13 Gezi Park

A Revindication of Public Space

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> 'Perhaps, after all, Lefebvre was right, more than forty years ago, to insist that the revolution in our times has to be urban-or nothing.' (Harvey 2012, 25)

Introduction

Gezi Park became the subject of worldwide headlines in June 2013. What had initially started as a small sit-in to protect the last piece of green space in central Istanbul went on to develop as a nationwide uprising of sorts.[1] Turkey had rarely seen this level of inter-group camaraderie in contemporary history. It seemed that, at last, something was happening that would start to seriously question the policies that had destroyed (and continue to do so) large chunks of the social fabric, environment, the tangible and intangible heritages of Istanbul, alongside the possibilities of more egalitarian and truly heterogeneous urban spaces. This paper attempts to conceptualise the background events that led to the occupation of Gezi Park and how Gezi Park itself materialised the hopes of the 'right to the city' movement, as it stood as a moment in a process, rather than a one-off event.

In the latest cases of citizen struggles, the return to the commons and the reclaiming of public space seem to be the most effective exercises of social participation and grassroots alliances. Thus, the way urban space has been produced to control citizens and has been reproduced by Gezi Park is of particular importance. Specifically, I seek to answer the following question: How did the AKP project of urban restructuring feed the protests in and about Gezi Park? In order to do so, this paper will identify the different processes of institutional positioning in relation to urban spaces, demonstrating the links between exclusion and social unrest. I will approach AKP's project from a number of perspectives; namely its reliance on the construction sector as the basis of its economic programme, the commodification of culture and its role in rewriting history.

1 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-22753752.

Seeking responses to the points raised in the first section, I will then go on to analyse the stateless autonomous space reclaimed in the midst of the protests. Mirroring the initial contextualisation, a description of how Gezi was a response to institutional efforts will follow. This exercise will allow the paper to demonstrate that truly public spaces are indeed achievable and are the product of the performing of citizens' collective urban identity. I will highlight Gezi's position as a response to the militarisation of urban spaces by focusing on the identity produced within its boundaries. Cartographic readings of the park will aid the aim of the paper.

I will draw on Doreen Massey's (2005) work on the reclaiming of spaces as 'the product of interrelations; as constituted through interactions;' 'the sphere of possibility of the existence of multiplicity in the sense of contemporaneous plurality' and 'space as the necessary constituent of the Social' (Massey 2005). In addition, David Harvey (2004) has been able to capture the nature of capitalist urban development by coining the term 'accumulation by dispossession;' he is also instrumental in the conceptualisation of the 'right to the city' movement defined as 'the struggle [...] against the powers of capital that ruthlessly feed upon and extract rents from the common life that others have produced' (Harvey 2012). Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson (1992) provide a useful analysis of the anthropology of place in relation to identity and sense of belonging. Throughout the paper, I will identify unregulated urban spaces with spaces of possibility (Lees 2004), as they are the prime geographical location of social interaction. The spirit of the *mahalle* ('neighbourhood') will be a recurrent theme invoked throughout the paper and it will help illustrate the success of Gezi as a space of solidarity and tolerance.[2]

The Turkish Institutional Approach to Intervention in the Urban Environment

In this first section of the paper I will describe how the Turkish city is institutionally produced. This will support the argument that Gezi was a direct consequence of the different hegemonic practices taking over

2 It draws from the collective imaginations of an urban space where dwellers not only know each other but can also count on each others' help in times of hardship. A recurrent theme in popular culture, the reality of neighbourhoods is not perfect but nevertheless provides urbanites with the possibilities of unregulated interaction, thus aiding the construction of an essential part of an urban sense of belonging.

urban spaces, Istanbul in particular: 'Instead of stopping with the notion of deterritorialization, the pulverisation of the space of high modernity, we need to theorize how space is being reterritorialized in the contemporary world' (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 20). If Gezi feeds a cross-border struggle for citizen's rights similar to class struggles in other places, the way those in power apply tools of social control and adapt them to fit the needs of their own enterprise need to be addressed.

AKP's Neoliberal Project: Taming the Commons by Taming the City

Since AKP was voted into government in 2002, the implementation of their own neoliberal project has advanced at high speed as all manner of (apparent) economic growth and urban changes exemplify. It is necessary, nevertheless, to clarify here the term *neoliberalism* when used in the context of Istanbul and Turkey. AKP was initially seen as a moderate conservative Islamic party but as the core of its policies has been challenged, its real nature has surfaced. On the one hand, they have actively supported privatisation processes. On the other, they have intervened in the promotion of foreign investment on previously public land, thus setting the stage for what we have seen as a regulation of public space into something else: a space disciplined into creating relationships based on capital exchange.[3]

AKP's take on advanced capitalism suggests a combination of liberal economic policies and conservative ideology. The role of urbanisation has gained central importance as 'The whole neoliberal project over the last 30 years has been oriented towards privatisation of control over the surplus' and 'cities have arisen through the geographical and social concentration of a surplus product' (Harvey 2012, 5). Seemingly, citizens' conditions are better, as they are able to access more goods in more places. At the same time, working hours are longer, job security remains precarious and the best services are accessed by those who can afford them.

Inasmuch as the neoliberal model thrives in a landscape of class division, the ruling elites of any socio-economic structure, in this case Turkey, have taken advantage of already existing cultural divisions. Adding to Engin Isin's (2007, 221) description of the city as a difference-making machine, Anna Secor (2004, 357) points out, 'class is not the only variant of discrimination,' as subaltern groups are defined and redefined by an elite that continues to benefit from a society based on the discrimination of the Other. Secor

3 The official discourse is available at http://investment-in-turkey.com/page7.html. Accessed 29 May 2014.

demonstrates how women discovered they were labelled with *Kurdishness* as they came into contact with state sponsored discrimination at school. Following Gupta and Ferguson, traditional identity politics per se does not resolve the issue, but the addressing of the hierarchical nature of social relations helps define it. Therefore, Secor's (Ibid., 361) accounts on the 'spatiality of identity in the city and performance' become relevant inasmuch as official narratives instrumentalize difference to redefine who the city is for.

AKP's Reliance on the Construction Sector

Urban spaces have been at the forefront of the analysis of contemporary social uprisings. The possibilities of unregulated association and equal interaction between different sectors of society have been curbed by attempts from the Turkish government to restructure (tame) the very nature of social spaces through mechanisms of urban exclusion. David Harvey's theorisation of how streets are the new battleground of democratic rights as the state functions as the guard of the rights of the minority is convincing: 'Cities have arisen through the geographical and social concentration of a surplus product. Urbanisation has always been, therefore, a class phenomenon of some sort, since surpluses have been extracted from somewhere and from somebody, while control over the use of the surplus typically lies in the hands of a few.' Furthermore, 'Capitalism needs urbanisation to absorb the surplus products it perpetually produces' (Harvey 2012, 5). Istanbul stands as one of the best examples of his exploration of advanced urban capitalism:

> What is new in recent developments is that, while spatial policies used to be a method to *strengthen* hegemony, the AKP's neoliberal hegemony is *constituted* through their use of space. Since the 2000s, the AKP has invented governance models to commodify spaces that, on the one hand, allow them to allocate surpluses to their own budgets and networks while also supporting the enormous growth of a government-allied construction sector on the other (Çavusoğlu and Strutz 2014, 143).

The elite, in this case a party in government with the majority of votes and links to a new emerging class of entrepreneurs, has sought a monopoly over rentable spaces. It has also created the conditions to rule over that monopoly uncontested (Özcan and Turunç 2011).

The *gecekondu* (literally 'built overnight:' informal housing) amnesty in 1983 was struck as a deal between the political elite and powerful factory

owners whereby they did not have to provide services to dwellers and workers of their factories.[4] This had an effect on the urban fabric, in the sense that it provided the urban poor with social mobility as they became responsible for their housing. Economic neoliberalisation started to take place in the 1980s (Keyder 1999). The potential for profit in lands occupied by poorer dwellers was too good an opportunity. TOKİ was created and it went on to become the essential agent in the expropriation and privatisation of lands and allowed since 2003 the building of housing consortiums with private firms.[5] Furthermore, interventions in the built environment of cities are no longer sufficient to feed the machinery at play. Threatening further ecological and social catastrophe, AKP has also embarked on huge infrastructure projects all over the country: a third airport, the 'crazy' canal and extensive dam building, to name a few.

The legal framework enabling this rapid intervention in the urban context has been developed to fit government interests. Two laws were passed that were instrumental in the process: Law 5366 (2005) and Law 6306 (2012). The first one went on to become the Urban Renewal Law as it allowed intervention and expropriation by the municipalities within the historical boundaries of the city. Since it was passed, more than forty areas have been designated as urban renewal projects and around 12,000 people have been evicted from their houses.[6] If Law 6306 initially responded to the urgent need to address the real threat of an imminent earthquake, its possible consequences have alarmed different sectors of Turkish civil society and academia, among others. Alongside these laws, other fiscal measures have been put in place to ease speculation, e.g. Law No. 6302, which opens the land to foreign purchase.[7] There have been instances where judges ruled against the destruction, privatisation or 'regeneration' of an urban space (the last floor of *Demirören* shopping centre in İstiklal Avenue being one of them)[8] but projects have not been halted accordingly.[9] These examples support the idea that Turkish law is essentially relative, rather than a citizen's tool to access justice. Indeed, changes to Istanbul have caused havoc to egalitarian understandings of public spaces. Asu Aksoy highlights the extent of the urban transformation. When tackling the possible outcomes,

4 http://lsecities.net/media/objects/articles/istanbuls-gecekondus/en-gb/.

5 http://www.toki.gov.tr/english/hda.asp. Accessed 18 May 2014.

6 http://reclaimistanbul.com/2011/04/04/hello-world/.

7 http://www.mfa.gov.tr/guidance-for-foreigners.en.mfa.

8 http://www.tarlabasiistanbul.com/2011/05/istiklal-demiroren/.

9 The recent Zeytinburnu project, to name a few: http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/construction-disfigures-istanbul-skyline.html.

Aksoy describes the possibility of Istanbul becoming a city based on 'spaces of consumption' and the 'gentrification of living spaces;' landscapes that 'we are seeing' now. She goes on to offer the second possible outcome: 'the possibility of a social and cultural openness predicated on inclusive and egalitarian principles – a politically inspired, alternative vision of openness.'[10] She clearly exposes the need to contest the neoliberalisation of space. Entire neighbourhoods have been evicted or deprived of infrastructure in order to be rebuilt and brandised for middle/upper-class capital. Gated communities have created a fear of the outside and others that did not exist in the first place. The ever-growing construction of shopping centres aims to respond to consumerist lifestyles imposed by a tightly-controlled media. The possibility of a neighbourly *mahalle* is increasingly disappearing to give way to secured individual spatial consumption. All these systems of strategic rule over citizens' lives were brought to a halt, or interrupted in one way or another, by the Gezi Park protests.

Commodification of Culture and Monopolization of Narratives: Branding the City

As Doreen Massey (2005, 24) argues, 'space implies the possibility of relations.' The new regime of capital has been imposed, making use of different tools of social persuasion to limit those possibilities of relations. In order to turn space into the opposite of the political and the social, the opposite of the unregulated interactions found in the *mahalles*, it becomes imperative not only to construct accordingly, but also to make sure the narratives are internalised. It is thus that the project can continue uncontested. How to fill these new AKP-branded urban spaces? 17,000 new mosques have been built since AKP came to power.[11] Anything that stays out of the equation ought to be marginalised or even criminalised: hence, the importance of renewed efforts in the struggle for women's rights (as the prime minister tells women they should have at least three children and abortion should be illegal), alcohol consumption (new laws restricting consumption have recently been passed), internet use (as a new internet law has just been approved and will jeopardise users' privacy), and so on.

10 http://www.europanostra-tr.org/files/file/Asu%20Aksoy_Istanbul_Dilemma%20of%20Direction.pdf, 6.

11 http://www.ansamed.info/ansamed/en/news/sections/generalnews/2013/02/19/Turkey-17-000-new-mosques-built-Erdogan_8274135.html.

As Harvey (2012, 14) notes, '[s]hopping malls, multiplexes, and box stores proliferate (the production of each has become big business), as do fast-food and artisanal market places, boutique cultures, and, as Sharon Zukin slyly notes, "pacification by cappuccino".' All these spaces of consumption have been secured to maximise the experience and do away with any possibilities of dissent. When the streets erupt against yet another shopping centre, the links between social unrest and excluding urbanism are clear. These narratives available in mass media describe better lives in gated communities and privileged islands of exclusivity:[12] the city, Istanbul, has been torn apart and branded as a site of investment and opportunity in order for the taming to be more acceptable, or at least undisputed. Exercises of 'cultural engineering' produce an Istanbul hollow of its character, safe for its consumption and devoid of the necessary element of surprise essential in thriving urban spaces (Huyssen 2008, 3). From the construction of luxury villas on top of invaluable heritage in *Sulukule* to the marketing of shiny new business districts, the city has been rebranded.[13] This exercise has actively packaged urban spaces and lifestyles as another product to be sold.[14] As '[t]he successful branding of a city might require the expulsion or eradication of everyone or everything else that doesn't fit the brand' (Harvey 2012, 108), those urban dwellers that are not profitable or marketable are relegated to another category in the social pyramid. Thus, popular neighbourhoods or *mahalles* located in profitable lands are torn down both physically and socially. The underprivileged, unable to afford the prices, are rendered invisible. They are literally moved somewhere else, normally to the outskirts of the city or TOKİ housing, thus making the process complete: these new TOKİ homeowners would still be part of the economic machinery as new contracts are signed. Those that enriched the city's culture and diversity, effectively being an essential part of the process that makes Istanbul Istanbul, are finally discarded. Following historical lines of social and cultural exclusion, these groups tend to be the marginalised minorities; namely, Roma, Kurdish, African, Alevi, transsexual, gay, lesbians and, above all, the urban poor.

12 Any advert in a Turkish Airlines magazine exemplifies this: http://www.skylife.com/en/. Accessed 30 March 2014.

13 http://www.zaha-hadid.com/masterplans/kartal-pendik-masterplan/. Accessed 12 February 2014.

14 Their success remains unattainable if we are to go by the results the Spanish and UK governments have achieved with regard to any significant economic gains. Both *Marca España* and *Branding Britain* projects have failed as poverty and unemployment continue to rise.

Rewriting History

AKP's project of urban exclusion has been supported by the manipulation of official narratives of cultural belonging. In order to destroy both tangible and intangible heritages, AKP has actively engaged in the rewriting of a history that suits their neoliberal project: 'The price of belonging, in Turkey, comes at a cost – the forgetting of particular histories at the expense of the frequent retelling of others and the silencing of particular memories that cannot entirely be repressed' (Mills 2010). Amy Mills (Ibid.) exposes the use of the versions of the past in order to prompt a particular narrative of identity. A 600-year-old Roma settlement (*Sulukule*), the oldest on record, does not belong to the institutional understanding of history (as it inconveniently stands in the way of profit making schemes and land speculation). Still, the past of Hagia Sofia as a mosque should now be discussed as a matter of importance, making it seem a result of collective will, though undoubtedly engineered.[15] But where in the mainstream media was the systematic destruction of Greek and Armenian heritage in Tarlabaşı? Or reports about the history and the livelihoods that will be lost with the construction of dams all over Turkey?

One of the myriad new urban projects is the Yedikule gardens, an urban farming tradition going back 1500 years. The gardening activities that have taken place for centuries and give employment to dozens of domestic migrants are threatened by the municipality's plans. The historical Byzantine walls have already been damaged by the excavations. A solidarity platform has been trying in recent months to raise awareness between neighbours and the public, but Fatih Municipality backed the project that would eventually see the construction of further luxury housing:[16] '"The soil does not have history" – uttered the leader of the AKP council members at a meeting in the City Hall of Fatih municipality' (Sopov 2013). Indeed, the historical value of cultural and social exchange as exemplified by Yedikule is of no interest to AKP in the face of a profitable, future privatisation contract of the land.

15 A cover of the Turkish Airlines magazine showed the museum embedded in a narrative of Ottomanism enhancement: http://www.skylife.com/en/2013-08/hagia-sophia-mosque-of-sultans.
16 http://yedikulebostanlari.tumblr.com. Accessed 25 April 2014.

Gezi: Mapping the Space Reclaimed and the Victory of the Commons

> What kind of city we want cannot be divorced from the question of what kind of people we want to be, what kinds of social relations we seek, what relations to nature we cherish, what style of life we desire, what aesthetic values we hold. (Harvey 2012, 4)

Who is the city for? This question is asked repeatedly as it becomes obvious that contemporary social alliances and uprisings take place around a new idea of citizenship directly related to how bodies become political in the set up of the urban environment. As explained above, the institutional approach adopted by AKP with regard to shaping Istanbul benefits the already privileged minority. Inasmuch as the system itself is unsustainable (ecologically, socially, economically) there is only so much social fracturing a government can practice without encountering mass urban resistance, even when the hegemonic system of governance has relied and promoted historical constructions of identities.

As Harvey (2012, 14) argues, 'the fissures within the system are also all too evident.' What happens when cities are shaped through exclusionary practices? There have been different stories of urban struggle that, if largely ignored by the mainstream media, have helped build strong links between neighbourhood associations, civil society groups, academics and other citizens. The Sulukule Solidarity Platform managed to bring to the negotiating table instrumental agents such as TOKİ and Fatih Municipality. The Tarlabaşı Tenants and Homeowners Association was able to put the Tarlabaşı project on hold for years. More recently, the Yedikule platform has been engaging with local dwellers to raise awareness and has promoted a media campaign that has raised the issue internationally. All these different moments in the struggle of the 'right to the city' have contributed to new understandings of urban citizenship and solidarity that do away with those imposed borders defined by the combination of a neoliberal agenda with identity politics.

If the links between international privileged elites are strong, there is no reason not to understand urban citizenship as an open identity based on solidarity and on the idea of public spaces as the places of possibility. 'The process of the production of cultural difference [...] occurs in continuous, connected space, traversed by economic and political relations of inequality. [...] the more radical operation of interrogating the "otherness" of the other, situating the production of cultural difference within the historical processes of a socially and spatially interconnected world' (Gupta and Ferguson

1992, 16) is what needs to be tackled. The relevance of the occupation (and further construction) of the Gezi Park commune stems from the ability of the urban mass to do away with the historical construction of otherness that has been a constituent element of Turkish politics.

Gezi Protests as a Reaction against AKP Policies

The system fostered by AKP has not only tried to tame the urban in order to produce a certain kind of citizen, but it has also curtailed the possibilities of social engagement between people by different means, from antagonising prime ministerial speeches to the criminalisation of the urban poor via the destruction of social networks of support based on unregulated uses of space. The protests became a platform where no affiliation was needed, and where the general discontent against a prime minister hungry for uncontested power could be expressed freely. His refusal to accept criticism has often fed the authoritarian description of his style of politics. But there is a need to go beyond his persona. When Gezi Park protesters were taking to the streets showing their position against state policies and police violence, they were effectively reclaiming that space from the sphere of influence of the institution, AKP in this case.

Furthermore, the fact that all exchanges and interactions had nothing to do with monetary transactions (from free food to neighbours' donations) stands as the materialisation of an opposition to the economic policies that AKP had become so popular for. Indeed, a different city is possible, as was in fact achieved at the park, producing a much more interesting platform of connections and trajectories based on the premise that everyone can and does have a place in the project of a fairer society.

The Value of Resistance in and for a Park: Creating New Senses of Belonging

When drawing distinctive parallels between the different tools used by the social actors involved in the construction (or destruction) of cities in Turkey, the results are charged with symbolism. AKP's project could be represented by the extensive urbanisation and environment intervention that relies on undemocratic decision-making processes for the benefit of the few. The reclaimed space of Gezi Park stood as an example of how relationships of difference can be the basis of a struggle against the senseless destruction of nature and heritage, offering a snapshot of how the complex social and cultural components of society in cities can be activated to build solidarity.

Furthermore, the possibility of aligning with a cause that has, until now, remained, to a certain extent, outside of the rigid structures of political identity formation imposed from above, has much to do with the success in numbers at the Gezi Park protests. Thus, new kinds of identity are being built around the idea of protection of public spaces, providing a new way of political engagement that does not have to conform with historical (and opposing) sides. Gezi stands as the proof that fighting hegemonic social divisions promotes a kind of solidarity that not only far more reflects the heterogeneity of societies but is also able to articulate a much more effective political position. In this sense, it could be argued that all sorts of bottom-up networks of everyday interaction, which normally build links between dwellers sharing streets, neighbourhoods and public transports, were activated and propelled into the political realm, demonstrating the potential when new kinds of identity based on the idea of contiguous plurality are performed.

Gezi became part of contemporary cross-border attempts at real representative democracy by opening space as the realm of the political. The commons defied violent crackdowns in order to liberate the park from the rule of capital and capital-accumulation processes. The tactics deployed to protect and define that space required acts of solidarity and consensus essential in the nature of true public spaces. The level of self-organisation was outstanding: from the setting up of the spaces to the cleaning up of the park, via the protection of the right to pray and the celebration of civil *iftars* (the fast-breaking meal during the month of Ramadan) as socially cohesive events that helped uncover the false sense of piety promoted by AKP. A clear set of demands were drafted and widely shared.[17]

Everyone had an opportunity to express themselves freely without offending others. Freedom of expression, with a constant regard for others, is probably what better defines the narrative of Gezi: a self-regulated space that was able to make tolerance its basic moral principle in order not to antagonise anyone. Taking this into account, the following question remains unanswered: after the violent crackdowns, the obvious disdain towards its citizenry and the climate of fear and censorship promoted, what will be the long-term impact on the AKP government?

When most institutional systems had aimed to create a class of docile citizens, the last thing the AKP needed was an awakening of this kind; a realisation of the possibilities of public spaces when creating egalitarian platforms and understanding difference as a cohesive, rather than divisive,

17 http://reclaimistanbul.com/2013/06/07/demands-of-occupygezi-movement/.

force. The internalisation of the space reclaimed in the park has taken place, even now that the park is a private space, rigidly regulated and policed. Citizens are already aware that public space can become the product of interactions and reciprocally influence a sense of belonging. Furthermore, a new sense of identity can be created and can be activated inasmuch as it has already been performed. This stands as the victory of the commons over the privatising efforts of an elite, far more interested in securing gains than the welfare of the majority.

Those who constituted Gezi Park have a lot in common with the struggle in and for other public spaces in other cities: they are agents of a new culture of resistance, in the way that there is a collective recognition of the possibilities that was not there before. They have also collectively rewritten the social and political rules of engagement and identified new positions with regard to citizenship and power. Gezi offered a glimpse to what the possibilities of public spaces are and could be, and that is already a victory inasmuch as several generations can now identify with this achievement.

Responses to the Militarisation of Space: The Return of the Commons

How did Gezi reflect the collective wish of a different city? Overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of protesters and pushed back by their resistance, the police eventually retreated. The Gezi Park commune was thus established on 1 June 2013. Many agreed it was the safest they had felt, highlighting in no uncertain terms the indiscriminate violent character of the police force. What followed was an exercise in self-organisation that demonstrated the possibilities of bottom-up citizen engagement. All the services of a fully-working autonomous zone were provided: from medical assistance to veterinary services, from a children's area to a vegetable garden, from a library to a mosque, from free food to yoga lessons, to a memorial space, to explicitly political spaces.

If the use of space remained somehow fluid, there were some corners of the constructed space that were identified with specific groups, as per the figure below. Whilst these attempts at counter-cartography described a very fluid situation difficult to capture, they also offer us a great opportunity to assess the nature of Gezi. The protesters openly aligned with a political group constituted less than 20 per cent of those coming out to Gezi. The question in this case would be whether to attribute more constitutive importance to those political groups over the individuals coming out without previous political background. In what I believe is an accurate reflection of society in Turkey, these maps show the complexity of the make-up of

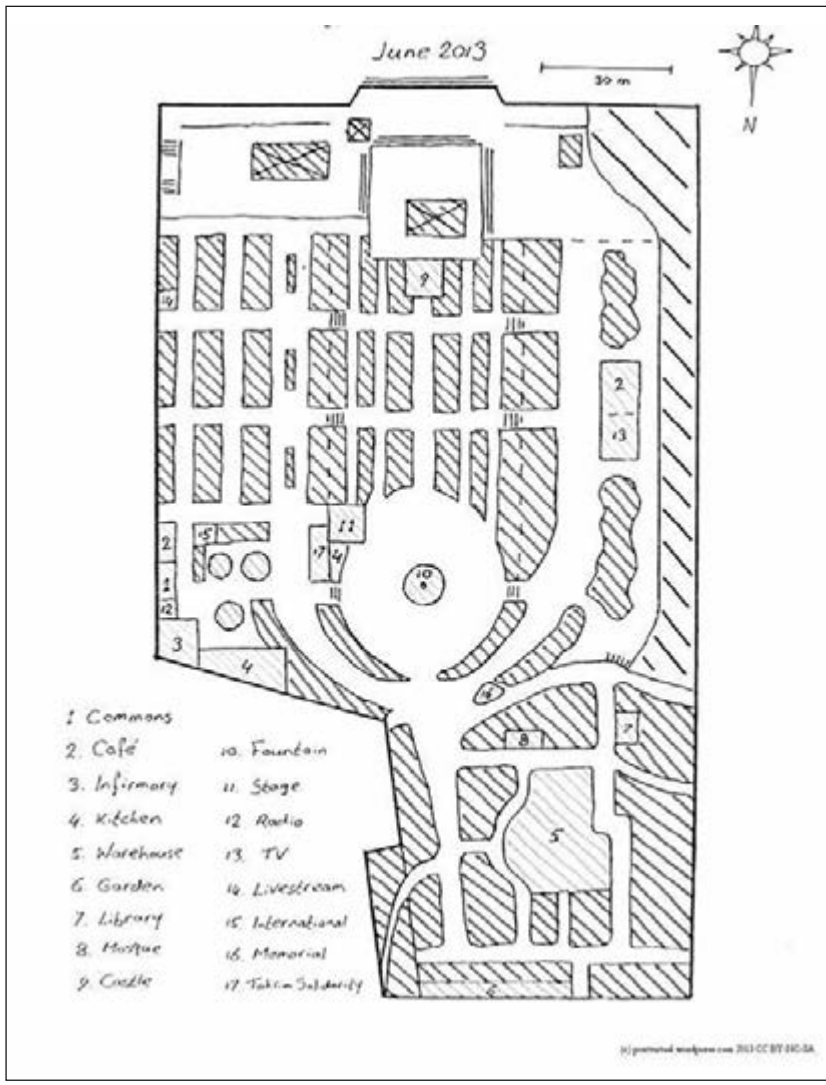

Figure 13.1 Functional Map of the Occupation of Gezi Park
'Gezi Republic' Image courtesy of Oscar ten Houten #OccupyGezi Digital Edition v1.130725

urban citizenry. If some describe the protests as mainly secular, images of Anti-capitalist Muslims and the earth *iftar* come to mind. If some want to label it middle-class, the role of the unions calling for the demonstrations is also central. It is known that people who voted for AKP were there too. All this implies that the self-organised, stateless, autonomous zone was a reclaiming of space in Massey's sense: a space full of possibilities and

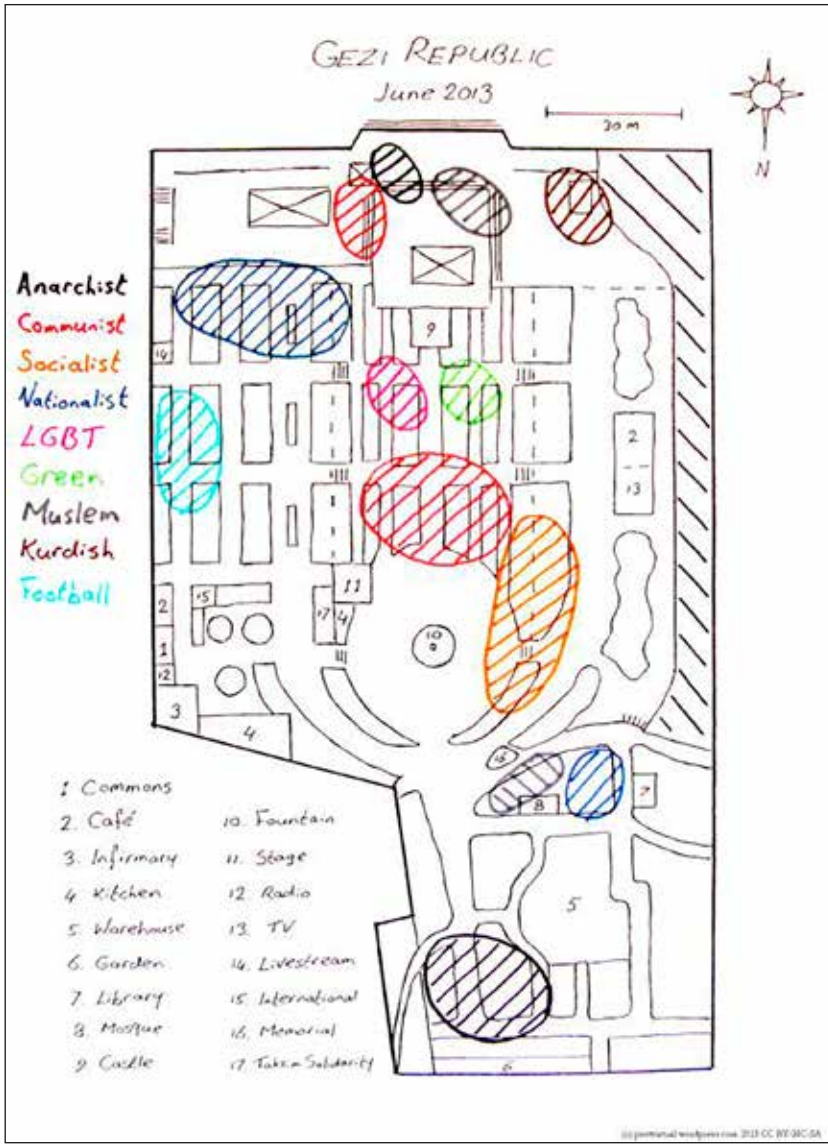

Figure 13.2: Map of Occupied Gezi Park Demonstrating Group-specific Use of Space
'Gezi Neighbourhoods' Image courtesy of Oscar ten Houten #OccupyGezi Digital Edition v1.130725

trajectories involved in processes without hierarchy. Furthermore, as a space born out of the struggle and solidarity between all different peoples, it truly embodied a political awareness that has long been the subject of suppression by political and economic elites.

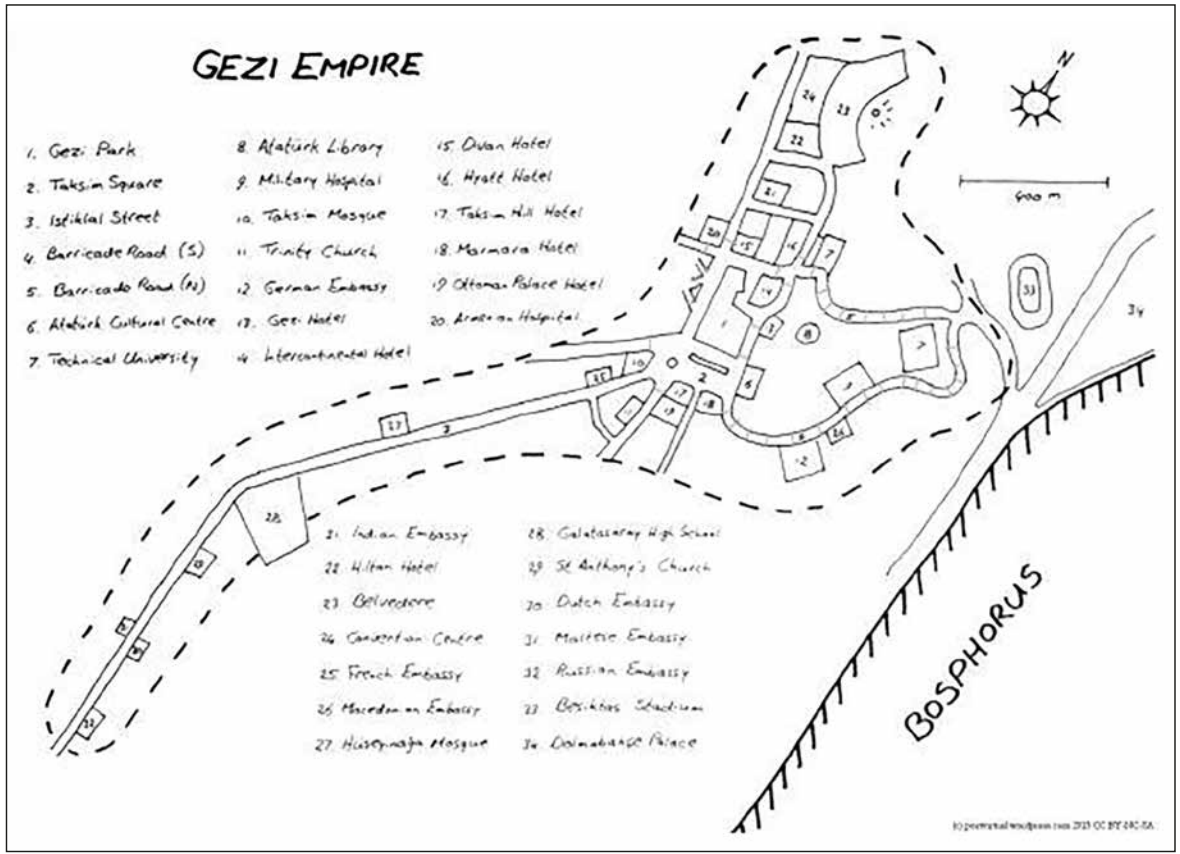

Figure 13.3: Map of the Area in Beyoğlu Occupied by the Protesters. 'Gezi Empire' Image courtesy of Oscar ten Houten #OccupyGezi Digital Edition v1.130725

Another helpful representation is the map on page 245 of the spaces that the Gezi resistance gained. If the park became a much more visible centre, the spirit was also transmitted to the barricades being built in Gümüşsuyu and beyond. In this sense, the space was being reclaimed in different parts of Istanbul and Turkey, as the institutional response did nothing to seek a consensus and increasingly tried to polarise the population. As much as the media focused on one square in order to make the event easy to mediatise, the streets around the park and in other cities were also the battleground against the police crackdown and for Gezi. At the end of the day, those standing together in Ankara, Rize, Izmir, Mersin and so on, were there to reclaim their own positions as constitutive members of an urban citizenry that needs to be consulted, respected and taken into account.

Conclusion

If what happened in Gezi Park was extraordinary in terms of social cohesion and solidarity between seemingly different groups, focusing on spacio-temporal boundaries would only limit the phenomenon as a singular moment in a specific place. This has already been practiced by mainstream media in their efforts to give more visibility to the event, whilst the implications on a more meaningful level are left unattended. It has already been articulated by the critical mass itself: Gezi Park was also in the streets of Ankara or Lice, inasmuch as Lice and Ankara were also in Gezi. The neighbourhood assemblies that followed reflected a mature level of political self-awareness. Furthermore, the permanent management of spaces as is happening in Kadıköy's *Yeldeğirmeni Dayanışması* (a self-regulated occupied social space in Kadıköy, Istanbul) reflects the longer impact of the phenomenon that we are trying so hard to describe and understand. Once again, the possibilities within spaces of association and solidarity are endless inasmuch as different kinds of sense of belonging are activated; this calls for a more open and fluid idea of identity and politics that will enable us to construct more connections, rather than barriers. Of course, there are difficulties to overcome: a renewed crackdown on freedom of expression, corruption allegations, environmental destruction and privileged-based urbanism continue to take place. Furthermore, questions need to be asked with regard to those who did not want to engage in the struggle: how could a conversation involve all and opposing sectors of society?

Still, the inclusive character of the 'right to the city' movement as practiced in Gezi Park has the ability to represent many more urban dwellers

than any other movement or struggle. More importantly, it has the ability to give space to those normally discriminated against, the minorities, the subalterns and the victimized. The 'right to the city' thus combines the struggle against the hierarchy of the powerful and the further exclusion of different heterogeneous groups based on a new kind of citizenship, built on the premise that public spaces are the product of difference. The occupation of Gezi Park put in practice the character of the *mahalle*, where space is constructed by the juxtaposition of trajectories of difference. Thus, the practice of everyday life became and becomes the realm of contemporary political struggle.

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