turkey, the conflicting initiatives under consideration, and the social situations and cultural and political orientations of these mobilizations; (2) a participant observation during events; (3) a sociological intervention conducted by two researchers with a group of 10 participants, representing different cultural and political orientations in the Gezi movement (see n. 14), 10 semi-structured interviews of between one and two hours, conducted with people involved in the Gezi movement, other than the participants in the sociological intervention. This article reports the results of this research. Antimo L. Farro contributed to the writing of points 2.2., 2.3., 3, 3.1., 3.2., and the conclusion. Deniz Günce Demirhisar contributed to the writing of points 1. and 2.1.
2. The artillery barracks called 'Halil Paşa Topcu Kışlası' or 'Taksim Kışlası' were built in the late eighteenth century and destroyed in 1940. Since 1943 Gezi Park extends to the location of the barracks and the Armenian cemetery Pangaltı which has been there since the sixteenth century.
3. The project was made public in September 2011 (Radikal 2011). For a critical analysis of these projects, see Pérouse (laviedesidees.fr, 24 September 2013).

4. In the 12 June 2011 elections, the Party of Justice and Development (AKP) obtains, with 49.9% of the votes, 326 seats in parliament, while the largest opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP) from the Kemalist tradition, only gets 135 seats with 25.9%, and the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) gets 53 seats with 13%; 36 seats go to independent forces consisting mainly of the Kurdish Party of Peace and Democracy (BDP) which presents itself only to local elections to avoid the rule that requires representatives in the political coalitions participating in elections at national level to have a minimum of 10% of the votes (Turan 2011).
5. Many projects reflecting this vision are underway, including the third motorway bridge on the Bosphorus, whose foundation stone was laid on 29 May 2013, the Marmaray, a rail tunnel under the Bosphorus (it was opened on 29 October 2013, A.L.F.), Kanalistanbul water canal of 200 m width, dividing the Thrace peninsula west of Istanbul, for 45 km from north to south between the Black Sea and the Sea of Marmara (Pérouse 2013, pp. 3–4).
6. This heterogeneous co-ordination of organizations said in particular: 'The change in the urban plan announced by the government neglects the universal values of urbanism, violates the scientific and technical principles of mobility and violates the laws of heritage preservation. What is announced is actually a project of "concretification", "dehumanization" and "dispossession of identities". At the same time, the underground ramps and retaining walls provided in the project threaten the safety of pedestrians and cars. The sidewalks will be transformed into corridors preventing pedestrian access to the square. It is also a project "underground" that destroys the visual unity and vital part of a historic environment. It thus imposes on the public opinion new projects under the excuse of reconstructing the barracks Topcu. Open spaces to all to which we all have the right, the only green space in the city center, the park where we can take refuge in case of an earthquake, our walking areas, meeting and rest places, our trees are confiscated and may be sold, transformed into concrete blocks. The objective is to gain money and power by deceiving the public. Taksim is our common cultural property under protection and the most important public space of the city. We demand the immediate cessation of this project. We ask that Taksim be replanned with a more holistic approach, taking into account its historical, social, cultural and ecological values, by means suitable to universal standards, honest, transparent, participatory and democratic. Taksim Square is the first and most important urban development of the republican period. Taksim is the place of democracy and workers where our claims of rights, where our parties, our joys, our reactions are expressed. We defend Taksim Square because it belongs to all of us'. (See the full text of the Turkish joint statement on Solidarity for Taksim on the website: http://www.bianet.org/system/uploads/1/files/attachments/000/000/506/original/TAKS%C4%B0M_DAYANI%C5%9EMASI_ORTAK_DEKLARASYONU.pdf).
7. Cf. <http://bianet.org/bianet/yasam/145960-guler-taksim-1-mayis-a-kapali>.
8. The mobilizations started at dawn on 30 May, following the intervention of the police setting fire to the protesters' tents to evacuate them from the Gezi Park. Throughout the day, thousands of people flock to the park. At the same time, opposition members of the BDP and CHP gave their support to the protesters, despite the first being pro-Kurdish and the second, traditionally Kemalist and nationalist. Among the most active politicians is Sırrı Süreyya Önder who stood in front of the bulldozers twice. Elected in 2011 as an independent candidate on the behalf of the democratic left, as a Turkish deputy member of the pro-Kurdish BDP parliamentary group, he is a well-known intellectual figure and film-maker in the country. However, the movement was not led by any political organization or political leader, although some representatives were very much involved.

On the night of 1 June, in Istanbul, night demonstrations of protesters departed from the Asian side to reach the Gezi Park walking across the Bosphorus Bridge, a road usually exclusively for vehicles. Also, in Istanbul, after 36 hours of clashes with the protesters, the police withdrew from the Gezi Park early in the morning on 2 June, and protesters then reinstalled the camp and restarted a peaceful occupation. On that same day, the governments' hostile and polarizing discourse, such as the designation of protesters as 'vandals' by the Prime Minister (<http://siyaset.milliyet.com.tr/bu-milletin-hizmetkariyim/siyaset/detay/1717849/default.htm>), exacerbated the protesters' criticism and opposition, who then decided to reverse the stigma by appropriating the term and using it widely in the social networks; meanwhile the demonstrations and clashes with the police kept spreading. Moreover, as announced by the Ministry of

- the Interior, on that same day, 2 June, 235 protests were held in 67 cities, which resulted in 1730 people held in custody since 28 May.
9. The consequence of this violence is, according to the report of the Order of Physicians, five deaths during the police attacks and 10,000 injured until 15 July 2013 (<http://www.ttb.org.tr/index.php/gezidirenisi.html>).
 10. On 13 June the Prime Minister met a delegation from the 'Solidarity for Taksim' platform (see section 1.) – a delegation constituted of protesters, trade unionists, artists, and intellectuals – to listen to their demands. The main demands are: (1) The Gezi Park must remain a Park; (2) The resignation of the chief of the Istanbul police, the prefect, and the others responsible of the violence; (3) The prohibition of tear gas; (4) The immediate release of arrested protesters; (5) The end of any prohibition of assembly and demonstration in the public space. The meeting which Mr Erdogan leaves slamming the door produced no results.
 11. The police attacks of an extreme brutality were denounced by international organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International. Also the Istanbul Bar Association filed a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights to denounce the excessive use of violence, including against volunteer doctors; complaints that join the denunciations expressed by the demonstrators and the collective 'Solidarity for Taksim' whose press release dated 16 June states for example: 'We condemn the police attack that targeted Gezi Park, on June 15 evening. We declare that it is a crime against humanity to attack the Park, by firing rubber bullets, and the abusive use of tear gas and stun grenades, while women, children and the elderly were there. At the moment we are writing these lines, the police attack continues on Taksim Square and its surroundings as well as in the rest of the country. The infirmaries built in Gezi Park and Hotel Divan were hit in these attacks in which the violence is unacceptable, even in a state of war. At the moment, in the four corners of Turkey and everywhere in Istanbul, people are protesting against the government attack, walking towards Taksim. The first observations of eyewitnesses indicate that many are being held in custody, the number remains uncertain, and hundreds are injured. There are people affected by rubber bullets and dozens of injured who are unable to go to the hospital. This attack follows the meeting of our representatives with the Prime Minister. It took place while the various components of Solidarity Taksim were discussing, in an open and democratic way, the form the movement would take, to decide on the organization of co-ordination within the Park. At the time of the attack, no demonstration was taking place on Taksim Square. This reveals that the intention of the Prime Minister is to exacerbate the social polarization in the country, through repressing its people to satisfy his thirst for authority.' (Solidarity for Taksim 2013).
 12. The sociological intervention is a research method introduced by Alain Touraine to analyze the social, cultural, and political meanings of new social movements, through a dialogical relationship established between the researchers and a movement comprising activists from the different tendencies, both involved in socio-analytical focus groups (Touraine 1993, see also n. 1).
 13. Following Touraine's (2007) and Melucci's (1996) theoretical proposals, we define a collective movement as a common action conducted by subjects aiming to affirm themselves as self-directed actors and pursuing universalistic alternatives to dominant cultural, economic, and social systemic orientations. These subjects constitute a common action which seeks both to identify and challenge its opponents – the systemic forces conditioning systemic development – to control the direction of these systemic orientations. The collective movement, then, constitutes a level of initiative which aims both to construct conflicts with systemic forces and to integrate these problematic relationships through the regeneration of institutional systems (Farro and Vaillancort 2001, Farro 2004, 2006).
 14. These data are the result of a survey conducted on 6–7 June 2013 by the Konda Institute. The survey covered 4411 protesters, including 50.8% female protesters in the Gezi Park. In terms of education, 3% have a primary school certificate, 6% have a college certificate, 35% are high school graduates, 43% college graduates, and 13% have a higher degree than a Master level of study. In terms of work and social situation, 52% are working people, 37% students, 3% are retired, 2% are housewives, and 6% are unemployed (Konda 2013).
 15. The concept of technostructure is adopted here by critically taking the term proposed by J.K. Galbraith and following its analytical perspective to define the leading actors of the new industrial state (1967). It refers to the organizational structures of agents mobilizing the technological, economic, and scientific resources concerning the power development of the

- systemic forces, as in the case of the finance systemic forces, for example. The activity of the technostructures – as in the case of the financial flow ruling – conditions individual and group life, while this activity develops separately from the actions of these individuals and groups. This can be verified by means of technological platforms or management infrastructures for scientific knowledge which are interposed between the systemic forces technostructures' activity and the individuals' and groups' living experiences (Beck 2006, Touraine 2007, Castells 2009).
16. In Taksim Square, at the time of the most intense phases of mobilization, on 6 and 7 June, 79% say they are not members of any political party, political organization, or NGO. Among these protesters 52% are either undecided about their vote or not planning to vote. A total of 21% of the protesters are members of a political party, a political organization, or an NGO; among these protesters 38% are undecided about their vote or do not plan to vote. In the last 2011 general elections 41% of the protesters voted CHP, 17% had not reached the voting age, 13% were non-voters, 10% voted independent candidates, 7% voted blank, 3% voted other parties, 2% MHP, and 2% AKP. If the elections were held at the time of survey 31% of the protesters would vote for CHP, 29% would be undecided, 18% would not vote, 12% would vote for other parties, 8% for the BDP, 2% for the MHP, and 0.3% for the AKP (Konda 2013; see also n. 15). But, according to qualitative research conducted at about the same time of the Konda survey, 'the CHP voters among the protesters are not the typical CHP ... The most important feature of these atypical CHP voters is that they are mostly young people who were raised in a family of typical CHP voters. Even though atypical CHP voters do not trust politicians (including the CHP ones), they would still vote for them in the polls despite their distrust, for different reasons. One of them, revealed in the research is the fact that the CHP is the most influential choice against the AKP among the existing political parties' (Taştan 2013, pp. 28–29).
 17. Following the success of the AKP in the parliamentary elections in 2011, a comment from a member of the official circles of the party and government apparatus on this event is as follows: 'Given decades of military coups and anti-democratic practices, this election once more proves the strength of Turkish democracy. The AKP's success comes mainly from its ability to maintain a balance between democratization and reforms on the one hand, and nation-wide services and steady economic development on the other. Markets have already responded positively to the election results, and the strength of Turkish economy is expected to continue' (Kalin 2011).
 18. The trial gives to these sentences a remarkable importance. Indeed, until the end of 1990s, the army has been the carrier of the interests and the defender of the power of the social and political Kemalist elite who ran the country. In this context, they had an arbiter role in the Turkish political spectrum. Between 1960 and 1997 they removed four governments in the name of secularism or the fight against terrorism. This changed with the arrival of the AKP government. This political entity and the groups they represent have become stronger than the army and the secular elite in which personality of the army are members. But clashes between the nationalist part of this elite and the moderate Islamists of the AKP have not disappeared.
 19. The Kemalist party CHP traditionally had a secular and a state orientation (Mansfield 1992). But the new CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu engaged in a major effort to transform the party into a more pragmatic social-democratic political force, following the tradition of Western Europe (Turan 2011).
 20. This picture, widely shared on social networks, shows a young woman dressed in red and standing in front of a policeman who is spraying her with water cannon.
 21. Research conducted by the Social Media and Political Participation Lab at New York University during the Gezi movement mobilizations demonstrates the close correlation between the expansion of the collective action and the increased online contacts about the participation in conflict action. More specifically, referring only to the events of 2 June (see n. 10), this study notes: 'The response to social media and the role of social media in the protests has been phenomenal. Since 4pm local time yesterday, at least 2 million tweets mentioning hashtags related to the protest: such as #direncezipark_ (950,000 tweets), #occupygezi (170,000 tweets) or #geziparki (50,000 tweets) have been sent. As we show in the plot below, the activity on Twitter was constant throughout the day. Even after midnight local time last night more than 3,000 tweets about the protest were published every minute' (Social Media and Political Participation Lab 2013, p. 2).

22. The Gezi Park occupation is achieved through the creation of forums, spaces for debate, and creativity based on a respect for differences. In these meetings, the protesters both express their resistance to domination and try to outline alternatives not only to the financial and urban speculation and what they consider as its disastrous ecological consequences, but also to authoritarianism. Moreover, they question the model of economic growth, which, despite a relative reduction of poverty, leads to an increasingly precarious life.

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