A 21st Century Protest “REPERTOIRE”: ISTANBUL’S GEZI COMMUNE AND THE AFFECTIVE DYNAMICS OF URBAN SOCIAL MOBILIZATION

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Abstract

This dissertation represents a social and cultural analysis of the Istanbul protests of 2013. Known popularly as the Gezi Park protests, this Occupy-like movement began on 28 May 2013 as a small-scale resistance by environmentalist groups. Over the next two-weeks, it evolved into a self-sustaining and self-governing encampment, which drew individual and groups from different backgrounds and with different ideological viewpoints. Based on field research and interviews as well as a reflexive interrogation, the dissertation approaches the Gezi Park protests as a new or reimagined protest repertoire with roots in the 1871 Paris Commune. The 21st century “commune repertoire” represents the practice of building an heterogeneous community held together by the emotions and affect generated by the creation of the encampment at the heart of a sprawling post-modern metropolis: it is the embodiment of a collective yearning for a more humane city and demands to maintain the urban commons. Framing the investigation of the 2013 protest against the history of the Justice and Development Party’s neoliberal policies and its impact on the city of Istanbul, this dissertation brings sociological theories of collective action into dialogue with the newly emerging literature on the role of affect, memory studies and critical urban geography.
Acknowledgements

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In loving memory of my Afu…
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List of Abbreviations

Groups, Organizations and Unions involved in the Commune

Çarşı: Supporter group of Beşiktaş Football Club, (Anarchist, left-leaning character)

DISK: The Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey, (one of the four major trade unions, left leaning, revolutionary, 1967-present)

KOS: Northern Forest Defense, (Environmentalist organization founded after the Commune)

SYKP: Socialist New Foundation Party, (New-left to environmentalist, 2013-present)

TBG: The Turkish Youth Unity, (Ultra-Nationalist, right-wing youth organization)

TD: Taksim Solidarity, (Grassroots organization constituted by left-leaning groups, chambers, student groups and Marxist-Leninist parties)

ACM: Anti-Capitalist Muslims, (Theological-oriented youth organization, anti-materialist, anti-neoliberal)

Parties

ANAP: Motherland Party, (Neoliberal to Conservative, 1983-present)

AKP: Justice and Development Party (Ex-Islamist-nationalist, Conservative, 2001-present)

CHP: Republican People’s Party, (Founding party of Turkey, Kemalism, center left to right-wing Kemalist, 1923-1981, 1992-present)

DP: The Democrat Party of Turkey, (Conservative, Center Right to Liberal, 1946-1960)


PKK: The Kurdistan Workers’ Party, (Maoist, outlawed, 1978-present)

Universities

METU: The Middle Eastern Technical University, (Pro-Marxist, Leftist)
A Timeline of the Commune

Friday, 7 April
Police dispersed a large crowd of demonstrators who protested the demolition of the city’s iconic movie theater, Emek Cinema, on İstiklal Avenue.

Wednesday, 1 May
May 1, a traditional workers’ holiday across the world, was cancelled in Taksim Square following the 1980 military coup in Turkey. It was reinstated in 2010 by the AKP government. The city’s governor announced the re-cancellation of the celebration upon the directives given by the government. Demonstrators attempted to defy the government’s ban on holding the celebration in the symbolic square. The square and its surrounding area witnessed clashes between the demonstrators and police.

Monday, 27 May
The initial construction for the artillery barrack commenced in the late night hours. Bulldozers razed five trees. A group of 80-100 protesters gathered in Gezi Park upon the call of the Taksim Solidarity. Protesters and the members of the platform set up a small encampment to prevent further demolition.

Tuesday, 28 May
Police used tear gas for the first time in the park. Environmentalist groups and the constituents of Taksim Solidarity temporarily halted the construction. Some parliamentarians from the dissident Kurdish party and the CHP joined up with the protesters. Ceyda Sungur, also known as the Woman in Red, was targeted.

Wednesday, 29 May
Police attempted to evict the protesters from the park for the second time. The number of the protesters continued to increase following the news that spread via social media. A larger crowd attempted to stop the construction by taking Kurdish parliamentarian Sirri Süreyya Önder’s support behind. Protesters pitched new tents in the encampment following the tension in the park. Some of eco-protesters planted trees.

Thursday, 30 May
At 5:00 a.m., police raided on the protesters who were keeping watch. Footages that showed Hazar B. Büyüktuna hugging the tree and police setting the tents on fire spread via social media and TV news channels. By evening, the number of the protesters increased significantly.
**Friday, 31 May**

The encampment was targeted once again just before dawn. Önder and other dissident parliamentarians were wounded during the confrontation. Istanbul’s 6th distractive court adopted a stay of execution for the project. Police evicted the park from the protesters for a temporary period of time. Following the evening rush hour, crowds began gathering on different roads and boulevards leading to the park. The crisis inside the park developed into a citywide massive civil disobedience.

**Saturday, 1 June**

In the early morning hours, a large crowd of protesters from the Asian continent of the city attempted to cross the bridge on foot to reach the park. The ongoing protests in Istanbul spread to other cities in the country. Ethem Sarısülük was shot in the clashes that took place in the capital city, Ankara. Security forces were ordered to withdraw from the area surrounding the park starting from 15:45 as the civil disobedience spread to other public spaces in the country. The commune began to take shape as the protesters restored the occupation.

**Sunday, 2 June**

The communards organized the psychical space of the park. The encampment site was partitioned in accordance with the cultural, political and social vitrines of the groups and actors involved in the park as well as the uprising. The Taksim Solidarity set up a big platform in the mid section of the site along with residential tents and various stands. Anarchist and Kurdish groups were stationed at the south and north entrance. Various socialists, ultra-nationalist, communist and environmentalist groups scattered across the encampment. The eco-communards initiated collective activities to clean up the debris left from the clashes.

In an official statement, the Interior Minister declared that the number of detainees reached to 1,730 in the sixth day of the protests. Then Prime minister Erdoğan dismissed the protesters as “a few chapulcu,” roughly translated to “marauders”. The Anarchist soccer fan group repelled the police assaulting the encampment borders in response.

**Monday, 3 June**

The communards sealed the borders of the encampment by setting public transit buses on fire in the near vicinity. The Taksim Solidarity began to hold park forums on a regular basis to ease the communication between the communards, groups and organizations. The global hacktivist entities RedHack and Anonymous targeted various government, party and state websites. Gezi became a global phenomenon. The first collective yoga session was organized in the commune at 19.30.

The stock market opened with an unexpected plunge in prices. The president then declared: “Democracy is not just ballots.” Erdoğan disapproved the president’s statement on an unexpected diplomatic trip to Morocco. Ongoing protests in the other cities of the country escalated. Abdullah Cömert, hit by tear-gas canister on the head, died of a concussion.
Tuesday, 4 June

The encampment evolved into its full form as a commune. The communards set up library and prepared a list of collective needs. They began to go to workplaces from the commune. The feminist groups initiated a campaign against sexist slogans. Yoga sessions became a part of daily routine in the park.

Prominent minds as Slavoj Žižek, Judith Butler, Antonio Negri, Jean-Luc Nancy declared their support for the commune. The Turkish Medical Association issued a statement suggesting all its members temporarily to halt duties in hospitals and urged them to help wounded protesters on the streets and in the commune.

Wednesday, 5 June

The Anti-Capitalist Muslim communards organized a dinner to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan. Other secular and atheist communards joined the ceremony and abstained from drinking. The Turkish Alcoholic Movement Party gave their support to the invitation.

The dissident unions and syndicalist organizations including DISK declared a countrywide lockout. The Turkish Airline workers organized a set of protests at various airports in order to draw attention to the lockout. Noam Chomsky joined the international support for the commune.

Thursday, Friday 6-7 June

The eco-communards set up the Gezi garden. They planted out vegetable and herb seedlings. The communards declared this day “ecological day.” Trees and flowers were planted at various spots of the park. Greenpeace activists began to cook food by concentrating heat from the sun. A collective Friday prayer event was organized by the Anti-Capitalist Muslim organization, and other communards lent their support.

The prime minister re-assured his determination for the project during his diplomatic visit in Tunisia. Right after his foreign trips, he began to rally his own party supporters starting from Istanbul’s Atatürk Airport. In his statements, he threw all the blame on an imaginary organization he called “interest lobby.”

Sunday, 8 June

The commune started broadcasting live, along with a printed publication called the Gezi Post. Taksim Area testified one of its most crowded days following the support came from other soccer fans in the city. The AKP officials declared two big party rallies to be held in Ankara and Istanbul. The city mayor issued a statement indicating that they would not build a shopping mall inside the park.
Tuesday, 11 June

In the early morning hours, police carried out an intervention to take the square under control. Clashes between police and the communards escalated despite the governor’s official statements guaranteeing the presence of the commune in the park. The intervention was justified on the grounds that the placards and flags of “marginal organizations” that were placed around Atatürk’s statute had to be removed. The prime minister made an unsubstantiated claim that a veiled woman with his baby was physically assaulted by a group of half-naked protesters in leather clothes.

Wednesday, 12 June

Talks that were carried out between the prime minister and the commune representatives relieved some of the tension resulting from the ongoing clashes around the park. The deputy prime minister issued a statement that the government would hold a nation-wide referendum for the restitution project. Following that, the prime minister issued a last warning for evacuating the area. Italian-German musician David Martello performed live over the entrance to the park. The communards demarcated the boundaries of the commune by gathering around Martello’s piano.

Thursday, 13 June

The mother communards formed a human chain as response to the governor’s warnings that urged to move “children” away from the park.

Friday, 14 June

Ethem Sarısülük died after a prolonged comma. The prime minister left the negotiation table after a quarrel with the DISK general secretary. State authorities started investigations for medical officers that treated wounded protesters participating in “outlawed” demonstrations.

Saturday, 15 June

Following the prime minister’s “national will” party rally in Ankara, the Gezi communards were forcefully evicted from the park in the evening.

Sunday, 16 June

Militarized security forces were deployed the first time in the Gezi protests. They blockaded all the roads and boulevards leading up to the park. Berkin Elvan, a 15-year old boy, was hit on the head by a tear-gas canister on his way to grocery store during the clashes.

Monday, 17 June

Following the rush hour, one dissident called “the standing man,” began to stage a mock protest that lasted 8 hours. Many other protesters joined him and stood staring at Atatürk Cultural Center by Gezi Park.
Tuesday, 18 June

The standing man protests spread to other cities in the country. 16 protesters were detained in Istanbul’s Taksim Square following the incident. The prime minister stated that police put up a “successful fight for democracy” against the “anarchist and terrorist groups.”

Wednesday, 19 June

The standing man protests continued across the country. The communards of Istanbul began to assemble in other urban parks of Istanbul.

Saturday, 22 June

Upon the call of Taksim Solidarity, thousands once again managed to gather in Taksim Square to commemorate the protesters who lost their lives for the commune. Police allowed a group of 9 protesters to leave flowers in the park. Clashes erupted when police attempted to evict the protesters from the square.

Sunday, 23 June

In an official report issued by the Ministry of Interior, approximately 2.5 million people participated in the events, which spread to 79 of Turkey’s 81 provinces.

Monday, 8 July

Gezi Park was reopened to the public. Protesters and activists poured into the park. Police used tear gas and plastic bullets to disperse the crowd. A group of 50 protesters including Taksim Solidarity representatives were detained.

Wednesday, 10 July

The ongoing clashes in other cities of the country resulted with a 19 year-old teenager’s death; Ali İsmail Korkmaz was beaten to death by unidentified civilians running away from police.

Saturday, 3 August

Police used pressurized water, tear gas and plastic bullets to disperse the crowds that gathered around Gezi Park.
Tuesday, 14 March 2014

Berkin Elvan died after remaining in coma for 269 days. Thousands marched in the central districts of Istanbul following his death.

Sources Used for the Timeline:

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Chapter 1  Introduction: A Transcontinental “Ecumenopolis”

On May 29, 2013, I was making my way to the Afro-Turkish community’s annual meeting, which was in Taksim, Istanbul’s central district. After I got off the bus, a large crowd of demonstrators gathering at the entrance of the Gezi Park caught my attention. Although I was running late, I decided to swing by the park to see what was happening.

News about the gathering already spread via social media and mainstream television. They were protesting in light of the municipality’s announcement that the state had authorized the restitution of an Ottoman artillery barracks, which had been torn down during the early years of the republic. It would serve as a façade for privatizing the area and constructing yet another new five-star hotel and shopping mall that would largely destroy the park. Although I was disturbed by the news, it was difficult for me to be surprised by the latest installment of the Justice and Development Party’s (AKP) urban renewal scheme, given the fact that the city was already a colossal construction site due to its neoliberal policies. Having lived in a city at the mercy of a regime of accumulation, I did not expect that the park could be saved. In fact, a couple of years ago, an entire neighborhood, Ayvansaray, in the city’s historical peninsula was gentrified in a fortnight as I watched in silence (Kolluoğlu 2011). This time, feelings of apathy and despair surfaced as I moved among the crowds gathering to defend the last green space left in the heart of the city.

Many of the individuals at Gezi Park were animal rights activists who were protesting with their pets in tow. That unexpected scene of barking dogs, demonstrators with cats perched on their shoulders who were standing amid the solemnly swaying branches of the trees led to a shared sense of belonging and rage with those present: here was a movement that might change the fate of not only Gezi Park but all of Istanbul. Here was a movement that reached beyond the existence of flawed human nature. In the next
two days, this small-scale urban resistance, initiated by a local grassroots organization, backed by environmentalist groups, evolved into a new social site: an occupation, an encampment, a city within a city, above all, a commune.

In retrospect, my own feelings of ambivalence, apathy, and hope were representative of my generation: no one would have imagined that a small encampment of environmentalists would form in Taksim’s Gezi Park, much less that their action would ignite a cycle of protests throughout the country. The Istanbul protests that developed from this initial grassroots eco-resistance, the so-called Gezi events or (#OccupyGezi), drew many different types of actors and individuals from different groups. The participants’ orientation spanned the cultural and political spectrum. They included not only comrades from the left (environmentalists, LGBTQ, Marxists, anarchists, feminists) but even the socially conservative, pro-government, and government allied ultra-nationalists. On June 1, 2013, this politically and culturally diverse dissident crowd created what I consider to be an example of 21st century commune: a compact, fully functioning social group that blossomed in the midst of continuously sprawling urban “ecumenopolis”.

1.1 A Transcontinental Metropolis in the Third World

The famous French urban planner Le Corbusier visited Istanbul in 1911. The natural beauty of the setting clearly mesmerized him and he contrasted it with the industrial-age landscape characteristic of urban North America. “If we compare New York with Istanbul, we may say one is cataclysm and the other a terrestrial paradise,” he said (Corbusier 2013, 64). One of the characteristics that proved so alluring to the modernist architect was undoubtedly the city’s unique landscape, a transcontinental cityscape divided by a narrow sea channel that connects the Black Sea to the Aegean. As an ancient port city stretching across the Asian and European continents, despite the ravages of the capitalist urbanization, the former capital of two Empires, Istanbul/Constantinople still today offers magnificent...

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1 For a visual account of Istanbul’s urbanization process in the 2000s, watch the documentary by Imren Azem, “Ecumenopolis: A City Without Limits,” 2012.
panoramic views of its waters, built environment and parks. Its seven hills provide a gorgeous backdrop, even as high-rises of neoliberalism loom over its hauntingly beautiful Bosphorus straits.

Among the metropolises of the neoliberalizing world, Istanbul can be considered an example of a post-Fordist city in the developing world, and a powerful one at that. The city’s metropolitan area is estimated to be the world’s 20th largest “urban agglomeration” with a population predicted to be over 16 million by 2030. These demographic statistics suggest that the city will not only remain the largest metropolitan area in Europe, but will become one of the biggest urban centers in the region of some 200 million Turkic speaking peoples stretching from the Aegean Sea to the Caspian Basin (Lovering and Türkmen 2011, 73). In short, it is projected to be one of the most enormous post-Fordist cities in the entire Eurasian continent. As result of structural, political and social processes of economic post-modernization, the city’s metropolitan space has continuously grown by absorbing the migration flows of provincial populations coming from the fringes of the country as well as from other urban centers. According to the 2000 consensus, 62 percent of the Istanbulites were born in a different province. The majority of the new Istanbulites came from the Northern belt and Kurdish provinces of the country (“TURKSTAT: Migration Statistics” 2000), the latter of which mostly sent dispossessed migrants who fled from the civil war that has been continuing in the region since the early 1980s (Yükseker 2009). In recent years, the city has also served as a transit destination, a conduit for a significant number of migrants and asylum seekers fleeing from the civil wars in west Africa (Brewer and Yükseker 2006) and the Arabic-speaking Middle East, many of whom seek entrance to western Europe.

Paralleling these demographic dynamics, which have received curiously little attention in the global literature on cities and planning (Lovering and Türkmen 2011, 74), is the physical growth of the city, the “Greater City,” (Büyük Şehir) and its roadways and bridges. The number of vehicles that course through the city increases daily; the number of cars that cross the straits daily has increased by 1,180 per

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cent since the construction of the second Bosphorus bridge in 1988 (Çalışkan 2016). With an area of 5.343 square kilometers, Istanbul’s urban sprawl is expected to absorb the last remaining green belt in the northern part of the city by 2040, following the construction of a third bridge and third airport (Akın, Sunar, and Berberoğlu 2015). This means not even a hectare of natural reserve area untouched by humans will be left in the near future. Despite these dramatic changes in the natural landscape, the city’s unique urban fabric has also emerged as a site that attracts local and global capital, particularly following the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. It has taken its place amongst other iconic cities of spectacular capitalism through both its ancient history and attractive landscape. In 2014, it became world’s fifth most visited city, welcoming over 12.50 million visitors (“MasterCard Global Destinations Cities Index” n.d.).

Today’s Istanbul is actually the product of what Çağlar Keyder refers to as the “new urban coalition” (the city government, real estate concerns as well as the bourgeoisie and its manifold manifestations) that took shape in the aftermath of political Islam’s overwhelming victory in the municipal elections of 1994 (Çağlar Keyder 2010). This coalition’s goals to privatize and “globalize” the city at the crossroads of Europe and Asia, which took on a more Islamic tone than it had following the AKP’s rise in the national elections in the early 2000s, were diametrically opposed to those of the Gezi Park communards. The communards regarded these policies and tourism contributing to the already uncontrolled and unsustainable “development” of their metropolis. In gathering at Taksim Square in the summer of 2013, they entered the urban contest to express their perspective about the present state of the city and its future. Ultimately, the Gezi Commune responded to the growing scale and impersonalization of the city’s urban fabric, to the AKP’s privatization schemes, as well as the wholesale restructuring of the urban plan that has overwhelmed public spaces with commercial buildings, shopping malls, and bumper-to-bumper traffic.
Gezi in this regard can be imagined as the embodiment of the collective yearning for a communal form of living in a 21st century global city and a cry against the destruction unleashed by two decades of neoliberal urban policies.

Figure 1. A bird’s eye view of the Gezi Commune


1.2 Transitory Protest Forms and Durable Political Transformations

The communards of Istanbul continued their occupation of the park and its surrounding area, known as Taksim Square, until the second week of June. The square itself became an emotional point of reference that drew visitors and communards from far and near. It is estimated that almost 16 percent of Istanbul’s population (15 million) temporarily visited or participated in the commune (Yörük and Yüksel 2014, 105). Although the physical occupation/habitation of Gezi Park ended on June 15 with the police’s brutal routing of the communards, protests continued with sporadic demonstrations, collective or individual acts of defiance and dissent until the commune’s first anniversary.
Following the fall of the commune in the late summer of 2013, criticisms over the ephemeral and apolitical nature of Gezi began to spread. Whether the “movement” was alive or dead or whether it had any significant impact came up as a topic of discussion among a cluster of graduate Turkish students over dinner in Toronto. At the time, I was still pondering the topic of my dissertation. A voice from the far side of the table interrupted my thoughts and directed a question to me: “What is your research on”? I responded that I was thinking of writing a dissertation on the events of the past summer at Gezi Park. They reacted in silence to my words, so I turned my head toward the curly haired blonde woman whom I knew from Istanbul, hoping she would break the silence. But I realized that her response was typical of Turkish Marxists who disdain any alternative political vision other than a “socialist revolution.” In their dogmatic vision of politics and society, anything that departs from essentialized class-based reading of political forces automatically suggests, at least according to them, that one is a “liberal,” or a “po-mo-ist,” a derogatory reference to adherents of postmodernism. Laughing at my face, she exclaimed: “Oh please! Gezi will be dead and gone by the time you finish up your thesis. It is just a conjectural event that will not make a big change. Also so many people will be studying it…” Little did she know that my experiences at the commune afforded me with a different perspective. Although the encampment had been disbanded, the spirit of Gezi continued to roar lively. I saw it as a laying of seeds that would eventually breed a new society in Turkey, a belief I still adhere to despite the very recent and similar political developments in Asia Minor.

Almost a century later, just like Napoléon III, the Turkish prime minister then, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who also came to power through democratic means by taking support of a coalition of provincial and urban bourgeois classes and by securing the political acceptance of the republicans in 2001, was quite willing to become the republic’s first elected president. There seemed to be no obstacle to his ultimate objective except the state’s institutional check and balance mechanisms. Even a majority of liberal leftist circles did not raise their voices against his plans to change the constitutional structure since they considered his party, the AKP, a midwife to a better democratic order that would open the path for
peace with the separatist Kurds who were crushed under the rigid étatist ideology. This moderate political climate that favored Erdoğan’s ideological and personal ambitions lasted until the eruption of the Gezi event, in turn revealing his pseudo-democratic orientation that was weaved into his general Islamist-conservative narrative. And it seems like a failed military coup attempt is now, as I am writing these introductory sentences, turning the Republic of Turkey into a police state in the same way and manner Bonaparte’s “prepared” coup of December 2 transformed the short-lived Second Republic into an dictatorial empire as Marx articulated in “18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte” (Marx 2008, 38).

Taking the support of the peasant populations, the Second Empire that terrorized the French proletariat for almost two decades was undoubtedly amongst the significant political incidents in Europe’s modern history, which shaped Marx’s intellectual development and philosophical approach. Marx was theoretically supportive of any sort of working-class uprising when the Commune erupted in France’s capital city in 1871. The Commune’s “own-working existence,” that mesmerized him, in fact, led him to recognize the fact that the state’s articulation with civil society was the dynamic through which the bourgeois classes imposed their authority over the proletariat. But at the same time the cycle of oppressive regimes and state formations since the revolution of 1789 forced him to move away from the history of theory to the history of class struggles, which in effect eventually convinced him to take a cautious stance against the Commune’s short-lived, experimental cross-class alliance (Ross 2015, 31-32,112,175-176). One of the very first reasons that convinced Marx to vindicate the bitter prescription for the dictatorship of the proletariat was, in fact, the failure of the Paris Commune. In 1881, a passage in a letter written to a Dutch Social Democrat reads: “this was merely the rising of a city under exceptional conditions, the majority of the Commune was in no wise socialist, nor could it be” (Marx, Engels, and Raddatz 1981, 369). The Commune of 1871 was undoubtedly a historical turning point, a day of reckoning that has molded the trajectory of the political spectrum and social theory of 200 hundred years to come by relegating Proudhon’s visions of radical politics to the fringes and favoring socialist revolutionary ideals and Toquevillian/liberal visions of society against them (Calhoun 2012, 228–48).
Marx regarded the Paris Commune as a failed revolutionary attempt that had to be buried deep into history. Nonetheless, it was imprinted into the global collective memory. The political imaginary and protest modality it has weaved into progressive politics resonates vividly across today’s revolutionary situations, which recently have manifested themselves in square and park movements across the world (Ross 2015, 15–16). Today’s Occupy Movements bear some similarities to the Commune of 1871, from their short duration to the way they abruptly rise, crystalize and disperse in global urban centers and often in capital cities. But they are also distinctly a 21st century phenomenon. I argue that they are the expression of intersectional affective alliances formed in defiance of oppressive state formations. Generally, they are ephemeral, volatile and may not result in immediate political and social change. They communards of the 21st century may not shake political systems or major institutions, which are consolidated as a result of complex and long-lasting processes. As well, their alternative political means may not possess the institutional capacity to change the nature of regime ecosystems for the common good overnight. And their visions of the future society may even be shadowed and absorbed by more conservative and nationalist groups, as evidenced in Kiev’s square in 2014. But like those of the 19th century, they nonetheless lay the foundation of new ways of conducting and conceptualizing politics, citizenship understandings and societal living forms.

If the Paris Commune inspired a multi-layered, cosmopolitan urban citizenship, the insurrection concomitantly resulted in its demise by challenging the primacy and domination of a growing nation-state structure, thereby clinching national citizenship and its supremacy over urbanity. Perhaps hardly a trace of social movements for right to the city appeared for more than almost a century, but the defeat of the Commune convinced political organizations to invest primarily in national as well as socialist mobilizations. At least, that was the common conviction that had emerged in social theory in the aftermath of the fall. In a similar vein, 21st century Communes are, I argue, remolding forms of mobilization and citizenship imaginations of the past century, but they differ by taking on crumbling nation-states.
The legacy of the commune of Istanbul just like the ones that leaped vertically in Paris, Tahrir, New York, Kiev has taken its place in the stream of global history as well. Just like its genesis and contemporary sisters, Gezi was undoubtedly a memorable opera; its tunes, melodies, songs, tirades, poems, costumes, graffiti, images, smells, trees, cats, dogs, sensations of tear gases and lemons, and the potpourri of protest forms performed by the communards throughout the first two weeks of the summer of 2013 in Taksim Gezi Park will be sources of inspiration for the freedom struggles that will come after it.

1.3 A 21ST Century “Repertoire”

This study employs interdisciplinary theoretical approaches to sketch the contours of the Gezi Commune. I consider the events of 2013 in Istanbul as a distinct iteration of a global wave of post-2000 social protest. Departing from political process theories, my analysis of the Istanbul encampment of 2013 primarily builds on Charles Tilly’s concept of “repertoire.” Tilly states: “Like their theatrical counterparts, repertoires of collective action designate not individual performances, but means of interaction among pairs or larger sets of actors.” He characterizes repertoires as “cultural creations” that “do not descend from abstract philosophy or take place as a result of political propaganda; but they emerge from struggle” (Tilly 1993, 263–65). A Tillean approach to social movement phenomena nonetheless tends to view repertoires not as an end in themselves, but rather as micro-cultural modulations “innovations” that form in parallel to the state-making and democratization dynamics occurring in the political eco-system he calls “regime space” (Tilly and Tarrow 2015; Tilly 2010, 2008, 2005a, 1978).

The theoretical approach I am deriving from such political process approaches is salvaging the concept from the hegemony of institutional state politics and the limited scope of resource-based explanations of mobilization processes. I am nonetheless utilizing the metaphoric and temporal explanatory power of the concept. In this purified framework, repertoire per se comes forward as repetitive protest tactics, strategies, and patterns that come out of collectively or individually produced cultural modalities and loosely scripted performances, which I associate with “affect.” Expressed
differently, I am re-conceptualizing repertoire as a shared “resonant experience” that spontaneously emerges in the relations among protest actors, space of action and protest action itself against a common problematic, which enables actors themselves “to see the world in a different light” (McDonnell, Bail, and Tavory 2017). In this way, this study is also a critical ontological approach to rationalist perspectives on human agency through a re-imagination of social protest as affective, resonant, cultural resistance praxis not entirely dependent on the projections and calculations made with respect to structural and political constraints/opportunities.

By retrieving repertoire from the domain of rationality and macro-politics, I am framing the site of social protest form as metropolis, both as a historical and global phenomenon reflected and refracted through the collective memory and emotions of its inhabitants, as well as through representational spaces that intersect with capitalist urbanization processes, sights and sounds of globalized social and commercial media circuits and cultural matrixes. I am, in other words, locating repertoire within the regime of over-accumulation that rises upon shared, collective social consciousness as well as capitalist urbanization processes, which permeates through symbolically significant public spaces and natural sites of both global and historical cities. Thus, I have chosen Gezi to examine Istanbul’s Turkish Summer not only as the consequence of the changing intensity of protest over inequality and the political oppression/opportunity that occurs within the borders of a political ecosystem (if framed within the approach of an orthodox Tillean), but also as an example of a specific type of repertoire that manifests itself in the metropolis as a result of the reconfiguration of city space and representational meanings attached to the spaces.

Locating repertoire in the domain of metropolis, affects and representations inspired me to coin the literal concept of “commune repertoire.” Building on Craig Calhoun’s historiographical critique of social movement phenomenon, in the terminological terrains of social movement theories, my interpretation of a commune repertoire corresponds to the emergence of alliances formed in complex emotive/affective domains by dissident segments of society—including individual subjectivities and
collectivities—that are gradually pushed out of public spheres and regime spaces of hegemonic formations through various political, economical, cultural and symbolic means (Calhoun 2012, 8–10). Thus commune repertoire may be thought of as a potpourri of repertoires, or a composite repertoire through which previously used social protest forms, tactics and strategies made by claim makers fuse into collective urban resistance praxis. The power of commune repertoire, I argue, resides not necessarily in the political and social gains it makes in the regime space, but in its ability symbolically, aesthetically, ethically and normatively to call out the global systemic formation as well as local power holders by creating affective ties/relations amongst its ideologically and sociologically diverse participants, thereby unifying different and even at some points clashing local political views under an alternative and utopian vision of a world/city imaginary. By gathering all the subaltern segments and groups of society/city dwellers, the commune repertoire addresses a wide range of issues stretching from personal dignity, universal rights, equality for sexually, socially, politically, ethnically, and culturally oppressed subjectivities to environmental issues and sustainable societal living forms in the metropolis. Concomitantly, it brings together the various protest repertoires, as I have indicated above.

As an analytical category, commune repertoire enables us to draw parallels with the paradigmatic uprising of Paris in 1871 as well as communitarian societal forms that are founded upon the moral-economic principles of the late 18th and early 19th centuries. It points to the intersectional systems of political and economic injustices that have produced the contemporary revolutionary situations of the last two decades or what I imagine as the 21st century communes. Thus the commune repertoire is projecting a multi-vectored approach onto the pool of global protest repertoire, thereby opening the doors to historical as well as contemporary comparative studies as its primary contribution to the social movement literature (Calhoun 2012, 315).³ Such a telescopic approach to global history provides us with a lens to

³ Despite the fact that 21st century communes forming under the conditions of late capitalism and communal/traditional ways of living as local resistance movements defending visions of moral economy as a response to the nascent forms of capitalism in the late 18th century differentiate in terms of the structural conditions that produce them, such a historical comparative approach, as Craig Calhoun puts it, “has a value.”
observe cycles of repertoires in a broader temporal scope in the metropolis, and to make a theoretical
collection to the historiographical critiques of social movements that strive to place “roots of radical
politics,” on a new theoretical and ontological footing (Calhoun 2012). In doing so, it also provides a new
interpretation of recent efforts to open up a dialogue between the contemporary Anarchist critiques of
politics, urban geography and mainstream structural explanations of social movement phenomenon.
Clearly, the branches of social movement literature that have developed are disconnected from one
another.

In brief, through the multifaceted theoretical framework used to map out the Gezi Commune, I
am combining historical and sociological perspectives, humanist and structural approaches to urban
gerography, communitarian visions of revolutionarily politics and the emerging literature on affect. Such a
multi-legged theoretical formulation that foregrounds commune as a distinctive form of protest repertoire
invites two significant rhetorics: what are the contours or defining features of social movements in the
new millennium? And precisely when have communes formed as a common social protest medium under
the conditions of the information age?

Unlike the movements of late-capitalism, in the post-2000 protest panorama we see short-term
collective engagements, or collective actions of politically and culturally heterogeneous dissident crowds
with no leadership and horizontally mobilized through new communication means. As such, they react
immediately to morally shocking events that resonate across affective domains. Diverse participants in the
next-generation of social movements are more concerned with drawing symbolic attention to social and
political injustices instead of attempting to change the structural factors that produce them. In new
millennium movements, occupation of public spaces is the primary mode of action, especially after the
2008 financial crises and the Arab Spring. The practice of occupation itself provides dissident multitudes
with a shared physical site and common opposition rhetoric by identifying the public with the common
people instead of the state (Calhoun 2013). By establishing temporary encampments and collective
societal forms as alternatives to the ones regulated and mediated by the state, social movements in the
information age reflect communitarian characteristics that are reminiscent of craft and guild communities, which emerged in light of the alienating effects of early capitalism. Put simply, they are more concerned with forming cross-cultural, cross-social alliances and self-nurturing social enclaves on a non-institutional ground, compared with realpolitik. In this sense, it is not an oversimplification to state that one of the defining features of post-2000 social movements that comes to the fore is their “anarchistic” nature (Day, Richard J.F. 2011), which in effect seems to render them “eventful protests” as, Donatella della Porta writes (Della Porta 2011). As a protest strategy, “urban occupation,” which I associate with the embryonic phase of commune repertoire, undoubtedly did not spring into existence spontaneously. There was a global wave of protests that prepared the ground it rose upon before it spread across the world (Calhoun 2013, 3).

Before the harsh political climate following the September 11 attacks, activists in Seattle and Washington pursued direct action-oriented strategies to draw public attention to the inequities created by the process of globalization in lieu of pursuing long-term social and political agendas. Two years later, at the World Social Forum’s first meeting in Brazil, global activists including representatives from of the Kurdish movement in Turkey, and Zapatistas from Chiapas, Mexico who had been building small pockets of resistances inside the nation-state structure, met together to add new momentum to the anti-globalization movement. Voices raised in the Americas have reverberated across Continental Europe as well. In 2001, protesters continued to seek immediate results over long-term social and political gains during the World Economic Forum in Zurich and the 27th G8 summit, which was held in Genoa, Italy. This incident of cross-border collective action attempts resulted in the death of an anti-globalization activist; Carlo Giuliani was shot dead by an Italian gendarme.

The momentum gained in the anti-globalization protests permeated through more micro-scale local/national protest incidents such as the railway blockade protest in Val Di Susa, Italy in 2006 (Della Porta 2011, 268–74) and the cycle of uprisings that broke out in Greece following the murder of 15-year old Alexandros Grigoropoulos by police in 2008. In all of these incidents, the unled crowds, horizontally
mobilized through new communication means, reacted to morally shocking events that resonated across affective domains. By doing so, they both symbolically and practically drew attention to social and political injustices instead of attempting to change them. In 2009, the sparks of “Greek Fire” along with its dramatic effects jumped across Asia Minor; the election protests in Iran lasted more than seven months following the police murder of another young civilian, a student of philosophy, Neda Agha-Soltan. Her name and face ricocheted around the world as millions viewed her death online to the dismay of the Islamic Republic’s authorities.

In the early 2010s, the sparks of long-running insurrections in Greece and Iran ignited in the Maghreb region. Mohamed Bouazizi, another victim of police abuse in Tunisia, set himself on fire to protest the confiscation of his wares. This subaltern’s self-immolation sparked waves of protests in political geography reaching from the Maghreb to the Levant, effectively penetrating through the “Arab” world and across a political geography of authoritarian regimes that were the products of post-colonial, pro-Western administrations and the Cold War politics. The so-called “Arab Spring” wove these different threads of protests into a new and distinct form not only in the self-immolation of many others but most enduringly in Tahrir Square, where in 2011 crowds made up of mostly millennials staged a successful occupation of a public space. Such an encampment may have been reminiscent of Tiananmen Square in 1989, but it is most closely an analogue of the Paris Commune of 1871.

While the protests in the Arab world affected young people elsewhere, it was the Commune of Tahrir that offered a new model well beyond the Middle East. A new form of global solidarity followed this cross-cultural and cross-class alliance, which presented a self-sustaining and self-governing societal form as an alternative to post-colonial authoritarian state. Protesters from Cairo sent in orders of pizza to support the communards of Zuccotti Park in lower Manhattan in September 2011. Already being familiar with this social protest form in a historical sense, London, Madrid and other major European capitals have simultaneously attempted to follow in Cairo’s footsteps. The cases of Independence Square in Kiev initially occupied by a cluster of protesters coming from different sociopolitical traditions and small-scale
temporary encampments formed by the students demanding democratic representation in the streets of Hong Kong in 2014 show us that the praxis of liberating/holding public space as protest form seem to be diffusing across the world regardless of the idiosyncrasies of regime ecosystems. Thus, the commune, or Temporary Autonomous Zones, as Hakim Bey poetically expresses it (Bey 2003), as a protest strategy directed against the power holders as well as the systemic formation itself is coming to the front among other strategies of 21st-century protest movements. Another question the post-2000 social protest panorama raises is why parks and squares do emerge as the central sites of dissident politics. A specific answer to this question requires an archeological dig into the historical, cultural, social and political specificities that frame the significance of such public gathering places and urban sites, or “representational spaces” as Henri Lefebvre defines them (Lefebvre 1992, 39–46).

1.4 “Taksim Square:” Crossroads of Empire and the Nation-State

As Gülsün Karamustafa masterfully captures in her film installation, “Taksim Square,” the site of the Gezi commune is a particular public space to which Turkish citizens attach complex and dense historical associations. Taksim’s history furnishes a window on a century of protests, pogroms, social upheavals, and repeated cycles of military interventions (Karamustafa 2005). Along with the Christian Pera Rue line, which became İstiklal (Independence) Avenue that runs from what was once the largely Christian and Jewish neighborhood of Beyoğlu to the square, the Taksim area embodies what Henri Lefebvre refers to as a “lived space” (Lefebvre 1992, 362). It is a site in which collective memories, spatial social practices, architectural relics, of both clashing and intertwining nationhood, publicity and urban imaginations that express contemporary political discourses and quotidian cultural modalities of today’s Istanbul as well as modern Turkey are stored or at other points forcibly erased.

Despite all the efforts to conceal the complex history that lies behind it, the greater Taksim area still retains its cultural distinctiveness by offering glimpses into the past of the heart of the former capital of multi-religious and multi ethnic empires that had been abandoned by the Turkish founding elites in the aftermath of the First World War. In La Turquie Kemaliste, a quarterly series of propaganda, one article,
which aimed at presenting the republican revolutions to the world, exemplifies this alienation policy implemented for Istanbul by the new elites. In this article, visitors coming from Europe to the city were urged to take "the first train to [the capital city of] Ankara" to get the real sense of the new "dazzling" republic. The text, articulated in a bewildering way as if Istanbul was a foreign city, states that one spending time in the former capital would most likely eat “Russian food,” buy newspapers from a “Greek porter” and be guided by an “Armenian courier.”

By the turn of the 20th century, a set of regional and systemic wars gradually and dramatically altered this cosmopolitan demographic fabric. In 1885, non-Muslim dwellers constituted 56 percent of the city population. By 1927, the social distribution over the urban space shifted in favor of the Turkic and Muslim inhabitants (Gül 2009, 88,89), as a result of the catastrophes that split the Balkans and Caucasia. The last remaining Jewish and Orthodox Christian communities survived in the enclave of İstiklal Avenue agglomerating around Beyoğlu up until the creation of Israel and the Greek Pogrom of 1955 (Toktaş 2008). The social and cultural void left after the exodus of the non-Muslim dwellers set in motion the transformations in spatial and architectural practices as well as representational meanings attached to them over the following years in the area surrounding Gezi Park, as well as in Istanbul in general.

Gezi Park at the tip of Taksim may be viewed as an epitome of these changes in the use of city space and built environment that came along with the imposition of a Rousseauian public sphere understanding over the society in the new Turkish Republic of the 1920s. The notion of homogenized, Western style, profane, distilled, bourgeois public space—imagined as an alternative to the Ottoman Empire’s ambiguous ones that were shaped around ethnic and religious fault lines—where the new citizens would gather, mingle with one another and perform daily life activities under the control of the state, required new architectural reconfigurations and symbolic spaces in the cities of the crystallizing republic in Asia Minor. This panoptican-like urban planning mindset first manifested itself in the new
capital not very long before it did in Istanbul. Ankara,\(^4\) founded in 1923 near a remote Anatolian town, reflects, spatially, the changing state tradition from the Ottoman monarchy to the Turkish republicanism. Big boulevards and long roads making surveillance easier along with gigantic, cubic monumental buildings demonstrating the so-called potency and sublimity of “Turkishness,” which was assumed to be embedded in mythical spatiotemporal cultural modulations oscillating between the so-called Occident’s white, secular modernity and Central Asia’s uncontaminated homogenous ethnicity, all carry traces of the desired corporatist nation-state and its public life imagined in an organic way. The rise of the regimes displaying fascistic and authoritarian inclinations on the southern shores of Europe in the inter-war period convinced the ruling elites to apply this idealized, distilled notion of homogenous publicity all over Asia Minor.

Following the efforts to replicate a combat-ready society akin to Italy and Germany in the midst of Anatolia, the founding republican cadres, made up of a cluster of army officers coming from Macedonia and romantic ideologues that fled from the Caucuses due to the oppression by Tsarist Russia, also attempted to remold Istanbul’s urban space in accordance with Rousseauian public sphere logic. In 1927, French urban planner Henri Prost was directly appointed by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who served as the first president of the republic after leading a successful independence movement in the early 1920s, to veil the chaotic Ottoman-Byzantium cosmopolitanism in the city. As the chief city planner, he remained in his post until 1950, exceeding the length of the government that put him in charge.

Gezi Park, which was first named as İnönü Gezisi (promenade) after Atatürk’s successor, was integral to his master plan designed for the whole city. It involved the razing of a 16\(^{th}\) century Armenian cemetery as well as the Ottoman artillery barracks in Taksim Area. The ruling elite accepted his recommendation to construct the promenade along with a now shuttered-opera house on the site. His objective, as it was directed by the state, was to enlarge the space of “the square,” which encompassed the war monument placed by an Italian urban planner a couple of years before him. His ultimate aim, as he

\(^4\) Against the idealization of Ankara with respect to “Turkishness,” ironically the name of the city etymologically originates from Greek word “anchor.”
puts it, was to “direct the ancient capital towards the future” (Gül 2009, 106). Rerouting the historical trajectory of the place as well as Istanbul in general meant erasing the political relics and social texture that had been inherited from the empire. Thus, there was no room for any kind of mass political demonstration, nor quotidian life practices not reflecting the laic (French secular), obedient bourgeois citizenship imagination in the square that Prost cut to fit over the city. A new square was built for public ceremonies and national celebrations in the old, historical peninsula (Baykan and Hatuka 2010, 53–58).

Figure 2. Taksim Promenade 1944

Despite the French urban planner’s exhaustive efforts in carrying the urban spatiality into the temporality of the Enlightenment, it was clear that eliminating the mystical architectural atmosphere and social fabric in the city and in Taksim was difficult to accomplish, given the political imaginaries and collective memories that had been carved into the place itself. Prost, in fact, was appointed to send one of these symbolically significant political incidents off into the depths of history. The uprising known as the 31 March incident occurred around the artillery barrack, also known as the Topçu Kışlası; he razed it to the ground. In this contentious political episode of the empire, the constitutionalist army officers from Salonika sowed the seeds of the upcoming republican revolution by purging the military cadres of rebellious, regressive officers and violently suppressing crowds demanding a monarchy based on Sharia law in 1909. The first Labor Day was celebrated on the site three years after this mutiny, which put the constitutional frame of 1876 back into effect by restricting the absolutist Ottoman Sultanate.

In fact, the square was not the only site of the first, primitive forms of class-consciousness embodied in an empire that was crumbling at the periphery. Prior to the first May 1 demonstration near the barrack, a wave of gradually forming labor movements also manifested themselves in other Ottoman industrialized port cities such as Salonika, Alexandria, Beirut. They even reached out as far as to their hinterlands like Skopje, Macedonia (Quataert and Zürcher 1995; Çağlar Keyder, Özveren, and Quataert 1993). Parallel to the first sparks of worker’s resistance momentum, the reverberations of nationalist movements across the multi-ethnic and multi-religious empire (especially its drastic implications in the Balkans) prepared the ground for a set of interregional wars, which eventually convinced the constitutionalist army officers along with their organic intellectuals to embrace Turkish nationalism as a panacea for the dissolution process during the World War I. The declaration of the Republic in Ankara in that sense meant the victory of Turkish nationalism against the other alternative competing political ideologies—cosmopolitan Ottomanism and Pan-Islamism—as the sole dominant ideology. Despite its secular character, the new nationalist regime space was paradoxically built on the ethnically homogenous loyal Muslim bourgeois identity in terms of state-class relations (Çağlar Keyder 1987, 60–67).
Unlike the “rebellious” and “unreliable,” Armenians and Greeks of Anatolia, the Muslim bourgeois were assumed to be “obedient” because the new ruling elites believed that the new hegemonic texture, which was built on the mythic history of Central Asian lands enhancing the pride of the nation and the Rousseauian citizenship imagination, sufficed to bind the new subjects to their young republic and keep them under control. This new national identity formulation, in other words, was designed as a buffer zone against the “traitor” and “rebellious” non-Muslim craftsmen, labors, merchants, the Levantine bankers and tradesmen - as well as other antagonized Muslim communities such as the separatist Kurdish movement, which had been using religious discourse to legitimize its cause back then, as seen in the Sheik Said Rebellion in 1925. Unlike other exemplary ones that emerged in the Western World, the first constitution of the republic, as a result, arose as a founding social contract that lacked the universal, inclusive liberal principles of the 18th century (Kasaba 1997, 27).

The founding constitution of Turkey was adopted in the midst of the so-called independence war fought against the Greek armies that were backed by the British Empire. The constitutional structure that took shape in the midst of a civil war triggered by an imperialist power, therefore, evolved toward the social contract of the nation-state of the 1930s that was idealized as an organic entity gathering around the leader, Atatürk. The fabric of nationhood, I argue, was inspired by El Duce Mussolini’s Italy, which was then the rising regional power in the Mediterranean Hub. Ironically, although the ultimate objective of the republican revolution was to wipe out all the legitimate governing apparatuses of the Ottoman monarchy, such a nation-state configuration paradoxically left the paternalistic state tradition untouched. Thus the sultan’s governmentality, of which ruling legitimacy was driven from the claim to be the “shadow” of God in the quotidian world in a literal sense, was traded within for Atatürk’s persona as the blue-eyed, blonde, enlightened “father” of the Turks.

Such a political culture that tied ethnic roots to the mythical lands in Central Asia and framed the nation as a homogenized entity mobilized around the leader in a collective way led to racist ascriptions of ethnic nationalism as well as discourses and practices on anthropological/scientific grounds (Maksudyan
The corporatist characteristics and exclusionary elements of the ethno-nationalism that incarnated in the midst of the inter-war political climate on the far shores of Southern Europe were the harbingers of a belated social catastrophe. One of the very last relics of the racist mindset that devastated Continental Europe manifested itself around Taksim Square. The Greek pogrom in the conservative Democratic Party (DP) era, which replaced the founding of the Republican People’s Party (CHP) in the 1950s, was carved into the memory of square as one of the most shameful incidents to have ever taken place in Asia Minor’s history.

Undoubtedly, Gezi Park and the greater Taksim area were not the only public spaces testifying to such contentious episodes and scenes in Turkey’s modern history. The DP’s three successive, corrupt populist one-party governments came to an end following a student opposition that secretly mobilized and gathered in another significant public space of modern Turkey, Güven Park in Ankara. This clandestine form of protest, which was also backed by the young army officers, led to a set of economic crises in the late 1950s. Not even the Marshall aid that was pouring into Southern Europe—which was imagined as a buffer zone against the so-called red threat—and the global economic climate of the Korean war that favored grain-exporting countries like Turkey were enough to prevent the political crises that came along with the gradually declining economic conditions, which led to the first coup d’état in Asia Minor. The 1960 military intervention aimed to appease the atomized young and educated segments of society by introducing a new constitution, thereby opening enough social and political space for the labor movements and syndicalist organizations that were suffocated during the authoritarian one-party governments to re-proliferate in the developmentalist era. Thanks to new extended social rights and with burgeoning state-owned enterprises and factories that attracted migrants from periphery to urban centers, and the Cold War détente that lessened the intensity of the US hegemony over the developing world, Istanbul once again witnessed a couple of May 1 celebrations starting from the mid-1970s.

In 1977, this short-lived working class-based momentum ended dramatically when unidentified right-wing forces opened fire on a crowd of 500,000 people in the square, an incident that is remembered...
as the “bloody Taksim massacre” in the collective memory of the left. Right after the CHP’s big electoral campaign, which gathered the counter-hegemonic movements and syndicalist formations in the site a couple of weeks after the massacre for the last time, the area was closed to all sorts of political demonstrations following another coup in Asia Minor, the short-breathed junta regime of 1980 that cleared the way for economic post-modernization in Asia Minor.

1.5 Urban Cultural Movements and “Islamopolis” in a Belated Neoliberalizing Milieu

The neoliberal processes Turkey had gone through in the early 1980s may be comparable to the cases in Chile and Argentina, other experiments of the Chicago School in South America. The 1980 military coup rendered the rise of neoliberalism and the Islamic bourgeois impossible by purging the political ecosystem of the counter-hegemonic working class actors and organizations, thereby opening the path for a rapidly atomizing and fragmenting Turkish society. Concomitantly, the short-term coup administration led to the first neoliberal government, which assured the support of a substantial portion of the voters—paradoxically of the provincial segments of society that were left more vulnerable to the shock prescriptions—through its populist appeal spiced with moral-conservatism and economic promises. The gradual dissolution process of the working class movement’s dissident political and social actors and organizations into cultural individual and collective subjectivities of post-Fordism incarnated in Taksim Area. Belated cultural movements of Asia Minor that were suffocated by the rigid Marxist and national leftist agendas peculiar to third world countries in the midst of Cold War politics in other words, found enough breathing space to project themselves over the representational spaces of Istanbul.

Almost a decade after the coup, one of the very first protest stages came from the LGBTQ community in the form of a hunger strike in Gezi Park. In this collective protest performance, Turkish

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5 Shock therapy prescriptions were applied long before in the Chilean Case. The failure of Milton Friedman’s prescriptions in South America, in fact, sped up the flow of credits from the WTO and the World Bank to Turkey since they were looking for a so-called success story after the disappointment in Chile.
gays and transgender and sex workers aimed to draw attention to the oppression and discrimination they had been through since the junta administration. The hunger-strike protest that lasted almost ten days reached a global audience and even managed to bring a famous exiled transgender popular cultural figure back to the country (Güneş 2016). The first official mass demonstration that bypassed the so-called “Taksim ban” was in fact organized by the third wave feminist organizations that changed the spatiality of the protest action. Approximately 2500 women marched in Kadıköy, followed by another politicized neighborhood in 1987 in the Asian part of the city, under the sentiment “solidarity against the beating,” after the harsh political climate of the coup (Kerestecioğlu 2004, 123). These simmering in the sexually dissident movements evolved toward the first green party of the country that succeeded in turning the ecological movement of the 1970s into a political force in the 1980s, thereby unifying all the cultural movements under its umbrella (Bora 1989).

New cultural social movements were undoubtedly not the only actors that channeled their voices through various protest forms in the belated neoliberal milieu of Istanbul. Following the rise of identity politics and the intensifying clashes between the Turkish Army and Kurdistan Worker’s Party (PKK) in the eastern regions of the country, elders and mothers of the prisoner Kurds began to stage long lasting, periodic sit-in protests on İstiklal Avenue starting from the mid 1990s to draw the public’s attention to cases of torture and missing political prisoners. This dramatic example of social protest, also known as the “Saturday Mothers,” left its traces on Turkish political culture and in the memories of Taksim as well, and it is still continuing in the 2010s. Police forces even dared to assault a group of elder mothers that showed their support for the commune during the Gezi protests.

Socio-economic and political processes of the post-Fordist regime of accumulation reflected themselves over Istanbul’s urban space and demographic fabric as well. Structural transformations in the field of agriculture in tandem with the escalating civil war in the Kurdistan region of the country resulted in a second wave of migration from the periphery to the cities including Istanbul in the late 1980s (Çağlar Keyder and Yenal 2011; Yükseker 2009), following the first wave that was triggered by the agricultural
mechanization in the 1950s. The city’s population in the 1970s increased from roughly 3 million to 7.5 million by the 1990s, making it not only one of the biggest metropolitan areas in the country but in all of Europe as well (OECD 2008, 35–40). Placing the city’s demographic motion in a broader time span gives a better idea about the urban agglomeration that is taking shape in the third world spatiality. By 2000, Istanbul’s population reached over 15 million from its post-Ottoman Empire low of 700,000 (Lovering and Türkmen 2011, 73) as a result of the three big demographic transformations that have occurred since the exodus of the non-Muslim communities.

The unregulated, export-led economic model also meant the commodification of squatter settlements, which were left from the populist housing policies of the developmentalist era, and the marketing of the city’s authentic landscape and history in the vitrines of the rapidly growing global financial economy. In spectacular capitalism, historically and aesthetically distinctive urban spatiality, such as that of Istanbul, was valorized and arose as an economic magnet not only for attracting global capital searching for lucrative zones to direct investments, but also for the new middle classes of post-modernism that became more inclined to express and mark their identities through particular consumption habits and lifestyles, which take shape around the gentrified sites’ global cities. Accompanied by the rise of identity politics in the political realm, the urban spatiality in the Turkish experience - especially the Taksim Area with its unique historical texture - emerged as both a cultural “contention” and “negotiation” ground between the declining Turkish secularist ideology and the gradually neoliberalizing political Islamic sub-state actors in the late 1980s and 1990s, along with their different approaches to the official national history (Bartu 1999).

Encouraged by the notion of a touristic city to be “sold” on the global market and the emergence of a capitalist urban coalition finding out the economic potential of the squatter settlements, the liberal and conservative mayors of Istanbul, including the current president Erdoğan, built big boulevards along the historical peninsula, the Golden Horn and the Bosphorus by changing and redefining the urban centrality through the extended economic and administrative powers given to the municipalities. Tarlabası
Boulevard intersecting Gezi Park and cutting through the old Greek neighborhood that once provided cheap housing for the first and second wave of migrants in post-1950 Turkey is an epitome of such big urban restructuring plans. High rises popping up in the financial district, dozens of shopping malls reflecting the ethos of spectacular capitalism and luxury residential compounds built for the emerging yuppie and middle classes also changed the face of the city. Massive infrastructural transformations and urban restructuring projects involving large-scale investments like that of Tarlabasi accompanied this dynamism in the real-estate market in other locations in the following years (Çağlar Keyder 1999).

In the mid 1990s, as a result of all the improvements in infrastructure and new urban imaginations, Taksim and its surrounding neighborhoods emerged as a site of attraction that drew to itself tourists and global traders coming from both oil-rich Arab, liberalizing Eastern block countries and the European Union (EU), which signed a customs union agreement with Turkey en route to a full membership in 1995. Paralleling to the country’s political and economic subsumption under the global capital, some of the neighborhoods in areas such as Galata and Cihangir arose as residential ghettos and entertainment spaces for the newly crystalizing middle classes, counter culture-groups and dissident subjectivities, which became more inclined toward aspiring and marking their distinctive lifestyles through various cultural means and praxes under the conditions of economic post-modernization (Yücesoy 2008). Benefiting from free higher education opportunities in the country, the new educated middle classes transformed the ancient, touristic İstiklal Street and its surrounding residential sites into a web of aestheticized cultural resistance spaces through which the voices, desires, and imaginations of the alternative lifestyles echoed throughout the whole neoliberalizing city. Paradoxically, as some neighborhoods in the central districts began to reflect the characteristics of a global city, others that provided cheap housing to the migrant Istanbulites on the fringes were deprived of basic infrastructure, a condition that revealed Istanbul as a city that was stuck somewhere between the global and local in the 1990s (Çağlar Keyder 1999).
As the legal and structural obstacles to privatization regulations were entirely removed in the early 2000s, the last remaining slums and squatter areas left from the developmentalist era located on the fringes of the city were gradually absorbed into the sprawling urbanization process, a whirlpool that has gradually become more unbearable and potent since the AKP governments (Lovering and Türkmen 2011; Kuyucu and Ünsal 2010). It not would be entirely wrong to metaphorically describe Istanbul as a city caught up in the vortex of hyper-capitalism as I indicated above. In a rapidly and constantly sprawling and growing metropolitan area, the contention and negotiation occurring over Taksim’s ancient historical spatiality modulated into a city-wide cultural clash that began to take place not just at the historical/symbolic and local administrative level, but also on a practical and political ground as well starting since the early 2000s. The actors of this new form of urban battle were the new conservative middle classes blending consumption praxes with Islamic motifs and the ossifying dissident subjectivities of postmodernity. As the AKP’s hegemony reached threatening levels in the mid 2000s in the political realm and its conservative social base internalized the cultural opportunities and economic benefits of late capitalism, Istanbul’s whole urban spatiality has crystalized as a cultural battleground between the Islamic urbanity and the cross-cultural and cross-social opposition way of life by incorporating the valorized/gentrified/commoditized residential areas, shrinking public spaces and natural sites.

In 2007, following the assassination of Armenian journalist Hrant Dink by a group of fascistic youths with links to the state intelligence office, the Taksim Area witnessed another significant protest. It is fair to state that Dink’s assassination led to one of the biggest anti-racist rallies that ever took place in the history of the Mediterranean hub. On the day of the murder, right after the moral shock it created, a large crowd of protesters gathered right beside the spot of the crime scene and spontaneously began shouting “We are all Armenians, We are all Hrant,” thereby modulating the initial shock into a set of complex emotions that instantly constructed a symbolic collective identity. Certainly, not all of the protesters marching in the memory of Dink were ethnically Armenian. The slogan not only signaled the symbolic cultural resistance against the imposition of an Islamized way of life in an urban setting, but
also was the harbinger of the spontaneous, intersectional affective mobilization forms that were framed around the dynamics of the capitalist urbanization processes and the historical, moral and cultural allegations made of the public sphere. The cortège of mourners that formed for Dink, in other words, was the expression of the rise of an democratic, “cosmopolitan” urban coalition against what Ariel Salzmann characterizes as “Islamopolis,” a post-modern, distorted imagination of the Ottoman urban life (Demirhisar 2014, 105–6; Salzmann 2012, 70,86).
The vicious assassination of the patriotic Armenian journalist marked the beginning of a new phase in the Islamic-neoliberal systemic formation in the Turkish experience as well. In the early 2000s, the AKP came to power with the promise of a full EU membership and initiating of the so-called peace process with the outlawed Kurdish separatist movement of which the lead figure, Abdullah Öcalan, was captured abroad by the Turkish intelligence officers in 1999 with the help of the CIA. The notion of a moderate, local Islamic bourgeoisie merging with global capital and the so-called liberal-democratic principles was also appealing to the West, especially to the Obama administration, which was seeking
exemplary cases of democracy in the Middle East against increasing domestic Islamophobia and continuing failures of foreign policy in Iraq and Afghanistan then. In the Turkish liberal circles, the fusion of Islamic cultural values and liberal market principles was also welcomed as herald of and midwife for a truly democratic order against the rigid, étatist republican policies and discourses. Following the crash of Asian markets and set of financial crises that shook the Latin American countries in the southern hemisphere, Erdoğan’s one party government gained substantial support of not only the global and local liberal circles, but also of the burgeoning conservative and the provincial classes through the post-Washington socio-economical climate that introduced a strong, facilitator state role in lieu of free-floating markets. The 10 percent election threshold in the election system undoubtedly played into the hands of the AKP by carrying the Turkish secularists as the only opposition party, which actually prepared much of institutional and legal framework for the accelerated privatization processes in the early 2000s. The Turkish secularists’ “strong economy program,” in other words, laid down the legal and institutional framework for the AKP to maintain populist economic policies through privatization of state-led enterprises and public lands, and booming construction sector in the growing cities. Global capital that directed the flow of hot money from the weakening economic zone in Europe to Asia Minor undoubtedly gave the neoliberal Islamic government (Öniş and Şenses 2009, 4) the opportunity to sell the delusion of the so-called growing economy.

In the absence of an effective opposition party that would channel the voices of young, unemployed and atomized generations of Asia Minor, a new form of dissidence praxis against the two-legged hegemonic formation at the parliament began to take shape in public spaces and university campuses. The cosmopolitan urban coalition that made a short-breathed vertical leap in Dink’s cortège, in other words, began to mobilize horizontally and attempted to create new protest repertoires against the crushing political agglomeration in the parliament. In the winter of 2012, Erdoğan’s visit to the Middle Eastern Technical University (METU)—known for its Marxist-leftist culture—for the inauguration of first Turkish space satellite resulted in fierce clashes between students and police forces. The
reverberations of this conflict not only set in motion a countrywide student opposition movement across other campuses, but also led to an experimental protest in the capital city. A couple of weeks before the Gezi protests erupted, Ankara dwellers staged a “kiss of a love protest,” in subway stations in response to an announcement urging passengers to act “morally” in public spaces (Sofos 2014, 138).

As the belated modern milieus such as that of Turkey are left exposed to the processes of “time-space compressions,” individual or collective acts of defiance become part of the daily political routine along with social amnesia, which constantly erases collective action praxes from collective memory to open up space for others to fill in afterwards. The experimental collective protest performance in the subways of the capital city and the student opposition movement spreading across the country from there were undoubtedly not the only point of ruptures that preceded the Gezi commune in this sense. In 2011, before the AKP’s pseudo-democratic rhetoric entirely disappeared, International Labor Day celebrations were once again reorganized at Taksim Square after an almost 30-year ban following the massacre in 1977. As the Gezi communards interviewed for this study articulated and verified, the May 1 gatherings of the new millennium acquired a more layered social texture through the participation of counter-cultural groups and grassroots movements alongside the old forms of politics nonetheless. Not surprisingly, this cross-class and cross-cultural alliance that gradually increased the number of the crowds gathering in the site over two years created disturbances in the government. The Istanbul municipality cancelled celebrations in 2013 following the directives from AKP authorities. Taksim Square once again testified fierce clashes between the progressive politics and police forces, which were drafted to the heart of the city to blockade the square.

A couple of weeks following May 1, the intersectional urban coalition that came along with the new millennium labor day celebrations succeeded to gather atomized and fragmented subjectivities of post modernism in the Emek—roughly translated as labor—movie theater protests. Thanks to the initiatives taken by a horizontally structured grassroots formation called the Taksim Solidarity Platform (TD)—founded by the chambers of architects, engineers and various Marxist-oriented micro party
fractions, local organizations and student groups (which arose as a response against the government’s and local municipality’s urban renewal schema in 2012) - crowds coming from different segments of society confronted police near the iconic movie theater to have a say in their “living spaces,” an expression that was repetitively articulated by the communards during the field research conducted for this study. Not very long after this incident, in the last week of May 2013, this intersectional grassroots-based urban resistance praxis once again manifested itself in the embryonic occupation encampment in Gezi Park.

1.6 The Rise and fall of a 21st Century Commune: A Timeline

On 27th of May 2017, right after the initial re-construction of the artillery barracks that Prost razed to the ground had commenced, a group of 80 to 100 protesters made up of the TD constituents and independent protesters set up a small encampment to prevent further demolition and to draw attention to the illegal aspects of the so-called “pedestrianization project,” which was planned to be implemented by the AKP government for Taksim Square. On 28 May, the Turkish police targeted a young graduate student in the park. She was amongst the small group of environmentally oriented protesters that set up the occupation encampment. Among many memorable images the ones of this young woman being pepper sprayed by police went viral on social media and later on arose as one of the iconographic motifs of the commune repertoire. The image grew more popular as the “Woman in Red” and during the commune even reached a global audience. 6

The clashes between the TD members, eco-protesters and police forces continued on and off for 3 days in the park. Some parliamentarians from the opposition parties joined up with the vanguard protesters as well. Sırrı Süreyya Önder, a parliamentarian from the Kurdish party, was a leading figure amongst the party representatives that supported the cause that was blossoming in Taksim. He was nonetheless involved in the incident independent from his party and acted as a public intellectual and film director. His articulate speeches, determination and courage drew mainstream local media attention to

6 For a detailed account of the woman in red dress, see “Lady in the Red Dress and her dream of a Turkish Rebirth” The Telegraph Web, 8 June 2013.
Gezi Park. Backed by Önder’s charismatic persona, the heterogeneous cluster of protesters managed to slow down and eventually halt the construction process. In the early morning hours of 31 May, police forces forcefully evicted them from the area by setting the encampment on fire. During the evening rush hour, thousands of other protesters from different segments of society began to gather on the boulevards and roads leading up to the park stopping the flow of traffic. The growing act of defiance in Istanbul spread to other major cities in the country and turned into nation-wide civil disobedience overnight.

On the afternoon of 1 June, a larger crowd of protesters restored the occupation following an almost twenty-four hour active struggle with security forces, which gradually withdrew from the square upon the Istanbul governor’s call. In the following three days, diverse groups transformed the encampment into a self-sustaining and self-organizing experimental protest enclave. This included: local anarchist football fans, homophile movements protecting their neighborhood against what they viewed as an “invasion,” feminists rebelling against the patriarchal order that is signified as father state (devlet baba) in the Turkish political lexicon, members of Marxist-Leninist party fractions participating in an uprising perhaps independent of their own organizations for the first time, unions and syndicalist movements of whose members were slaughtered in the area in 1977, secularists taking to the streets for the sake of protecting “laic and modern Turkey,” marginalized minorities of Asia Minor such as Alevis and Kurds whose communities were bombarded by the state forces in Roboski in 2010, and finally, environmentally sensitive citizens. Altogether, they poured into the park to save one of the very last green spaces left in the heart of the city and transformed the encampment into a self-sustaining and self-organizing experimental protest enclave. The representatives from TD set a big podium, which was reminiscent of a Greek agora, in the heart of the park so as to organize the relations and decision-making mechanisms among the collectivities and individual subjects. This big arena enabled them to channel their voices in a collective way against the state in the following days.
During his diplomatic visits abroad, Erdoğan dismissed the protesters as a group of “chapulcu” roughly translated into “marauders.” Starting from June 4, Gezi had manifested itself as a fully functioning commune with its library, collectively organized dinner nights, mass yoga sessions, free-food courts, botanic garden, solar ovens, infirmary, radio station, daily press and of course its communards who began to go to workplaces from the park they called “home.” Throughout the two-week commune experience, the communards of Istanbul turned the park into a utopian space by forming small or large scaled platforms such as that of TD, and stands where they practiced direct-democracy, staged ritualistic art performances, organized counter-cultural activities and had encounters with other communards that they would not have found the chance to cross paths with before. Floor discussions, music gigs, stages of tirade, soap boxes blossomed at various corners of the commune despite the ongoing clashes with police forces in the near vicinity. Political and social groups...
such as the Turkish nationalist-secularists and Kurds, Islamists and feminists who had hitherto antagonized one another shared the space and even sometimes slept in the same tents, as the police forces assaulted the borders of park.

The commune, the borders of which were reached out as far as the Greek Orthodox Church at the corner of İstiklal Street due to the participation of other Istanbulites that temporarily visited the site, managed to stand firm against assaults and raids for almost two weeks. During the two-week occupation, Gezi became a global phenomenon by capturing the attention of world news sources and internationally acclaimed scholars and thinkers including prominent names such as David Harvey, Noam Chomsky and Judith Butler who declared their support for the urban resistance that was blooming in Istanbul. On July 11, police carried out an intervention to take control of the square. The Istanbul government issued a statement guaranteeing the presence of the commune and invited the commune representatives to negotiate a withdrawal process and to discuss the future of the park. Talks between the state officers and the Gezi delegation came at a standstill on 14 June as then-Prime Minister Erdoğan furiously left the negotiation table after hearing the communards’ peace terms.

**Figure 5. A bird’s eye view of Taksim Square**

According to the official statements made by state authorities throughout the two-week commune repertoire, approximately 3.5 million people in Istanbul alone participated in the set of protests, which was also called as the “Turkish Summer.” 8000 injuries and 11 fatalities were reported at the end of the cycle of events that spread to 79 out of 81 cities in the whole country (Özkırımlı 2014, 2; Özel 2014, 8). The Istanbul Commune’s presence in the psychical space came to end on the afternoon of June 15 following a military-style operation backed by police air-forces that rained gas bombs over the communards. All tents, placards, protesters and banners were seized and then destroyed by the diggers and construction machines that once again showed up inside the park. A couple of nights before the fall, the communards gathered around German-Italian musician David Martello’s grand piano that was brought to the entrance of the park. Under the drizzling rain, song, tunes and melodies of the Gezi people, which acquired a global tone along with the activists coming from far cities of the world like São Paulo, reverberated across the space in a literal sense and signaled many other resistance movements and occupation struggles to come in the modern history of capitalism in a temporal sense by weaving Turkish romanticism into the global commune repertoire.

1.7 Outline of the Dissertation
The next chapter, “Mnemonic Community” that follows this section will map out the methodological tools of the reflexive, critical ethnographic research that was conducted in the winter of 2014-2015 and 2016 in Istanbul to conceptualize the commune repertoire in the Turkish context. In addition, a discussion on the nature of Turkish politics will also be presented to familiarize the reader with the diverse cultural and political background of the subjectivities involved in the commune for introductory purposes. The theoretical models that social movement scholars have deployed in analyzing the collective action phenomenon will be discussed from a genealogical perspective in chapter 3, entitled “Toward a Theory of Commune Repertoire,” This section primarily aims to draw the contours of the “paradigm wars” (Tarrow 2004) in the social movement literature and expand the boundaries of the concept of repertoire as well as the “emotional turn” in the social movement literature by addressing
critical approaches such as Marxist geography, contemporary anarchist theories as well as critical sociological perspectives on affect, religion, environment and spirituality. One of the primary aims of this section is to show the ways in which the economic climate of the post-Washington consensus and the global political structure that has crystallized since the September 11 events have increased the significance of political-process oriented approaches in understanding the revolutionary communes of the 21st Century and their repertoire. This demonstration will underscore the significance of subjective conditions of the local political culture in conceptualizing the global protest repertoire that we are observing recently, especially in the context of Turkey where the so-called political antagonism between the secularist elites and right-wing/Islamist liberal parties eclipses the systemic oppression imposed upon progressive political actors.

Following in this spirit, Chapter 4 will be conceptualizing the nature of the Turkish sociopolitical cosmos by employing another Tillean term: “composite regime.” This concept describes a condition through which polarized political and social agents, while sharing the same ideological vein, contest mainly via cultural means in a segmented political landscape (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 180). By doing so, this chapter also brings a critical approach to the clichéd center-periphery analyses and their contemporary ethnographic derivations that tend to read Asia Minor’s history through the political contention between so-called republican elites and center-right/liberal Islamist parties and their social bases. My ultimate aim in this section is to point to the contradictory ideological operational mechanisms that restrain the rise of democratic, cosmopolitan, plural visions in the Turkish political culture. Consequently, this chapter is also structured in a narrative style to familiarize the reader with the diverse political and cultural backgrounds of the subjectivities involved in the commune.

Chapter 5, 6 and 7 will present the ethnographic findings. In the chapter “Getting There,” we will demonstrate the ways in which the mobilization process or decision to participate in the collective occupation practice as an distinctive repertoire form, in general, operated at the confluence of
consciousness, reflexive emotions, political imaginaries, memory and the bodily experience in the protest practice itself. Thus, we will be looking at Gezi’s mobilization process through this prism of affect based on the field research findings. First it will be argued that two former protest incidents, the new millennium May 1 gatherings and the theater protests played a key role in the crystallization and mobilization process of the heterogeneous protester composition. Secondly, we will also see how the bodily experience in the course of the protest process itself in tandem with “affective intensities” or reflexive emotions come before meticulous calculations, which are claimed to be embedded in arising or closing political opportunities. This is not to say that we will be a turning blind eye to the ideological reasons or macro-structural factors. On the contrary, this chapter will show us how these factors operating at a conscious level become multi-layered and manifold in the context of heterogeneous protester compositions such as that of the commune of 2013. As such, it will point to the ways in which structural and political concerns are prioritized according to the subject positioning and biographic background in the sociopolitical cosmos. Basically, we will be probing the intersectional mobilization dynamics in the context of social movements that are made up of heterogeneous crowds. Finally, we will look at how the repertoire performed in Istanbul is historically related to its genesis, the Paris Commune or similar revolutionary situations, which manifested themselves in similar revolutionary situations in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

In the chapter “Being There,” we will be digging deeper into the communal dynamics of the repertoire by shedding light on the defining characteristics of the commune repertoire that reflect horizontal, self-organizing formations and direct democracy practices, all of which enabled the communards to have encounters with one another in a culturally and politically fragmented milieu. This section will also question to what extent the self-organizing commune repertoire as well as post-Gezi grassroots politics leaned towards reformist and revolutionary paths, and whether the communards would have preferred such political strategies considering the recently surfacing authoritarian and totalitarian tendencies of the regime aftermath of the events. Put simply, this section will pit Marxist visions of
revolution and reformist/liberal imagination against the Anarchistic prescriptions and communitarian visions on an empirical basis.

This discussion will lead us to the last days of the encampment and other defining characteristics of the repertoire including resistance through ritualistic activities and art forms that enabled the Gezi people to experience sense of collective joy in a sacred manner. Accordingly, the final empirical chapter “Greening Everywhere” will investigate the extent to which the environmental concerns were part of the mobilization process. In doing so, we will be looking at the new age traits of the commune, which will be unpacked under the rubric of “post-modern sacred,” a condition that is claimed to be surfacing following the gradual retreat of Abrahamic religions from our daily-life practices. Based on this critical sociological approach on new ways of doing religion, projections regarding the nature of future protest repertoires in Turkey will be presented. This discussion will also direct the spot light on the specificities of Gezi. Expressed differently, we will be looking at the elements and ingredients the communards of Istanbul have added on the global commune repertoire. The conclusion will take us to the individual protest performance called the Standing Man. By deciphering the cultural and symbolic codes of this silent protest in the immediate after of the Gezi Commune, I will be offering an overall critical assessment of the arguments and empirical findings presented in this study.
Chapter 2 An Ethnography of a “Mnemonic Community”

The Commune of 2013 and the initial shock it created has altered the trajectory of the studies on politics and social movements in Turkey, besides changing the patterns of protests in Turkish political culture. Recognized specialists on Turkish politics and anthropologists in the first World, especially those who had been preoccupied with deciphering the cultural and civil society codes of the so-called harmonious marriage of political Islam with late capitalist market principles (White 2011; Tugal 2009; Navaro-Yashin 2002) immediately directed most of their efforts towards understanding this popular momentum initiated by the younger generations following the afterglow of Gezi (Tuğal 2013). They concomitantly made projections over political Islam’s new journey to authoritarian horizons. The newly forming fusion of political Islam and Turkish nationalism that gradually manifested itself after the Gezi Commune undoubtedly is a perplexing and fruitful subject to be analyzed in parallel with Islamophobia simmering in the metropolitan world (White 2014). Even though it was a commune formed by the new millennials, scholars who prematurely celebrated the neoliberalizing political Islamic movement as the midwife of a true democratic order—although their own ethnographic findings indicated otherwise (Tugal 2009, 164–66)—did not lose time in trying to make sense of the political and structural factors that lay beneath the incident.

Gezi, without a doubt, cannot be isolated from a larger assemblage of protests forms and the mobilization of ideologies, complex emotions and other micro motivation factors that are being constantly remolded by the constantly evolving and changing local ideological mechanisms and state apparatuses. Most of the studies, edited volumes and articles that followed the commune nonetheless lacked critical methodological principles that would channel and articulate the voices, visions and feelings of the communards themselves (David and Toktamis 2016; Ozkirimli 2014; Yörük and Yüksel 2014; Evren 2013; Yel and Nas 2013). Few of them succeeded in capturing attention through their masterfully
crafted theoretical narratives, albeit they could not go beyond applying the clichéd Marxist paradigms and class-based readings to the incident despite the fact that the empirical validity of the existence of a Gezi “class” with respect to its “opposition” was just an assumption (Gürcan 2014). Reading the subtexts of the commune of young generations surely arises as a new methodological challenge for the scholars who are used to probing the mobilization and civil society formations of political Islam, or the place of the history of Asia Minor over the templates of historical materialism.

There are many excellent studies that approach the wave of urban insurrections that took place in world cities between 2011 and 2014 from the vantage point of social media. This study made a choice not to engage the question of social media. There is no denying that the media in the most general terms has long played a role in captivating and mobilizing protesters and supporters in Turkey and around the world, from pamphlets and telegraphs to television and recording tapes. Without a doubt, certain images that I will analyze became iconographic as they became a touchstone of both media accounts of the protests and the impressions they left on witnesses. However, precisely because my study focuses on the emotional chemistry (affect), the dynamics of immediate face-to-face interpersonal communications and contact, as well as the way that participants in the commune preserved the memory of these experiences, the question of larger message or networked-media-interactions is extraneous to both this study's methodology and analysis.

In this regard, I argue that conceptualizing and contextualizing a commune of multitude, its mobilization and internal working mechanisms requires not only new combinations of new theoretical models, but also a new methodological understanding that can map out the webs of cultural relations of a politically and socially diverse heterogeneous crowd. This chapter will explain and justify the eclectic and manifold methodological approach I had employed for gathering information from participants in the event, including retrospective tools of interrogating my own impressions and motivations as a fellow communard.

2.1 Reason for Mythological Justification: Logics of Hierarchy in the Turkish Political Culture

One of the most compelling reasons that convinced me to approach Gezi with a new methodological understanding is the logic of hierarchical organization historically rooted in Turkish political culture. Logics of hierarchy, I suggest, have taken precedence over other alternatives of radical politics and remained arguably hegemonic in state politics, political activism and civil society circles up until 2013. The regime space, in other words, has generally been dominated by party actors, groups and organizations that are structured around a chain-of-command mentality and mobilized by a charismatic leadership figure since the foundation of the republic. More importantly, these agents have usually had a tendency to follow state-oriented reformist agendas or pursue revolutionary party policies. As a result of this hegemonic inclination, a holistic understanding of politics that could reach beyond a state space and permeate through the whole public sphere or every realm of life has not developed and matured much in Asia Minor.

One could metaphorically characterize Turkey as a “military nation,” considering that it was founded by strictly secular army officers under the charismatic leadership cult of Atatürk who won the mythic “independence battle” against the “traitor” Greeks backed up by the “imperialist forces,” as the official national history thought in education institution still depicts (Altinay 2004). A new nation-state ideology that come to be known as Kemalism in the 1930s and solidified under the global ideological climate of the inter-war period meant the sacralization of leadership cults and a vision of society that binds its citizens together in an organic manner against threats. These threats not only included internal ones like the non-Muslim minorities or Islam as a “regressive” example of civilization, but also external ones like the Occident, which was paradoxically associated with the imperialism had to be collectively mobilized against and the Enlightenment values that needed to be internalized in civil society. Despite reflecting and sharing characteristics of other post-colonial nationalisms and state nationalisms that aimed to keep “citizen-soldiers” combat-ready against both internal and external threats, the founding party of
the Turkish nationalism, the CHP chose not to enter Second World War and remained neutral until the fall of Berlin. The emotional burden inherited from the catastrophes of the First World War and the Balkan Wars during which the Ottoman Empire was ripped apart by the imperialist forces most likely outweighed the irredentist aspirations and Pan-Turkist imaginations that would have dragged Asia Minor into another systemic war.

The post-war world order that opened the path for the Western democratic principles following the Universal Deflation of Human Rights in 1948 and Keynesian economic models in countries that were caught up in the gravitational pull of the American hegemony had not created much change in the logics of hierarchy and ideological mechanism on which Turkish political culture was built. In fact, not being part of the crystalizing new world order prevented the imposition of liberal democratic and economic principles on civil society by an outside force as happened in the cases of Germany and Japan. In post-war Turkey, the DP came into power by capturing the votes of a majority of the peasant populations and maturing Muslim bourgeois that were alienated, marginalized and atomized as a result of the CHP’s extremely rigid secular public sphere of understanding and economic failures in the countryside, as I have suggested in the previous chapter. As the tide turned and the provincial votes slid to the CHP and other opposition parties—which I will discuss in detail in the chapter on Turkey’s regime space—the DP tried to hold onto power by pursuing a series of populist economic policies and performing cunning political maneuverings, a political scene that is reminiscent of the current incidents unfolding in the country.

Consequently, the rift between the founding secular nationalist ideology of the country and the conservative-liberal actors as well as their provincial social base had continued to widen in the 1950s. The Democratic Party of Turkey did not culminate in a true democratic order nor a fully functional liberal market economy, which would ease the absorption of the country into the emerging new global economic order or the European Coal and Steel Community as in the case of Italy’s Christian Democrats (Sapelli 2014). Instead, Turkey in the 1950s emerged as an underdeveloped milieu that was polarized between the cult of party leaders that aimed to allure citizens through populist politics and the charismatic personas
that fueled bullish sentiments in the life-world of their social bases. İsmet İnönü of the CHP, who gave his name to the promenade in Taksim (İnönü Gezisi) in the 1940s, and who is also known as the “National Chief,” and Adnan Menderes from the DP, who was believed to be a “saint” after surviving a plane crash following his diplomatic visit to the US, in other words, did not alter militarist, authoritarian, corporatist, non-democratic political spirit, which they inherited from the one-party era of the 1930s. Public space and the state itself subsequently emerged as an ideological contention ground between these two main political actors. Whereas the former symbolized the secular-Enlightenment values articulated to a nationalist-étatist rhetoric that casted shadow over a cosmopolitan vision of society, the latter became the embodiment of the political spirit of the vernacular-traditional values and quotidian world of the provincial classes along with a pseudo democratic-liberal outlook, which in effect aligned the party itself with pro-Western economic and foreign policies. Accordingly, the derivations, branches of these contesting party actors had ramified throughout the regime space in the following years.

Asia Minor in the developmentalist era nonetheless witnessed a process of fragmentation/balkanization and some degree of democratization in the political ecosystem through the enactment of a new constitution in 1960, which paradoxically came along with a coup d’état. The new constitutional framework led to a relative amelioration in social and constitutional rights, which in effect opened the path for democratic visions among crystalizing new civil society actors. The coup of 1960 orchestrated by a cluster of young Pan-Turkist military officers actually aimed to bring a new spin to the founding ideology, thereby aiming to lower the tension between Kemalism and the conservative-liberal political actors in order to maintain social integrity and political stability of the “nation.”

In parallel to the restitution in the legal domains, a great deal of industrialization and urbanization occurred in the country. Unlike the Kemalist one-party era during in which the state played a major role in igniting the delayed industrialization process, goods were finally able to be made quickly and there was

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8 As I indicated in the introduction chapter, the origins of the cult leader tradition in the Turkish political culture can actually be traced back to the Ottoman sultanate.
a profit coming off them too. The international credits pouring into Europe and the developing countries that had geopolitical importance under the conditions of Cold War politics undoubtedly accelerated this transition from agricultural labor to factory work. Greece and Turkey in fact appeared to be the last standing fortresses as the so-called Iron Curtain loomed over Eastern Europe. Together they had much more than their share of the international funds, which were provided by the United States as a panacea for the so-called red threat.

Turkey perhaps could not create economic “miracles” through international credits and import strategies of substitution economic as Italy did in the Keynesian era. The delayed industrialization process it went through from the 1930s to 1970s cannot even be compared to China’s “Great Leap Forward.” It neither had the privilege of an external economic zone to export manufactured products as Italian manufactures did, nor a vast internal market like China’s to develop a closed economic system that would operate on its own. Against all the odds, when the limited industrialization leap coupled with the new constitution, the country witnessed a relative increase in the activities of the organized working class movements, as I indicated in the introduction chapter. Such structural transitions and opening opportunities in the political and social formations nonetheless did not result in the disappearance of the logic of hierarchy and the state-oriented political understanding in militarist style in the crystalizing Marxist and syndicalist circles. In fact, the Turkish left had hitherto evolved and proliferated within the Kemalism’s ideological sphere of influence. As a result, it reflected the paradoxical and extreme nationalist characteristics that were peculiar to the independence movements in the developing world despite the fact that the republic had never witnessed fully-fledged long lasting colonial rule akin to the ones established in the rest of the Orient.

In the 1970s, the Turkish left in fact had become less open and receptive to alternative visions of radical politics under the harsh political conditions of the Cold War. The economic stagnation that accompanied the 1973 oil crisis and mismanagement of the free higher-education institutions radicalized the young migrant populations of the 1970s that flocked to the urban centers looking for jobs and better
education opportunities. Arising anti-communist counter-guerilla formations such as that of Gladio in Italy that were backed by NATO and the state undoubtedly sharpened the political wills and practices of both of the left and right. On the one hand, socialist and communist organizations were cursed as the Moscow’s “extension,” while on the other hand underground stay-behind rightwing organizations and conservative liberal parties were labeled as the collaborators of “imperialism” that aimed to bring a “regressive order” to the society. Certainly, Moscow’s influence on Turkey was arguably very much limited compared to the ideological and culture effect of the West.

The founding state ideology had not lost much credibility in Turkey amidst Cold War politics. Nuances of the nationalist ideology stretching from pan-Turkism to moderate, secular Kemalism were exchanged between contesting groups and organizations. As university campuses turned into bloody battlegrounds in this tumultuous scenery, minor leftist party fractions and dissident groups were left with no choice but to embrace a heavy anti-imperialist and nationalist rhetoric, and an étatist outlook to gain leverage against the right-wing conservative actors. This process consequently contributed to the internalization of the hierarchical mobilization practices, leadership cults and state-oriented revolutionary politics among the Marxist circles and working-class based movements. This sharp understanding of politics permeated through the state and parties as well. The CHP, with his new leader, Bülent Ecevit who succeeded İnönü in 1972, became the embodiment of the nationalist-Marxist front against the successors of the DP. Because of the romantic nationalism of the new leader, who was known as the “Black Son” in the Turkish political lexicon, ideological cracks began to surface between the Maoist and Marxist flanks of the left, which deepened the political and economic crises in the country. The military as the so-called guardians of the state and the nationalist ideology again intervened into the politics respectively in 1971 and 1980 in order to prevent the escalating tension and the anarchist state of order, which threatened the social stability as well as the existence of the state itself.

In such a tumultuous political scene, not enough breathing space was left in the regime ecosystem for cultural movements such as the second wave of feminism and environmentalist groups to voice their
alternative visions of society or their social and political demands. This is not say that they did not exist at all or that Turkey was entirely deprived of the activities of the culturally-oriented movements, which proliferated in the 1960s across the Western world. They nonetheless faded into the background of the clashes that unfolded between the right and left, which, I argue, acquired a violent tone in developing the milieu of Turkey amidst the global Cold War, a political state of being that will be conceptualized under the rubric of “composite regime” in the chapter on the nature of contentious repertoires performed in Asia Minor. New Maoist-oriented movements like Öcalan’s PKK arose as alternatives to Marxist-nationalist actors of the left in the late 1970s and in the panorama of Turkish composite regime, although they were not able to kindle a political understanding that reached beyond the state and revolutionary politics and encompassed every realm of life and civil society. More importantly, the cult of leadership remained unchanged throughout the 1970s.

Neoliberalism in the Turkish experience paradoxically extended the space in which politics was performed by gradually diminishing the role of the state both in the economic and social realm as it purged the class-based politics of the regime space. When that was coupled with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the belated cultural movements of Asia Minor became more vocal in the broadening political ground that began to include everyday life. As a result of this temporal distortion peculiar to a belated modern milieu, urban grassroots homophile movements appeared to be the by-products of “Western liberalism” and “neoliberalism” in the perception of the old forms of politics, which were able to find living space only inside the syndicalist organizations such as the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey, (DISK). As Öcalan transformed his outlawed worker’s party into a separatist movement that only pursued ethnic-based political issues throughout the 1980s and 1990s, the fragmented dissident actors of Asia Minor could not find the opportunity to unify under a popular front in the public sphere against the conservative liberal, Islamist and secular political actors, all of which were able to converge on one and another in the confluence of the founding nationalist ideology of the 1920s. Thus,
the years of 1990s did not witness the rise of strong civil society dynamic that could carry the politics beyond the realm of state in a collective manner or defend individualism against the rule of the majority.

As Sürreya Evren points out, in this convoluted panorama of Turkish political culture, the Gezi resistance in Istanbul fits into a spatiotemporal context that falls in somewhere “between Tahrir, Occupy and a late Turkish 1968” (Evren 2013). Expressed differently, it may be viewed as the delayed rendezvous of a unified student movement that even includes the young generations of socially conservative and pro-government participants as well as members of government allied ultra-nationalists, as I addressed in the previous chapter. Considering the participation of the Turkish Youth Unity (TGB), a youth organization that gathers around a nostalgic yearning for the militarist state of the 1930s, the Anti-Capitalist Muslims (ACM), which brings a moral and political critique of the Islamic neoliberalism, and even independent participants of the ultra-nationalist party, the Nationalist Unity Party (MHP)—the political representative of pan-Turkism—and pro-government supporters along with the old forms of politics and cultural movements in the commune, I argue that a methodological approach to this case requires justification from an ethical point of view.

In brief, for the first time in the Turkish political history we are looking at a non-institutional collective arrangement that is culturally and politically heterogeneous in its core and horizontally structured without a leading figure. More importantly, this movement, which spontaneously mobilized mostly in affective domains, introduced a new experimental political understanding by permeating the whole public sphere, as a result carrying the means of politics beyond the realm of state in a collective manner. In this regard, methodological tools that are deployed to conceptualize and theorize this example of the 21st century commune, I argue, require justification. This justification for the methodological procedures and techniques to analyze the Gezi Commune is necessary not just because of the manifold nature of the movement itself, but also because the field research on this new phenomenon will modulate the biographic memories each of the socially, culturally and politically diverse subjectivities and collectivities constituting the commune into a collective memory in future years.
2.2 Methodological Tools for Justification: “Mnemonic Community”

When I arrived in Canada, I was fresh from the occupation of Gezi and the police violence that destroyed the commune. My advisor, Ariel Salzmann told me to quickly reconstruct my experience and document the period through my eyewitness account and memory, as well as various newspaper reports, including an entire series of Agos, a weekly Armenian-Turkish bilingual newspaper published in Istanbul.

In a world where everything is recorded and stored in digital matrixes, my contact with this dissident series in hard-copy form enabled me to narrow down and clarify my own insights and autobiographic observations over the incident from a chronological perspective. But more importantly, most of the articles and news that I analyzed in this newspaper were by Armenian-Turks. As members of an ethnically and religiously marginalized minority community, they had quite a different interpretation and imagination of the incident than mine. Almost all the texts began by pointing to the historical roots of the park, reminding the reader of the ancient orthodox Armenian cemetery that lies beneath it. At the end of the investigation into my own lived experiences, I began to realize that the park as a historical space and Gezi as a past event in general could take on different meanings.

In addition to the self-reflexive autobiographic retrospection, my experience with the Turkish student diaspora in Toronto, which I addressed in the introduction chapter, also helped me to situate my own subjectivity as an independent eco-protester, who envisaged a hopeful future in post-commune Turkey, on a critical ground in the panorama of Gezi. Considering the bleak socialist visions of the future of the commune, I came to understand that not only the historical roots of the event, but also its future were open to interpretation. Although I was aware of the fact that social cosmos is a subjectively lived experience in theory, these epiphanies, my experience in Canada and the self-reflexive daily writing exercises enabled me to critically approach the subjectivities and collectivities that filled in the commune, including my own in practice.

Seeing and approaching the incident in a new light helped me fully realize that the ways in which the Istanbul Commune was imagined and remembered differentiated based on the subject’s positionality.
In other words, I came to understand the event itself carried multiple and different meanings for its participants that come from different biographic backgrounds. In the light of this fact, I decided that it was necessary to conduct interviews with other communards to supplement my own autobiographical observations so as to come up with a common vision, a common body of knowledge through which I would determine the main contours of the commune itself. Thus an archeological dig into the memoirs of the communards was necessary to articulate the collective memory of the commune.

But memory as a mode of investigation does not necessarily mean an objective reconstruction of a past event that is being researched on. It is, in other words, not “a direct conduit into the past.” It is therefore not interchangeable with history and must be considered distinct from the epistemological criteria of history despite the fact that oral history and memory studies overlap with one another in terms of the methodological tools they utilize. Memory as well as the act of remembering “is a process of making sense of experience, of constructing and navigating complex temporal narratives, structures and ascribing not only to the past but to the present and future also” (Bornat 2013; Keightley 2010, 56). Thus, remembering is a mediated process through which past events are recalled in parallel to the present and future. More importantly, such temporal references to the past are being constantly remolded and shaped by various webs of socio-cultural narrations, (Fivush 2013, 15–17) systems of political representations and social institutions and grander collective memories (Kansteiner 2002, 180). Through the act of remembering, from a psychoanalytical perspective, actors actually gain an understanding of their own subjectivity and obtain a coherency with respect to their identity, whereby they make sense of the past they recall. Accordingly, certain “choices and exclusions are made in mnemonic accounts,” or at some points “mnemonic imaginations” are used to maintain the integrity and coherency of the identity in the present as well as to make actors feel that they are part of larger “mnemonic communities” (Keightley and Pickering 2012, 1–13; Keightley 2010, 57–58; Kansteiner 2002, 188–89).

Such a post-modernist and essentialist approach to memory that foregrounds its “contingent” nature does not necessarily mean that it cannot be deployed as a mode of methodological and historical
investigation. Even psychological and neurological studies recognize the fact that individual acts of remembering are mediated actions that are conditioned by bigger social settings and interactive relations (Brown and Reavey 2013, 45–50; Kansteiner 2002, 185). From a sociological perspective, it is actually through this process of forgetting, remembering and imagining that memory can be deployed to make sense of a particular event that is being recalled. Elements that are unconsciously or consciously excluded, included and constructed, in other words, in and through the “liminal space” of memory—that extends throughout the past, present and future as well as private and public space (Radstone 2016, 18)—may be evaluated and interpreted “hermeneutically” on their own terms (Keightley 2010, 57–58,64). In this way, a researcher at a fixed point in the stream of temporality may conduct “smaller in-depth ‘thick’ studies of narrative that allow close investigation of the” (Fivush 2013, 25) event being analyzed by taking into account his or her own and the participant’s subjectivities as well as the fact of the dialogical act of remembering that occurs in the course of one-on-one interviews (Bornat 2013, 30–31, 37–41; Keightley 2010, 60).

Keeping in mind the fluid and dialogic nature of memory, the fact that historical reality is in the eye of the beholder and critically approaching the Gezi Commune’s subtle characteristics of mnemonic community, I conducted semi-structured interviews with 17 communards who were recruited via a snowball sampling technique in two stages. The empirical core of the dissertation in this sense is based on semi-structured interviews. In the interviews I conducted, the researcher is positioned as a “critical insider” (Graeber 2009, 12)⁹ in dialogue with communards who represent diverse sociopolitical and cultural backgrounds. The interviews were, in other words, fabricated in a way to reflect the heterogeneous composition of the protesters. I tried to channel all of the voices of the subjectivities and groups involved in the commune as much as I could.

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⁹ David Graber defines critical insider as an activist ethnographer “whose ultimate purpose is further the goals” of the movement s/he is part of. For him, social movements are made up of participants with different ideological and social backgrounds, and maintaining solidarity in such diverse activist settings requires self-reflexive lenses directed at the ethnographer’s own privileged subjectivity as well as other participants’ political views and subject positioning (Graeber 2009, 12).
The first key group of interviewees involved the prominent figures of organizations and leaders of groups that participated in the events. These interviews were conducted in the winter of 2015. It took two months to complete the whole process. By asking questions of a biographic nature in these interviews, I allowed the leader figures—whose real names are used since they are known public figures—to express their identities and articulate their own interpretations with respect to the incident. This interview phase commenced on January 20 with Ahmet Saymadi whom I met through my informant in the Kurdish resistance movement. Saymadi is amongst the founding members of the Socialist Party of Refoundation, (SYKP), which was founded right after the fall of the commune. The first leg of the field research ended on February 28 with Levent Pişkin, a prominent human rights lawyer who holds leadership positions in various LGBTQ organizations and groups part of the commune.

Leading figures like Ahmet Saymadi and Levent Pişkin and their accounts helped me a lot in understanding how the commune itself, in general, was imagined and remembered by the subjectivities coming from different socio-political and cultural backgrounds. Some of these leader figures also took me to their group meetings and quorums, which gave me a remarkable opportunity to naturally observe post-Gezi organizational and grassroots dynamics. Such glimpses into the future of the commune were actually not on my ethnographic agenda but I held the view that the field research is an emergent and evolving process; a process of common knowledge production that is open to other members of community’s suggestions and visions (Greenwood, Whyte, and Harkavy 1993). In fact, the future of Gezi was quite relevant with its past as the memory studies suggest. In this spirit, I paid visits to the quorums of the TGB, the Northern Forest Defense (NSF)—an environmentalist organization that was founded following the commune—and the June Unity Movement (BHH)—an alliance of Marxist-leftist party fractions that aimed to transform Gezi into a movement—and tried to gather as much data as possible in a short period.
of time. Respectively, Uğur Aytaç, Efe Baysal and Demet Demir\textsuperscript{10} were my gatekeepers to each group’s meetings. Fortunately, I heard a lot about Gezi during these short visits.

The second group of interviewees included comparatively younger participants with secondary roles in their groups, social settings and organizations. Most actually defined their subjectivity in the events as “independent.” When asked they nonetheless indicated the political ideologies which they aligned. Various pseudonyms and nicknames, which I created imaginatively with the help of their physical appearance and ideological background, are used to designate the second group interviewees so as to protect their confidentiality and anonymity. I utilized a snowballing technique to recruit participants for the second group as well. Uğur Aytaç from the previous year was my informant in this second stage. The interviews designed for the second group commenced in first month of 2016. The whole process lasted over 5 weeks and ended on February 11. Most of the interviews took place in natural public settings such as cafes, public houses and collectives, which are in close proximity to Gezi Park.

2.3 Structure and Flow of the Interview Process

Each interview process commenced with a briefing that reiterated the rights and matters of confidentially explained in the consent form, which simply framed the objectives of the field research as an “ethnographic study on Gezi” in order not in order not to influence the responses elicited from the participants and also not to pollute or taint the claim to objectivity in general. Following the debriefing, in three stages, 15 to 20 questions were directed to the participants depending on the content of the responses and the amount of information elicited. Each interview session lasted approximately one hour.

In the first stage of questions, interviewees, including the public figures, were asked to introduce themselves and briefly present their professional and family social and ideological backgrounds. They

\textsuperscript{10} The only public figure that I knew personally before the field research was Demet. I met her through my own connections in the LGBTQ organizations. She is defender of transgender rights and one of the very well-known political activists amongst the Marxist-Communist circles in Turkey. In 1999, she was amongst the candidates for Beyoğlu Municipal elections.
were asked if they were affiliated with any “political party” or a “political organization” of which they see themselves as “members.” They were also asked if they voted in the previous election. The majority of the participants pointed out that they voted for the People’s Democratic Party, a pro-Kurdish pro-leftist party that was founded one year after the fall of the commune.\footnote{11} Participants with affiliations were asked to elaborate on their “journeys” in the organizations or their “thoughts” on the “ideologies” they viewed themselves part of. Surprisingly, only one communard, Action, a film studies student with sexually dissident subjectivity, introduced herself as “Gezi member.” Sheriff, a young law student, and Ahmet, an entrepreneur in the construction sector, declared allegiance to the MHP and the government respectively. Younger members of the TGB, the Green Raincoat and Dawn also emphasized their “organic tie” to their youth organization and Kemalist ideology right away. Kara Bloc positioned himself as a “dissident Kurdish” who “works at heights” (a profession in construction sector that requires special training) and a member of various anarchist organizations including the soccer fan group (Çarşı), which emerged as one of the most noteworthy groups in the commune, as I pointed out in the previous chapter. Another anarchist, whom I named the red beard, told me he participated in Gezi as a member of the Revolutionary Anarchist Action (DAF). Despite presenting herself as an “independent,” academic, Telos suggested she sympathizes with “socialist ideology.” In a very similar fashion, Virgo—a professional journalist—pointed out that she “sees herself within the feminist movement.” One communard ideologically and socially aligned himself with the “Alevi community.”

With respect to social background, I suggest that the majority of the participants come from middle-class backgrounds and held diplomas and degrees obtained in free higher education institutions. In addition to this, Nihilist, another sexually dissident subjectivity, and Telos told me they grew up in a strictly secular family environment that had a tendency to display “Islamophobic,” inclinations at certain

\footnote{11} The party logo, the green tree symbol along with colorful stars on it was actually a direct reference to Gezi.
points. Lastly, Arya, a member of the KOS, introduced herself as an “environmentalist” and “curator” who works in the Taksim Area.

The second cluster of questions was phrased in a context to investigate and understand the mobilization dynamics that operate underneath the commune repertoire. They primarily aimed to prompt answers for two significant questions that preoccupied me during the field research: first, considering the big debate in the social movement literature between the political-process oriented theories and cultural-critical approaches—which I will address in detail in the following chapter—I tried to answer whether the Gezi communards mobilized more in parallel to affective and micro-cultural domains or according to the opening/closing opportunities and macro-structural concerns, which were allegedly embedded in regime spaces. The second question was actually pretty much related with the first one and it simply pitted the “emotions” against “politics.” Thinking about the occupation of public space as a form of repertoire, and particularly as an “innovation,” in Tillean sense, I looked for answers with respect to the origins of this protest strategy in the Turkish context: Where did this novelty and innovation in the Turkish political culture originate and come from? What was the source? How did the protesters invent the commune repertoire? Did the protesters in Istanbul consciously model this tactic, strategy, form of social protest on other exemplary cases such as anti-globalization protests in North America and the recent uprisings across the Middle East? Or was it more a result of the gradual accumulation of successful protest repertoires in the local spatio-temporality, as argued by Tilly?

In order to understand the ways in which the commune repertoire crystalized in the Turkish experience, I first asked about the last “protest event” or ‘political demonstration” that interviewees were involved in before Gezi. Despite the fact that most of the communards responded to this question according to their own political ideology and social background, the answers that I elicited also drew my

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12 Despite all my efforts to arrange a suitable time to meet with the leaders and members of the Anti-Capitalist Muslims, their voices, visions and thoughts over the commune unfortunately are not directly channeled in the empirical findings of this ethnographic research. Nonetheless, I made a lot of effort to depict the collectivity in the panorama of the commune by asking other communards’ feelings and thoughts with respect to this dissident Muslim organization.
attention to the millennium May Day celebrations in Taksim Square and the Emek theater protests, both of which occurred a couple of weeks before the commune. Most of the communards explained to me that they participated in one of these events in person or monitored them via social media, and more importantly they underlined that they “observed” a “different social texture” which came out of these two protest events. Nonetheless, against the question of what “factors” pushed them onto the streets at the night of 31 May, almost all the communards pointed to the feelings of “outrage,” and “anger,” that surfaced after witnessing various dramatic scenes they personally came across or saw on social media.

Contrary to my expectations, based on the answers I obtained, I would argue that social media did not play a big or key role in the mobilization of the Gezi communards. But I suggest nonetheless that it certainly accentuated the feelings and emotions that came along with the notion of losing the park. In other words, various dramatic images that were captured in an aestheticized way such as the Red Woman, which was spread via social media certainly heightened the emotions felt during the mobilization night. When asked about the most “memorable thing” left from the uprising night, most of the interviewees pointed to such dramatic scenes and images they personally witnessed or saw on social media. In parallel to this, they also pointed out that they simply followed “other protesters” and friends they knew before in the uprising night. Such accounts pointing to the emotive and bodily aspects of the mobilization process, I suggest, encouraged me to approach the incident through the prism of affect in general.

In order to understand how the protesters began to perform the repertoire of commune on June 1 and to probe the origins of the urban occupation praxis as a reoccurring global protest strategy—since sociological-historical approaches lacked the microscopic lenses that could provide answers for such an investigation— I also asked the interviewees to make associations with the “first image” and “scene” they saw right after they stepped in the park. In other words, I asked them “what sorts of things” came to their mind in the first day of the event. Considering the fact that every moment, even milliseconds of crucial turning points, of contemporary protests events can be recorded and even broadcasted live both on social media and news sources through the technological resources and means of the information age, I was
expecting that they would associate the “first day in Gezi” with the Arab Spring, the Tahrir Square protests, or the Occupy Movements that manifested themselves across the Global North. At the very least, I thought they would mention a political demonstration or protest event they recently participated in before Gezi. Instead of such similar contemporary incidents, surprisingly, almost all the interviewees used figures of speeches, metaphoric expressions and alluded to distant analogous historical events such as “utopian space,” “dream space,” “commune,” “the Spanish Civil War,” and “the Paris Commune,” in order to describe their first day experience and articulate the “feelings,” and “thoughts,” over the first scene they come across that day.

Methodologically speaking, “memories are at their most collective when they transcend the time and space of the event’s original occurrence.” Most of the historical events reach beyond their ontological borders through various mediums such as images, narratives, social and cultural written and oral metaphoric descriptions, and/or grander collective memories. In this regard, the “means of representations that facilitate” the act of remembering and the physical and social proximity to analogues past events and their “subsequent rationalization and memorialization,” do not have to coincide with the actual event being recalled. In other words, people may “embrace” memories of the medium events “that occurred in unfamiliar and historically distance cultural contexts” in order to “reconstruct” the fact after the event. And from a methodological perspective the processes of reconstruction and means of representation “provide the best information” about the event being recalled (Kansteiner 2002, 189–91). In light of this, I suggest that the answers received with respect to the origins of this protest form inspired and encouraged me to coin the term “commune repertoire.” Expressed differently, the responses I received for the questions about the origins of urban occupation as a form of protest strategy directed my attention to the political imaginaries of the revolutionary situations in past centuries, which eventually convinced me to apply the commune repertoire term to Gezi.

13 In fact, it was in this spirit that I first asked them about their last experience of the protest event at the beginning of the second-stage questions.
Through the second-stage questions, I also took the advantage of my own role as a critical insider as much as possible. In this spirit, I brought up problematic and controversial debate topics in the local political culture such as the war between the Turkish state and Kurdish rebels, the tension between the Turkish laïcité and local/vernacular Islamic values, the general societal approach to the LGBTQ members and the orthodoxy and hierarchical nature of Turkish Marxism during the interviews as often as possible. My objective in this regard was to question whether the solidarity formed in the park had positive consequences and ramifications in the future generations of Turkey. Has the short-lived resistance alliance maintained in Gezi Park really left no trace on the fragmented Turkish left or Asia Minor’s political culture? Was the Istanbul Commune just a flash in the pan? Such an inquiry, I suggest, corresponds to questioning the constituent power of the commune (Graeber 2007, 33) and the ways in which it has transformed the social relations amongst the communards in both a spatial and temporal sense. Overall, as I will address in detail in the following empirical chapters, participants had positive impressions left from the solidarity formed in Gezi Park. More importantly, despite the short-term, spontaneous nature of the incident itself, they hold the belief that the commune sowed the seeds of the visions of a democratic society for the next generations by creating spaces of encounter, which had “self-organizing,” “horizontal,” “affective” operational mechanisms in its nature.

Taking into account the collective act of a remembering process that occurs between the researcher and participants, the final set of the questions were directed at understanding the extent the interview process itself reshaped and remolded the memories elicited with respect to the event. Most of the participants gave the similar responses to the questions I phrased in a different style, albeit what is interesting is that in response to the question of “how would you define Gezi in general retrospectively” almost all the interviewees pointed to macro-structural, ideological and political factors at the end of the interview process. In other words, emotional motivation factors replaced structural and political elements through the dialogical act of remembering. More importantly, such macro-structural expressions seemingly proving political-process theories right were prioritized according to the subject positionality in
social cosmos. In other words, while Gezi was more of a cause that took shape around ecological factors for more environmentally sensitive communards like Efe Baysal, Arya and myself, for the TGB members it represented an uprising and “awakening” of a secular society against the “regressive” Islamic regime. In a similar way, whereas Gezi in retrospect symbolized the rebellion of the working-class segments of the society for the communards that hold views leaning toward socialist revolutionary politics like Demet, for feminists “abortion rights” and “increasing oppression against women” during the AKP government were main factors that pushed crowds onto the streets. On the other hand, for the gay community and anarchists the incident was an expression of protecting their living spaces and neighborhoods against what they viewed as “invasion.” What is interesting is that other communards also emphasized the significance of “public spaces,” “living spaces and styles,” “green sites” when probing questions were directed right after the political and ideological factors they listed.

Based on the answers given for the series of questions I directed to the interviewees, I would argue that in the context of spontaneously mobilized, short-lived heterogeneous movements like Gezi, motivation reasons for participation crystalize following the affective intensities such as that of the Red Woman in practice, but retrospectively macro-structural and political factors are related to those affective incidents according to social and political backgrounds of the subjectivities involved. In brief, Gezi’s mobilization dynamics, I suggest, operated on the intersectional systems of political, social and cultural oppression regimes, which became more visible through affective events.

As I indicated, the interviewees were given enough free space to shape their accounts and share memories they were willing to articulate, including in the second group, even though I went into these interviews with certain questions in mind. That was actually an intentional strategy for me given that it was my first research experience on the ground. In other words, I applied the method of “learning by doing,” in order to better understand the dynamics at play during ethnography (Rossman and Rallis 2011).
2.4 Transcription and Data Analysis Process

During the transcription process of the written and oral records into observable texts, a narrative inquiry method (Clandinin 2008) was employed to analyze the data obtained at the end of the field research. In other words, I looked for similar “themes arising from the accounts and identifying reoccurring commonalities in the form of content and experiences.” I also searched for the reoccurring “discursive constructs,” such as the metaphors—some of which I addressed above—that enabled me to “allude to social and cultural meanings of” (Keightley 2010, 64–66) Gezi in general. More importantly, I also analyzed the ingredients, elements, identities and historical and political facts that were left out, included or embellished in the accounts by paying attention to the interviewee’s ideological and social background.

Beside the narrative inquiry that is supported by methodological principles of memory studies, I also utilized my own feelings to contextualize and make sense of the responses given by the communards. This is to say, at some points I found myself surrounded by the disturbing feelings that arose as result of philosophical and political differences during the interviews. I used such tense moments as research tools to analyze the responses I obtained from my interviewees during the transcription phase and to draw more material out of them in the course of interviews (Kleinman and Copp 1993). In fact, I would suggest this methodological strategy also eased my role as the critical insider, as an actor who aimed to force the boundaries of the commune and to further its goals. What is interesting is that after the transcription process, I realized that I was in uncomfortable situations more often with the communards who ideologically positioned themselves as Marxist-leftist, rather than the conservative-nationalist ones that seemed to be caught in the allure of the commune. After critically approaching my own subjectivity, I came to understand that such tense situations surfaced more often with them because of my own judgmental views about the actors who hold political views leaning towards hierarchical socialist visions. As I pointed out, there is a tendency to label sexually dissident actors like me as “liberal,” in a derogatory way amongst the Turkish left circles and, I think, this positionality triggered me to bring up problematic
issues with the interviewees that positioned themselves as socialist. In other words, despite positioning myself as independent eco-protesters, I would suggest I subconsciously acted as a LGBTQ activist in the course of my field research. As the empirical chapters will display, readers will come across a cluster of sections and paragraphs discussing the communards’ views on sexually oppressed groups and homophile movements of Turkey.

2.5 Deployment of the Field Research Findings

Viewing the fieldwork as a common knowledge production process and locating it on a processual ground, this critical and retrospective engagement with participants and groups who populated the movement has led me to underscore the significance of affective domains, everyday praxes and life styles in urban space, ecological sensitivities, intersectional systems of political and social injustices, prefigurative politics on the ground and, most importantly the global political imaginaries of past centuries revolutionary situations in framing the general contours of the commune repertoire from an epistemological point of view.

The findings that are obtained through the critical retrospective ethnographic methodologies that frames the research as an emergent process and utilizes the memories of the communards and as well as the researcher’s own feelings/visions and knowledge are deployed for theoretical purposes in accordance with the Manchester school’s extended case method principles. In other words, the findings of the whole field research process are contextualized to introduce an auxiliary hypothesis into Tilly’s general framework of regime-repertoire model, particularly to expand the boundaries of the expression of the repertoire itself. In this spirit, the findings of this study define commune repertoire as a distinctive type of repertoire that is simply imagined as a historically and globally reoccurring social protest form. In this way, this ethnographic study is pointing to the connections between micro and macro processes, thereby weaving the former’s dynamics into a global history.

Thus, in terms of methodological stance as well, this study is making the local field research observations part and parcel of a global ethnographic history, which sheds light on the reoccurring
patterns of global capitalism and its similar and parallel sociopolitical and cultural implications at the local level (Burawoy 2009b; Burawoy et al. 2000; Burawoy 1991). In this regard, this ethnographic study on Gezi is aiming to take its place amongst, as Michael Burawoy puts it, “practical wisdoms of tomorrow,” (Burawoy 2009a, 26). In this spirit, my hope is that the methodological basis that commune repertoire is erected upon will make a contribution to both practical and ethical efforts of creating and maintaining such intersectional alliances, which will be formed against the global capital and oppressive local hegemonic state formations in the future.
Chapter 3  The “Commune:” A Socio-Political Repertoire

As in all social scientific inquiry, the approaches to social movements and shifts in paradigms of analysis are responsive to changing political and social climates. This chapter examines the crucial shifts changes in sociological theories of mobilization and protest through the prism of Charles Tilly’s oeuvre, a body of research and theory that has changed over the second half of the twentieth century. It departs from an examination of Tilly’s political explanations of collective action that crystalized in the late 1960s and in the early and late 1970s.

Tilly is among one of the first sociologists who pointed to the ways in which rational decision making processes at the individual level were mediated by dynamics at play in the realm of politics. Expressed differently, he aims to expand the explanatory scope of resource mobilization theories by annexing and relating the matter of politics to the cognition mechanism. By his last decades he had turned his attention to state transformation and its relationship to the dynamics of capital and coercion. Finally, and most relevant to the present work, he began to address the recurrent patterns or repertoires of sociopolitical mobilization that shaped the formation of regimes or coalitions of interests. Thus, his primary objective of improving rational choice explanations had gradually left its place to his efforts of formulating regime-repertoire model in a Machiavellian sense.

Tilly was certainly not the only leading figure that shaped the literature on collective action, which was primarily dominated by Durkheimian psychological explanations up until the late 1960s. Whilst political analysis of social protest proliferating under the shelter of American academe was taking the place of the socio-psychological explanations, which tended to view collective action as the result of social anomaly or pathological social outburst, his European counterpart Alain Touraine was shedding light on the fuzziness of identity to make sense of the student uprising in the late 1960s. It would not be entirely wrong to suggest that both traditions, one proliferating under the influence of the Civil Rights
Movement in the United States, and the other driving its inspiration from the student-working class alliance incarnating in the cities of Europe, invented the term “social movement” by bringing a normative critique to the cognitive approaches of the era (Calhoun 2012, 2–4; J. M. Jasper 2011, 3–8). In order to clearly pinpoint the place of Tilly’s model as well as repertoires of commune in the panorama of the current developments in the literature, I argue that we must turn our attention to what ways social psychologists observed the acts of civil disobedience, riots, uprisings, demonstrations, rallies before the crystallization of what is also called the new social movement theories. The questions I would like to raise in this regard are: Which sociological sources of cognition-based approaches had been utilized in order to give meaning to unforeseen political and social disturbances? Why were social movements deemed as social anomalies or treated as pathological incidents in visions of behaviorists?

3.1 From “Social Outbursts” to “Social Movements”

Cognitive approaches, also known as the collective behavior tradition, drew largely from Émile Durkheim’s classical analysis of anomie and egoist that he argued manifest themselves in the form of elevated suicide rates in rapidly urbanizing cities. While Durkheim was more concerned about the social integration and cohesion under the conditions of modernity, rather than the collective behavior itself, his contemporaries in the early 20th century picked up the notions of “social breakdown” and “strains” and integrated them to the crowd theories so as to bring sociological interpretations to unexpected social outbursts. Robert Park, Herbert Blumer, Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian were among such sociologists who laid the foundations of the collective behavior literature by framing uprisings, riots, acts of collective civil violence as relatively positive, healthy and spontaneous disruptions in routines of everyday life.

Despite such relatively less pathological views on the crowd behavior, other cognitivists, especially those leaning toward Freudian psychology, framed the collective behavior more as disruptive, dangerous, excessive and unpredictable acts of protests (Buechler 2003, 48–51). Rather than Durkheim it was the afterglow of Max Weber that set this branch of collective behavior tradition down the path of
irrationality. In this spirit, Harold D. Lasswell, Eric Hoffer and Gustave LeBon conceptualized the crowd behavior within the framework of “libidinal constitution” and Darwinian approaches to human agency. In the clinical perspective that dominated the literature on collective action up until the late 1950s, the aforementioned psychologists and thinkers painted protesters as primitive, impulsive, intuitive and emotional beings that are caught up in the allure of mass psychology, which was deemed to be an uncontrolled, primitive force of nature that is capable of toppling down systems of civilization or opening the path for modern nation states coming after civil wars, as Hoffer suggested (Hoffer 2011).

Such pathologic views of mass participation had been widespread in Western Europe because of the phobia of fascistic-authoritarian regimes mobilizing and manipulating masses in the name of so-called holy causes and missions, which resulted in a set of catastrophic wars and ethnic cleansings. Even the positive reverberations of post-citizenship movements of the 1960s could not undermine or soften the tone of such logic that associated the collective action with juvenile delinquency. In 1968, Neil Smelser brought a complementary Oedipal approach to the explanations foregrounding the subconscious aspects of crowd behavior (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2009, 2–3; Goodwin, Jeff, Jasper, James M., and Polletta, Francesca 2000, 66–69).

In contrasting fashion to such common pathological and cognitive-based accounts in the Western academy, starting as early as 1910, Marxist thinkers and scholars approached the collective action phenomenon from an entirely different angle long before the crystallization process of social movement theories. They drew attention to material conditions and the matters of class-consciousness in order to give meaning and political inspiration to the class conflict repertoires, which began to surface inside factories and spatiality of hegemonic modern state at the turn of the century. Vladimir Lenin, Victor Trotsky and Antonio Gramsci were amongst such names that based their critiques on Marx himself. Contentious repertoires presumably leading towards revolutionary situations were depicted in a more

14 I would argue that Hoffer’s biographical background perfectly exemplifies this tentative approach to mass psychology. He was one German migrant who fled from the catastrophes of fascism and settled down in New York as a working class person.
positive light by also foregrounding the fact of “rationality” in their narrations (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2009, 3). Such materialist accounts of contentious encounters had become more widespread in European academic circles as the threat of fascism was eliminated thanks to the popular fronts, which emerged in the inter-war period in southern Europe. Expressed differently, the so-called success of the Keynesian state model and its immunity to fascistic class dynamics opened more fertile ground for the post-Marxist accounts to proliferate in social theory in general.

Nonetheless, following the Soviet’s invasion of Hungary in 1956, doubts were raised about Marxist ideology, its prescription for contentious politics and the conceptualization of class-consciousness and agency in a rationalist and mechanic sense. Bipolar world dynamics, certainly along with collectivization efforts and policies favoring an oligarchic Russian ruling class under Stalin showed that the Bolshevik experiment was just another version of Western market ideology; it was state-led capitalism that had the potential to produce authoritarian policies and exploit its satellites when its political hegemony was challenged at the center. In other words, there emerged a common conviction that the socialist prescription could be as oppressive as capitalist ideology unless the space in which social relations were produced was changed in accordance with new visions (Lefebvre 1992, 59).

Not only the political climate of the Cold War era, but also the politicization of individual self and the rise of identity politics contributed to the realization of the self-critique of the left in general. As the student uprisings in continental Europe and anti-war movements in the United States, which prioritized the issues of ethic and lifestyles over political and social gains, began to make themselves heard in the Western Marxist circles, the efficiency and rationalist-bureaucratic aspects of unionist movements in parallel to the class consciousness became a matter for discussion. The experience of the inter-war period indeed proved that syndicalist formation had even the potential to be building blocks of fascist regimes and in this way mass worker populations could be pitted against one and another. Such incidents lit up the discussion on the matter of “class in itself” and “class for itself,” which first
manifested itself in the works of British Marxist historians (Kaye 1995). Accordingly, attention in the
social movement studies as well as in social theory in general were directed towards new horizons.

New social history along with the cultural history that gradually replaced it accordingly extended
the scope of class conflict and its rational aspects of contentious politics in the orthodox Marxist sense to
wider sociopolitical and cultural contexts by critically approaching the matter of the base-superstructure
model. Known also as the new left tradition, this new wave of academic thought in Western Europe led to
the emergence of inspiring and influential names in the study of modern history and social movement.
Prominent names such as E.P Thompson, who traced the origins of English working class back to the pre-
capitalist times and the critiques raised over Jürgen Habermas’ definition of the public sphere paved the
way for the conceptualization of counter-culture movements. Accordingly, Touraine and his student
Alberto Melucci and their offerings on the cultural aspects of the social movements of the 1960s as well
as their emphasis on the ways in which social relations are reproduced in urban space, sowed the seeds of
the new social movement theories (Calhoun 2012, 2-4,53,121-122,249-257; Kaye 1995, 1–22). On the
other hand, the post-Marxist wave took a different path in the American academy. Since the African
American Civil Rights movements reverberated across the political realm, attention was more drawn to
the resources, arising political opportunities and decision-making mechanisms from a game theory
perspective. To some extent, this meant the inclusion of political ecosystem in the social movement
studies that hitherto developed disconnected from the politics (Calhoun 2012, 275–76).

In a nutshell, in the beginning of the 1960s, socio-psychological studies of collective action along
with the crowd theories began to fade away leaving their places to game theory based models, politically
oriented explanations and culturally-based accounts in the European academy, which mostly came from
the sociologists actively participating in those movements of the era. Although rational/political models
and constructivist approaches to social movements seemed to be diverging from one another at first
glance, the common denominator shared by these post-Marxist and post-Functionalist traditions was their
emphasis on the rejection of the subsumption of the category of “social movement” under collective
behavior. In this way, they together pointed to “rational” aspects of the participants as well as to wider political, cultural and economic contexts and formations influencing and shaping mobilization dynamics and practices (Calhoun 2012, 275–76; Flacks 2004, 136; Goodwin, Jeff, Jasper, James M., and Polletta, Francesca 2000, 69–72). Thus, theoretical attention in the collective action literature gradually, I would argue, shifted from the pathological/orthodox Marxist axes to more fluid demographic, economic, political and cultural axes in the 1970s. This paradigmatic shift also meant the pre-approval of social breakdowns and strains as factors to be studied from a scientific point of view to some extent; it was a paradigm shift that later became known as new social movement theories later on, as I have suggested before.

### 3.2 Social Movement Theories in the 1970s and onwards: “Repertoires” versus “Emotions:”

Tilly was a leading and pioneering figure in the developing post-Marxist and post-functionalist tradition in the 1970s. The genesis of his study, “From Mobilization to Revolution” came out in 1978 along with the theoretical objective that aimed to equip resource mobilization paradigms with better tools, (Tilly 1978, 148). In this groundbreaking study, he masterfully blended Marxian, Durkheimian, Webern and rational choice/game theory-based approaches together in the context of 19th century preliminary citizenship movements and mass rallies forming in Western Europe as well as North America. The peasant uprisings in rural France and the anti-slavery demonstrations evolving into democratic participation demands both in the mother country, Britain and New England, which resulted in the emergence of first primitive, citizenship movements, were the cases he paid special attention to (Tilly 1978, 48). Nonetheless, in his later studies, Tilly, I would argue, reduced the Weberian and Marxian elements for the sake of coming up with a more coherent theoretical framework, thereby driving the interplay between the polity and repertoires foreword. Such an attempt seemed to be filling a gap in the collective action studies by relating the matter of politics to collective action phenomenon (Calhoun 2012, 275–76), it nonetheless also led to what is also known as the “paradigm warfare” in social movement
theories (Tarrow 2004). The question I would like to raise in this regard is: How did Tilly’s repertoire-regime model created this rift or chasm in the social movement literature?

In the next-generation of Tilly’s schema, repertoires appeared to be evolving gradually as a result of the accumulation of protest experience itself or “external pressures” (Tilly 2008, 4-12). These external factors correspond to the power and institutional dynamics that are at play in a political ecosystem he calls regime space (Tilly 2010, 25). For Tilly, alternations in a state’s capacity along with arising/closing democratic conditions influence claim-making tactics in the short run. In other words, as the nation-state structure and its market is exposed to the processes of capitalization and centralization, lower classes of early capitalist society invent new tactics in order to go around the already existing power blocks and judicial-legal frameworks on which the state is erected. Fluctuations in state power in tandem with political and institutional rights, which do not necessarily always tend to expand even in the metropolitan world, therefore give birth new protest tactics and reshape the already existing protest repertoires. Nonetheless, he suggests we see a reverse path in the medium to long run. In a contrasting fashion, repertoires yielding successful results remold the nature of regime space by enabling the claim makers to make inroads into the political ecosystem in and through the alliances made with other actors and sociopolitical gains in the state apparatuses. In brief, for Tilly in the extended time interval, repertoires appear to be independent variables influencing the state-making processes and degree of democratization in political eco-systems (Tilly 2010, 211; Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 118).

The interplay between the regime and repertoire is therefore “contingent” as Tilly himself puts it. And in and through this fluid mechanism regime and repertoire are entangled with one and another. The questions then become: In what ways does this regime-repertoire entanglement influence the protest tactics used on the ground? What factors create incentives for dissident segments of society to influence and change the nature of regime space? In this regard, Tilly sticks with a rationalist agency assumption that the resource-based theories defend. According to Tilly, “opportunities” arise, emerge, crystalize and disappear as the state navigates in parallel to the dynamics of capitalist market. For Tilly, political
opportunities basically refer “to the features of regime that facilitate or inhibit a political actor’s collective action.” In other words, they are initiatives taken by rational actors as a result of meticulous calculations of gains that would be obtained at the end of the protest action. In accordance with the fading or arising political opportunities, protest patterns also modulate in and through innovate tactics used by the claim makers as a result of such calculations in a game theoretical sense. That is to say repertoires evolve, transmute and diffuse through “improvisational performances” in parallel to the “political opportunities,” in Tilly’s terminology (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 45; Tilly 2010, 211, 1978, 8,223-234). It would not be entirely wrong to state that political opportunities are the most influential ones among the other external factors that draw the contour of the regime space as well as performative aspects of the repertoire itself. In brief, protest repertoires operate at the crossroads of rational decision making mechanism and contention dynamics taking place inside regime space regardless of the nature of the political ecosystem itself.

I would argue that in his later studies Tilly foregrounded this contextual aspect of polity to such an extent that his former multi-faceted approach, which is even considered as “revolutionary” (J. M. Jasper 2011, 3), lost its dynamic features. In this way, seemingly static contention dynamic eventually opened the path to the criticisms that came along with the cultural turn and reverberations of anti-war movements in the 1980s and early 1990s. As the protest repertoires of new movements began oscillating between the demands arising in civil society circles and universal rights, both frame alignment approaches and constructivists targeted the political process theory for neglecting human agency and squeezing mental states into static, causal explanations. They primarily tried to undermine the assumption of rational human agency and simplistic, game theoretical views of a political landscape arising upon the power dynamic occurring between claim makers and rulers. In other words, they targeted Tilly for framing the state as a black box in which the dynamic of “contentious politics,” as he himself calls it, arises as the only factor shaping the mobilization practices, regardless of the different political cultural contexts in which they emerge.
Against such a reductionist Machiavellian view of political landscape, the next generation of critical social movement scholars stressed the importance of a processual approach, changing fluid political forms by reasserting the priority of moral visions and cognitive beliefs in the course of mobilization. More importantly, driving inspiration from transnational effects of global civil society mobilization, they pointed to the logic of those movements that transcended the realm of politics. Accordingly the first wing, which has become known as the frame alignment approach in American academe, emphasized the importance of intersubjectively signified and aligned meanings that are attributed to particular events, symbolic causes or experiences. In other words, intersecting symbolic interests and emerging common causes at particular times were variables for analyzing the social movement nature for them (Snow et al. 1986, 464–67; Snow 2003, 386). On the other hand, the latter wing depended on the post-Marxist critiques directed towards historical sociology. Reinterpretations of Habermas’ public space and Melucci’s readings on the “cultural codes” and “collective identities” were sources of inspiration for this wing of the constructivist school through which prominent scholars such as James Jasper and Jeff Goodwin channeled their criticisms. In a very similar fashion to the frame alignment theory, collectively constructed identities, complex emotions and ethos of specific cultural structures that are not necessarily shaped by politics and macro-structural conditions were foregrounded in their narrations, a paradigm shift that later became known as the “return of the emotion” in the social movement studies in the late 1990s (R. H. Williams 2003, 92–93).

Thus, most of the offerings on emotions and frames in social movements therefore crystalized as a critical response to Tilly’s political process model, which also includes other well-known names such as Sidney Tarrow, David S. Meyer and Dough McAdam. In one very recent critique of this tradition, constructivist scholars tried to show that there is in fact no “causal” relationship between the “opportunities” arising in political space and the emergence of social movements by basing their findings on meticulous statistical observations and calculations. By doing so, it was argued that protesters are more likely to take action and mobilize for certain causes in authoritarian regimes, where the “causality”
between the emerging political rights and mobilization seems to be meaningless (Goodwin 2011). I would argue that such a critique based on quantitative analysis not only overlooks the fact that regime-repertoire dynamic is a contingent mechanism in a Tillean cosmos, but also ignores that democratization is actually “a never-ending process” according to Tilly. Thus, constructivist scholars obscure the fact that Tilly problematizes the very core of liberal democracy from a normative perspective, thereby misreading his sociological approach that resembles democratization processes to a crooked line, which includes de-democratization tendencies even in the context of metropolitan democracies like the United States (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 67; Tilly 2010, 3-4,60-89).

In brief, social breakdowns, strains, grievances and emotions which were treated as irrational outbursts and pathologic deviances a few decades ago therefore arose on the horizons of collective action theories once again in the early 1980s and 1990s in and through the critiques directed at the political process theories. Yet, this time group psychology, feelings, complex emotions, collective outrages were considered to be parts and parcels of cognition in the mobilization process along with symbols, moral values and collectively-constructed cultural elements, which are claimed to be factors pushing protesters to the streets to stage demonstrations. Understandably, the non-violent nature of the anti-war, environmentalist and student demonstrations of the past decade and their protest repertoires that are shaped around universal rights and identity politics influenced and projected themselves over this overall paradigmatic schema. The common denominator that aligns all these scattered neo-culturalist approaches, I would suggest, is their emphasis on the movement itself in a processual manner. Thus, collective action process itself along with symbols, identities and framings all together lead to affective ties or collectively experienced moral shocks that fuel mobilization.

Nonetheless, focusing on the movement itself as the unit of analysis and its emotional domains eclipsed wider cultural contexts in which movements emerge, flourish and decay (William 2003, 94–95). Following the new millennium, cultural perspectives have been targeted, even from scholars coming from inside this discipline itself, for viewing social movements or any kind of institutional and organizational
formation as unified entities bordered and encompassed by collective psychology (Polletta 2004; Tilly 2004; Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005). As a result of this theoretical momentum there seems to be a growing tendency to bridge the gap between the political process models and the approaches that look at social movements through appreciation of the role of collective emotions and beliefs. That mediatory reflex evidenced by the collection published in the memory of “Chuck Tilly” (J. Jasper and Goodwin 2011).

In this regard, it would not be entirely wrong to state that cultural critiques moving beyond explanations that privilege broad structural conditions have been caught in the gravitational pull of de-democratic or authoritarian ramifications of the first decade of the 21st century. In the literature, once again, I would argue that repertoires linked with the changing nature of regime space have emerged as influential variables in understanding and making sense of collective action phenomenon. Although Goodwin and Jasper earlier attributed the emergence of such proposals and offerings to the critical insights that restrained structural components in political process paradigms (Goodwin and Jasper, James M. 2004), in effect, what is being sought is a new theoretical balance with respect to the relationship between culture and structure I suggest.

As I have mapped out above from a genealogical point of view, theories of social movement have been shaped by the political and cultural climate of the period to which they pertain as well as epistemological concerns, which simply revolved around the matter of rational human agency. The recent attempts that basically aim to find a middle ground between culture and structure also appear to stem from the regressive impact that late capitalism has left both in developing and developed countries. Added to changes in the economic sphere, the new levels of militarization across the globe following 9/11 have only reinvigorated state repression. This new systemic structure, which began to take shape in the early 21st century, has been structured in such way as to bring the fluctuating markets of world states and the so-called threat of unrestrained flows of global immigrations under control. In a decade during which 20th century conceptions of citizenship is crumbling, youth unemployment and labor precariousness has
reached unprecedented levels due to “flexibility” and digitalization/mechanization, even as anthropogenic global warming causes food crises and massive involuntary migration waves. As a result of these major upheavals, the new millennium has been predicated on the replacement of “the social democratic compromise of the post-war years” with regimes that “outlaw the possibility of protest and democratic expression” (Tabb 2003). In fact, the eco-activists in Seattle did not vote to oppose the Kyoto Protocol. Their electoral preferences were not reflecting American policy on the climate change. And when they mingled with other dissident groups to voice their own democratic vision of society and environment they were pepper sprayed, beaten down by police and paramilitary, and eventually arrested for using their bodies as mediums to draw attention. What the Seattle incident shows us is the reality of undemocratic characteristics of regime spaces and the renewed state capacity and violence, which shapes every aspect of mobilization dynamics and protest tactics used on the ground in the 21st century.

Given this new context the questions then become: Are the intermediary synthesis approaches theoretically sufficient in making sense of the repertoires performed by heterogeneous crowds, which eschew hierarchical organization and reflect infinite political and cultural demands? To what extent efforts to bring political opportunities and wider cultural contexts back to constructivist paradigms are helpful in understanding the protesters striving to form temporary communes and encampments in symbolically significant urban spaces, public spheres and piazzas such as those that we witnessed in Tahrir, Madrid, Zuccotti and Gezi, and very recently in Kiev? Is there still enough room in Tilly’s model for a sub-category, a distinctive type of social protest form such as commune repertoire?

3.3 The Commune as an Analytical and Historically Specific Category of Repertoire: Bringing Back Prodhounian Views to the Social Movement Literature

Since commune is a form of protest that involves sociologically, politically and culturally diverse participants that are inclined towards creating their own nurturing, autonomous spaces instead of making social or political gains in the regime space along with a rational mindset, I would argue that it does not seem to be falling within the scope of recent intermediary theoretical efforts, which
aim to bridge the gap between the repertoires and emotions. In other words, merging microscopic cultural lenses with Tilly’s longitudinal approach to grasp the mobilization dynamics at play in the recent exemplary cases of social movements is both theoretically inadequate and, actually paradoxical. I suggest it is reconcilable in the sense that culturalist explanations are more inclined to conceptualize the instances of collective action within the microcosm of collectively constructed or aligned emotions that appear to be the independent variables producing the movement itself, as I indicated above. Through the microscopic prism of so-called emotions, even though they attempt to integrate wider political and structural conditions into their explanations, emotions such as “moral shocks” (J. M. Jasper 2008) or “libidinal ties” (Goodwin 1997) still appear to be arising as the driving engines and locomotives of the movement solidarities. As such, they are neglecting and eclipsing the ways in which affective structures and domains themselves are actually tied to other factors such as memory, body, cognition, or in spatial terms to the habitus they emerge upon. In simple terms, they overlook the fact that “emotions have many emotions with dynamic relations among themselves” (Calhoun 2009, 47).

By contrast Tilly, I suggest, primarily focuses attention to reoccurring and sustained collective action strategies occurring inside the nation-state. For him, outlier examples of short-lived protest strategies such as communes are almost impossible to include under the expression of repertoire. Surprisingly, even though he probes post-1840 revolutionary politics in France, he does take into account the fact of rapid transformations in urban spaces as one of the catalysts fueling encounters between claimants and power holders. More importantly, he pays little attention to the Paris Commune, one of the most remarkable events of the 19th century when a radical, politically heterogeneous group assumed control of the governance of the city over the spring of 1871. In other words, even though he sheds light on the revolutionary dynamics that surface between the periphery and the center following Second Republic and though he mentions the rapid structural transformations such as industrialization their reflections on urban life as factors influencing and shaping the contentious politics, the uprising of 18 March does not appear in his narration as a distinct form of repertoire.
Again, one might attribute this oversight to conjectural political reasons. The failures of the 1968 revolts in continental Europe, the increasing authoritarian tendencies in the Soviet republics to keep the block intact and the rise of universal rights and their democratic implications in welfare states in the 1970s, especially in the American experience, may very well have convinced Tilly to formalize the matter of political opportunities and state capacity instead of volatile and ephemeral uprisings of heterogeneous crowds. Indeed, in one of his early studies investigating the issue of societal networks and the influences of urbanization on communal solidarity in a historical sense, he argued that a “community organization” can only become a vehicle for mobilization and collective action when it is “homogenous,” “territorial” and “already partly mobilized.” More importantly, he points out that the dynamics at play in urban settings are just a “complementary” factors to other major ones, which include the processes of “state-making,” growing of international markets and industrialization, in understanding communal claim making practice in urban spatiality (Tilly 1973a, 236–37).

In the early 21st century, a re-invented form of commune repertoire has made a return to the world political scene (Ross 2015, 15). As such, it emerged not in a single location but in multiple sites on a global scale. In Tahrir, Zuccotti and Gezi we witnessed encampments and occupation attempts that mainly formed in urban spatiality, as I indicated. They were mostly performed by a multiplicity of protesters with diverse political views and class positionality, and as such they had different and complex emotional motivators. Despite its layered affective and socially heterogeneous composition, and its rareness defying the re-occurring nature of repertoire, post-2010 communes nonetheless may also be imaged as affective melting pots or “a community of destiny” in the sense that Otto Bauer defines them with respect to nationalism (Bauer 2012). In other words, they emerge as actors in contentious global politics despite their ephemerality and volatility. In this regard, I would argue that repertoires of commune have their own reoccurring patterns and repetitive sociocultural compositions that may be conceptualized and situated within the framework of new social movement theories, particularly under the subcategory of repertoire. The question then becomes: how to place and salvage the expression of
repertoire in the vignette of protest movements that tend to establish temporary encampments in symbolically significant public spaces?

In order to bolster the analytical power of the concept of “repertoire” and to make it both a historically and analytically rigorous category under the conditions of late capitalism that produces 21st century communes, we must primarily problematize the expression of “radical politics.” This critical twist will enable us to view the repertoires used by social movements not solely as “proactive” political responses and embodiments of democratic desires operating in rational domains, but more as the ensemble of “defensive” measurements and affective actions taken by actors that are committed to defending their existing lifestyles and living/public spaces, which come under the threat of ebbs and flows of the systemic structure in a cyclical temporal manner. In effect, instead of thinking about repertoire as well as the definition of social movement through the prism of a linear history understanding and rational agency, we are reimagining repertories of commune as short-lived temporalities and spatial webs of relations that provide a ground for establishing solidarities and affinities between heterogeneous groups, which are to a greater or lesser extent excluded from the public sphere as well as political ecosystems. (Calhoun 2012, 1–11). I would argue that such a historiographical critique corresponds to giving a Copernican spin on the history of social movement, thereby resituating the concept of repertoire as well as the expression of radicalism on a more free-floating footing so that seemingly short-lived manifold, multi-layered, segmented cross-cultural, non-mobilized or partially mobilized alliances can be included within its scope. In this way, the term may be retrieved from the imagination of Machiavellian political cosmos and Marxist conceptualizations of old forms of politics, which eventually enables us to open the doors to Prodhounian visions both in theory and practice.

As a protest strategy, along with alliances formed through pre-figurative politics, establishing communes or temporarily occupying/blockading public spaces in and through encampments are the ones that come to the fore among other direct-action oriented strategies in the anarchist tradition (Morland 2004, 32,35-37). In fact, commune itself may be viewed as a controversial political strategy that led to
divisions and differences of opinion in the progressive radical politics of the 19th century, thereby creating the rift and discursive cracks between the anarchist thought tradition and orthodox Marxist visions of state. Very recent contemporary anarchist critiques of social movements emphasize the fact that since the demands of the post-2000 occupy movements are “are not reducible to single political programs or monolithic analytical tools,” we are looking at a resurgent ideological sympathy on the ground as well as scholarly interest in the anarchist critiques in academia, which even seemed to be approved by well-known Marxist oriented journals such as New Left, which recently gave place to David Grabber’s analysis of the occupy movements under the title of “New Anarchists” (Purkis and Bowen 2004, 2). In reconsidering the repertoire of the commune I think it is vital for us to pay attention to the offerings presented by the contemporary version of this radical thought tradition in order to better situate commune repertoire within the recent debates in social movement literature.

Richard Day draws our attention to the logic of “hegemony of hegemony” both in social and critical theory, and introduces a distinction between “politics of the act” and “politics of demand” by drawing inspiration from autonomist Marxism and traditional anarchist critiques. He contends that social movements of the 2000s, which, he assumes, have evolved from the “post citizenship movements” of the bygone Cold War era, reflect the characteristics, formations and sociocultural dynamics of the former. According to Day, politics of the act operates in a space that is minimally contaminated by hierarchical, unionist structures and old forms of class relations. For him, these novel politics are interwoven with “direct action-oriented” strategies that undermine the building blocks of conventional politics. The politics of the act briefly may be considered a composite repertoire of non-hegemonic challenges, practices, tactics and strategies pursued by the “newest social movements” as Day calls them in an ironic manner.

In simple terms, the post-2000 movements do not make political demands on the basis of revolutionary ideological principles. Nor are they driven by what Lacan calls “ethics of the desire,” which Day argues reproduce the conditions of capitalist, nation-state existence. Instead they blockade or
render some parts of state redundant and form their own peculiar social bonds as remedies and alternatives to the structural problems and hegemonic formations imposed upon them (Day, Richard J.F. 2011, 107–8). As a result, semi-autonomous zones (SAZ), not being absorbed into the state via reformist and revolutionary demands emerge from the new forms of social relations and subjectivities created in the encampments. Day calls this “new” momentum that is crystalizing within the social movements of the information age “politics of affinity” (Day, Richard J.F. 2011, 113; Day 2005, 210).

Of course the expression of SAZ or temporary autonomous zone (TAZ) and resistance through such aestheticized protest strategies and multi-layered affinity groups may very well be attributed to other well-known contemporary Anarchist scholars like Hakim Bey who deliberately refrains from coming up a dogmatic definition of TAZ (Bey 2003, 74–96). Unlike Bey’s poetic narration colored by metaphorical accounts, Day’s systemic deductions and masterfully-crafted theoretical approach enable us to clearly see the radical anti-hegemonic tendency crystalizing in the repertoires of new millennium resistance movements. But by taking a cautious stance, contrary to his colleagues coming from the same tradition, he emphasizes that not all protesters in anti-globalization struggles of our age should be seen as “anarchists.” He suggests that the protest practices we have witnessed recently are better referred to as “anachronistic” by pointing to the issue of “multiplicity” in a Deleuzen sense both in theory and practice (Day, Richard J.F. 2011, 105). In readdressing the post-structuralist accounts of Jacques Derrida, Michael Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari, and Jean-François Lyotard, he points to the discursive and rhizomatic nature of systems of oppressions and the ways in which recent anti-globalization struggles respond to these multiple nodes and axes of power, which may be associated with the analogical expression of “Empire” in Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt’s metaphorical accounts (Hardt and Negri 2005, 2000).

The contemporary anarchist tradition and the post-structural critiques of power, both of which draw their inspiration from the Situationist wave of the 1950s, emerged as both scholarly and ideological reflexes to the so-called failures of popular fronts in the Spanish Civil War, the repression of the Paris
Commune, as well as to the consolidation of nation-state structures in the post-war era. Certainly, the horizontal, self-organizing nature and spontenity of the student uprisings of the 1960s in Continental Europe, which also left its mark on the social movement literature as I indicated above, also influenced and inspired this school of thought with the “new” energy released on the streets. For the sake of not repeating so-called mistakes made in the past centuries, new anarchism nonetheless jettisoned “the analysis of history” even at the expense of denying some of the principles of its founding figures like Proudon who repetitively defended the necessity of detailed historical insights in order to dismantle the existing power structures. As a result, what remains after this theoretical self-denial process is “an endless celebration of de-contextualized” and “de-historicized” principles, strategies and terms like Hakim Bey’s TAZ (Kinna and Prichard 2009), which, I would suggest, is conceptualized as an alternative to the commune repertoire itself. To some extent, this meant turning a blind eye not only to the communal protest forms, but also to all direct-action oriented protest tactics of the 19th and early 20th century. This what I characterize as histori-phobia seems to have convinced critical scholars like Day to label the post-citizenship movements of the 1960s as “new” social movement and occupy movements as “newest” since they disrupted the logic of old forms of Marxist politics in the genealogical discussions they make (Day 2005, 69–70).

Lack of historicism and historical approach to the protest repertoires is not only prevalent in the Anarchist circles, but also quite a common epistemological epidemic in the social movement literature in general as well. Due to this widespread ahistorical understanding and conviction, post-citizenship movements of the 1960s came as “new” agents to both critical scholars like Touraine and to those who were inclined towards relating politics to collective action like Tilly. As indicated in the introductory chapter, the fascist regime that came after Bonaparte’s coup relegated the Prodhounian radical views of politics to secondary positions both in academia and the political spectrum that followed the fall of the Commune. Such a political and intellectual cosmos taking shape around the poles of Marxist and Tocquevillian/conservative ideologies meant the hegemony of the modernist, positivist and secular
visions in the literature. Calhoun points to the ways in which scholars and ideologues began to skeptically approach “the traditions of direct-action, fluid and collective shifting identities, means/ends division of more instrumental movement organization” following the legacy of the Commune. More importantly, he suggests how secularization of politics and academia rendered nationalist or religious movements regressive in the eyes of Marxist and liberal politics and accounts (Calhoun 2012, 253–54). In this regard, late 19th and early 20th century movements were more imagined and conceptualized as actors emerging around the matter of class conflicts, which presumably puts them on the path “for a total structural change in the whole society.”

Nonetheless, against such reductionist historical understanding of collective action, Calhoun reminds us that what new social movement and critical theorists call “old forms of politics” were actually identity-oriented and aestheticized resistance movements that have “hardly been committed to a thorough restructuring of society.” More importantly, politics of class were also aestheticized in the sense that certain cultural elements such as worker songs and accents were used as identity demarcation tools. As the boundaries between the private and public spheres blurred due to the emergence of new forms of consumption and production patterns and as the so-called revolutionary dreams came to an end in the post-war period, social movements disrupting the established left-right political spectrum by addressing universal rights emerged, he suggests, as “new” agents from the point of view of social movement theories (Calhoun 2012, 250–51, 261–64). To some extent, social movement theorists and critical scholars were caught up in the allure of the recrystallization of identity politics, I suggest, given the fact that most of them hesitated to approach to the cultural ingredients of radical politics from a macro-historical perspective.

Thus, Calhoun holds the view that personalization and aestheticization of politics along with communally performed direct-oriented tactics and collective demands that reach beyond immediacy of politics were not entirely new protest repertoires in the 1960s. He traces the origins of such anarchistic repertoires back as early as the late 18th and early 19th centuries. Consequently, he views all generations of
social movements, including the political and labor movements of the early 20th century as defensive or “reactive” responses to the shrinking public sphere. To put it differently, by building on the counter-culture criticism directed at Habermas—who viewed the early, primitive examples of public sphere as the inclusion of broader segments of society that were able to use the rationalist-political discourse (Calhoun 2012, 121–51)—supplementing them with historical and empirical examples, he underscores that “resistance to efforts to define public sphere so narrowly,” is a “common feature” that unifies all the radical politics across different decades and centuries (Calhoun 2012, 10,71-74,257,313).

Such a holistic approach to social movement phenomenon begs the question of in what ways and forms do these defensive and reactive responses occur with respect to notion of a public sphere that is assumed to be exclusionary? In this regard, Calhoun asks us to problematize the notion and expression of radicalism and in effect he points to the ways in which artisans, craftsmen and peasant classes, who relied on the communal bonds and traditional values that were being recreated on daily basis, arose as counter-order actors. Accordingly, he frames the so-called working classes around the notion of actors that found breathing spaces in corridors of nascent capitalism in and through the unionist movements and political gains made in electoral politics. For Calhoun, commitment to the already existing ways of life, fading traditional values and crafts were more “radical” when compared to the reformist visions of labor classes that were able to exist on the fringes of the emerging capitalism of the 19th century since the former did not enjoy the privileged positionality of the latter (Calhoun 2012, 78–80).

This does not necessarily mean that all the labor classes and unionist movements desired or followed the reformist paths. On the contrary, these classes joined up with the disappearing artisan and traditional craft communities when the shrinking public sphere began to threaten their positionality in the social cosmos, as we may observe in the changing patterns of the dissident class dynamics that occurred in Paris 1848 en route to the Commune (Gould 1995) and in the case of Chartism in Britain. What Calhoun is trying to emphasize here is that by placing radicalism on a floating and fluid ground like civil society, he brings a processual approach to the matter of resistance and dissidence movement formation.
In doing so he simply underlines the boundary and identity activation, the rift between the segments of the society that are excluded from the common public spaces and those straining to shape it in accordance with their political and economic interests. In this way, radical politics arises as a changing, evolving amorphousness of identity, which may even include conservatives, republicans and dissident religious groups at some points as seen in the case of the 19th century US reform movement (Calhoun 2012, 264–67).

Thus, in the historical picture that Calhoun repaints, social movements emerge not as “proactive,” organized, constantly evolving unitary webs of networks with certain goals directed toward the state as the Marxist and liberal prescriptions idealized and imposed upon the academic circles (Calhoun 2012, 71–72), but more as “popular forces” and “affinity groups” loosely knit together, which always fall behind the oscillations of capitalist expansion and state reorganization processes (Calhoun 2012, 309–12). In this regard, by reminding the “missed lessons” from the 1848 revolution, Calhoun also touches upon the significance of public spaces in city spatiality and addresses the ways in which symbolically significant capital cities may arise as enclaves and microcosms of revolutionary situations as centralizing low capacity states threaten the life-world and communal ways of life of the atomized segments of society, as happened in 1871 Paris, on a small scale in 1905 in Germany, and Tsarist Russia en route to Bolshevik Revolution, which changed the trajectory of social theory and world politics (Calhoun 2012, 244–247, 284). In brief, though unexpected from a historian, he emphasizes the importance and role of urban spatiality in understanding and giving meaning to the repertoires performed by multi-layered dissident segments and affinity groups.

3.4 Reconsidering Repertoire via Metropolis: A General Loss of Meaning and Atomized Subjectivities

Urban space is a structural site that reaches beyond the political peculiarities and spatio-temporality of the modern nation-state. In the early 21st century, particularly in the so-called developing world, urban spaces are in a constant state of metamorphosis. They are “modernizing” with its elites as
well as its subaltern populations; that is a concomitant of cultural and structural changes in society as a whole. Urbanization involves a process of drastic and rapid transformation of its populations and a reorganization of city space in order to open up new profitable terrains for capitalist accumulation. In fact, rather than a process in a literal sense, it may be more viewed as a maelstrom, wrenching older and newer city dwellers from face-to-face communities to simultaneously impersonal, profane settings and increasingly privatized spaces. The process of capitalist urbanization shows tendencies to accelerate and increase in volume in times of systemic crises as systemic formation seeks “profitable trains for capital surplus production and absorption” (D. Harvey 2012, 4-22,29-45, 2010, 222–24, 1992, 180–88). Capitalist urbanization follows more or less the same paths both in the developing and developed milieus. Whereas mass housing compartments left from the welfare state policies are being absorbed into capitalism in the latter case, it is shanty towns and squatter settlements become sites of gentrification process in the former. In general, as a result of gentrification policies that provide enough liquidity to go around economic stagnation, cities of the 21st century yield isolated, alienated, atomized and sporadically scattered individualized subjectivities as well as collectivities trapped in fragmented city spaces. In the developing context, it also includes the total disappearance of informal economies that provide survival strategies for subaltern classes. From a Marxist geographic point of view such segregated agencies usually come together for defending “urban commons” against privatization, or under the cause that take shape around the notion of “right to the city,” as Lefebvre puts it (Butler 2012).

In this way, urban spatiality, other than space of factory of the early decades of 20th century becomes “as major sites of political, social and class struggles.” Given that capitalist urbanization intensifies in times of systemic crises and turbulence, which are actually endemic in the operational mechanisms of capitalism, I suggest that city space has actually always been a sphere of class contention throughout the whole history of modern capitalism. Among the factors that led to the 1871 Paris Commune, the social reflex directed against the momentum initiated by Napoleon III when he appointed
Haussmann as the new mayor to rebuild the city space in order to generate enough liquidity for the empire’s stagnant economy may undoubtedly be included (D. Harvey 2012, 5,14,33-34, 72, 2004).

The ways in which urbanization manifests itself undoubtedly take different forms under the conditions of economic post-modernization. Whereas capital cities used to operate as the control hubs of the crystalizing modern states in the 18th and 19th centuries, as Bonaparte’s centralizing French state exemplifies, contemporary metropolitan sites manifest themselves more like locomotives of nation-states that operate as transition hubs. In Manuel Castells’ terminology that corresponds to “nodes of network society” that take on the role of courier, which eases the flow of information and of global financial capital upon which systemic formation is built. He furthermore observes that constantly growing “metropolitan areas” do not meet the administrative demands of world citizens that fade into tumultuous backgrounds of the fragmented public spaces. When that is combined with a hollowed out popular culture displaying characteristics of mass culture and precariousness and digitalization of labor, Castells points to a general loss of meaning and dialogue in the life-world of citizens. Expressed differently, in an urban setting where culture, social and politics loose their meaning, a state of direct communication crisis seems inevitable. In this regard, “spontaneous social interactions in public spaces” suggests Castells “are the communicative devices of our society” (Castells 2001, 556, 1999, 1983).

As a Marxist scholar caught up in the allure of digital matrixes of the information age, such synchronized and improvisational social encounters undoubtedly owe their ephemeral existence to social networks on the Internet. Thus, in contrast to early capitalism, where networks of craft-communities and webs of social relations of local dwellers that were knit together through shared norms served as conduits for mobilization, interactions and encounters are now only made possible through new communication technologies and virtually imagined/virtual networks of affinity groups and their concrete embodiments, which flash on and off in public spaces under the conditions of hyper capitalism. Both in the global north and south, the reorganization of city space in accordance with the interests of capital or ruling classes and
the addition of new communicative methods and means appear to be the common denominator of both the "virtual" and real city space.

Constantly growing and changing metropolitan areas create a sense of tension, a general loss of meaning in the life-world of city dwellers. For sure, the implications of constantly sprawling urban spaces are more deeply felt and experienced by subaltern segments of society, which are economically and socially more vulnerable to the resonances of capitalism in the developing world. Migrant populations that are coming from both urban centers and provincial geographies of the global south and arriving in big cities of the metropolitan world are without a doubt among such vulnerable and fragile groups. In this light, Touraine proposes a normative perspective over the matter of general loss of meaning in social cosmos of atomized dissident subjectivities of late capitalism. Focusing on the newest migrants to Europe, particularly in the decade after the "War on Terror," he also identifies cities in fragments in the way Castell does. Building on that he particularly draws our attention to the religio-cultural reactions of the Muslim communities. Although his emphasis on Muslim migrants living in the métropoles of Europe may be construed as another version of the Huntingtonian so-called clash of civilization, his comments I would suggest, are worthy of some considerations.

He in fact views these "banlieu" communities as part and parcel of more pervasive, social/affective reactions and reflexes evidenced by those North African migrants living on the fringes of Paris. In this regard, he points out that crystallization of radicalized affinity groups mostly knit together in and through shared traditional belief systems and, particular religious views is not only a product of mass displacements caused by the conflicts in the Middle East, then in Afghanistan and Iraq, and now in Syria. He ties such reflexes and reactions channeled through neo-communitarian forms and reinvented religio-cultural norms/values are actually to the overall failure of Western modernity, which has replaced face-to-face guild/local communities of early capitalism with secular and profane societal forms that we live in today's world. Accordingly, he argues that today what we know as "social" that holds subjectivities together, thereby, gradually dissolving their ability to give meaning to their life (Touraine 2007, 9–18).
Unlike the urban geography approaches, Touraine’s normative critiques attribute the “decomposition” of social mostly to the decaying institutional structures of the 20th century. Undoubtedly, the decline of the secular modern social structure is not manifesting itself in the social crises that are erupting in the banlieu parts of the metropolitan world. The crumbling of the nation-state formation may also be observed across the Middle East, which has actually been immune to the Western modular forms of nationhood because of the cosmopolitan legacy of the Ottoman Empire, in the form of bloody civil wars of which trenches are drawn along sectarian and ethnic lines. As the end of modernity takes a more visible shape in the recent dramatic developments in the non-Western world, in parallel to those in the so-called developed world we also see a significant decrease in the voter turnout as well as the rise of anti-establishment parties and populist charismatic leadership cults. Very recently, not only have democracies including Poland, Hungary and Ukraine fallen into the hands of right-wing fascistic rules, but political demagogues and populist parties defending anti-immigration policies have gained acceptance by a significant portion of societies at the expense of ruining supra-national bodies like the EU. Considering prior examples in Turkey and Russia, it would be reasonable to suggest that the anti-establishment regimes is a rising trend in the world politics in general.

Thus, what we have come to know as the politics of the 20th century is gradually disappearing and along with it the very meaning of citizenship, be it of the metropolitan or of the nation in the 21st century. One of the main causes of this “decay” of the social contend of political individualism, I argue, may be attributed to the economic post modernization process itself more than anything, which renders the reproduction of labor meaningless by making it more precarious, flexible and digital on the global scale, rather than the urban metropolises and the so-called end of history. In brief, I suggest labor as well as politics and social no longer produce sufficient meaning for subjectivities of new the millennium anymore. As the world we know declines along with public life itself, as Touraine puts it, a new “individualized” and atomized agency crystalizes who channels its cultural enchantments and projections in and through “neo-communitarian” forms.
In a world where individuality turns into political expression, culture is subsumed under mass consumption practices, and simultaneously social disappears, it is hard to make sense of “social” movements (Touraine 2007, 69–70), whether they operate somewhere between and betwixt the political opportunities and sociocultural mobilization motivations. In fact, I argue that it becomes clearer in this picture why participants of social movements strive to gather around identities that they are collectively attempting to construct in public spaces. For our purposes, considerations by Castells and Touraine help to make repertoire an analytical and historically-specific category again in the sense that the fact of individualized and hollowed out subjectivities and collectivities of economic post modernization that try to fill the void left by the general loss of meaning in their social life in and through the new living forms, webs of sociocultural networks—whether being communally imagined in digital matrixes or psychically experienced in public spaces—must be taken into account.

To sum up the critical insights that I have sketched out for my purposes with respect to the new operational logic of repertoire: The repertoires of commune arise as ensembles of defensive, reactive measurements taken by alienated, isolated, atomized individualized subjectivities and collectivities that either live in contemporary metropolitan settings or traditional crafts communities, which are committed to vision of a moral economy. More importantly, they form mostly as cultural responses against a public sphere and political ecosystem that gradually becomes exclusionary as a result of the withering away of a social, imposition of a mechanistic, secular view of society as well as the capitalist urbanization processes. In that sense, they may be viewed as yearnings and cultural searches for new citizenship formations and imaginations alternative to modern-secular living forms that the Enlightenment mindset has brought along with itself. And in this picture, the rationality of certain objectives and their prioritization with respect to political processes emerge as less central factors than the commitment of atomized subjectivities and collectivities to “personal dignity, rights, justice, and the possibility of world thought otherwise: a utopia of possible actions and consequences” (Farro and Lustiger-Thaler 2014, 4). If commune repertoire does not operate at the domain of rational consciousness then where? In what
cognitive forms do subjectivities of late capitalism trust each other? Answering these questions brings us to what Patricia Clough describes as the “affective turn” in social sciences (Clough 2007), which, in my reading, basically extends the explanatory scope of the sociology of emotions and critical sociological approaches to new ways of doing religion from an ontological point of view I suggest.

3.5 Affect and the Sacred: A World Experienced Beyond Rational Perception

In his last studies, Tilly did not also ignore networks and emotive ingredients of politics. He in fact began to reflect on the ways in which certain webs of social relations, such as religious dissenters, diaspora communities, modulate into concatenated communities or “trust networks,” as he calls them. The networks of subaltern groups seem to be offering an alternative account of the micro-foundations of collective action for Tilly. Unlike his previous studies, in “Trust and Rule,” Tilly is attempting to put a finger on the affective and “non contentious” aspects of collective action, which he had hitherto been hesitant to do so as historical sociologist.

The discussion of trust network, I would suggest, designates a different ontological approach to the matter of rational, self-interested agency. Nonetheless, Tilly still does not go beyond considering trust networks as “ramified interpersonal connections, consisting mainly of strong ties, within which people set valued, consequential, long-term resources and enterprises at risk to the malfeasance, mistakes or failures of others.” More importantly, he still treats “communes” as “extreme forms of trust networks” that are produced by a fusion of emotional and rational mechanisms, which marks and reinforces the imagination of “us versus them” boundary between the contenders and power holders (Tilly 2005b, 12,69-78). In my reading, such an assessment reiterates cultural critiques that were directed to him. To some extent, it would not entirely wrong to state that he blends the identity construction theories with rationalist approaches in the social movement literature—both of which are actually based on the logic of separation of mind from body—in order to make sense of trust as an affective tie.

Today’s affect turn in social sciences and various experiments conducted in the field of cognitive psychology show us that smiling is not directly or solely the result of feeling happy and environmental
triggers. Cognitivists point to a far more complex bodily mechanism operating both outside and parallel to the domain of consciousness, intentional actions, perception and stimuli in explaining various feelings such as trust. Research conducted in the field of clinical psychology in fact proves that a great majority of automated human acts performed in the course of a daily routine actually happen milliseconds before the neurological circuits of decision making mechanisms active in the brain as the body moves and engages with social cosmos. As Matthew Crawford masterfully puts it, “we think through the body” (Crawford 2015, 101). Thus, such critiques of human nature and psychology based on the findings of recent experiments, turns the logic of mind-body duality inside out, or the separation of mind-body that the Enlightenment mindset projected upon the social sciences in the late 19th century, which eventually resulted in the “compartmentalization” of disciplines in early 20th century academia. The process of splitting of the humanities meant the relegation of “emotions” to the fringes of Freudian and social psychology that treated collective action as pathological outbursts of crowds. Rational choice, resource mobilization theories and political explanations tried to disprove the crowd theories by taking the reverse path, which in effect eclipsed the emotive structures in the realm of politics. Although the next-generation of critical theory scholars tried to bring emotions back into the panorama of social movements, they did not go beyond viewing them as isolated building blocks of collective action itself, thereby underestimating the significance of the habitus they were placed in (Calhoun 2009, 47-48, 54-56) as well as memories they were conjured, as I have detailed above in the discussion with respect to the paradigm shifts.

For my purposes in the name of relating emotions to wider structural forms I argue that we must reimagine repertoires of collective action, specifically the repertoire of the post-modern urban commune as affective phenomena that operate at the confluence of consciousness/rational, ideological realm, reflexive emotions, political imaginaries, memory and most importantly the bodily experience in the course of the protest practice itself. Such a assessment I argue corresponds to the ontological definition of affect made by Brian Massumi; a prominent social theorist in this emerging field (Massumi 2002, 1–15).
Contrary to the logic of imagining social protest repertoires that revolves around emotive domains merely rooted in structural mechanisms, which draws the contours of identity against other actors as Tilly recently argued, I suggest that commune repertoire is also very well related to the “affective intensities” caused by dramatic incidents disturbing the routines and rhythms of everyday political and social life (Bartelson and Murphie 2010). More importantly, it is also related to memories that carry on both local and global political imaginaries (Lustiger-Thaler 2014) to bodily encounters made between the individualized subjectivities that occur and unfold in and through the process of the repertoire itself.

Varying the statements made in the newly emerging affect literature, critical anthropological approaches to the bodily state of being joined together also point out that under certain conditions collective action acquire a mystical and “sacred” sense that can hardly be explained in terms of rational domains and human consciousness. Coming from this angle, “communitas” writes Edith Turner is “the sense felt by a group of people when their life together takes on full meaning,” which manifests itself spontaneously in liminal spatio-temporalities and mystical practices that are performed in ritualistic sense such as tribal ceremonies, festivals, carnivalesque events, music gigs, ecological protests and even in revolutionary situations. They are esoteric “Les Rites De Passage” in and through which a group of people get connected to a higher “affective” mood that transcends the realm of consciousness as well as the temporality of the action itself (Turner 2012, 1–7).

In a very similar fashion, critical sociologist Bronislav Szerszynski also addresses affective aspects of certain human behaviors and acts that tend to acquire a sacred content whereby he asks us to carefully consider the example of a “young” eco-protester who “locks themselves to the top of a swaying tree” in order to prevent the construction of a road or complete destruction of a green space. Accordingly, he introduces the term “post-modern sacred,” and notes that such affective reactions and protest repertoires are “new forms of enchantment” to nature in a modern cosmos that is assumed to be totally “profane” (Szerszynski 2008, 8). Szerszynski, in other words, gives meaning to such affective eco-protest performances through the prism of new ways of doing religion and notes these reflexive defensive protest
practices reflect our instinctive spiritual needs and desires to make connection with nature, which is imagined and believed to be a living, “sacred” organism, especially in the life-world of eco-protesters. The invites the following rhetoric: How come nature acquires a sacred meaning in modern secular society for post-modern subjectivities?

Coming from a genealogical discussion on the historical trajectory of mainstream religions, he argues that such post-modern sacred protest praxes and sacralized abstract objects ideals like nature actually operate as affective mechanisms/ingredients that fill in the void left by the gradual disappearance of Abrahamic religions in modern societies (Szerszynski 2008, 15, 1999). Through such affective protest performances and everyday practices in general, nature itself as an abstract object, therefore, arises as a sacred phenomenon to be protected, worshiped and even to be sacrificed for its sake at some points. Szerszynski in this regard draws parallels between what he characterizes as “new ways of enchantment to nature” (Szerszynski 2008, 6) and the pagan and nomadic communes of the late antiquity where forces of nature, certain eco-systems or objects of nature held sacred values and meanings. Just like humans and other living creatures, such natural phenomena were believed to have souls and spirits connecting all other living creatures to the core in pre-modern communal societies.

Accordingly, he reminds us that pre-modern living forms and polytheistic, paganistic belief systems nonetheless gradually came under the pressure from mainstream religions as the latter began to permeate through the daily life practices and quotidian worlds of societies. What came along with that process itself was the emergence of modern sovereign governing political systems, which first manifested themselves in the form of small, feudalistic kingdoms and belief systems that were built on the notion of the so-called one true god. The pre-modern communes and their living forms that were usually cut off from the rest of the world as well as their traditional norms and values nevertheless did not entirely disappear into the background of the gradually crystalizing modern governmentality. In fact, as the profane, secular institutional societal forms began to make themselves more felt in and through the Enlightenment logic and hegemonic administrative and belief systems, the sacredness of the pre-
modernity continued to float over the social tensions that came along with the first waves of capitalism.

Not all of aspects of the modern life in other words were cleared off the sacredness of the antiquity. The sacred condition retained its presence in the private spheres of communities and subjectivities that were not absorbed by the secular way of life. Concomitantly, as the material institutional living ways and monotheistic belief systems lost their power and capacity to provide meaning for modern subjectivities in modern times, the tension between the institutional world and pre-modern belief systems ramified through the rifts and cracks, which surfaced between the public and private spheres of late-capitalism. New modern subjects freed from the “institutional moorings” of the old of forms of religion in other words re-created and re-invited their own sacred meanings, places, and objects in and through the residual elements and ingredients of pre-modern belief systems. Such cultural and religious reinventions have the tendency to surface in the “dramatic” protest repertoires of environmental politics (Szerszynski 2008, 15, 1999) as well as in other post-religious daily life practices.

In my reading, this crystalizing post-sacred state of being may be simply associated with spiritual new age belief systems that challenge anthropocentric views in our neoliberalizing world. Nevertheless, I suggest, it cannot merely be explained in terms of the relegation of mainstream and orthodox religions from our life-worlds. The sacralization of nature and green sensitivity itself in general is in fact a recurrent phenomenon throughout the history of modern capitalism and may also very well be approached and grasped through Marxist geographic lenses, which show us the implications of the ebbs and flows of the systemic formation. In this regard, I would argue that nature comes into prominence, and thereby acquires a new sacred meaning, especially in times of accelerated systemic transformations or crises when the implications of economic and sociopolitical dissolution reach certain thresholds.

In times of systemic turbulences in a similar fashion to sociocultural dynamics taking places in urban spatiality as I have addressed above, nature itself gets more exposure to the processes of decay and decomposition. The lobotomizing sense of living in growing industrial towns and working in factories and decreasing connection the nature, of which resources are used and exploited to supply growing cities
and factories of production, understandably result in the increase in bodily incentives for getting closer to green areas. For instance, in the rapid industrialization of late 19th Britain, a widespread environmental sensitivity emerged along with the utopian communes creating alternatives to decaying social relations (Szerszynski 2008, 105). The first wave of the systemic turbulence that gave inspiration to utopian socialist Robert Owen to conceptualize communal living forms as a “scientific” alternative to capitalist societies. Thus, desires for communitarian forms of living or commune repertoire accompany the ebbs and flows of the systemic formation as well as the sanctification of particular practices and phenomena like nature.

Our social cosmos in the new millennium is being left exposed to another systemic turbulence in the history of capitalism. We are in other words looking at another chapter of an over-accumulation crisis, which financial capital and their organic ruling elites and technocrats in the driving seats of countries try to overcome through the methods of acceleration of temporality and expansion of spatiality, as Marx suggested before urban geographers. Accordingly, social worlds in conjunction with political ecosystems are changing their forms in the way that happened in late 19th century, in the inter-war period and in the post-Fordist era. Nonetheless, to me the upheavals of new millennium seem to be undermining the building blocks of our modern ways of livings, rather than transforming them. In other words, the “social” as we know has been going through a process of “decomposition,” as Touraine puts it, rather than metamorphosis. The institutional frameworks of the 20th century like nation-states, metropolitan cities, orthodox religious and political formations as well as the realm of working in parallel to old left politics, all exhausted their potential to hold citizens together and generate meaning for their lives. “We are living through the end of the “‘social’ representations,” as Touraine puts it (Touraine 2007, 45,64,130).

By echoing Szerszynski, Touraine also associates the end of the social with the failure of European modernity that imposes a secular vision of life to hold society together in a Rousseauian manner (Touraine 2007, 91). The more secularization attempts to “recharge” the social, “the more sacred world
comes to us,” he adds. As I have suggested above, for Touraine, the communitarian and sacred response correspond to the atomization of Islamic and communal sectarian movements in general (Touraine 2007, 16), rather than the post-sacred values that manifest themselves in a more positive light like we see in the eco-struggles. In other words, unlike Szerszynski, Touraine seems to be painting a bleaker vision of our crumbling modern secular cosmos. Nonetheless, as being one of the prominent architects of new social movement theories, he also mentions the ways in which abstract notions like nature has the potential to fill the space left by the void of the social by bringing “cultural” movements to our emotional and social world (Touraine 2007, 24). Thus, he envisages that new protest repertoires of the new millennium as well as party politics will have a tendency to take shape around abstract but sacralized phenomena like religion or nature around which individualized, fragmented subjectivities will be spinning the webs of communitarian forms of living. I would argue that ethnographic evidences and findings obtained through the Gezi Commune seem to be verifying such assessments and projections over the future of the protest repertoires as well as our newly crystalizing post-modern sacralized social world.

The critical sociological approaches to the notion of new belief systems, spirituality and nature, and anthropological interpretations on the affective state of being together, and the general ethical critique Touraine presents with respect to the Western modernity, I would argue, helps us to imagine communes like Gezi as sites where environmental concerns, eco-sensitivity, post-religious values and visions emerge, crystalize and diffuse in and through communally performed ritualistic activities mostly related with nature and mystical art stages. In other words, commune repertoires are very much embedded in the causes that take shape around environmental degradation and they may be viewed as harbingers of new cultural protest repertoires, which would reach beyond values of our secular societies. Under the conditions of late capitalism, where affective acts gain more prominence because of lobotomizing effects of a fully materialized and digitized social cosmos and sprawling metropolises I suggest, communes feature a yearning for a lost mythical way of communal life, which is believed to be built on the notion of a sacred unity with nature as well as other living forms. In brief, a critical ontological approach disrupting
the mind-body and the notion of rationalist agency in the social sciences, I argue, is necessary in understanding communes repertoires and their affective and reflexive acts, which are becoming more prevalent in today’s gradually (re)sacralizing world.

3.6 The Relationship Between Political Context and Repertoires

The eclectic theoretical model I have mapped out, which basically combines more critical structural approaches to social movements with greater attention to the changing patterns of community formation and the role of affect and emotion in forging new political subjectivities and cross-cutting the cultural fragmentation of the “ecumenopolises” of the contemporary world, appears to be downplaying the role of political milieus. But as I have emphasized above, this newly crystalizing contemporary form of social protest is also embedded in the conscious decision making mechanisms and memories that are passed down through the local sociopolitical spatio-temporality, which actually correspond to one of the components of affect I listed above. Thus, the regressive political dynamics or arising political opportunities in regime space are the variables to which we cannot turn a blind eye. Considering the regressive and undemocratic nature of the post-2000 political climate—which opened the path for synthesis approaches in the social movement studies, as I indicated above—I would further argue that there is a visible, concrete relationship between the regimes displaying authoritarian tendencies and the capitalist urbanization process itself, which also manifests itself in the symbolic realms.

Second Empire Paris for instance became a ground for urban renewal initiatives in order to demonstrate the mythical and sublime temporality that the Emperor desired to reflect. Haussmann’s projects also aimed to establish the solid, middle-class base for the regime he desired to maintain. The city’s space and living spaces of dwellers was remolded in accordance with Haussmann’s ambitious projects (D. Harvey 2004, 1–20). In a strikingly similar fashion, Milan is an expression of the power of Duce Mussolini’s fascistic regime in the 1940s. Stazione centrale along with the box shaped residence blocks built for the labor classes working in the car factories are a few monumental architectural designs of the legacy of that mindset. Another example addressed in the introductory chapter, the capital city of
modern Turkey, was established over a small village in the heartland of Anatolia in the 1930s. Ankara reflects the modernist ethos of a re-imagined Turkish ethnicity in a militarist sense with its wide boulevards, iconographic and cubic monumental buildings evoking the sublimity of a lost secular identity and well planned urban environment. In brief, it would not be entirely wrong to state that increasing authoritarian tendencies in times of systemic turbulences reflect themselves over architectural styles as well as allocation of city space for certain segments of society. Thus, political ecosystems and hegemonic formations are parts and parcels of the commune repertoires as well.

But how has the current hegemonic formations of a regime forged by layering the new neoliberal Islamist AKP over the one-party republic of the inter-war era diverged from other political settings in terms of the nature of contentious political dynamics? To what extent have the legacies of previous repertoires in the local political protest culture influenced the Gezi Commune? How can we relate Gezi to broader structural dynamics that have taken in Turkey’s past? Answering these questions requires a historical investigation into the peculiarities of Turkish politics and its idiosyncratic protest culture. Such an investigation will not only enable us to shed light on the local subjective conditions of Gezi’s, but also disrupt clichéd center-periphery and state-class narrations in the context of Asia Minor in the next chapter.
Chapter 4  The Turkish “Composite Regime:” Repertoires of Contention

Before the Commune

The commune of 2013 may not seem to embody a direct political challenge to the multi-legged operational logic of ideological mechanisms in Turkey. Yet when viewed in a 100-year perspective, Gezi was actually an attempt on a cultural and symbolic ground to break through the political polarization and the socio-ethnic fault lines that hitherto had defined and sustained the paradoxical nature of Turkish nationalism. In a Tillean sense, I suggest it has opened up another chapter in the contentious repertoires of Asia Minor. Future forms of collective action and new contentious episodes in Turkey’s tumultuous political culture will undoubtedly be referenced according to the legacy that Gezi left behind. In this chapter, in order to pinpoint its place in the spatio-temporality of local contentious episodes and to shed light on the ways in which repertoire of commune performed in Asia Minor has changed the trajectory and nature of collective action in general I am deploying the term of “composite regime,” coined by Tilly and his colleague Sidney Tarrow.

A composite regime is made of segmented actors that have a tendency to polarize mainly along cultural, ethnic and religious fault lines. “Polarization involves,” say Till and Tarrow “distance between the wings of an once unified movement sector” (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 180). As well, composite regimes involve mediatory international actors, guarantor states and historical connections that are either inherited from a colonial or an imagined mythic past. The term, I suggest, was primarily coined to expand the explanatory scope of Tilly’s general regime-repertoire typology by bringing mediatory international actors holding relatively less ambitious agendas into play in his Machiavellian political ecosystem, which was insulated from outside dynamics at play beyond the black-box of nation-state.
But more important than that, I suggest composite regime also aims at discussing the co-existence of pseudo democratic landscapes with social movements, or repertoires of contentions that produce “lethal” implications, a condition that raises a conundrum in Tilly’s general regime-repertoire framework given that he argues violence tended to lessen in high-state capacity democratic, or high-state capacity-undemocratic examples (Tilly 2008, 175–99). Thus, composite regime not only enables us to see “variations within regimes” types (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 55) but provides us with the critical lens to give meaning to paradoxical co-existence of pseudo democratic regimes applying repressive methods with social movements displaying tendencies to perform repertoires that fall at odds with legal structures. In effect, this creates a tumultuous political culture that has a tendency to lead to lethal implications for populations residing in regime spaces. The cases of horizontally segmented Northern Ireland and transnationally-segmented Palestine/Israel, both of which have been shaped by colonial legacies inherited from the 19th century, exemplify the term (Tilly and Tarrow 2015, 163–81).

Unlike the examples of Ireland and Palestine/Israel, the nature of contentious politics unfolding in Asia Minor is not cross-border. Turkey in other words does not possess a segmented regime that is partially recognized or disputed by the other actors of the international arena. Nonetheless, the space in which in politics is performed seem to be symbolically and culturally bordered by three main ideological nodes; these are étatist-secularism, ethno-nationalism and neoliberal/Islamism, as well as their derivations them. More importantly, the imagination of the Western world as a political discourse is, I would argue, among the significant factors that influence and shape the regime space itself as a trans-state element. Undoubtedly, the Turkey’s never-ending journey with the EU carries that discursive effect from the realm of semiotics to a more institutional level.

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15 Tilly measures democratic level of a regime according to ratings announced by Freedom House association located in New York (Tilly 2008, 181). He nonetheless does not clearly indicate what state capacity mean for him and how he categorizes that in parallel to his general schema. Since one of the primary objectives of this chapter is to critically approach these two categories, I will also not be relying on any statistical findings while discussing the regime of Turkey and its idiosyncratic state capacity and democratic conditions. In fact, by doing so I will attempt to make the concept of regime space dynamic, which I argue appears to be static in Tilly’s general framework.
In this section, I am re-conceptualizing the nature of the Turkish contentious politics as another example of composite regime systems for the following reasons: first, the main contesting actors, the Islamist/Pan-Turkist and secular nationalist flanks of the hegemonic ideology were once unified actors during the disintegration process of the Ottoman Empire and independence movement of the 1920s. This seemingly polarized regime space nonetheless paradoxically also created what I imagine as a sociopolitical confluence, which corresponds to Luis Althusser’s term of “ruptural unity,”16 where these main contesting actors, their social bases, relatively smaller political agents what I characterize as swing-byes and for sure—including the Turkish army that intervened into the politics respectively in 1960, 1971 and 1980—come together over the matters of populism, charismatic leadership cult, nationalist agitation and the logic of the maintenance of an economy based on market principles. Without a doubt in and through nuances of the systemic formations desire to be preserved. Thus, rather than a mere site of polarization I am more inclined toward viewing the Turkish regime space and its founding nationalist ideology that rises on as a mechanism that sustains and preserves itself in and through the contention and paradoxical politics it produces.

Secondly, I argue Turkey, as an example that could be categorized under the rubric of semi-periphery according to the world system analysis, does not fit any of Tilly’s clear cut categories of low-state capacity-undemocratic, low state-democracy, high-state capacity undemocratic and high-state capacity democratic. In fact, as this section will be demonstrating, Asia Minor actually navigates somewhere between the four quadrants of Tilly’s categorization map of the state power and democracy. In other words, it displays different variations of regime space simultaneously and wobbles over the all four quadrants throughout its almost 100-year modernization journey. Thus, my reading of the Turkish

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16 The metaphor of sociopolitical confluence here may be comparable to Althusser’s expression of “over-determined contradictions.” By that he means the “accumulation and exacerbation of historical contradictions.” Accordingly, he introduces another the term, “ruptural unity,” which simply designates the amalgamation of the contesting interests of ruling and bourgeois classes. Althusser reminds us that revolutionary, transformative processual events in sociopolitical cosmos take place when contesting class interests fuse into a “unity” in and through “exceptional” circumstances and “subjective conditions.” And as this chapter will demonstrate military coups in Turkey operates as ruptural mechanisms in terms of class and politics. (Althusser 1969, 96–100).
politics in the context of composite regime gives a more dynamic outlook to the concept of regime space.

Thirdly, as I suggested, general political discourses and rhetoric have been pretty much influenced by international dynamics and actors because of the paradoxical occidentalist imaginaries rooted in the ideological lexicon. In other words, Turkish nationalism shares characteristics with other third-world nationalisms that simultaneously embrace material and technological aspects of Western modernity, but take a defensive stance against its colonial ambitions both on the cultural and discursive practical grounds. This chapter exemplifies this paradoxical state of being with respect to the Occident by drawing attention to the fact that the modern Turkey was founded in the midst of a disintegrating cosmopolitan empire fractured by imperialist forces during the World War I, and more importantly by emphasizing the ways in which Cold War politics, or put more accurately, discourses of a bi-polar world remolded the contentious repertoires of developmentalist Turkey, which resulted in the massacres of progressive political actors. Moreover, it will also demonstrate how these contentious repertoires with lethal implications morphed into the guerilla warfare conducted by the Kurdish resistance movement in the neoliberalizing era. Lastly, as I suggested above, Gezi features the commencement of a distinctive contentious episode in the history of Asia Minor. It was a global social protest form that normatively and symbolically challenged the main ingredients that had hitherto defined the nature of the political ecosystem. These included Kemalism’s exclusionary Rousseauian public sphere understanding, the neoliberalizing political Islam that is positioned against it and ethno-nationalism of Pan-Turkism, which takes on ethnic Kurdish nationalism.

This section divides contentious repertoires of Turkey into three main historical episodes: first, from the late 19th century to the post-war era where the building blocks of the founding ideology were erected. This phase also includes the split in the Turkish independence movement that gave birth to the secular laic citizenship imaginations of the 1930s, which laid the foundations of contemporary forms of contention. Second, the developmentalist era from 1960-1980, a decade where regime space became more multi-layered and tumultuous in and through the rise of working-class movements, paramilitary right-
wing groups and a set of military interventions in the midst of Cold War politics. Lastly, post-1980 neoliberalizing Turkey, through which ecumenical implications of identity politics in belated modern milieu will be mapped. Each contentious episode will be marked by protest events and mobilization practices that took lives of actors of collective action.

Discussing the nature of regime in Asia Minor under the rubric of composite regime will enable us to see another distinctive pattern with respect to regimes displaying variations and prescribing lethal protest repertoires. I argue that fluctuations in the levels of democracy and state-capacity are more likely to be observed when state-building and citizenship configuration processes converge with one another because such a condition is almost set by default in the context of belated nationalisms. And the condition of being latecomer to nationalism means demarcating the distinctiveness of official national identity along religious and cultural lines both against the West as well as other liminal identities that are assumed to be threats to its uniqueness and existence. In that sense, I suggest the Turkish experience, which takes a paradoxical stance against the Occident and views the Islamic ingredients and non-Muslim identities as cultural threats to its raison d’être, display similarities with contentious repertoires performed in the Israeli-Palestine and Irish cases.

4.1 A Laic Organic Nation-State Founded upon a Disintegrating Empire

The state-building process in Asia Minor coincides with the disintegration of seemingly cosmopolitan empire that had a socio-political texture actually, which gradually acquired a more Islamized tone due to the loss of the Balkan lands in the late 19th century following set of systemic wars that unfolded before First World War (Ortaylı 1999, 59–61). In a disintegrating multi-religious multi-ethnic empire at the periphery where non-Muslim communities constituted the bulk of trading bourgeois classes and even some portions of bureaucratic circles at key positions, the constitutionalist army officers that simultaneously demanded a fully-fledged parliamentarian rule against the crumbling monarchic administration and foregrounded the solution of an obedient, local, Islamic bourgeois against the problem
of the so-called treacherous non-Muslim merchants and their communities, which were caught up in the allure of nationalist ideologies that had been permeating throughout Europe (Keyder 1987, 49–69). Expressed different, the panacea of a more Islamic social base was put forwarded by the revolutionary army officers to cure the so-called “sick man of Europe.” The strategy of building a new regime over an ethnically less-heterogeneous but more Islamized social texture perhaps could not put a stop to the disintegration of the empire, but provided the Unity and Progress cadres with a social base to survive the catastrophe of World War I within borders of Anatolia, against all odds. More importantly, it also fueled mobilization sentiment to form an independence movement to clear the lands under occupation of imperialist forces.

The Turkish independence movement of the early 1920s nonetheless tended to leave the Muslim bourgeois solution behind as well as irredentist aspirations of Pan-Turkism, which resulted in ideological differences of opinion and hierarchical struggles within the movement itself. In fact, I suggest such a simmering in the elite army cadres arose because the belief in the binding power of the Islamic cement was entirely undermined in the secularist flank since the caliphate in the port city failed to mobilize the Muslim populations in the Middle East against the imperialist forces during the big war that ripped apart the empire. In other words, the loss of the colonies in the Levant proved the inefficacy of Islam as social cement. The rise of a more distilled, purified secular nationhood imagination was marked by the marginalization of the Pan-Turkist flank of the Unity and Progress cadres—which was more open to the Islamic visions—in the movement and the decision to move the capital to a Ankara, small town in the middle of Anatolia. This strategic and symbolic move also clinched Atatürk’s leadership in the hierarchy of politics and the independence army. He was one of the prominent army generals that outmaneuvered all other significant leader figures through his charismatic persona and so-called epic military victories won in Anatolia.

As the battle of “independence” against the Greek communities, which were allegedly waging a proxy-war under the protectorate of the British Empire, and the Kurdish independence struggle that was
using a Islamic rhetoric to justify its claims over in the Eastern regions of the country unfolded in the early and mid 1920s, the notion of Islamic bourgeois gave way to a new citizenship imagination that embraced the distilled Turkish ethnicity along with a secular way of life. As a result, this new citizenship configuration squeezed the religion and vernacular traditions within the borders of the private sphere and daily life practices. Such Rousseauian visions of society gained more recognition among the founding elites when Grand National Assembly of Turkey, which was recognized at the international platform through the Treaty of Lausanne, permanently abolished the Ottoman Sultanate in 1922. This meant the commencement of processes of building new state institutions and formulating citizenship models that unfolded in a decade where the logic of a corporatist, organic, homogenous national unity under a charismatic leadership cult arose as a common and widespread sociopolitical formation in the inter-war period, especially in southern Europe.

When the threat created by Duce’s Italy began to reverberate across Europe and reached to the Aegean Islands, the fear of another war was coupled with the emotional legacy of a disintegrating empire that even failed to bind to the non-Turkic minorities in the imaginations of the founding elites of new Turkey because of the necessity of embattled citizens. As a result of this bleak international climate that began to manifest itself following the failures of the League of Nations and the United States’ isolation policy, the founding secular ideology that the nation-building elites cut to fit over the society arose as a social contract lacking the libertarian and inclusive principles seen in 18th and 19th century Europe. The liberal-democratic principles of the last century were in other words traded with the widespread authoritarian regime characteristics of early 20th century Europe in order to keep the newly founded, fragile nation alive and integrated in the prospect of another systemic war on a global scale. Undoubtedly, uprisings that carried ethno-religious tones and erupted on the fringes of the country convinced the founding elites to tighten the ropes over society as well. The spirit of the solidarist-corporatist social contract—in which the logic of “enlightened” and secular but obedient and combat-ready citizenship

17 The founding document of Turkey, Lausanne Treaty, article 34, implicitly points to the “non Turkic” minorities and their rights within that context.

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fabrication was prioritized over egalitarian constitutional principles—projected itself over the modernization project initiated by the founding party, the CHP and its overall policies in the 1930s and 1940s.

The modernization project designed by the CHP, which arose out of the independence movement along with the parliamentarians that came from Istanbul following the abolition of the monarchic administration, thus began to take shape under the harsh political and ideological climate of the inter-war period. Also known as the Kemalist modernization project in the literature, it nonetheless, I suggest, remained within the borders of cultural realms because of the worsening global economic conditions, which left latecomers to the industrialization process with no option but to follow protectionist policies against the economic hegemony of metropolitan world. A state-led industrialization process in a closed economy not only hindered the consolidation of a social base in an ideal capitalist sense but also rendered as problem the cultural policies of the modernization project, which had been implemented in a top-down, as happened in the of non-Western world. Cultural policies implemented by the young army officers coming from the lost Balkan lands of the disintegrating empire along with romantic men of letters who fled from the Caucasus because of the oppression against Islamic-Turkic communities did not fully resonate with the periphery of the country, the peasant populations of Anatolia. I would argue that, in some cases, this was because of the low state capacity and lack of technological infrastructure (Ahıska 2010)\textsuperscript{18} and in other cases it was because these policies themselves failed to develop affective ties between the ruling elites and masses.\textsuperscript{19} Consequently, the top-down imposition of Western modernity in the cultural realms atomized vernacular and traditional values, thereby creating a chasm between the

\textsuperscript{18} Radio was one of the significant nation-building apparatuses not only in the context of the developing world but also in industrialized nations as well. Nonetheless, in the Turkish case it was only able to reach urban dwellers, though the elites believed otherwise. Most of the households in the countryside did not possess receivers except public houses and town centers. For a detailed account of the history Turkish radiobroadcasting see Meltem Ahıska, “Occidentalism in Turkey: Questions of Modernity and National Identity in Turkish Radiobroadcasting,” I.B Tauris Publishers, London&New York, 2010.

\textsuperscript{19} The so-called music revolution unfolding throughout the 1930s and 1940s may be viewed as a case where the ruling elites failed to establish an affective connection with the provincial classes of Asia Minor, which may be exemplified by the so-called polyphonic folk tunes that did not appeal to broader segments of the public.
ruling elites and the life-world of provincial classes in the heydays of the one-party era of the 1930s, which is also known as “high Kemalist years.”

The emotional rift between the republican elites and provincial segments of the society not only opened a path for cultural reinventions of the ruled populations in their private spheres, but also enabled conservative-liberal parties to base their raison d’être and moral justification on the logic of representing provincial classes, their traditional values and life-world. It would not be entirely wrong to suggest that the cultural penetrations made in and through the modernization project itself politicized the conservative-Islamic vein. In the late 1940s, the DP of Turkey, with a liberal-conservative outlook unlike their counterparts in the United States, replaced the CHP’s hegemonic position by capturing a majority of the votes of provincial classes along with the Muslim bourgeois in the urban cities, which gradually replaced the non-Muslim merchants and communities through the systematic population policies applied by the CHP itself throughout the 1930s and 1940s.

What is ironic is that the bulk of the DP cadres were mostly constituted by parliamentarians coming from the conservative flank of the CHP that gave support to the independence movement but were alienated as a result of the party’s protectionist economic policies that fell at odds with the interests of the big landowners in the countryside. They also included politicians from the former Istanbul parliament. Along with two charismatic leaders, İsmet İnönü from the republican side and Adnan Menderes from the democrats who attempted to fill the void left after Atatürk’s death in 1938, the fierce competition between these once unified political veins in an electoral system based on the winner-takes-all principle sowed the seeds of populism in Turkish political culture (Keyder 1987, 117–140).

Milking the global conjectural geopolitics and relatively more liberal economic climate of the 1950s, the representatives of the DP clinched their political dominance at the periphery of the country by firming up their base in the provincial electoral votes. Not only the mechanized agricultural equipment that came from overseas along with the efforts to rebuild Europe against the so-called red threat in the post-war era, but also the ossifying Islamic petit bourgeois that preyed on the proprieties of the non-
Muslims in the urban center in other words gave leverage to the democrats against the republicans in the very first elections of late capitalism. Without a doubt, that was due to a relative economic betterment in the country that made the impoverished segments of society more content. As the favorable influences of Marshall Aids and the Korean War, which played into the hands of grain-exporting developing countries such as Turkey, gradually shifted toward more planned economic visions in accordance with the Keynesian prescriptions in the mid 1950s, the DP’s initial elector success nonetheless crumbled. As a result of re-emergence of the bleak economic conditions once again triggered by transitions in the global economic order, the provincial votes slid back toward the CHP and other newly emerging minor nationalist actors such as the Republican National Peasant Party.  

The DP party’s charismatic leader, Prime Minister Menderes attempted to slow down this downward momentum by sabotaging prospect election alliances between the CHP and new party actors emerging in regime space through snap elections strategies. Moreover, he directed treasury money accumulated during the İnönü era to extravagant infrastructural project in the growing urban centers. In other words, the DP tried to hold on to power by pursuing economic populist policies that would please urban voters instead of provincial vote base, who concomitantly became a less significant factor in determining the outcome of elections as a result of the first migration wave to urban centers caused by agricultural mechanization.

The strategy of setting sights on winning the votes of proliferating petit bourgeois classes in growing cities was in fact more compatible with the laissez-faire logic that the DP represented in the eyes of society against étatist Kemalism. Nonetheless, because of economic stagnations caused by extravagant infrastructural expenditures, the Menderes administration became more inclined toward intervening in the economy in order to bring it to its so-called optimum level in the mid 1950s. When the persistent belief in the power of invisible hand was coupled with draconian measures to save the economy from total  

\[20\] The Republican National Peasant Party evolved into the Nationalist Movement Party in the 1960s under the leadership of Arparslan Türkçeş, who was a former lieutenant among the cadre of army officers that organized the 1960 coup d’état.  

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collapse it meant complete economic failure towards end of the 1960s. More importantly, populist policies did not lead to the desired electoral outcomes. On the contrary, interventionist strategies made to fund the populist expenditures alienated the merchants in urban centers and more importantly big capitalists of the industrializing country. As the votes continued to slide into the other parties, the DP’s arbitrary, cunning political maneuvers like snap elections became more sharpened and began to threaten the constitutional framework that the Kemalist cadres crafted.

As a result of this chaotic economic and political climate, there emerged a widespread public discontent in the society, stretching from the big bourgeois blocks, which was desiring a more regulated economic structure to make investments, to the university students and young nationalist army officers that staged several demonstrations and sit-in at the university campuses and streets to protest DP’s arbitrary policies (Ahmad 2002, 111–17). Menderes nonetheless tried to cling on power by utilizing the charismatic leadership cult created in the republican era. He responded to erupting protest events by organizing his own rallies in provincial towns as well as at symbolically significant public squares like Kızılay in the capital (Yücel 2002, 842–43). As such, the DP deployed all sorts of undemocratic measures through state apparatuses formed in the 1930s and 1940s to ban and crack down on the demonstrations and rallies organized by dissident segments.

Such an uncompromising political stance feeding on the polarization and contention energy in everyday politics prescribed clandestine mobilization repertoires through which opposition movements succeeded in gathering in public spaces despite all the arbitrarily declared martial laws and police brutality. In one of these clandestinely-organized protest events, given the secret code called 555K, meaning 5 May at 5 o’clock at the same spot, dozens of young dissident crowds to gathered Güven Park, which is located right by the parliament building in Ankara. In this gathering, slogans of “freedom” (hürriyet) were shouted right at the prime minister’s face, who attempted to physically confront the crowd (Dündar 2014). The killing of a young university student in one of these eventful protests prepared the legitimate basis of the 1960 coup in Asia Minor.
4.2 The Rise of the Developmentalist State in Asia Minor: From Military Coup to an “Institutional Revolution” in the Midst of the Cold War Politics

With the overall public discontent stretching from the big manufacturing bourgeois to young segments of the society, which manifested itself in barracks, university campuses, eventful protests and ballots, along with arbitrary political decisions and corruption scandals of leading figures in the DP, the Turkish army was left with no choice but to intervene into the politics on behalf of the so-called common sense. The coup d’état of 1960 was organized by a cluster of young nationalist young officers including Alparslan Türkeş who were marginalized both during both the CHP and DP governments because of their extreme Turkist visions, which were at odds with the pro-Western policies of the republic in general (Ahmad 2002, 123–25). The short-lived coup administration nonetheless declared its neutrality right after following the intervention.

Unlike other cases in the developing world, especially compared to the long-term seen ones seen in Latin America and Greece, the junta administrations in Asia Minor tended to last not more than two years. In this regard, as argued by William Hale, they arose as transformative events opening the path for pseudo democratic systems, rather than consolidated authoritarian regimes of a class of oligarchic colonels (Hale 2013). The 1960 coup may actually be viewed as the genesis that placed this tradition in the Turkish politics. The 27 May administration emphasized the necessity of elections under a new constitution immediately following the coup.

Following the declaration of free elections, a group of technocrats, including lawyers with connections to the CHP as well as academics oppressed by the DP’s rule, were tasked with drawing the

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21 There is a common assumption that associates the army with the CHP as the “old guardians of the state.” The intellectual pedigree of this reductionism appears to derive from several important social scientist accounts, including that of Şerif Mardin [particularly his centre-periphery analysis (Mardin 1960)] and Çaglar Keyder’s analysis of the state-class relations that combined some degree of Weberian analysis with dependency theory (Keyder 1987). In fact, a truly cordial relationship between the Turkish army and the CHP leadership was not typical, especially during the early years of the republic and military interventions.
contours of the new constitutional system. In accordance with the neutral spirit of the coup, the new constitutional framework was designed to prevent the amalgamation of power in the hands of one political actor, as had happened in previous decades, by introducing a two-legged executive system. The committee of technocrats modeled the new constitution on the American presidential system. The upper house of the parliament and the senate of the republic therefore came along with the new proportional electoral system in this new form of governance. More importantly, civil rights and liberties were broadened in an unprecedented fashion in the name of increasing the checks and balances mechanisms along with the introduction of a new judicial body. The constitutional court through which citizens were given the right to apply for appeal individually accompanied the new executive system.

Through the shifts and structural transformations in the executive and judicial realms, proliferating working class segments gained the right to unionize, lockout and strike collectively. These were constitutional rights that had not been allowed since the foundation of republic. In this regard, it would not be entirely wrong to state that the coup administration morphed into “institutional revolution,” as Ahmad puts it (Ahmad 2002, 125–27). Such a wave of change in the institutional landscape brought planned economies along with it, which reflected on the overall wealth standards of the country starting from the early 1960s. In this regard, I would argue that as Greece had been struggling with a series of far-right military junta dictatorships for a decade across the Aegean sea, Turkey during the first phase of the developmentalist era reached to the apogee of its democratic and economic potential, thereby emerging as an exemplary case in the literature on modernization on theoretical ground. As well, it became a role model for other so-called third-world countries in the Middle East on a practical ground, as I indicated in the introductory chapter.

In accordance with Keynesian economic prescriptions, the Important Substitution Industrialization (ISI)\textsuperscript{22} model along with a planned economic logic was introduced in order to avoid the

\textsuperscript{22} ISI is a set of economic strategies mostly applied in the developing world throughout the post-War decades that aims spark a belated industrialization process by gradually reducing imported manufactured goods through subsidization of technological advancements.
crises and stagnations that occurred in the DP era as well as populism, which atomized the society in the post-war period. The developmentalist strategies had worked for in favor of all class actors and social groups up until the late 1960s. Manufacturing capitalists enjoyed the privilege of state subsidies and protectionist tariffs. In a relatively less-restrained and free floating market dynamic, peasant and provincial classes were also made content through the reconsolidation of the subsidies and centralized agricultural policies, which primarily aimed to satisfy domestic demand. An economic system structured only for domestic consumption also meant higher wages for urban working and middle classes, which resulted in the increase of living standards and changing consumption patterns (Pamuk 2007, 118–26). It would not be entirely wrong to say the transition from an agrarian society to an industrialized one was accelerated in the Turkish experience through the planned economic strategies as well as international funds, which began to circulate in large amounts under the conditions of bipolar world politics in order to pull developing countries like Turkey into the liberal-democratic block.

Such an economic system shaped in accordance with the logic of state-led capitalism also brought new groups into the new regime system. Being the architects of this big wave of change, the military also took its place among other economic actors in industry and market through the foundations of its own charity association—known by its Turkish acronym OYAK— as well as its closed bazaars where families of army officers were able to buy consumer products at cheaper prices than average (Ahmad 2002, 11, 129–31). Making inroads into the market required developing organic connections with the political system as well. Some of the coup administration officers were appointed as “permanent delegates,” to the new senate whereas others were elected on regular bases. In a similar fashion, one of the prominent figures of the coup, Türkeş was elected as the president of the Republican National Peasant Party, which evolved into the MHP as the representation of the Pan-Turkism. Thus, democratic openings on the constitutional ground and overall betterment of markets accompanied unjust political and economic privileges that were given to the coup cadres.
The first post-coup elections were dominated by the successor of the DP, the Justice Party (AP) that was also first lead by a retired army officer. In a very similar fashion to the previous decades, the CHP came as the second biggest party in the ballots following the AP, which again appealed to the provincial classes and new migrants that brought their traditional lifestyles to industrializing cities of the developmentalist era. Both parties formed short-lived coalitions with one another or minority governments by supporting each other from outside channels of government. They also made political alliances with what I characterize as swing-byes, newly-crystallizing small party fractions, which had a tendency to pursue political and ideological agendas ranging from the conservative liberalism to Pan-Turkism, to fill in the vast power space that the new dispersed executive body required.

Besides the two-legged executive body, the new electoral system guaranteeing proportional representation was another factor lying behind the new balkanizing dynamic occurring in the political landscape. Concomitantly, as the urban proletariat developed in and through the burgeoning factories and state economic enterprises, developmentalist Turkey also witnessed the rise of unionist movements and the reconsolidation of Marxist parties such as the Workers’ Party, which was able to win 14 seats in the parliament in the 1965 election. The creation of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey, (DISK) in 1967, which separated itself from Turk-Is union, with a more revolutionary agenda in the political realm also contributed to this working-class motion of economic and institutional reforms. The regime space and the social texture therefore became more politicized and socially segmented when compared to the genesis of the composite regime. I would suggest that structural and institutional transformations were not the only factors lying beneath this segmentation process in the political ecosystem.

In the bipolar world order, Turkey, in tandem with Greece, was assumed to be strategic buffer zone against the expansion of the so-called red threat in the eastern and southern Europe as I suggested above. The bifurcated political actors of the two-party era—the CHP and DP—channeled the West’s strategic geopolitical interests in global politics throughout the 1940s and 1950s. Whereas pro-Western
policies were pursued in the name of becoming the so-called Western civilization for the republicans as the case of Baghdad Pact exemplifies, that meant finding credits to fuel populist policies for the democrats. This bipartisan pro-Western stance allowed a NATO membership in 1952 following the Korean War and Marshal Aid, which set Turkey down the path of the Western-liberal block in terms of economic interests. The Ankara Agreement signed in 1963 with the European Economic Community marked Asia Minor’s absorption process into late capitalism. Against the increasing dependent relations in the realm of economics and politics, there arose a widespread opposition against the pro-Western policies both in the crystalizing left and the radicalizing right-wing block actors. The source of this anti-Western sentiment may undoubtedly be related to the emotional legacy of the World War I that the founding ideology inherited. Regardless of their positionality in politics, both left and right blamed “imperialism” for leaving the country undeveloped, even though Asia Minor had never witnessed a fully-fledged, long lasting colonial rule akin to the ones established in the rest of the Orient.

This growing anti-Western sentiment acquired a more radical tone when the Cyprus crisis escalated in the mid 1960s. Turkey, as a guarantor country along with Greece and Britain, was forced to follow appeasement policies through economic sanctions and diplomatic notes given by the hegemonic force; the United States became more inclined to take all measures to protect the integrity of the Middle East and southern Europe against the increasing influence of the Soviet Union in Eastern Europe. Towards the end of the 1960s pacifist liberal stance of the AP and its new charismatic leader Süleyman Demirel’s began to draw reaction from all political actors. When that was coupled with the first signs of deteriorating economy, the Islamic-nationalist oriented National Salvation Party (MSP) and the Türkeş’s MHP emerged as actors playing on the votes of the lower-middle classes, which were unable to integrate themselves into the wealth of the developmentalist state (Ahmad 2002, 142–45).

Toward the end of the 1960s, the inward-looking industrialization process reached its natural boundaries, and thereby began to create large account deficits in the economy. Whereas countries applying outward-looking developmentalist strategies created “miracles,” as evidenced by Italy, the
Turkish entrepreneurs did not have to with foreign markets such as the ECC. A state supported closed economic system, in which the manufacturing capitalists did not have any incentive to make exports, therefore gradually became stagnant. More importantly, Asia Minor did not enjoy the privilege of tourism revenues that other countries on southern shores of Europe did (Sapelli 2014) A total economic bankruptcy was nonetheless delayed through the remittances sent by the migrant workers abroad, especially by the growing Turkish community living in Germany (Keyder 1987, 185) as well as by the international credits that kept flowing into the country up until the first shock waves of Oil Crisis reached the shores of Asia Minor (Pamuk 2007, 121–22).

Under the conditions of a gradually stagnating economy, it also became harder to absorb large supplies of workforce, which kept growing as a result of second-wave migration to urban centers. And some of segments of new young migrant populations looking for opportunities to integrate themselves to the urban life could not even access the free-higher education institutions because of the centralized, ineffective university entrance examination (Keyder 1987, 215–216). As a result of the crumbling economy, inefficient institutional mechanisms and the growing anti-Western sentiment, university campuses and streets in the country began to witness the increasing clashes taking place between atomized, radicalizing right and left groups. Despite the fact that both coalesced on the matter of “anti-Americanism,” which actually emerged as a global wave of anti-war movement against the invasion of Vietnam, dissidents inclined toward more leftist visions were demonized for putting the country on the track of “communism.”

Undoubtedly, such contentious encounters were organized in a more systemic manner on the side of right groups through underground state organizations and deep state formations, which had the logistical support of the hegemonic groups through NATO channels, similar to the illegal state extensions seen in the case of Gladio in Italy. The origins of such organizations like “Association to Combat against communism,” and the ones defending Islam “as an antidote to communism,” may actually be traced back to the late 1950s and early 1960s (Ahmad 2002, 142). In time, they evolved into more contra-guerilla style
paramilitary formations. The MHP’s youth organization, known as the Grey Wolfs that were trained in the fashion of Hitler’s SS groups carried out lethal attacks against the left in order to be the sole voice of anti-Americanism on the streets (Zürcher 2004, 257). In one of those assaults organized by “dark forces,” crowds made up of unionists and student groups that came together to protest the arrival of the American 6th fleet were targeted. The massacre known as the Bloody Sunday left 2 dead and 200 people wounded in Taksim Square, in 1969.

Not surprisingly, increasing tension in streets and squares reflecting on the macro-political landscape starting from the late 1960s. Conservative-liberal leader Demirel, taking the support of the CHP—which was more concerned with the chaotic turmoil that could take down the state—behind in the parliament as well as in the senate, attempted to reconsolidate his base in the lower middle classes by passing emergency laws. These laws primarily aimed to rein back the revolutionary syndicalist movements and the Workers’ Party in the parliament that was allegedly fueling the contention on the streets. Very similar to the DP’s last years in the government, such an uncompromising stance in defending the overall maintenance of the systemic formation led to another spontaneous protest repertoire in Turkish protest culture, which is known as 15/16 June Resistance (Ahmad 2002, 146). This time, nonetheless, the actors who performed the repertoire were the organized working classes rather than students and young military officers. Thousands of workers spontaneously marched on the main roads of Istanbul and occupied factories for two days including the one that was owned by Demirel’s brother.

Thus, in this new contentious episode, not only the social structures of the groups involved in the incident, but also the space in which the repertoire was performed by the dissident segments also changed. The uprising, which was organized and shaped accordance in with the unionist forms of politics in factories, blockaded an entire network of production line in the greater Marmara region surrounding Istanbul; the industrial hub of the country. Following the cycle of protests that showed a potential to spread throughout outer industrializing regions of the country, fingers were pointed to Demirel, and his liberal idealism, as well to his incompetent management of crisis situations, for dragging the country into
the “swamp of anarchism.” This time high-ranking senior military generals, who were keener to preserve
the developmentalist capitalism through their privileged position both in economic and political realms,
forced the Demirel administration to resign through a memorandum. Instead of tanks rolling on the grand
boulevards of Ankara, this time a written note that was read aloud on live TV and radio broadcasts ended
another contentious episode in Turkey’s tumultuous history.

4.3 The fall of the Developmentalist State: Repertoires of Contention between
1971-1980

Following the ultimatum given by military commanders emphasizing the urgent necessity for a
“strong and capable government” able to redress the “anarchical situation,” Demirel’s three consecutive
liberal conservative governments came to end in 1971. Such an official statement not only proved the
Turkish state’s decreasing capacity in crisis management situations, but also meant the commencement of
a process of reversing the democratic gains of the past decade. Not disrupting the nature of the military
tradition in Asia Minor, the memorandum immediately led to a pseudo civilian, transitory government,
which was “suggested,” to hold elections in 1973. The appointed head of the intern government was a
law professor and technocrat, Nihat Erım, who had cordial relations and close ties with both the right-
wing swing-byes, military and the nationalist cadres of the CHP.

The oppression targeting the counter-hegemonic movements and the left opposition became more
systemic under the law professor’s administration, which was likened to Ramsay Macdonald’s
government of 1931 in Britain by Erım himself. The systemic oppression of the counter-hegemonic actors
was legitimized in the name of, in his words, “preserving the integrity of the state, the nation, the
republic and national security and public order” (Ahmad 2002, 148–52). Thus, unlike the 1960 coup, this
semi-intervention into the political ecosystem aimed to delimit the borders of the space in which the
progressive politics and unionist movements proliferated in the democratic nature of developmentalist
state. This condition that I characterize as a sociopolitical confluence, which may be comparable to the
Althusser’s “ruptural untiy,” a concept I have noted above, not only provided a ground for the major actors and right-wing swing-byes to merge with one another—including the segments of society that they represent—over the hysteria of anarchism and communism, but also paradoxically and unexpectedly gave birth to a progressive internal party opposition within the CHP, which saw the future of the republic along the side of the targeted counter-hegemonic actors.

The opposition succeeded in toppling down the İnönü’s almost three-decade reign and replaced it with another charismatic leader, young Bülent Ecevit. Also known as the “black son” in the Turkish political lexicon, Ecevit appeared in the new chapter of the founding party’s history accompanied by the slogans of “people’s Ecevit” chanted at the party headquarters and during electoral campaigns. On semiotic ground, the slogan itself proved that there was no way for the republicans to surpass the AP’s dominance at the ballots unless they left the “republican” outlook, which had been repelling provincial votes since the 1940s. This change in the party’s ideological vitrine immediately paid off and Ecevit captured 33 percent of the votes in the general elections of 1973.

Notwithstanding winning almost half of the of votes at the electoral level, Ecevit was not able to form a majority government in the parliament, which led to a process of political stagnation and set of short-term coalition and minority governments as happened in the early 1960s. In parallel to the shaky ground in political cosmos, the limping developmentalist economy of Asia Minor continued to deteriorate, and eventually it went bust following the Oil Crisis, the reverberations of which not only resonated across the developing world but also the metropolitan countries of late capitalism. As a response to the CHP’s electoral victories and the set of economic crises, by leaving the hope of winning the votes of urban proletariat behind, Demirel’s party began to play on more conservative vote base, thereby aligning his policies along the right wing swing-byes, the MHP and MSP. Blending Pan-Turkism, political Islam and liberalism, these three parties formed national front governments since Ecevit approached coalition options cautiously, which most likely would alienated not only the supporters in his party but urban proletarian voters. Nonetheless, the national front governments under Demirel’s banner
had to face and struggle against serious budget deficits. In Demirel’s own words, the state treasury was in need of “70 cents.”

Thus, the developmentalist state was in such an economic dead end that it was not able to maintain the win-win economic formula anymore. The amount of international credits flowing into the developing world was dwindling as the détente period lessened the intensity of the Cold War, thereby making geopolitical competitions on ideological grounds less significant. The containment policy, keeping countries in the Western block was not as significant as it used to be. As a result, the so-called Third World lost their privileged position in the eyes of the United States. That meant fewer credits and bailouts for Turkey. In fact, the chronic problem of surplus production was also another factor at play behind the decreasing international credits. The approaching systemic crisis not only meant abandoning the welfare state policies, but also lessened the desire to maintain global economic stability.

The global economic stagnation and weak, unstable political coalitions once again exacerbated the unfolding clashes between the left and right, causing deaths of many young leftist students at university campuses. The disappointment felt among the dissident Marxist-Leninist circles radicalized its supporters in general, thereby fragmenting it and giving birth to alternative forms of struggles that were modeled on Maosim and the Latin American urban guerrilla resistance movements. The PKK crystalized in the midst of this economic and political turmoil in the late 1970s under the leadership of Öcalan; a student of law student in Ankara who gave up on not only the Turkish left because of its rigid nationalist visions eclipsing minority rights in the country, but also on the state that tended to overlook terrorism of right-wing organizations.

Despite the fragmentation and simmering process in the left block, a consolidated class-consciousness incarnated in the 1977 May 1 rally at Taksim Square for the last time. It was the first organized labor rally in this historically significant site, which witnessed the beginnings and endings of contentious episodes in Turkey’s history. Previous Labor Day celebrations in the developmentalist era were held in other neighborhoods of the city. The cycle of violence and the lethal nature of the
contentious repertoires, which was set in motion by the DP and took shape under the climate of Cold War politics, casted a shadow over this enormous gathering. Approximately, 500,000 participants, including the Maoist and Marxist groups, which were on the verge a big division, came together.

Once again, as happened in the incident of 6th fleet protests, unidentified right-wing forces opened fire over the crowd, killing 34 people and leaving many wounded. A few weeks following this bloody incident, Ecevit nonetheless succeed in attracting a crowd of approximately 600,000 demonstrators in the same spot where the whole left block regardless of the internal ideological competition gave full support to Black Son in his electoral campaign. Right before the campaign Prime Minister Demirel himself wrote a letter to Ecevit saying he could be assassinated at the square in case he showed up there. Yet such threats and rumors were not enough to turn the Black Son away from his path. I would argue that this little anecdote proves how the founding party emerged as a counter-hegemonic force by making what I characterize as a short-lived vertical leap in the composite regime space. As expected, the CHP won 42 percent of the votes in the 1977 general election. That still was not enough to form a majority government. Creating a deadlock in the political system, which led another national front coalition, the political chaos that came along with the year of 1977 deepened the economic crisis.

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23 There were undoubtedly limits to Ecevit’s vision of progressive politics. First of all, he also created a charismatic leadership cult for himself by playing the nationalism card. During his short-lived partnership with the MSP in 1974, he made an intervention in Cyprus, thereby sailing on the winds of national agitation to increase his votes. In exchange for that strategically wrong intervention, he gifted EU membership to Greece. In other words, I suggest Ecevit’s unwanted advances in the island dragged Greece closer to the West, a rapprochement process that ended the seven years of right-wing military regime across the Aegean Sea. More importantly, despite articulating the party to the growing oppositional momentum, he was hesitant to declare popular front against the right during the heyday of the lethal clashes. Ultimately, he was a romantic man of letters admiring the principles of Western liberal democracy in and through the education he received in the institutions affiliated with so-called American philosophy. Nonetheless, he was able to fuse this elitist outlook with his humble stance that resonated across the provincial and working classes. That was in fact the magical formula laying behind his growing popularity. He was also cheered as the “the black son” during the his rallies across Anatolia by his provincial supporters (Ahmad 2002, 157). Thus, against he succeeded in becoming the voice of the subalterns.
Thus, the vertical leap made by the founding party of Turkey put the country in the midst of a volatile economic and political condition in a decade where some of developing countries like Chile already began to make transitions to neoliberal economy. Demirel’s undersecretary Turgut Özal, prepared a list of shock therapies so as to put the markets back on track in accordance with the suggestions made by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank (WB). Not diverging from other cases exemplifying transitions from Fordism to post-Fordism, the prescriptions offered, also known as the 24 January Decisions, basically aimed to improve the economy through wage reductions, devaluation of currency, shrinking the state’s role in the economy, deregulation and privatization, thereby making borders more porous to the global capital. Taking a strong stance against the shock prescriptions, the unions nonetheless succeeded to repel this move made by Özal, a technocrat who had cordial relations with venture capitalists in the country through his past experience in the WB.

In brief, the last national front coalition did not possess the necessary judicial and political resources to implement the Chicago School’s global economic prescription in Asia Minor. The voices of syndicalist movements and organizations still carried weight in the state decision making mechanisms. They managed to halt the neoliberal transition for a while. At the turn of the 1980s, the economy was going through a total collapse nonetheless. There emerged lines and queues in front of markets for bare necessities. The clashes between the flanks of left and fascistic right organizations continued to leave casualties and corpses of young people on streets. Sporadic murders against the left became part the quotidian life. Another chapter of contentious repertoire producing lethal implications for society prepared the ground for another military intervention, which this time came along with the motto of bringing “order,” to the “chaos” that the country had been going through in the developmentalist era (Önder 2016, 15,18; Boratav 2003, 147–48).
4.4 Neoliberalizing Asia Minor: A Coup For Protecting “Kemalism” or Purge of Counter-Hegemonic Movements off the Politics?

The military intervention in 1980 had a more radical tone and agenda when compared to the previous ones, namely the 1960 institutional revolution and the semi-intervention in 1971. On live broadcast in early morning hours, a group of high-ranking military authorities announced that they had no option left but “to take over the state administration” in order to put an end to the social and political “chaos” and “anarchy” undermining the “state authority “ and the “prosperity and happiness precious (aziz) Turkish nation deserved.” Word choice in the coup text was reminiscent of the right-wing party leader’s speeches made during electoral campaigns. In other words, the discourses of the “order” and “stability” that conservative-liberalism symbolized back in the 1970s was articulated to legitimization discourse of the military intervention (Keyder 1987, 223–225). “The national security council” under the leadership of Kenan Evren appointed Özal as state and deputy prime minister responsible for the economy until the elections held in 1982. Thus, the technocrat coming from overseas, as Boratav puts it, became “the sole patron” of the country (Boratav 2003, 146–47). That meant there was no obstacle left for implementing his shock therapy prescriptions, thereby disciplining the labor classes through wage reduction and purging the unionist bodies from the politics. In simple words, the junta administration’s first target was the working class movements’ excessive power in shaping the long-term economic agendas.

In fact, given that the military had organic linkages with the market, a more liberal economy would even work for generals in the business sector. The coup administration had the support of a wide range of social base stretching from the big manufacturing capitalists that were keener to make exports to increase profits to the conservative and provincial classes, which viewed the so-called red threat and “anarchistic” order as social threats undermining the so-called national values. The bureaucratic secular classes leaned towards total state restructuring so as to preserve the integrity of the systemic structure (Keyder 1987, 224). The notion of disciplining the labor leaders some of whom were earning more than
the administrative staff in factories was alluring for all the state and class actors. Thus, the politics of Asia Minor was going through another ruptural unity point in an Althusserian sense.

In keeping with the Turkish coup tradition, Evren also pointed to the urgency of elections under a new constitutional framework. The new judico-political system in his mind was nonetheless more of an amalgamated mechanism that would be structured to bound the dispersed checks and balance mechanisms of the developmentalist state. In that way, state capacity would be increased and another anarchistic order would be forestalled. In short, the carrot strategy in the 1960s was traded with a stick at the turn of the 1980s.

The new constitution enhanced the power of the execution vis-à-vis the legislative branch by abolishing the senate for the sake of making policy implementation practice a more effective and rapid process. Accordingly, it introduced %10 percent election threshold so as to prevent the balkanization of social representation in the parliament. In other words, the Jefferson method supported with a barrage replaced the proportional system of the 1960s, which carried the Marxist party and independent candidates to the parliament. The ultimate aim, I suggest, was to create a political cosmos where actors, be they liberal-conservative or secular, would swing around the so-called moderate neoliberal economic gravitational force under control. With this logic in mind, all the parties of the developmentalist era and their leaders were fended off in politics, including Ecevit who was blamed for turning the founding party into a threat to the systemic structure. More importantly, all the syndicalist activities were suspended, and accordingly the unionist movements were reduced to more manageable sizes. In an export-driven and unregulated economy, there was indeed no place for the logic of state planning at all. Thus state planning institutions in and through which the unions had shaped the political and economic decision-making mechanisms throughout the developmentalist era were abolished as well. What envisaged in this new social contract therefore was a stronger state authority along with a depoliticized society model (Önder 2016, 18,25).
“Strong social democratic movement” of the developmentalist era that had brought Asia Minor closer to the democratic trajectory of the Southern European countries, but which simultaneously undermined its state capacity, was in this way left behind as all the social classes and political actors agreed upon a “limited democracy,” which was promoted by the junta regime as the only viable option against “anarchy and terrorism.” This time the army managed permanently to integrate itself to the state through the foundation of the Supreme Military Council where governments were periodically asked to consult economic and political plans with high-ranking military generals. Despite the closing of the democratic channels one by one, the logic of an export-driven economy at the same time required increasing ties with the Western World and inevitably with its democracy. In other words, the EU, which began to expand towards for the Eastern bloc countries after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, emerged as a rescue boat for Turkey’s sinking democracy.

Coming from a more Marxist-Weberian perspective, one prominent Turkish scholar, Keyder places the Turkish experience within the context of Latin American “dependent development” literature and notes that the 1980 coup “whose program alluded broadly to ‘solidarity nation’ formula of Kemalist times” derailed the country by putting it down a path more similar to “Latin American experiences,” but with one exception: the “option” of the EU membership (Keyder 1987, 4–5, 223–226). Sharing the point he raises with respect Europe’s role in Turkey’s democracy, I would nonetheless argue that such an assessment, which stems from rigid theoreticism viewing the Turkish case through prism of world system and center-periphery analyses, is quite reductionist in the sense that Keyder tended to view the military as the “guardian” actor of the secular structure of Turkish state, thereby positioning this so-called “bureaucratic class” against the triangle of the traditionalist provincial classes, their right-wing political parties and the Muslim bourgeois classes. In other words, he paints a picture of ideological mechanism in which the mechanism itself is portrayed almost as stationary and static since the 1930s. Moreover, I would argue that associating the whole army with Kemalist ideology is not very historically accurate
given even Atatürk himself struggled with conservative Pan-Turkist army officers that attempted to call out his authority by taking on the role of both parliamentarian and army general at the same time.

Understandably, Keyder’s study that came out in the late 1980s was molded in accordance with the liberal-leftist logic of the decade, which tended to foreground the failures of the Turkish modernization project, thereby obscuring the authoritarian aspects of liberal-conservative ideology both on a theoretical and ideological ground. Against Keyder’s theoreticism, another Turkish Marxist historian from the same generation, Boratav raises the question why the coup administration abolished one of the six main principles of Kemalism, that is étatism, if the telos of military leaders was to preserve the so-called solidarity of 1930s (Boratav 2003, 157–60).

Agreeing with and echoing Boratav, I would further argue that the coup not only aimed to discipline labor by diminishing the state’s control over economy, but also through ideological strategies that directly targeted the social and cultural texture of the middle classes. As I suggested, the legitimization discourse of the coup administration tended to revolve around the discourse of order, which was pretty much used by the conservative-right wing parties during the crises times of the 1970s in order to spread the fear of communism within society. When that desire to bring order to society coupled with the logic of neoliberalism on state level, it meant not only chafing labor under the yoke of capital, but also reconfiguring a new citizenship imagination through which the rebellious, unpredictable working classes and dissident provincial segments like Alevi-Kurdish community would be transformed into obedient Muslim middle classes. In other words, I suggest the coup aimed to carve out a new post-modern subjectivity the life-world of which would take shape around new consumption patterns/spaces and re-invented vernacular cultural values in lieu of labor rights and factory space. In this regard, I would argue the post-1980 citizenship configuration may very well be compared to the submissive Muslim bourgeois imagination of the early 20th century, rather than the secular citizenship configuration of the inter-war period. The fact of the introduction of compulsory religious lessons in primary and middle schools in tandem with the increase in the number of schools training preachers as well as growing enrollments rates
in such non-secular schools during the short-lived military regime (Ahmad 2002, 219), I suggest, seem to directing some counter empirical evidences to the reductionist center-periphery analysis that Keyder presents.

In simple words, the 1980 coup was more inclined towards Islamizing and simultaneously “liberalizing” the social base, rather than secularizing or protecting the laic values of the Turkish republic. In this regard, Keyder’s analysis, which portrays polarization dynamics of the Turkish politics in an almost stationary regime space, I argue underestimates the common, intersecting ideological grounds where political actors and social bases merge or intersect with one another. Striving to read the history through Marxist-Weberian template, in other words, obscures the complex, contradictory operational mechanisms that actually, preserve and sustain the ideological system in a more Althusserian sense. In this regard, the coup that accelerated the transition from a state-planned economy to Post-Fordism, I argue, aligned all the parties and groups in Asia Minor not just along very similar economic and political agendas, but also prepared the cultural and social grounds where the Islamic bourgeois would crystalize and proliferate.

Big shifts in world politics, particularly the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 contributed to the process of marginalization of systemic alternatives like socialism and the humble, non-conspicuous lifestyle that Kemalism itself promoted. In this regard, it would not be entirely wrong to state that the neoliberal transformations giving an upper hand to the rhetoric of order and stability in parallel to the end of the bi-polar world order transformed the composite regime into a more amalgamated systemic formation through which power holders agreed upon the fact that the proliferation of anti-systemic actors were against their common political and economic interests.

Three new parties entered into the very first general elections in 1983 after the intervention. The coup general Evren and his officers hoped to take control in their hands by democratic means with the new party they founded, called the Nationalist Democratic Party. The other main actors were the conservative flanks of CHP, which embraced a rigid version of national secularism along with Özal’s
Motherland Party (ANAP) that blended moral conservatism with the allure of laissez-faire of neoliberalism. Against the expectations of the military generals, it was Özal’s charismatic figure that mixed the educated technocrat persona with his connections to underground Islamic orders that appealed to the voters. Such a formulation was indeed in harmony with the notion of the entrepreneur-Muslim citizen. Three consecutive single-party governments formed by the ANAP prepared the desired solid political ground to put Özal’s delayed shock therapies into effect, which mainly revolved around the devaluation of the Turkish lira, the creation of a stronger financial mechanism that could give birth to debt-based economy, reduction in agricultural subsidies and the shrinking of the state’s role in economy through the privatization of state-owned industries, as I suggested above.

The logic of privatization of state enterprises and the reduction of state’s role in the market was therefore placed on Turkey’s agenda as early as the mid-1980s (Atiyas 2009, 101). From the perspective of the Chicago School, what these drastic structural reforms theoretically aimed to achieve was to spark off the market competition, which was assumed to be a remedy for the stagnant Fordist regime of accumulation and populism poising the politics, especially in the developing world. For a short period of time, as happened in the DP era, the IMF and the WB directed large amounts of credits to Asia Minor in order not to repeat the mistakes made in the case of Chile and to create an exemplary case where invisible hand could actually thrive (Boratav 2003, 161–62). In other words, they needed a success story to promote neoliberalism to the rest of the developing world. What is interesting is that despite the naive belief in the efficacy of the invisible hand, in the Turkish experience the ANAP governments were more inclined to intervene into the markets for the sake of bringing it to its optimum level through various subsidizes and deregulation strategies, which I suggest, was reminiscent of the paradoxical economic policies seen during the DP years. Credits and incentives provided by the state for small entrepreneurs, for instance, aimed to increase export capacity so that the problem of current deficits would not occur again. Such government subsides given for the sake of increasing the volume of foreign trade nonetheless brought an “imaginary export” trend to the Turkish economy (Boratav 2003, 155). In other words, new
entrepreneurs received funds from the state through phony documents showing investments that did not actually exist. Thus, a new street-smart Muslim bourgeois mindset that aimed to “turn the corner” under volatile economic conditions began to take shape in the late 1980s. As factories of the developmentalist era emptied and class-consciousness faded from the panorama of politics, the nucleus of provincial middle classes seemingly yearning for their traditional and conservative values, but paradoxically embracing the logic of a conspicuous market and its opportunistic bourgeois mindset began to crystalize in Turkey en route to Islamic neoliberalism.

Despite the flowing credits provided by global economic institutions, shock therapy prescriptions nevertheless did little to ameliorate economic conditions. Even though pumping up the credit economy seemed to lower tension in the short run, it skyrocketed inflation rates towards the end of 1980s. Increasing inflation rates gradually slid the votes to other parties. In a very similar fashion to the DP, the ANAP government made excessive public and infrastructural expenditures so as to cling on to power, which resulted in enormous internal debt. Under the conditions of free-floating debt-based market, it meant financial chaos between the private banks and the central bank. In order to stop the downward momentum in the polls the party used snap election strategies to remain in power as Menderes did in the late 1950s.

4.5 Changing Protest Repertoires: From the Old Forms of Politics to the Belated Cultural Movements

As the increasingly worsening economy began to shake the ANAP’s single party administration, the syndicalist and unionist movements attempted to make a return to the rapidly neoliberalizing regime space. Despite all the laws and regulations aiming to discipline the labor, they still possessed the capacity and potency to challenge regime through the judicial relics left from the developmentalist era as well as through the innovation of new protest tactics. In other words, the labors improvised new protest performances “that defied the restrictive legal framework without technically violating it or fell into the
grey area between legality and illegality,” as Nilgün Önder puts it. New protest forms included medical visits during the work hours, refusing to work overtime, walking to work barefoot, as well as growing moustache, wearing black work uniforms—I suppose the indication of autonomist reflexes—, refusing to take bus services provided by capital and so on. This new wave of social protest tactics based on individual performances reverberated across the country, which later became known as the 1989 Spring Protests.

One of the distinctive characteristics of these work strikes was its their direct-action oriented nature that enabled factor workers to mobilize from below instead of waiting the organization and orchestration of the unions. Such individual protest performances modulated into a grand collective repertoire when the mine workers in a remote Anatolian city, Zonguldak, marched to the capital together with a crowd of 100,000 including local dwellers and independent protesters (Önder 2016, 224, 241,251).

As the class-consciousness faded away in the formation process of judico-political singularity in the post-developmentalism era, I suggest, old forms of politics gradually gave way to grassroots mobilization repertoires occurring from the below. In other words, economic post modernization expanded the spatiality, temporality and as well as the social base and texture of the protest repertoires performed during the developmentalist era. The crumbling ANAP administration responded to this resistance momentum that reached beyond factories and leaned toward grassroots politics by passing an emergency enactment, which banned all forms of strikes due to “the out break of the Gulf War” and for the sake of “national security” (Önder 2016, 251). The cycle of oppression once again manifested itself in the early 1990s but this time without lethal implications.

The gradual dissolution of the old-forms of politics came along with a general self critique of the Turkish left, as had happened in the Europe in the 1970s, and that self-retrospective engagement with the past a led to the crystallization of identity politics and belated cultural movements in Asia Minor. LGBTQ people, anti-militarists, atheist movements, feminists and the very first examples of the green politics at the party level, which had disappeared in the tumultuous nature of contentious politics of the
developmentalist era, began to make themselves heard in the stages of protests and in the political ecosystem. The dispersed actors of the cultural movements, which attempted to make a short-lived political alliance under the umbrella of a green party structure (Bora 1989), also brought new individual and collective performances to the existing and evolving old forms of protest repertoires. And such innovations, adaptations and modulations enabled the protesters to go around the bans put in force by the new hegemonic formation.

As I briefly addressed in the introductory chapter and in detail above, following the 1977 May 1 rally and the military intervention, all sorts of mass gathering and public demonstration activities were banned at Taksim Square. Against all the odds, almost a decade after this rally, one of the first protest performances came from the LGBTQ community in the form of a hunger strike at Gezi Park, which aimed to draw attention to the unprecedented oppression and discrimination they had been through since the junta administration. This performance by a group of LGBTQ people lasted ten days and consequently reached a global audience, and thereby succeeded in bringing an exiled controversial queer icon in the Turkish popular culture back to the country (Güneş 2016). On the other hand, the bourgeoning third-wave feminism in Asia Minor bypassed the Taksim ban by not attempting to adopt a new tactic like hunger strikes to the social protest forms, but by changing the site of the repertoire of mass demonstration. Approximately 2500 women marched in Kadıköy, a newly politicizing neighborhood following the coup, under the banner of “solidarity against the beating” in 1987 (Kerestecioğlu 2004, 123). The ecological movements and groups of the decade also circumvented the authoritarian bans of late capitalism through improvising, innovating and adopting new tactics. Although the first examples of eco-protests in Anatolia can be traced to as early as to the late 1970s, when the heavy industrialization of the developmentalist state caused environmental degradation and plans for nuclear energy created widespread discontent, the biggest environmentalist reaction in Turkey’s history occurred in 1990 as

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24 This popular culture figure, known as Bülent Ersoy, I suggest, paradoxically contrasted with the Islamic lifestyle that the ANAP symbolized and the notion of freedom of choice it tried to promote in terms of market ideology. Although Ersoy went into exile during the coup years, it took awhile for the so-called liberal ANAP to bring her back to the country.
dozens of protesters formed a human chain from a coastal industrial town to İzmir in order to stop the construction of the fossil fuel power plant planned to be built in the region (Anadol and Abacıoğlu 1990).

The gradual dissolution process of the Marxist-Leninist organizations and unions in parallel to the rise of identity politics also manifested itself in the contentious repertoires that took shape around ethnic fault lines. In the maneuvering space that came along with the rise of identity politics, the ideological split between the Marxist-Leninist and Maoist flanks in the left gave birth to a guerrilla style resistance movement in the southern provinces of Asia Minor under the fierce junta administration. As a result, as I have suggested before, the PKK emerged as an outlawed so-called terrorist organization under the leadership of Öcalan. In the 1990s, in the neoliberalizing regime space the PKK crystalized as the new counter-hegemonic actor that aimed carve its own independent territory out of the nation-state, which became more dependent on the Islamic-Turkish fusion following. Years of low-intensified civil war between the army and the Kurdish militia, which was primarily targeting security forces of the state, prescribed lethal repertoires even if the Kurdish militia were captured alive. Under the conditions of martial law during the coup administration, torture and missing people in prisons became a routine in politics (Gunes 2012, 124–51). Families and mothers of the missing and tortured Kurds, who were left with no choice but to migrate to the cities as result of the escalating conflict, began to stage a sit-in protest in Taksim Area on İstiklal Avenue starting from the mid 1990s. This collective performance by elder Kurds, also known as the “Saturday Mothers,” left its traces on the contentious repertoires of the Turkish protest culture and still is doing so.

4.6 “Paradoxes of Party Politics” and Consensus Over Globalization

Through the 1990s that the dissident Kurdish movement and the gradually neoliberalizing political Islam arose as competing agents against the inheritors of the CHP, including Ecevit who left the anti-hegemonic outlook behind in exchange for a rigid understanding of laïcité as a response to economic post modernization and the military coup. The progressive flanks of the republicans under Socialist Democratic People’s Party nonetheless managed to tone down this rigid, secularist-nationalist outlook by
forming electoral alliances with the legal representatives of the Kurdish movement as well as by channeling the voices of the remaining working-class segments through the coalitions made with Demirel’s new party, the Truth Path Party, which succeeded in capturing the provincial votes through well-established social network in the countryside. A new political fusion therefore toppled the ANAP’s one-party government down in the early 1990s. Such democratic coalition initiatives nonetheless leaned more toward the axes of center-right, national secularist and Islam as the clashes between the Turkish Army and PKK intensified in the southern provinces of the country in mid-1995 and the progressive cadres of the republicans were outmaneuvered by the secularist-nationalist ones in the internal party politics. This transition, I would argue, meant the end of the social democratic tradition that made a vertical leap for short period of time.

The gap of the social democratic party in a genuine Western sense created what Öniş characterizes as “the paradoxes of party politics” that forced the boundaries of periphery-center, or right-left dichotomous categories in the context of neoliberalizing Turkey (Öniş 2007). By that term he suggests that despite the statist-secularist reflexes in the republican block and anti-capitalist views in the outlier cases like national-Islamist the Welfare Party—the inheritor of the political Islam— in general, there arose a tendency towards viewing “globalization” as the sole right path to development. According to him, “the regional context of globalization namely the prospect of the EU membership” was a key factor aligning all the parties and along more or less similar economic and political similar agendas regardless of their electoral bases and ideological roots (Öniş 2006, 123). He points to the ways in which the process of signing the Customs Union Agreement in 1995— which, I would suggest, was an unprecedented compromise that opened up the borders to global capital, thereby putting local capital in a disadvantage position without granting Turkey the political membership— and the Helsinki Summit in 1999 have toned down the extreme nationalist-statist views in both the parties with Islamic roots such as the Welfare Party and the republican parties of the 1990s, which had oscillated between the “soft-Euro skeptic and globalist position.” The center-right parties were already the ardent supporters of subsumption
under global capital. As result, “all the parties” he suggests “emerged as agents of globalization” (Öniş 2007, 247).

Whether it was the prospect of the EU membership or the constitutional and social momentum that set in the 1980s, all political actors hence formalized as the conduits for the neoliberal economic policies, privatization and absorption into the global capital. Such a consensus over the dominance of global capitalism at political level projected itself over the cultural realms, social bases and grassroots politics of these actors as well. In their civil society organizations and daily life practices, the Turkish secularists utilized neoliberal market principles for the sake of defending their way of life by relegating their nostalgic yearning of the 1930s state into the private spheres (Özyürek 2006). Political Islam was claimed to be rapidly dragging into the sphere of laissez-faire logic in and through so-called “learning” and “professionalization” processes (Tugal 2009), or at least they seemed to be doing so. In this regard, it would not be entirely wrong to characterize the political temporality of 1990s as a socio-political milieu where the dominance of market ideology was erected upon the vernacular values and nationalist nostalgia.

The last paradoxical coalition government of this convoluted socio-political state of being, I argue, was the harbinger of the AKP’s hegemonic singularity in the 2000s. Although that coalition put Ecevit back on the political stage once again, he was then more inclined to channel the voice of the secularist-nationalism and the laissez-faire logic along with his partners the MHP and the ANAP. Although the nationalist tone in this three-legged coalition was very much high because of the apprehension of separatist Kurdish leader Öcalan in 1999, paradoxically it also passed new laws that boosted economic and political integration with the EU.

Ecevit’s last coalition government coincided with the crash in Asian economies, which once again raised doubts about the potential of free-floating markets on a global scale towards end of the 2000s. When the reverberations of this crisis reached to shores of the Americas, there arose a common conviction for a strong but small state model facilitating the market dynamics in lieu of total Lassiez-
Faire; this was also known as the post-Washington consensus. Both the IMF and the WB in fact pointed to such a moderator role for the state to forestall the epidemic of global corruption and restrain unwanted advances of big corporations, which hollowed out treasuries of the developing world in hand in with local entrepreneurs that had established organic economic relations with the state. Turkey was no exception to this global wave. The proliferating street-smart neoliberal mindset led large amounts of account deficits in the country. Adjustments had to be made in the politically and economically destabilized third-world countries. In a very similar fashion to the 1980s, another economic architect working overseas in the WB sneaked in Ecevit’s coalition government to “rescue” the markets.

The extensive reform packages prepared by this technocrat emphasized the urgent need for the implementation of new monetary and fiscal policies to accelerate the flow of hot-money through foreign direct investment and privatization in order to take the IMF’s shackles off Turkey. As a result, these new economic prescriptions completed “the coherent legal framework for privatization,” which empowered the state with increased institutional capacity to speed up the delayed deregulation policies of the 1980s and put the state-owned enterprises on sale (Atiyas 2009, 27). Hence, “the Strong Economy Program” as it was called, was initiated by the small cadre of technocrats having a privileged position above politics. Ironically, the motto of a strong economy was immediately picked up by the AKP after the 2002 general elections (Öniş and Şenses 2009, 4). The first election of the new millennium brought the bifurcated parliament structure back into the political panorama by rendering the CHP only opposition party against the AKP’s hegemony, political landscape reminiscent of the 1950s.

4.7 “We Are All Armenians”

As stock prices took a rapid downturn in 2001, the world political arena witnessed the first foreshocks of the earthquake about to happen in liberal democracy, which manifested itself in the rising trend of high-security state model and increasing surveillance methods in the metropolitan world as a result of the 9/11 attacks. The failure of the Western liberal economic model meant the total disappearance of the liberal-conservative actors from Turkish politics, which directly played into the
hands of the AKP. Accordingly, the fragmented, multi-node, paradoxical regime nature of the previous decades modulated into a duopolistic form reminiscent of the post World War II era, thereby providing the Islamic bourgeois with enough maneuvering space to consolidate itself both on cultural and social ground. Nonetheless, the dynamics of the Turkish composite regime in and through which political actors and their social bases polarize on cultural matters but merge with one with another over the overall maintenance of the systemic formation, have not displayed much change in the early 2000s.

When the AKP emerged as the first party in the 2002 national elections, its leader Erdoğan was jailed pending trial for allegations of antagonizing society over the matter of religious sensitivities. Following the 2002 election results, all the republican parliamentarians immediately voted “yes” for the necessary constitutional regulation that paved the way for the 2003 by-elections, thereby allowing politically imprisoned Erdoğan to run for the position of prime minister. It was declared that for the sake of “democracy” and the “welfare” of the country, the CHP supported the passing of the bill. Thereafter, the only opposition rhetoric left for the republicans merely revolved around the protection of the so-called secular structure of society, which neither resonates well across the consolidated Islamic segments embracing vernacular values, nor the newly emerging educated middle classes in urban centers. In brief, the CHP rolled backed to the years of the 1930s but this time with political acrobatics that suspiciously played into the hands of the party in charge.

In the mid-2000s, the economy went through a brief period of recovery through the implementation of the so-called strong economy program, which has accelerated privatization policies at unprecedented scales. Concomitantly, the plans for placing the state in the driving seat with respect to fiscal and monetary matters reflected in the ameliorating economic growth rates. When this optimistic climate coupled with the chronically stagnant economies of the EU, foreign direct investments flocked into the promising Turkish economy. As a result, provincial classes that recently migrated from the urban centers of the periphery to metropolitan areas in the center enjoyed an overall but relative improvement in
their living standards under the AKP’s rule in spite of increasing unemployment numbers and continuing current account deficits (Pamuk 2007, 302).

Even though in theory privatization was expected to lead to more efficient market dynamics through the increase in the numbers of competitive actors, the post-2001 privatization wave in the Turkish case has resulted in the emergence of the oligopolistic companies (Atiyas 2009), which were mostly owned by Muslim capitalists that had close connections to the AKP since the state played the role of arbiter in market, a chronic condition of nepotism peculiar to the developing context. The epitome of such companies organically tied to the state, and surely to the party, manifested itself in the booming construction sector. Entrepreneurs in this lucrative business sector provided high amounts of credits and mortgages for the new conservative-Islamic middle classes that were caught up in the allure of consumerist society, which had been promoted since the 1980s. This caused the development of debt-based organic webs of relationship between conservative households, oligopolistic companies and the state, as evidenced by the government backed-housing agency called TOKI.

Undoubtedly, Erdoğan’s charismatic male persona that allegedly reflects the life-world of neglected, subaltern segments of society gives this submissive economic dependency more of a consensual taste. I would argue this new sociocultural texture that emerged following the AKP can be viewed as the completion of the obedient Muslim bourgeois project, the origins of which can be traced back to as early as the 20th century, as I indicated at the beginning of this section. In other words, the hegemony of AKP expressed the completion of an Islamic capitalist revolution that almost lasted for 100 years. The inevitable rise of the Muslim bourgeois brought along with itself the imposition of an Islamic way of life in urban space, which rendered urban spatiality as the new site of contention over which lifestyles of culturally-segmented Turkish society began to clash. Perhaps this new modulated form of contention has not cost lives of civilians on mass scales as happened in the developmentalist era, but took the life of one of the most prominent journalists, thereby drawing crowds to the streets of Istanbul.
As I addressed in the introductory section, in 2007, following the assassination of Armenian journalist, Hrant Dink by a group of fascistic youths, who allegedly had links to the state intelligence office, Taksim Area witnessed one of the biggest anti-racist demonstrations in its history. Immediately following the assassination, a large crowd of protesters gathered right by the crime scene and spontaneously began shouting “We are all Armenians, We are all Hrant,” thereby modulating the initial shock created by the incident into a set of complex emotions. Dink’s funeral cortège developed into an anti-racist march that stretched from the gates of church where the service was held to Taksim Square. The same slogan was chanted both in Armenian, Turkish and Kurdish in this cortège. In other words, not all of the protesters that marched on that cold winter day were ethnically Armenians, but the slogan itself, I suggest, symbolized a collective urban identity positioned against an Islamic way of life (Salzmann 2012). The cries of “We are all Armenians” also reverberated across Gezi Park as the crowds passed by it en route to church service. This march was the harbinger of such affective protest mobilization practices as well as the upcoming commune protest repertoire.
Chapter 5  Getting There: Mobilization

Night

When police maced the young, female graduate student in Gezi Park on the 31st of May 2013, the moment of the assault was captured in a dramatic and aestheticized fashion. Shots portrayed the scene in an almost surreal way. Time seemed to stop in these frames. It was as if the young woman’s physical body was in a warped temporality that was stretching parallel to reality and the site of action. One of those shots later on took its place among the iconographic motifs of the commune, famously known as the Red Woman to which I referred in the introductory section.

In times of revolutionary situations, micro mobilization processes or initiatives taken by student groups and vanguard protesters tend to modulate into country or city wide civil disobediences through various forms of what James Jasper refers to as “moral shocks” (J. M. Jasper 2008). During the Greek junta administration, the funeral of the ousted leader George Papandreou turned the small-scale cultural resistance movement into countrywide student uprisings in 1969 (Asimakoulas 2009, 32). The embryonic student-liberal alliance in the Iranian revolution that involved labor and clergy classes became a nationwide protest following “suspicious” theater and massacre of peaceful demonstrations in Tehran (Kurzman 1996, 156). The Leipzig protests in East Germany initiated by younger segments of society evolved into a bigger scale anti-regime movement when Honecker’s government placed a ban on the Soviet magazine Sputnik, which criticized the regime for straying far from the communist principles and ideals (Pfaff 1996, 103). Citizens of Beijing, including peasants, workers, entrepreneurs, and even some party members, flocked into the Tiananmen Square when hunger-strike of students resonated with the masses (Zuo and Benford 1995, 147).

Media plays a crucial role in spreading moral shocks across different segments of society (Biggs 2013). Images capturing moments of dramatic events increase the emotional intensity experienced and
lived during ruptures, thereby aligning collective conscience along similar lines.\footnote{25} Under the conditions of accelerated spatio-temporal configurations, images, which give us enough time to feel, experience, and interpret the drama of an incident from the perspective of our own subject positioning, pull bystanders into the processes of collective action. In this regard, I would argue that images arise as the embodiment of moral shocks that lead to micro-mobilization processes. Undoubtedly, the notion of the construction of a shopping mall in the park came as a moral shock to Istanbulites by disturbing the “ontological security” in the space of action as well.\footnote{26} Thus, in my reading, the Red Woman expresses the embodiment or iconographic representation of that state of being and of the dramatic implications that would come after the razing of the park to the ground, an affective singularity through which the small encampment became infinite, a multiplicity inside a black hole.

The vignette that shows the assault on a young woman’s body dressed up in red with white skin underneath it—almost reminiscent of the Turkish flag in terms of composition—may certainly not be seen as tragic as such other images that marked other key political ruptures in Asia Minor’s history. The film footage panning from Dink’s dead body laying on the sidewalk of Harbiye boulevard to the horrified bystanders and co-workers in 2008 — which led one of the biggest anti-racist rallies in Turkey’s history as I indicated — and dozens of other images that show elder Kurdish women’s brave resistance moments during demonstrations in the eastern provinces of the country may undoubtedly leave a more intense effect on the spectator when compared to the snapshot that zooms in an isolated incident, which revolves around a subjectivity of a young middle-class woman in urban setting. The power of the image of the Red Woman nonetheless not just lies in the affective intensity it leaves on the gaze, but also in the protest

\footnote{25} The image showing Alan Kurdi’s washed up body on the Aegean cost had a very similar effect on the Western audience, particularly in Canada with respect to the civil war in Syria and migration policies. The aesthetics of the photograph along with the drama it projects resulted in sort of enlightenment moment or epiphany for the Western world that had remained apathetic to the developments in the region up until that point.

\footnote{26} By referring to Anthony Giddenn’s “ontological security” expression, Jasper notes that sudden or gigantic urban planning decisions in certain spaces and neighborhoods may come as “moral shock” to locals by disturbing regular rhythms of life (J. M. Jasper 2008, 107). In this regard, I would argue that the neoliberal transformations and privatization processes that I have addressed up to this point in general undermined ontological security of the Istanbulites.
repertoire in the making into which it was woven. The Red Woman, in other words, takes its power from the distinctive mobilization ground on which it rose.

Unlike previous protest repertoires in the Turkish protest culture that had hitherto been shaped around a single sociocultural identity and its macro-political reasons, the small eco-resistance at Gezi Park truly blossomed in an improvised and horizontally structured way. Expressed differently, in this contentious episode of local history, the Turkish protest culture for the first time witnessed a heterogeneous protester profile that crystalized by itself without being stimulated by any major political campaign, ideology or leadership that would promote them. More importantly, this cluster of activists set up a small encampment so as to have a say in matters related to their own living space that came under the threat of urban sprawl. Thus, along with the encampment, which was comparable to the occupy movements that are seen across the public squares of different world cities, a culturally, politically and sociologically multilayered urban resistance fabric emerged in Gezi Park. Such a social protest form, which cannot be narrowed down to a single political representation, was an innovation in the already-existing local repertoire pool despite the fact that it had hitherto manifested itself throughout the Middle East and in cities of the Western World.

But how did this innovation that seemingly emerged out of nowhere became part and parcel of the unfolding contentious Turkish politics? To what extent did the previous modulated collective protest performances reoccurring in the local spatiotemporally play a role in the emergence of this new repertoire? Did the eco-protesters deliberately and intentionally tweak a new protest strategy by foreseeing and envisioning that such an innovation could turn mass crowds out to the streets? Or is it more accurate to talk about more of a macro-global composite protest repertoire that is being simultaneously performed at the domain of quantum consciousness, which goes beyond the national time and space configurations as well as personal/organizational rational decision making mechanisms? Perhaps a more important question is to ask why crowds would mobilize for a lost cause that only lasted two weeks? An example of a protest repertoire that does not yield immediate social or political
implications would possibly resonate with the Marxian revolutionary imaginaries and liberal democratic ideals. Answering such questions with respect the process of mobilization, I would argue, requires a micro-historical ethnographic approach, a glimpse into the near past, that sheds light on the changing nature of the actors involved in the contentious politics and the site of the action itself, rather than a macro-longitudinal analysis tracing the evolutionary path and achievements of repertoires in a Tillean sense. In brief, it requires qualitative ethnographic lenses that could investigate whether the commune repertoire of Asia Minor is an adoption, modulation or innovation.

5.1 The New Millennium May 1 Celebrations and the Crystallization Process of a Heterogeneous Crowd

In 2010, International Workers’ Day was once again organized in Taksim Square after almost a thirty-year ban following the bloody massacre in 1977. The pseudo-democratic rule of the AKP did not fully evaporate into the air then. The ban was lifted in the name of bringing “justice” to the oppressed segments of society. The prime minister at the time, Erdoğan, was quoted as saying: “Taksim is embracing with its labor and civil servant” in his speech in parliament for his party’s weekly meeting (Ergin 2014). Right after overturning the ban, crowds celebrated May 1 in the historic site once again with chants, slogans and cheers.

In the subsequent two years, the crowds gathering for the celebrations grew larger. As such, the demographic composition of the masses acquired a more layered sociopolitical texture as well. In other words, old forms of politics, which I associate with the unions, syndicalist movements, macro-party politics and micro-scaled Marxist-Leninist oriented parties in the Turkish context, were not the only groups, agents and actors that formed the backbone of the May 1 participants. The LGBTQ community member whom I dubbed Nihilist told me “he could not see what we may call the traditional left in 2012.” His “observation” of the “the last demonstrations he participated in before Gezi” was as follows: “That May 1 coincided with the student pact that was taking shape against the AKP. There were many anarchist
groups, black colors, rainbow flags along with the rhythms of the resistance,” a music band that grew
more famous in the pride weeks organized in the same area.

Nihilist was not the only person who participated in one of the May Day demonstrations that
preceded Gezi. All of the interviewees, excluding the ones situating their ideological position within the
spectrum of conservative-nationalism, were actively involved in at least one of the new millennium Labor
Day celebrations that took place between 2010 and 2013. One TGB member, who I call Green Raincoat
because his coat reminded me of the Turkish socialist archetype, shared Nihilist’s views as well. He
attempted to reach to the square in 2013 when the government decided to reinstate the ban, presumably
because of the fear of the growing masses that flocked to the site. “There were more independent
protesters than the organized ones,” he replied to me when I asked him about his “opinions” and
“feelings” over the very last demonstration in which he participated before the commune. Another Gezi
communard, Virgo, a feminist-journalist, also echoed Green Raincoat’s remarks. She noted “there was a
different momentum that day.” She explained to me in detail that May 1, 2013 was much “bigger” than
the ones that previously took place since 2010. She also expressed that she observed more feminist
organizations “than ever” compared to the other demonstration events in which she took part.

But the crowds that grew larger and thereby acquired heterogeneous participant texture were not
the only factors that differentiated the new millennium Labor Day gatherings from its precursors as well
as other previous protest forms in the Turkish protest culture. Another demonstrator, Action—who
introduced herself as an independent bisexual-socialist—addressed the terrifying scenes she witnessed
that day around Şişli, a busy commercial center that borders the square. Along with her friends, she tried
to reach to the celebration site when the ban was reinstated. She repetitively emphasized that she observed
a different kind of police violence that day. She recounted in detail how one of her friends was almost
beaten to death trying to escape the police who were dressed in military camouflage. Perhaps it became
much more easy for the security forces to target independent activists and demonstrators given that they
participate in smaller and more scattered groups. Thus, it would not be entirely wrong to state that as the
crowds became more manifold, multi-layered, composite and heterogeneous, or put it in more critical terminology, as the multiplicity began to show itself, state violence increased.

Based on the interviewees’ similar accounts of the new millennium May Day events, I would argue that the decision to re-impose the ban again was amongst the most significant factors that led to the Gezi uprising. Demet, a transgender Communist Party (CP) member, once a candidate for Beyoğlu municipality, nodded her head in agreement when I asked her views on the “significance” of previous “episodes contributing to” the commune. As an activist witnessing more political demonstrations than any other participant that I interviewed, when I commented that she responded “I agree with you; it (Gezi) is not just about three trees, things boiled to an insane point, I think the decision not to open Taksim area for May 1 in 2013 could be included among those things.”

But it was the regime mechanism that removed the ban and then reinforced it again. In this regard, opening/closing political rights or arising opportunities in the regime space may seem in a Tillean sense to be the catalyzing factors that prepared the ground for the uprising that took place three weeks later. When asked about their “opinions” on the Labor Day demonstrations preceding Gezi, most of the interviewees nonetheless pointed to the crystallizing new protester profile and the bitter feelings and memories left from them, rather than constitutional rights or the hope for the resurgence of the class-consciousness. Thus, in retrospect, political processes or Marxian mobilization reasons, I suggest, were not recalled. Telos, who identified herself as independent socialist, replied to me when I asked about her “thoughts” on the regime’s decision to open the space to the gatherings: “Although they let us celebrate the May 1 after so many years there, we were under strict control; they did not let too many people to pour into the square. I got stuck in Beşiktaş—another neighborhood known for its secularist texture along with the anarchist soccer fans—in 2011, I got gassed there, I was pissed off then.” In a very similar way, Action also underlined her fear, outrage and terrifying memories left from her very last May 1 experience. “If you had such a fear in you… such terrible things happened to your friend, why did you hit the road from Kocaeli—a midsized industrial city adjacent to Istanbul—for Gezi on 31 May?” I asked in a naïve
way in order to dig into the depths of her motivational reasons for mobilization. “Sort of a sense of I have to be there outweighed my fear,” she replied to me with a glib smile on her face.

Thus, none of the participants primarily accounted that public gathering and demonstrating in public spaces is a constitutional right, especially in Taksim, nor did they view the regime’s decision to lift the ban as a window of opportunity to make gains either in the economic or political realm. As such, they also did not foreground ideologically motivated reasons rooted in solely class matters, as clichéd Marxist analysis would convey. Expressed differently, they did not articulate any sort of a nostalgic vision that framed the May 1 gatherings as the resurgence of a lost class-consciousness, which is digitalized and stretched via various institutional and structural strategies under the conditions economic post-modernization. In lieu of such macro-structural conditions, they emphasized the “different” crowd composition they observed and gave voice to the terrifying feelings and memories left from the last important incident they were involved in before Gezi.

In this regard, it would not be entirely wrong to state that we see a gradual change in the nature of the protest repertoire in the new millennium May demonstrations that took place between 2010, the year the regime in Turkey in hand with the Istanbul governor lifted the ban, and 2013, when the same administration mechanism decided to reinforce it presumably because of the fear of public resistance that could be directed against the state. Thus, the opening/closing opportunities do not seem to be the catalyzers fuelling mobilization sentiment of Gezi. As the interviewees noted, the formation of a new demonstrator composition was one of the attention-capturing elements of the new repertoire in the making. A more heterogeneous crowd along with independents and cultural movements like the homophile movements and feminists, not only brought a carnivalesque and aesthetic taste in addition to the actors of old forms of politics, but they also laid the foundations of innovation in the already existing social protest strategies.
5.2 The Old Theater Hall and the Repertoire in the Making Toward “Right to the City”

The new millennium Labor Day demonstrations leading to the commune were in fact not the only incidents in and through which we are able to follow the incremental changes in the already existing repertoire modulations. Almost all of the interviewees also noted that they were involved in another pre-Gezi protest. In other words, they participated in the Emek theater protests in person or followed the event via social media or in main media outlets. This is another important finding that I suggest points to the fact that we see a process of motion blending, sort of a layering process in the nature of protester composition. Virgo, for instance, without a second thought, made reference to the theater protest when asked her for “observations” of the last demonstration she participated in before Gezi and 2013 Labor Day. More importantly, she indicated that she noticed “more of a cosmopolitan crowd.” But what made Emek so special and memorable in the imaginations and accounts of the communards? Why had the multiplicity that crystallized in and through the new millennium Labor Day demonstrations oscillated between the square and the theater located on the touristic İstiklal Avenue?

The Emek Theater was one of the symbols of social life, an iconic movie hall inside an art deco building built in 1884 by a Levantine architect. In time, it became a non-profit cultural center where arts people and film producers were able to chat around small tables placed in cozy, small salons giving a feeling of old Pera days. Its name’s reference to the expression of “labor” in Turkish, I would suggest, also contributed to the construction of such a iconic and nostalgic representation in the life-world of the middle classes not just living around the Taksim area but throughout the city as well. As a film studies student, Action describes the theater as follows: “Emek and other similar, small sites are places where the old is preserved like places where time stops. Emek was a place where you would be able to screen your own film against all the odds even though you were not famous director. It was also a space where you could meet one of those famous directors and take their suggestions… it was a space where your voice could be heard by other people.”
Just like Gezi Park, the municipality had authorized the plans to demolish the theater and turn it into shopping venue, which generated wide disapproval and discontent in early April 2013. Emek was actually just one part of the big urban transformation that was unfolding around Taksim area back then. The big restructuring plans for historic Beyoğlu—once inhabited by non-Muslim Istanbulites—can actually be traced back to 2012 when the neo-liberal Islamic regime together with the municipality publicly announced their plans under the motto “pedestrianization of Taksim.” This was also the first time that Istanbulites were introduced to the controversial project involving the restitution of the old army barrack. Privatization of various old monumental buildings like Emek that stretch across touristic İstiklal Street was the first step towards the big transformations that were about to take place in the neighborhood. Arya, co-founder of KOS and a curator for the arts events in Taksim, noted that these “changes” around her own “habitat” made her feel “uneasy.” “Those places like Galata, Emek, Narmanlı, are such sites that catch you by surprise with its crazy people each minute… that texture began disappearing after this greedy capital found out the potential of such places; you cannot see crazy people of Beyoğlu anymore. You know what I mean?” she added with a childish expression on her face and poetic tone in her voice as if waiting for my nod.

The idea of losing Emek not only caused disturbing feelings in the emotional world of arts people like Arya and Action, but also captured the attention of other dissidents that tended to prioritize macro ideological concerns like threats to the laic Turkish society over the micro ones such as urban transformations. Dawn—the young TBG member—surprisingly told me that Emek was among the last demonstrations he was involved in along with the “republican marches” in Ankara before Gezi. When I directed a volley of questions with respect to his motivation to go there, he pointed to the operational logic of capitalism and vehemently explained to me the ways in which that “devours national treasures” like the old theater hall. In a similar vein, Green Raincoat told me that he closely followed the news about the incident via social media because he observed a different “stirring” both in the theater protests and republican marches, the latter of which his own organization formed a key role. Demet also confirmed she
and her “comrades” from the CP closely “monitored” the same “simmering” that was happening around the old theater hall, which got Green Raincoat’s attention as well. When I questioned the source of motivation that lay behind her own attention, she stated, just like Dawn, the significance of “resisting against capitalism in every realm of life” and how she has been battling against that “mentality” since her first demonstration experience, the 15-16 June labor resistance in 1970, the cycle of labor uprisings I addressed in the context of developmentalist era in the previous chapter.

Nihilist recounted the dramatic vignette he witnessed in Emek as follows: “There were artists, actors and directors. The rhythms of resistance was also present there again just like in May 1. I also remember a large crowd of police, but I sensed sort of an anxiety in their eyes because that was an alien protest culture to them, but eventually they assaulted on the protesters.” What Nihilist means by “alien,” I suggest, corresponds to the occupation tactic applied in public spaces like theaters or parks. When he was asked to “associate” the theater protesters in conjunction with Gezi with another similar incident he witnessed or took part in, he mentioned an occupy Starbucks event he was actively involved in at his own university campus a couple of years ago. “That [occupy Starbucks] was like a playground for me,” he said. “For the first time I experienced such a tactic, yes! If that is in your mind, what you are trying to ask. And I think that may be the thing that perplexed the police in Emek. The alien thing I mean.”

Efe, co-founder of the KOS, echoed other communards’ observations of the incident. Similarly, he described to me how a crowd by itself surfaced in front of the old theater hall. “Most of the people there were independents, they were just ordinary people, dwellers and arts people living in the neighborhoods around the Taksim area,” he noted. “They were there just to halt the construction,” he added. But he also suggested that despite the spontaneously surfacing crowd along with famous artists attempting to occupy the theater, the incident did not garner the public attention he hoped it would. “In time, very few of us were left there, we were right across Emek Theater… I thought to myself, I must draw the attention to here otherwise we would lose our ground. I just did not want this to be forgotten like
the other ten thousand political incidents of which memories have gone for good, and then I jumped down police’s throat.”

The theater resistance and 2013 May Day were certainly not the only junctures prior to the commune. There had been several demonstrations, rallies, gatherings and sit-in stages that arguably operated as catalyzers before Gezi. The TBG members reminded me of the big republic marches in which they played a leading role in Ankara in May 2013. Those mass demonstrations that spread all over the streets in the capital aimed at drawing public attention to the regime’s decision to stop celebrating a national holiday in militarist fashion, which created outrage especially among the secular segments of society that yearned for the 1930s corporatist spirit. On the other hand, another interviewee, a graduate student researching one of the minority movements in Turkey, Alevism, indicated how the news of the third-bridge construction — which was named after Yavuz Sultan Selim, the Ottoman sultan who is claimed to have massacred the religiously dissident Alevi-Bektashi community of the empire in 16th century — antagonized and atomized the contemporary Alevi community, and the ways in which that outrage can also be related to the big demonstrations organized in southern Turkey, the set of protests that erupted after the state rained bombs over the innocent Kurdish villagers of Reyhanlı for allegedly being border smugglers.

Many other such incidents, rallies and demonstrations that surfaced reactively to state oppression applied towards different segments of society may very well be included within the same context if the time scope is extended. As reminded by Nihilist, the formation of a “student pact” against the regime can be traced back to the winter of 2013, when the prime minister visited METU, known for its dissident leftist culture. Such eventful protests resonating in symbolic realms, or practically emerging in response to the deaths of innocent civilians may be considered as the causal agents that triggered the commune itself. Nonetheless, based on the accounts of participants what Emek and the new millennium May 1 gatherings show us is that protesters with different political and cultural backgrounds began to merge and mingle with one another. What I imagine as the state of getting there sowed the seeds of the new
commune repertoire. More importantly, Emek was a matter of a “living space,” an expression most of the interviewees used with respect to the commune more often, rather than macro-political concerns. In fact, if political opportunities and the lost class-consciousness do not even matter that much in the context of May 1, that incident itself may be framed as a struggle for a symbolically significant public space. The question then becomes: what was the modulating factor that transformed the matter of living space to a reason for collective mobilization in the context of Turkish protest repertories, thereby aligning the newly emerging young middle classes along more or less similar agendas and objectives?

Performing opposition at the macro-party level, as the political analysis of the previous chapter mapped with respect to composite regime nature, was futile given the fact of the AKP’s unchallenged hegemony in electoral politics and the republicans’ limited political understanding. These two parties lacked the political palette to appeal to the generation of new millennials, including those that saw themselves closer to the conservative-nationalist pole. Because of this agglomeration and congestion in regime space, the only option left for the dissident segments was to seek out new protest repertoires at a micro-urban level and in the public sphere through which they could collectively articulate, channel and voice their visions. It would not be an oversimplification to suggest that this momentum or simmering, as the communards put it, that were occurring by the theater as well as during the May 1 events could be viewed as a search for political alliance under the crushing force of hegemonic singularity. Verifying this assessment, Nihilist for instance admitted that even though he was neither an artist nor a passionate film follower, he “turned out to the streets” for the theater protests just because he was willing to “resist” against the logic of “fait accompli’ that the regime became accustomed to applying at the “realm of politics.” Action told me that her main source of motivation to set out for Gezi Park was that she just wanted her “voice” to be heard following her “disappointment” about the theater, another similar account that draws attention to the diminishing hope for politics.

In this regard, I would argue that as the regime’s authoritarian particles began to diffuse from the political cosmos into living spaces, quotidian worlds and daily ecosystems of ordinary people and when
that was combined with the absence of an effective opposition actor at the parliamentary level, the new young middle classes in Asia Minor started experimenting with new alliance forms on the streets, which took shape around the matter of the right to the city and urban commons. Certainly, this was not merely a rational decision. Based on the open-ended interview questions and responses I received for them, it would not be wrong to state that the formation process of this solidarity was reaching out beyond perception and consciousness as well as arising/closing political opportunities. This is not to say that political reasons did not matter at all. It was in fact its hegemony of itself, which was consolidating and settling in regime space, which led to this new alliance formation that began to take shape in public spaces and sites of protest action.

5.3 May 27 and the First Contact with the Park

As I expressed above, the demolition of the park was just one leg of the grand urban restructuring project that was designed for Taksim. The legitimization rhetoric of the grand plan revolved around the illusion of opening more space for pedestrians despite the fact that Taksim Square was not such a busy place in terms of the quantity of vehicles that pass through the area. More importantly, local administrative bodies did not even feel the need to ask the city dwellers’ feelings and opinions about it. In response to this top-down mentality, or as Nihilist puts it “fait accompli mentality,” the people of Taksim formed a multilayered grassroots defense organization called the Taksim Solidarity Platform (TD), as I indicated in the introduction chapter. The platform was founded thanks to initiatives taken by various actors, organizations and guilds such as the chambers of engineers-architects, lawyers, local environmentalist groups, and cultural associations, as well as some dissident Marxist parties fractions such as the CP, with which Demet is affiliated.

A couple of days after the theater protests, a few activists, graduate students, eco-protesters and members of the chamber of architects-city planners had already begun to stage a sit-in protest following the diggers seen in the park as the TD drew attention to the illegal aspects of the project as well as its
ecological implications in the surrounding area. In this regard, without a doubt, the part that the platform played in rounding up people inside cannot be overlooked. Nonetheless, this not to say that this backyard style grassroots movement actively orchestrated and organized the uprising from the beginning. Environmentally sensitive people like me and Efe, who was following the developments inside the park via his friend-relative circles and media outlets or social media, made it there independent of any constitutes of the platform.

I paid several visits to Gezi Park starting on May 27. As I expressed in the introduction chapter, in my first contact I swung by the park on my way to one of the meetings organized by the Afro-Turkish community in the area. The moment I saw the animal activist group that gathered there along with their pets in tow or perched on shoulders, I began to develop an affective tie with the space and the cause that was crystallizing there since there was a bigger issue at stake than mere humans. My intuitive sensitivity to non-human creatures was certainly not the only factor that lay behind the impact that this first contact left on me. The question of why I instantly began to develop such an intimate connection with the park requires more elaboration on my own subjectivity and a deeper dig into my positionality in the Turkish sociopolitical cosmos, which I touched upon briefly in the methodology section.

Akin to other communards like Arya and Action, I also felt uneasy about the ongoing urban transformations in various neighborhoods of the city. Because of high-rises and construction sites that were springing up like mushrooms after rain in the city, it seemed the world was spinning too fast around me. The whirling vortex that was sweeping and even at some points destroying the shores of the Bosphorus and ancient Beyoğlu made me feel as if I was uprooted from the past and the space in which I was grounded. Such unsettling feelings sometimes dragged me to the last remaining green sites such as the Prince Islands — an archipelago where time stops through the restrictions and regulations on motor-vehicles — and into a few old Orthodox churches in the Asian part of the city where I sought solitude despite not believing in any Abrahamic religions. I can in fact trace the origins of this state of restlessness back to 2009 when they began to take down the Greek-style wood houses of Kadıköy, a neighborhood
that sits across the Bosphorus from where I was born, grew up and went to high-school (Kolluoğlu 2009). In 2011, I also closely monitored the gentrification project that took place in Ayvansaray, another authentic neighborhood known for its cosmopolitan cultural texture back in the Ottoman era and for its vivid music culture nowadays. In the years before Gezi, it was not very common to see activists that would organize against the so-called urban transformations that turn our eco-systems inside out. Certainly, there emerged a few urban social movements that gathered local dwellers and middle classes. The urban resistance in Sulukule, where the cries of the Romani people garnered the attention of UNESCO and the EU, may be included in this regard (Uysal 2012). Nonetheless, I suggest most of my generation seemed to be apathetic to such so-called urban regenerations, at least in my social circles. Presumably, they were preoccupied with the Marxian revolutionary fantasies that coloured the small-table talks inside the thick walls of university corridors, as a result leaving no place for alternative discussion topics such as gender and green politics, which are generally viewed as “trivial problems” in such hardcore socialist circles. In the absence of a collective I could relate to, I individually made some amount of effort to spread the word about the so-called urban regeneration projects, which began to drill holes in the ancient landscape of Istanbul, via prominent main news sources as much as possible (Kolluoğlu 2011, 2009).

In addition, in early May 2013, I was a laid off research assistant. I was working in a migration project that was conducted under the shelter of one of the universities that is ideologically affiliated with the current Islamic-neoliberal regime. The research was nonetheless supervised by a famous Turkish sociologist who is known for his progressive background in one of the most famous Marxist universities,

27 Before the full digitalization process of media, I was even paid for writing and publishing such informative articles and news bulletins. Nonetheless, in time this personal cultural initiative emerged as a popular medium for the new middle classes to channel their voices and increase their popularity in digital matrixes and blogs. In effect, media outlets renounced the right to be paid for publication because there emerged a cluster of digital columnists who would be willing to write articles for free in exchange for being granted places on the edges of news portals and digital newspapers. In brief, my cultural capital lost its commodity value in the course of time.
the METU. Despite his egalitarian persona, I was subjected to mobbing via wage cuts, reduction in holiday entitlement, flexible working hours, emotional abuse and psychological pressure. Since research assistants did not have the privilege to be unionized in Turkey, for the first time in my life, I found myself facing the reality of labor rights under practical circumstances. Because of that experience, I came to understand that there was no space left for working-class resistance in a belated neoliberalizing Islamic milieu. More importantly, this experience proved to me the extent to which the logic of so-called Marxist solidarity was actually fragile and superficial because it showed me that even your fellow colleagues, including the ones working on the same project as other research assistants, could actually try to secure their own positions by distancing themselves from you as the target of mobbing. This becomes more ironic given that one of those colleagues had her/his degree from the METU sociology department, the higher education institution known for selling itself as the core of the left solidarity. To a certain extent, this was a wakeup call for a subjectivity like me that used to daydream of Marxist paths to a final end as a strategy of escaping from reality.

In fact, although I used to situate my political ideology within the diplomatic side of Marxist orthodoxy, I never felt my voice was channeled through socialist organizations or groups because of the heterosexist logic and hierarchical rigidity that operates in them as a cultural legacy left from the Cold War. As I explained in detail in the methodology section, the Turkish left has a tendency to mute alternative dissident voices by labeling them as “liberal,” as the story of my socialist interlocutor in Canada exemplifies. I actually sneaked into one of those groups, which provided an easy access at first because my own gender positionality in social cosmos, in order to struggle against that rigidity within its own sphere. I am still a member of the group called Socialist Homosexuals Unity thanks to the diplomatic skills I have developed during my undergraduate studies.

Ultimately, I was a drifter, a nonpartisan subjectivity who was yearning for a sort of a collective organization. I held the view that my visions, feelings and moral values could not be represented by any of the political groups and formations I knew. Certainty, there were a couple of ones like the Socialist
Homosexuals Unity to which I felt closer. Nonetheless, up until that point I never believed that animal activism or the green politics would surface as an effective resistance force in a belated-neoliberalizing cosmos. Right after I mingled with the animal activists inside the park, I became more eager to take action against the project. That first contact, in other words, kindled in me a sort of a militant love for the park. More importantly, activists and urban dwellers were gathering in public spaces to protect their city, unlike a couple of years ago. The missing physical collective entity I could relate myself to was present there. I surrendered myself to my body’s flow as I strolled around the park. In the meantime, I called a couple of my Marxist friends so as to make the crowd more resilient to police assaults. Almost no one picked up my calls. Those who answered did not sound very keen. One got back to me saying that s/he had no time to “play games in parks anymore.” This person was another METU sociology graduate who was proud of being an activist and once teased me for being “liberal” just because I boycotted a referendum in 2007, a political choice that allegedly played into the hands of the government.

On 31 May, the incident inside park developed in a very similar fashion to the Emek protests. Channeling the thoughts and feelings of other communards, it would be not be entirely wrong to say that the police were not very prepared for such a new protest strategy that involved the mass occupation practice by a heterogeneous crowd that came out of the theater protesters. The crowd was mostly made up independent, non-partisan participants who set up their tents in order to halt the construction. Along with the TD constituents, they did not flinch from using their bodies as a means to resist the security forces. There was only one politician, the Kurdish parliamentarian, Sırrı Süreyya Önder involved in this embryonic sit-in protest; nonetheless he came to the site independent of his party. As someone already experienced in such struggles, he negotiated with the police along with one of my interviewees, Ahmet Saymadı, who was about to lay the foundations of a new ecologically oriented party called the SYKP. Önder, the Kurdish MP, kept giving speeches and interviews to the main media outlets as a public intellectual known for the films he directed before he became a politician. In one statement he is quoted

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28 I consider myself an independent animal activist given the fact that I have contributed to the collective efforts in improving the living conditions of stray cats and dogs around my neighborhoods.
as saying: “This is the only place where poor people, who do not have a coin to buy a glass of tea, can sit and enjoy the city. Here they usurp the right of the poor to sit under the shade of trees” (“Gezi Parkı’nda Sırı Süreyya Önder Eylemi” 2013).

As such dramatic and pivotal statements hit the headlines in social media as well as in main media outlets, and as the news garnered more public attention, more people flocked into the park to backup the vanguard resistors in their struggle. A couple of urban planners and architects also expressed their concerns via major news broadcast channels by articulating the implications of the project on the built environment and surrounding neighborhoods. As the news of the restitution project spread throughout the four days prior to the uprising night, I would suggest, an audience by and in itself, just like in the case of Emek, emerged. This happened through a moral shock, which came as result of a feeling of intrusion into “living space,” an expression that most of my interviewees articulated with respect to their “opinions” on the project planned for the park.

But certainly this moral shock was not the only emotive factor that lay underneath the whole mobilization process. The general question of what causal agents lay behind the decision to be part of the first environmentally oriented small resistance inside Gezi Park is a complex one to answer, as I suggested in the methodology chapter. Verifying the complexity of this question, the participants interviewed for this study in fact outlined a cluster of motivation factors ranging from the regime’s increasing authoritarian inclinations and Islamist rhetoric that threatened the secularist structure of Turkish society, to the matter of lifestyles and the logic of economic privatization along with the “unjust” social and economic policies, which were manifesting themselves in the urban setting. Thus, the set of events, grievances, affective factors I have addressed chronologically to this point cannot be isolated from a larger complex of protests, forms of action and mobilization of ideologies, emotions and motivations.

I would nevertheless argue that all these subjective macro factors are interconnected, intersectional, linked with one another and prioritized in accordance with the subject positioning in the Turkish sociopolitical cosmos. Yet what is more important than the intersectional nature of macro
mobilization factors is the fact that ideological and macro-political concerns came to the ground when the participants were asked to “make sense of the Gezi protests” in general, whereas affective domains, which correspond to the emotive factors that the red women represents, were recounted with a particular emphasis on the uprising night.

To put it in more empirical terms, for Efe, his decision to go the park was primarily based on the notion of saving the green space left in the heart of the city. On the other hand, Demet, who also mobilized that night, emphasized the matter of privatization and economic conditions from her point of view as an activist defining and introducing herself as a member of the CP. Understandably, the young TGB members passionately expressed how they associated Taksim Square with the enlightenment and secular spirit of the republic in their own life-world, and in doing so reminded me the significance of the monumental concert hall, Atatürk Cultural Center, that is located beside the park. That Cultural Center was also planned to be demolished along with the park. For Arya, that corresponded to the matter of intrusion into her “living space” since she was an artist spending most of her time around the neighborhood. Kara Block told me that he was working on the 25th floor of a construction site when he made up his mind to go to the park, as if he was pointing to the alienation he was experiencing at his workplace. Virgo, the journalist comunard, reminded me of the restrictions on the Internet and media outlets along with many other “intrusive” policies such as limitations on hours of alcohol sales. On the other hand, Action first emphasized the increasing violence against women in society, and then brought up the matter of abortion, which became the subject of heated debates after the prime minister’s remarks in early May 2013. Levent Pişkin, a hard-nosed public figure in the LGBTQ community, prioritized the fact of how the park itself still served as a “space of exchange,” sort of a cruising site for “the gays of Istanbul,” especially for the ones without access to luxurious clubs in Taksim Square area or the Internet. He also emphasized how the message of the project was decoded and perceived as a “matter of intrusion into living space” among his community members. Nonetheless, in answer to the question of “what sorts
of things made you decide to take to the streets on 31 May,” communards primarily pointed to the dramatic and emotive incidents such as the Red Woman that resonated across affective domains.

5.4 Affective Singularity and Woman Iconography during Revolutionary Situations

What about the participants who defined their political affiliations in terms of the spectrum of moral conservative and nationalist ideologies? Why they get pulled into the gravitational force of commune repertoire? Despite the fact that they were not involved in the events in large numbers and groups, I would argue that their reasons to join to the protests along with dissident subjectivities like the ones I listed above are very vital in understanding how the core dynamics of the mobilization process in the Turkish context unfolded. In other words, their accounts of the uprising night brings us closer to a neutral ground where the micro-processual, affective dynamics become more visible and readable in this context.

Among the participants I interviewed, Sheriff is a young law student who framed his political vision around the spectrum of pan-Turkist-Islamist ideology that is embodied by the MHP in the regime space. Even though he seemed be to situating his own subjectivity on a social base that is open to other dissident political and cultural visions, at the same time he appeared to be cynical and sarcastic of any kind of alternative political movement that would derail pan-Turkism from its true path. He repeatedly told me that he did not give “significance” to the “environmentalists” inside the park and he did not see any social or “political cause there” that he could identify himself with at first.

“So what really turned you out to the streets that night?” I inquired of Sherriff. “I first dropped by there to check on and give a look at my socialist friends,” he replied self-assuredly with a warm tone in
his voice. Then he emphasized that he was “impressed by ordinary people’s heroic acts, especially women.” He also said, “they did not seem to possess extraordinary talents and skills, like heroic characters we are used to see in films… the courage they showed just impressed me.” Thus, as his body moved around and witnessed what others were performing in the repertoire in making, he let himself go with the flow of the protest motion itself. In a similar fashion, another participant with a similar political profile, Ahmet, who introduced himself as an “Erdoğan supporter,” recounted how he was “impressed” by one of the symbolic images of Gezi, the image of a Kurdish LGBTQ community member reading a book in front of a police barricades. He mentioned another iconic image when I asked him if other similar scenes came to his mind that triggered him to take to the streets. “The Red Woman, she had a very strong stance in there. Those sorts of images really made me thought there was a matter of injustice there. That is why I went to the park with my wife,” he said.

Ahmet was not the only partisan regime supporter who made it to the park with his concern about “injustice.” According to Dawn, one of his childhood friends that he described as a regular AKP voter, decided to team up with what he perceived as the “CHP supporters” to protest in the name of “justice.” But what did “justice” really mean for the conservative participants of Gezi? In order to understand what this abstraction signified for Ahmet, I directed a couple of probing questions to him. “Can you give me another example of protest event, besides Gezi, where you see such unjust treatment?” I asked. “You probably remember how veiled university girls were beaten up by police in the 1990s. That is also a matter of justice for me. They were not even allowed to walk at campuses.” In order to tie the unfolding discussion to Gezi I intervened asking, “And you had the same feeling when they assaulted environmentalists in the park with gas guns?” He responded: “I think yes, to be honest I did not care about people there when I first, but when I first saw what was happening there I really felt furious.” In this regard, I would argue that the Red Woman and other dramatic images that spread on both social media and news sources reminded both Ahmet and Dawn’s friend of the headscarf protests, some of which took place around Taksim Square area back in the late 1990s. Because of the traces of those
memories, they may have framed the Red Woman and Gezi in general around the rhetoric of “justice,” the discourse that has given inspiration to the founding members of the party for whom they tend to vote.

As I suggested, there emerged many other images that were circulated in social media after the police’s assault on the vanguard occupiers. In particular, the image of “woman in red” being pepper sprayed went viral and became one of the iconographic background motifs of the event itself, as I suggested before. The Red Woman and acts of heroic resistance by other women that night not only impressed and inspired participants that leaned towards moral conservatism and ultra-nationalist views, but also the members of marginalized communities like Kara Block. This young dissident Kurd, who spoke in poetic sentences that winded through subordinate clauses, told me he was getting news via social media at his workplace and he came across with the photograph of the Red Woman on his smartphone. In a paradoxical way as an anarchist, Kurd used an intriguing metaphor to express his “feelings” and “opinions” over the “shocking” image he saw. “I felt the whole country was under invasion; it was as if the public emerged as the enemy… how they could do that to this girl I kept mumbling to myself,” he said when he was asked to recount the most memorable moments left from the insurrection night. Telos also said “the gas gun pointed to that girl’s face; that shot, its memory is still haunting me,” when she was asked to narrate the “unforgettable moments” and “scenes” left from the uprising night.

Certainly, the Red Woman was not the only unforgettable image that depicted a dramatic moment from the uprising night. Some of my interviewees lined up many other similar incidents that they witnessed first hand or that grabbed their attention via social media. These cases stretch from the elders and old-school protesters in about their seventies to “brave” LGBTQ people fighting at the front lines and to the environmentalists inside the park who locked themselves to the top of trees following the assault that came at the dawn of 30 May. Most of the accounts of dramatic events highlighted the “heroic acts,” especially by women, and how the effects of these “brave” initiatives motivated and encouraged them to be part of the uprising that night.
Iconography, motifs and representation of women’s body that is mostly associated with the abstract idealization of “liberty” are in fact common and widespread phenomena in times of revolutionary situations and sociopolitical turbulences like Gezi. In the 1840s in France, women fighting on barricades had been widely circulated in pamphlets as reoccurring revolutionary symbolism in order to inspire and animate the dissident segments to rebel against the absolutist regime, thereby motivating them to gather around common causes that were shaped around the notion of “liberating Paris.” They were also associated with the image of “motherland,” to be protected and scarified for its sake (D. Harvey 2004, 4,280-285). Thus, in the genesis of the commune repertoire as well, heroic acts of women that were portrayed through various visual means played a significant role in the mobilization process of a fragmented and scattered public resistance—made up by craftsman communities and international working class segments—to liberate their city and country.

For sure, similar analogies that sacralize female iconography in times of mobilization may be observed in the local national culture as well. Images that show both elder peasant women and young townswomen carrying bullets to battlefronts during the Turkish independence movement of the 1920s were quite widespread. Such examples, which are still commonly included in primary school education textbooks to retain the spirit of nationhood, include popular names such as Halide Edip Adıvar, a romantic Turkish novelist and a lead figure for women’s rights whose extreme statements and visions with respect to a new nation even forced the boundaries of Atatürk’s idealizations, a quarrel that eventually caused her to seek exile in France. Not all symbolic feminist figures were at variance with the leader of the independence movement. Images and photographs showing Sabiha Gökcen, the first female combat pilot of the Turkish history and closely associated with Atatürk, operated as propaganda mediums to legitimize the secular aspects of the republican revolution, which allegedly took the shackles of Islam off women. Gökcen’s iconography actually may not resonate with all segments of the society since she symbolizes the so-called “elitist” and foreign aspects of the Western white modernity in the eyes of provincial as well as provincial classes. Nonetheless, it still proves the ways in which female
iconography, the abstract idealization of womanhood, its virginal fragility and its association with the notion of “motherland” (anavatan) in the Turkish semantic world, may operate and crystalize as catalysts during mobilization and revolutionary processes in the local political memory.

Given the role that iconography of woman played in the genesis of commune repertoire and the Turkish revolution, I would argue that the Red Woman is among the other cases of images that ignited the sparks of the insurrection during the mobilization of 2013. Accordingly, I view the redness of this Gezi communard disappearing into pale skin, which actually reflects the spirit of the Turkish flag, as the embodiment of such many other dramatic incidents that took place during the uprising night. Expressed differently, I imagine it as the incarnation of a common cause that manifested itself in the symbolic realm as well as in the affective domains, thereby consolidating the formation of a heterogeneous multiplicity I have mapped out thus far on a practical ground.

For Turks, although the story itself was not as deadly as Mohammad Bouazizi’s self immolation in Tunisia, which set motion of the Arab Spring momentum across the Middle East, the exercise of violence on a young woman’s body came as moral shock in the way the notion of the restitution project itself did. It had such an effect because the woman in red evolved into a simulacrum, becoming an intersubjectively or interactively experienced truth in its own right. It arose as an accentuated reality warping the spatio-temporality, thereby enabling an already atomized segment and relatively obedient subjectivities like Ahmet and Sherriff to get connected to this moment. I would further argue that it had such a spillover effect because the aesthetics of the image depicted the violence as if it was almost stationary, like a frozen timeframe that was reaching beyond the space and time configurations in which it was recorded. It was as if the composition of the static body, the pale skin in redness opened onto infinite possibilities by weaving the moment itself into previous contentious episodes such as Emek and May 1, including many other “unjust” events that took place in Turkish political history. The Red Woman, which I imagine as the embodiment of all other similar dramatic incidents that occurred that day as well as the Turkish flag, I argue, resulted in “a powerful indetermination” in the everyday politics; it was a
rupture in the Foucauldian sense. This ambiguity and chaos in everyday politics folded onto infinite possibilities at that moment, thereby re-modulating and rerouting specific prior political memories, imaginaries, grievances and socio-political injustices into affective events, or what Bartelson and Murphie call “affective intensities” (Bartelson and Murphie 2010). In brief, it transformed the repertoire in the making to the potpourri of previous contentious repertoires in the local social memory.

To wrap up the symbolic and emotional dynamics at play during the mobilization process and the repertoire in making, the crystallizing multiplicity that first manifested itself in the millennium Labor Day demonstrations thereupon taking shape around the notion of right to the city by the theater, as suggested, evolved into an affective intensity. This happened by pulling more subjectivities into itself through moral shocks such as the Red Woman, as well as prior grievances and memories, political and ideological motivational reasons, all of which differentiate and are prioritized depending upon the subject positing and biographic background. More importantly, the oscillation of bodily politics in the mobilization process itself, the process of observing other protesters on the ground that led to a desire to mimic their “heroic” actions, especially of women, fused all other intervening subjective independent mobilization reasons with one another. Consequently, the new multi-layered protester composition that emerged in the May 1 demonstrations and the theater protests morphed into what I characterize as affective singularity, which can be likened to a black hole, by absorbing other subjectivities through its immense gravitational force. That may also be viewed as an affective magnet that corresponds to collective oscillation of bodies in the course of action.

In brief, those who were already mobilized by the new millennium May Day demonstrations, as well as the theater protests and those who monitored and observed the vanguard protesters in the park and were swept up emotionally because of the calls for justice, met on the confluence of the affective singularity, which was constituted by various atomized emotive particles such as the Red Woman. I view the Red Woman as the epitome of such incidents that occurred during the night of mobilization not just
because female iconography operates as a mobilization catalyst in the genesis of other commune repertoires, but also because it is a resonant factor in the local collective memory.

5.5 The Uprising Night: Collective Oscillation of Bodies and Ramifying Affective
Circuits

Soon after the protesters were forcefully evicted from the park, I found myself on a large boulevard leading to one of the city’s busiest commercial districts. Small groups walking toward the action site and disturbing the flow of the traffic caught my eye on my way to this busy commercial area named Şişli. It appeared to me that the groups were mostly made up of white-collar workers dressed in business suits. As suits became the widespread pattern among the groups, I was able to clearly see the angry expression on their faces as well. In groups of three to five, they all together were walking hastily on the boulevard, slowing down the traffic. In a few minutes, it was suddenly like a large nest of ants that had been disturbed; crowds were filling the boulevard and small lanes.

The boulevard also borders the eastern limits of another neighborhood known for its poverty and migrant dwellers. A couple of groups mostly made of teens coming from that direction grabbed my attention as well. Some were gripping sticks and chains tightly in their hands. They were also loud and vocal; they sounded to be vehemently debating a plan. While I was waiting for a friend to come out of the nest, I kept watching the debating teens and the crowds that were gradually replacing cars on the boulevard. I would describe this vignette as an unexpected encounter of between the sticks and the suits. The space in which the multitude began emerging out of the affective singularity gradually went on expanding especially through groups carrying backpacks. It seemed to me at that point that a nebula of ionized gases was floating and drifting independent of ideology or organizational formation. As the boulevard emptied of vehicles, the opaque and the fluid borders of that nebula stretched as far as Gezi Park. No centralized political body, organizational formation or leadership cult orchestrated that night of May 31. It would not be inaccurate to characterize this uprising as an insurrection in that sense.
As the day turned to night some relatively more politicized groups seized the opportunity and attempted to solidify in the nebula of insurrection. One of those groups was presumably the youths coming from a nationalist-secularist background. Although they seemed to be in harmony with the drifting insurrectionists, they appeared to me as a pulsar, a neutron star that was beaming lights towards hegemony and hegemonic aspirations. They were projecting confidence through their combat-ready outside appearances; one alpha-male already put on a helmet although it was the first night of insurrection. They were also shouting militaristic slogans. They were nevertheless so scattered in the midst of the crowds that their repetitively chanted slogan “we are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal” did not resonate across other insurrectionists. Some responded by shouting “we are no one’s soldiers.” One protester, presumably coming from LGBTQ community teased them by yelling back “We are the soldiers of Zeki Müren” (a Turkish queer icon). It was as if the last children of Atatürk, a strong protective leadership figure associated with the imagination of patriarchal state in the political culture, were slowly being drowned and poisoned in the nebula. They were about to be resurrected in the form of a new subjectivity in the commune nonetheless.

Thousands of protesters kept turning out on other boulevards, streets and lanes leading to the park. The uprising multiplied, communicated horizontally and coordinated across different milieus. Most protesters followed via social media on their cell phones as the news channels preferred to broadcast limited coverage of the events taking place in the heart of city. Telephone calls made with other rebels resisting in other venues contributed to the circulation of information as well. Communally made chats and exchanges of information usually followed tweets, social network posts and cell phone texts. The insurrection, I would argue, was imagined and co-arranged through such affective and bodily contacts as well as social media. News of badly wounded protesters accompanied epic resistance stories, which were articulated through these affective bodily contacts. The heroic resistance of Çarşı that managed to repel police from their venue, Beşiktaş especially echoed among the multitude. There blossomed a sense of jubilance at that moment. It was as if the initial moral shocks began reverberating through other affective
circuits; I would argue that all those circuits in one way or another were related to the oppressing aspects of late capitalism.

I recall two young protesters wearing aprons of a restaurant chain and a middle-aged woman in a black work suit and high heels along with noticeable makeup and an outraged expression on her face. It appeared to me she had just left her office and turned into a militant in one night; she was helping those two youngsters in aprons to build barricades to prevent the salvos of water cannons. It was a vignette that I was not used to seeing and because of its rareness it stunned me. I was actually mesmerized by the oddity of the scene. I got a scolding from the militant woman in the suit for my apathy. It was indeed a necessary wake-up call. My body thereupon just began to follow and mimicked what they were doing. It was undoubtedly not my first demonstration experience, yet it was my first time building a barricade on one of the busiest boulevards in Istanbul and taking an active stance against the so-called legitimate security forces. I felt a liberating sense as my body simultaneously flowed with the militant woman and two proletarian guys. Gas canisters were flying over us. I was distracted and stumbled over a rock and fell down. One of the guys helped me to stand up. A couple of snapshots flashed before my eyes at that moment: the day I started working as a cashier in a pizza restaurant following my graduation from the masters program and coming out to my family; the day I was laid off from the research project; the animal activists in the park, especially the man whose cat was perched on his shoulder as if he were a human slave to a feline master. The bricolage of all these flashbacks gave me a sense of unity; it felt as if I was in the same boat with all other people around there. The feline master in particular enabled me to realize the fact that the systemic formation was also built upon a toxic and arcane masculinity that was poisoning our intimate relations as well as our work domains.

Given the fact it was a spontaneously self-developing mass civil disobedience without any organization, leader or political body in the driving seat, it would not be an oversimplification to suggest that most of the protesters, like me, just went with the flow through the collective oscillations of bodies along with other insurrections in the streets. In other words, they did not mobilize with certain tactics that
were meticulously calculated under the light of political opportunities or strict ideological purposes. In that sense, it would not be entirely wrong to suggest that no one could have envisaged or imagined the restoration of the encampment along with a much larger crowd. In fact, it was that spontaneity as well as the rhizomatic nature of the insurrection that caught municipal and security officials off guard. They were not prepared for that sort of effective, improvisational and multi-vectored resistance praxis that enabled urban dwellers with diverse social and cultural backgrounds to mingle with one another.

As the ebbs and flows of the bodies on the streets continued and as chaos deepened, helicopters with flashlights and camera drones began hovering over the crowds. But the small, historic lanes of Taksim Area veiled them by providing small pockets of breathing spaces. Thousands more kept coming from different segments of the fragmented society. Dumpsters were being overturned and set ablaze on main roads leading to the park. Barricades in the making were firmed up as more protesters contributed to the collective effort. Despite the police use of tear gas, rubber bullets, pressurized water and brutal force, there seemed to be no fear among the resisters. Ordinary city dwellers, in other words, were not afraid to be hit by police batons anymore. There was in fact a sense of security that covered all the site of action. I knew that if I fell down someone from behind would come to help. The initial indeterminacy and fear, I suggest, had given way to repetitively performed tactics such as the vain attempts to go forth despite being pepper sprayed over and over again. The repertoire began to acquire a mystical sense thereafter. The oscillations of this ritualistic bodily motion in the streets accompanied a sort of learning-by-doing process as well. My body was just flowing with the current; the only thing in my mind was to reach to the park again. I was neither aiming to establish nor imagine a commune nonetheless.

Fighting against police for the first time in their life, most of the insurrectionists in the small lanes, I suggest, followed the front-line fighters as they attempted to blockade main avenues and boulevards running through the Taksim area. Anarchist groups, leftists experienced in struggles and young partisan fighters protecting their neighborhoods constituted the backbone of the protesters attempting to sneak out. This is not to say that people waiting behind the barricades were not active
whatsoever. Ahmet Saymadi, for instance, told me that how the presence of masses behind them encouraged and motivated the front line fighters to move farther because they knew that there were masses coming behind. “That gave the night a different taste,” he responded to my question about the memories left from the uprising night. As the insurrection prolonged, the vanguard forces in fact temporarily left their positions for others stationed behind. I remember one of them, who had a scarf covering his face, pushing me toward the barricade on the boulevard in order to distract and negotiate with the cops. “You go and keep them busy now, we will circle them around,” he said to me. It was going to be my first direct confrontation with a group of security officers waiting with water cannons in a militarized fashion to suppress the protesters. I took shelter behind the barricade I had helped to build. With naïve voice but in a determined way, I yelled towards police: “You will regret what you are doing when the government falls tomorrow.” Demet also told me how her party comrades “found out” and used such time-buying tactics in order to give time to the rest of the frontline protesters in the late hours of the insurrection.

Hurling bricks and stones at water cannons, throwing back tear gas shells and canisters were the other tactics implemented. Such direct action-oriented practices were repeated again and again like religious ceremonies until the first light of dawn. The growing desire to protect the park was being put into words through chants, slogans and loud cries. It was as if the main slogan “everywhere is Taksim, everywhere is resistance” was modulating and re-framing the spatio-temporality that the Red Woman warped before. Some whispered that the insurrection had leaked into other cities in the country. “The cops are caught unprepared! They are drawing back,” cried out one protester after checking his cell phone.

Other accounts of the mobilization night more or less verify and reflect the scenes I narrated above through my own self-retrospective autobiographical investigation. Almost each communard noted that they had never before been part of such a “mass uprising” including the ones who were experienced in demonstrations and struggles against state forces. The TGB members, for instance, pointed out that in
spite of their “accumulations” and experiences in similar situations, “the night of the uprising had a
different sense,” because they had hitherto never been part of such a “mass demonstration” that involved
“people coming from different sections of the society.” Green Raincoat expressed his emotions as
follows: “It happened spontaneously; sort of a affectification (duygudaşma) emerged that night. I was
pretty much impressed because I heard many people shouting ‘don’t get back home, we are not
withdrawing, help each other!’ A strange sense of excitement filled me because I was never part of such a
large-scale demonstration before… I saw many people without Turkish flags, people with masks and
backpacks… I surrendered to the flow.”

Contrasting with his observations on the protester profile, Kara Block and Nihilist paradoxically
admitted that they spotted many more protesters carrying the national flag. Such ironic and nuanced
differences in the accounts could have arisen because of perceptual selectivity. Because of evolutionary
human mechanism, humans are subconsciously inclined towards recognizing people who either look like
themselves or spotting the ones different from their groups in an ecosystem filled with unpredictable
factors. Considering that the uprising spread to different neighborhoods and parts of the city, as I
emphasized above, there may have emerged agglomerations of protesters with similar social and
ideological backgrounds in certain sites. Along with his anarchist fellows, Kara Block attempted to reach
the park from Beşiktaş neighborhood, which is known for its secularist-nationalist social texture. In this
regard, understandably, he could have observed more nationalist flags in the crowd. Nihilist, nonetheless,
emphasized that he was raised in a secular “Islamophobic” family environment; perhaps because of his
biographical background more people with the flags captured his attention. Whether or not the majority of
the protesters mobilized that night came from the secularist-nationalist segments of the society does not
change the fact that the uprising was more of a spontaneous and reflexive dynamic through which the
insurrections created affective ties by letting their bodies flow with the motion itself.

Unlike Kara Block and Nihilist, the majority of the communards echoed Green Raincoat and
verified the fact that there were more “independent” protesters than members of any kind of organization
or hierarchical formations such as Marxist-Leninist parties and unionist movements. To the question “what was the common pattern you observed that night?” they replied by describing various scenes including the “independent protesters” with “backpacks” and “masks.” This is not to say that old forms of politics were not involved at all in the insurrection. Virgo for instance reminded me how some members of the revolutionary labor union, the DISK, were “active” starting in the afternoon, as one of the constituents of the TD. Nihilist also noted that he was able to see more banners with hammer-sickle symbols and flags of the “socialist organizations” in the late hours of night. As an active member of the CP, Demet noted how her “party comrades” in the park tried to regroup in a more organized way as the insurrection prolonged. Her response to the question of whether the decisions they took and tactics they used that night were planned was: “Everything progressed in the blink of an eye. It [the uprising] was more of reflexive reaction, we could have arranged a meeting with the comrades before, but we bumped into each other on the streets. Yes true! Nobody prepared flags and placards in advance but some friends managed to get a few pieces from the party quarters afterwards. Despite that, it was too quick; like a dream.”

At its core, the night of 31 May may be better referred to as an insurrection that reflects anarchistic characteristics through which the Marxist political and organizational bodies oscillated along with the motion that raveled “feelings of excitement,” which ultimately, I argue, eclipsed the ideological concerns and rational-decision making mechanisms in the course of mobilization process itself. Just like Green Raincoat, Arya also emphasized that she felt a strange feeling of “excitement” that night, and by feeling so how she experimented with a new protest performance. She pointed out that one of the primary reasons that turned her out to the streets that night was the “sense of looking after friends and brother.” She indicated that it was her first experience, along with her friends and brother, of struggle against “state forces.” Her accounts about the excitement she felt was as follows: “There was violence in each minute. I saw a man who was hit by gas canister from back. Despite that chaos I tried to stay one step ahead in every move, I also felt excitement because there was performance in each minute. It was sort of an
aestheticized resistance. I do not know what was the reason behind my intention but I just started recording videos, taking shots and tweeting them.” When I asked if she saw or heard anything about the usage of social media in times of protests before Gezi—Tahrir and other occupy movement were in my mind—she confirmed that she did not learn that practice of taking snapshots and tweeting. In other words, she suggested she did not model her act on a case that was stuck in her mind. “Perhaps it was just an artist instinct; you know we have that animalistic instinct to save and record aesthetic things in life, those beautiful moments in life, which makes things more meaningful,” she added with her big eyes open as if reflecting the excitement she felt over the course of that night.

Certainly, unlike Arya there were more experienced protesters who were used to applying various tactics that they had tried and knew already. Kara Block, for instance, pointed out how his struggles in his own neighborhood, Gaziosmanpaşa, known for its dissident Kurdish-Marxist social texture, helped him on the ground that night. “I was gassed, beaten by police not only in my neighborhood but as a member of Çarşı in the middle of soccer stadiums because of my previous experiences, the things I saw that night was not really new to me.” But when I asked him what factors would differentiate May 31 from his previous protest experiences, he recounted an intriguing anecdote: “Such scenes are very usual where I grew up; police abuse us everyday in Gaziosmanpaşa. But that night I almost passed out in the gas fume. One trans person pulled my body out of that gas cloud and dragged me into her place. She gave me the usual stuff to ease the side effects; you know milk, lemon… it was my first time in my life being saved by a trans person; I could have never imagined that before Gezi if you are asking that.”

5.6 The Commune of 1871 on the Horizons of Gezi Park

As I mapped out above, the mobilization dynamics that lay behind the insurrection are complex, compound elements and woven with one another. With this fact in mind, I first directed the attention on the crystallization of the heterogeneous protester composition, the formation process of the multiplicity, which can be traced back to two significant events that occurred in Istanbul’s urban space, the new
millennium May Day demonstrations that took place between the years of 2010 and 2013, and the theater protests. Through the accounts of the communards that provided glimpses into these two cases, we first observed the emergence of the rhizomatic political alliance between the old forms of politics and the emerging new middle classes and their cultural movements. As first suggested in the introduction chapter and as will be emphasized in this following section, this self-surfacing solidarity primarily surfaced out of the dynamics that were at play at the macro political level, the hegemony of the AKP at the electoral politics along with the absence of an effective oppositional force that would channel the voices of dissident segments. As the systemic singularity gradually began to threaten the city space in parallel to neoliberalism’s implications peculiar to the belated post-modern milieu, the manifold, multi-layered protester profile crystallized against that momentum as seen in the May Day gatherings and the theater protests, the latter of which prematurely attempted to introduce the occupation tactic.

Following that, I observed the ways in which this new multilayered alliance that aimed to protect urban commons became more manifold and expanded through affective singularities such as the Red Woman and oscillation of bodies, thereby absorbing the fragmented, atomized, drifting, and even conservative segments of the society in it. In this regard, I followed up the ways in which the affective singularities wove the previous contentious repertoires in the local temporality into the unfolding mobilization process itself. Accordingly, I concluded that the macro-structural conditions seemingly produced the Gezi events and stretching from the threat of authoritarian Islam in the Turkish context to neoliberalism oppressive facades projecting themselves on the matters of rights to the city, flexible work conditions and gendered aspects to them, are intersectional and prioritized based on the subject and biographic positioning in the sociopolitical cosmos as well as in the repertoire in making. With this complex webs of structural conditions in mind, I then directed the spotlight on the ways in which the mobilization process in the insurrection night operate more at the confluence of reflexive emotions caused by moral shocks, affective singularities like the red women, previous grievances and outrages that are embedded in a space lying between the macro conditions and biographic memories. But more important
than all these factors, I emphasized the fact of experiencing the mobilization process beyond the conscious domains, which enabled the protester to create affective ties, as seen in Kara Block’s case, and caught the state forces off guard with its spontaneous and rhizomatic nature. As such, I suggested the ways in which such affective aspects of the May 31 night attracted comparatively less dissident and obedient regime supporters like Ahmet and Sherriff.

Sherriff’s observations on the late hours of the insurrection were as follows: “Unlike other demonstrations organized by the left, you know where you usually see the raised left fists, this was without organization. This is a historic moment I told to myself as I followed what other protesters were doing. Taksim was engulfed in flames.” When he was asked what those scenes unfolding before his eyes reminded him of, interestingly and immediately he said “the French Revolution” with a determined tone his voice in a way leaving no place for more contemporary exemplary cases like Tahrir and the occupy movements in North America. Such a response, I suggest, was unexpected considering my own estimations on the question of how the commune repertoire was adopted and Sheriff’s subjectivity that takes shape around the pan-Turkist tradition, which is rooted in the mythical spatio-temporality of Central Asia, rather than the Occident. He was not in fact the only communard who described the first days of the occupation with such analogous events and expressions that pointed to the revolutionary situations of the past century in western Europe.

On June 1, governor of Istanbul was left with no option but to give the withdrawal order. As the uprising prolonged, turning Istanbul inside out and spreading to 79 of the 81 cities in the country, the affective singularity began to ossify and incarnate as a commune in the park; the commune repertoire was about to lay the basis for new citizenship imaginations in Asia Minor.
Chapter 6  Being There: How a Commune Takes Shape

Following the affective singularity that brought the fragmented Turkish young middle classes closer to one and another, the encampment in Gezi park was restored along with much larger crowds as police gradually withdrew from Taksim Square on the afternoon of June 1. This second occupation attempt continued into the second week of the first month of summer. Modulated by the affective singularity, the small-scale occupation praxis morphed into a utopian space of hope or a commune, to use a more historically accurate expression, by gathering diverse social and political agendas, belief systems and lifestyles in the site. Accordingly, a potpourri of repertoires performed by the multiplicity, another example of commune repertoire, ossified as it was carved into the memory of the square.

In today’s world, each millisecond of eventful protests can be recorded and globally shared via new communication technologies and means through digital matrixes, which annihilate the time and space configurations we know. The children of the information age, who are born into this accelerated world, tweet, post and even broadcast live the incidents that generate new meaning for their lives. During the field research, the communards of Istanbul told me that one foreign Internet website, allegedly Canadian or Swedish, shared the first days of the Gezi Commune on live broadcast. Despite all my efforts, I could not come across with any concrete evidence verifying their statements. What is interesting is that despite such an awareness of the power of the new communication means and digital matrixes none of the communards associated the first days of Gezi with any of the exemplary cases such as the Tahrir Square Protest or the encampment in Zuccotti Park, two movements that remarkably communicated outside the channel of diplomacy by utilizing the digital matrixes and the fruits of global communication means.
As Tilly suggests, protest tactics are “learned cultural creations” (Tilly 2015, 54) and they can be transmitted and adopted to different political protest and national settings by personal contact or via media sources (Biggs 2013, 409). Considering the increasing momentum in similar social protest forms and mobilization dynamics since the 2000s as well as the resources provided by the information means of the movement of the new millennium, it could have been assumed that the communards in Istanbul consciously modeled their repertoire on such exemplary cases. In other words, scenes, images and snapshots, perhaps live broadcasts displaying the successful commune occupation practice in Cairo and New York or leaderless insurrections in Greece in 2008 and Seattle in 1999 may be thought to have inspired the Turkish protesters. The ethnographic investigation into the memories, conscious and affective domains of Gezi people, including myself, nonetheless revealed that what I characterize as commune repertoire in the Turkish experience and was almost experienced, imagined and practiced in the microcosm of Turkey. Thus, in the collective memory of the communards, Gezi occurred in a belated so-called modern milieu that keeps its subjectivities preoccupied with its own enigmatic, paradoxical local political contradictions, which melt into the thin air before they ossify, as Marx would have put it.

In developing countries like Turkey, the resonance of hyper capitalism causes severe collective social amnesia. A volley of political and economic problems crystallizes and preoccupies publicity before previous debates settle down. This is what I imagine as a neoliberal state of being peculiar to belated post-modern milieus, and in effect it draws attention away from the global spatio-temporality as well as the anti-globalization movements formed against it. Based on the ethnographic findings and ephemeral condition of the Turkish political culture, it would not be entirely wrong to state that the Gezi communards did not consciously adopt the repertoire to their own ecosystem, or least they were entirely aware of the protest tactics used by their age groups in other geographies. This is not to say that the protesters nonetheless made use of the already existing pool of protest repertoires embedded in the local political history and came to the site with concerns entirely related to contentious political dynamics.
peculiar to Asia Minor, as Tilly would have argued. The bodily, affective elements were still in effect and at play as they were in the course of the mobilization night in the first days of the commune.

During the first two weeks of the summer of 2013, there surfaced a self-organizing protest dynamic that was likened to a sort of an unseen living organism, a hive mind or a higher, transcending power by the Gezi people, which in fact, I argue, tallies up with the jazz metaphor Tilly uses to animate the nature of evolving repertoire. In this regard, the commune repertoire, its leaderless, horizontal, collectively performed direct democracy composition—characteristics that are shared with the post-2000 social movements as I emphasized in the introductory chapter—bio-formed, influenced and remolded its live components by permeating into their consciousness at a cellular level, rather than the other way around.

What is more important and intriguing is that the communards related the bodily, affective dynamics of the incident that are experienced beyond perception to the political imaginaries that evoke other similar revolutionary situations that took place in our global history. When they were asked to articulate their “opinions,” “thoughts,” and “feelings over the very first scene” that they saw as they first stepped in the commune, or associate the very first image they remember with “anything” that flashes in their mind, similar to Sheriff’s comments over the last hours of the uprising, they primarily mentioned the Commune of 1871 and other historical revolutionary situations like the Spanish Civil War. All of these are cases in which we see fragmented social segments with diverse political visions and cultural backgrounds unifying against the authoritarian regimes. In the same spirit, following my probing remarks they weaved these historical cases into Situationist concepts that, I suggest, operate as empty signifiers like “utopian space,” “a space of hope,” “liberated zone,” all of which correspond to the newly crystallizing social relations and cultural ethos in the commune itself.

Considering the free higher-education opportunities in the country as well as the access to the immense amount of information that circulates through the matrixes of Internet, such historical analogues and critical expressions may not come as a eureka moment, at the very least for a sociological imagination
that leans towards the overlapping terrains of critical theory and longue durée tradition. They may nonetheless raise new research questions and puzzles to be solved by social movement theoreticians that tend to neglect and overlook the role of urban spatiality as a global phenomenon and global political imaginaries in shaping and inspiring the protest repertoires at play in our social cosmos. In this regard, I would argue that answers given by the Istanbul communards show us how memory, an enigmatic and elusive concept in the field of sociology and in social movement studies, is actually a vital and important part and parcel of the process of passing down repertoires. Certainly, such questions would only find their answers if the working principles of collective-individual memory compound is mapped out.

In fact, even in the mainstream social movement theories, some studies investigating and questioning the ways in which repertoires carry on, along with their small modifications and innovations—which was in fact a puzzle for a sociologist like Tilly since it was a very abstract issue he could not put his finger on—indicate that all the tactics protesters use to challenge power holders and draw attention to systemic oppression may be traced back to their genesis. Such offerings nonetheless do not go beyond foregrounding media as the mere carrier of repertoires (Biggs 2013).  

In the light of such studies on mobilization sketching out the webs of relationship between the memory and mobilization phenomenon, I do not see any epistemological reason not to relate the encampment founded in Istanbul by the multiplicity to relate to the Paris Commune, which in fact crystallized in a similar political and social setting. In other words, the 72-day revolution of 1871 that came out of a process known as Haussmannization, which reshuffled the urban space of Paris in order provide the necessary economic

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29 Michael Biggs’ theoretical reformulation of repertoire centers on a suicide praxis as a form of social protest. Being an outlier example of social protest tactics, suicides, he suggests, provide us with a “methodological advantage” to see the ways in which repertoires evolve since the tactic itself leaves no room for repetition. In other words, the non-repetitive nature of this bodily protest practice gives us clues about how repertoires are invented or adopted to different political or cultural settings. Depending on the archival findings gathered for the period of 1919 to 1970, he argues that the self-immolation of the Buddhist monk Thich Quang Duc in South Vietnam in 1963 set the same tactic in motion across the world. Quang Duc’s immolation, which aimed at drawing attention to the oppression of the South Vietnamese regime against Buddhists, was in other words adopted to the Chinese, Indian, Spanish and American political cultures following the rise of the global anti-war movement. What is interesting is that he points out that whereas the tactic achieved its objectives in non-Western countries, it was found too “extreme” in the United States and failed to capture public attention.
liquidity to maintain a regime of over-accumulation under the conditions of systemic war (D. Harvey 2004; Gould 1995), can very well be related to their contemporary examples.

This does not mean the Turkish protesters consciously replicated the same collective occupation praxis in Istanbul by directly drawing inspiration from the symbolic representation and iconography of the Paris Commune, nor did similar structural dynamics condition them to perform a more or less similar repertoire, as the radical urban geography tradition that Harvey represents would have argued. As I emphasized in the previous chapter, the protest practice process in general was also immersed in affective domains. Thus, just as we saw during the mobilization process, the commune also operated at the crossroads between the intersectional systems of oppression, political imaginaries, memory, bodily motions in the course of action, and certainly including perception, all of which make up affect from a critical ontological point of view.\(^{30}\)

### 6.1 The Consolidation of the Multiplicity

Right after the police’s withdrawal from the square, the small encampment in the park modulated into a bigger occupation praxis. As the worn out protesters poured into the site, I found myself beside other environmentally sensitive communards who had already begun to plant seedlings in the places where trees were taken down. My physical body was still flowing with the current of the process. I suggest that this bodily oscillation came before my subjectivity as a laid off graduate student and sexually dissident person suffering from the heteronormativity rooted in the old forms of politics as well as in the realm of labor. Thus the motivational source of the commune repertoire, from my personal angle on the incident, was still more affective given the fact that I was following the motion of my body in the stream of repertoire. Unlike the other communards I interviewed, political imaginaries of such revolutionary

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\(^{30}\) Repertoires of commune, I would argue, just like suicide praxes takes us to a methodological ground where we can observe the ways in which repertoires adopted to different political and national milieus. Just like suicide, the commune repertoire is an outlier case. Nonetheless, it points to a far more complex mechanism than media sources. Media sources would be expected to play a more crucial role in the process of passing down of repertoires under the conditions of the information age. Yet in today’s world we are left exposed to the immense circulation of information to such an extent that, I would argue, we go back very far in time and use analogous events in the distant past to make sense of the present situations.
situations did not flash into my mind, nor did I associate the very first vignette I saw with other
communes. In that sense, for me, the desire of being part of a collective that was independent of old forms
of politics outweighed the commune imaginaries.

In retrospect, I would nonetheless describe the first day in Gezi Commune “as the kind of
revolution where Emma can dance.” As the communards draped huge flags and placards on the facade of
the Atatürk Cultural Center, feminists, LGBTQ people, minorities such as Kurds, Alevi, dissident
Muslims, environmentally sensitive and anarchist groups, old forms of revolutionary groups and Marxist
parties all began mingling with one another after it turned into state authority-free zone. Such a scenic
composition undoubtedly had an unprecedented atmosphere when compared with the previous
demonstrations organized in Taksim Square. In other words, it had a different “taste,” as Evren put it. He
suggests that unlike earlier May 1 gatherings in Taksim Square—I assume here he refers to the ones that
took place in the late 1970s—“June 1 TAZ in Gezi was based on flamboyance.” As such, he argues the
old forms of revolutionary politics were not able to dominate “the festival” (Evren 2013, 8).

There is no doubt that the unions and the Marxist parties could not catch up with the speed of the
uprising, as Demet’s anecdote exemplified. Nor were they able to dominate the festival atmosphere in the
commune. To a certain extent, such an assessment indeed points to the formation process of the new left
alliance the origins of which I traced back to the new millennium 1 May celebrations as well as the
theater protests. Countercultural groups, neo-bohemian arts people, marginalized and non-mainstream
collectivities expressing their ethos through various art-stages and group activities in the first days of
commune certainly gave the repertoire a sense of being a pre-modern ritualistic festival. But this is not to
say that the old left totally disappeared into the busy and chaotic background of the carnival. I recall the
arrival of trade unions, organized in a militaristic fashion along with their red flags and slogans and their
cortège and presence in there in general augmented the commune’s already jubilant mood, I suggest.
Actually, it would not be entirely wrong to suggest that Harvey’s theoretical prescription for revolution
under the conditions the of post-modernity, that is the alliance between those struggles in the name of the
right to city and traditional proletarian movements, was realized in Istanbul to some extent (D. Harvey 2010, 341).

I also recall the parade performed by the anarchist soccer fan club Çarşı, which was characterized as a “brotherhood involving every aspect of life” by Kara Block. That victory march stretching down all the streets surrounding the park seemed to me more significant in the sense that the LGBTQ groups, who gave them shelter in their quarters the previous night, as Levent Pişkin noted, were welcomed to join this performance by the soccer fans whose life-world is based on a machismo and masculine image/spirit incarnating in a competitive sports field. The members of homophile movement were hand-in-hand with them; they were all together chanting and shouting, yelling passionate slogans. This parade seemed to me as if the heterogeneous multiplicity that gradually came out of the millennium May 1 gatherings and the theater protests was taking shape in flesh and bones. It was indeed such an unprecedented encounter along with the heterogeneous protester composition that actually differentiated the commune from the previous repertoires we have seen in Asia Minor. In brief, I would say the multiplicity was firmed up and the affective singularity of the insurrection night ossified in and through such potpourri of repertoires in the first day of the commune, a potpourri of repertoires that mixed a pride week type of march with victory slogans that would usually echo in soccer fields.

6.2 The Self-Organizing Dynamic: “There Was Something Out There”

Immediately after resuming the occupation, the TD, which was re-modulated into a horizontally-structured platform on a practical ground, arose as the center platform that organized webs of relationships within the commune. Its agenda was shaped mostly around the notion of “creating the future… in new social relationships,” as Sitrin puts it (Sitrin 2006, 6). Discussion topics included a wide range of issues such as gender and social inequality, sustainable urbanization, labor rights, strategies against systemic hegemony and contemporary Turkish politics. Each group, organization and individual was entitled to speak. It was leaderless and horizontally structured where the communards gathered to
vote and discuss particular topics on regular basis, almost reminiscent of the agoras filled with citizens in ancient Greece. Hand gestures and sign language were used to express ideas and opinions over discussion topics. Specific ideological imaginations and concerns did not seem to poison the working mechanism of the platform. The groups, collectivities and individual actors that channeled their voices on the platform did not appear to be positioning themselves on a moral or ideological high ground by labeling or dismissing opposite views and visions as the old forms of politics would normally do. It would not be entirely wrong to suggest that the main platform emerged as a space where the communards practiced pure direct democracy to articulate their own sources of oppression as well as to harmonize social relations within the park. I would argue this unpremeditated self-governing logic mostly reflected itself over all other parts of the commune in general.

This general state of being became the default in the very first days of the occupation. It may be described as a self-organizing affective repertoire because most of the communards used metaphorical expressions likening the park to a living organism akin to a higher consciousness beyond the control of human perception. Ahmet Saymadi said that “the movement was shaping us not the other way around,” when I asked about his opinion on the “role” of the TD in shaping and influencing other platforms. In a very similar spirit, Arya, who first noticed a sign saying “don’t touch my neighborhood, home and earth” as she stepped on the park, recounted her very first experiences in the commune as follows: “I was wondering how such a huge crowd fit into the park. But there was something organizing that crowd out there. I do not know what that was, how to describe it; I can’t put into words but it was doing the right thing.” She was not the only communard mesmerized but at the same time baffled by the chaotic scenery as well as the self-organizing dynamic. Dawn also used very similar metaphorical descriptions pointing to the horizontal, self-organizing structure. “There were overwhelmingly too many colors. There were too many organizations. Yet I felt something new there at the same time. I could have never imagined the left resisting through humor and art before… yet at the same time there was a self-organized network. I think
all the previous organizations and non-organizational movements came together that day, I was really impressed then.”

The TD platform was indeed not the only site where this self-organizing, leaderless, horizontal pure democracy dynamic materialized, as I suggested. Many other small-scale platforms and workshops discussions forums blossomed around the tents and stands that the collectivities and individualized subjectivities set up. These spaces provided the communards coming from different ideological traditions, sociocultural backgrounds and belief systems with the opportunity to cross paths with one another, which could actually have created tensions in a belated post-modern milieu where fragmented subjectivities clash with one another through cultural means. With this fact in mind, and also considering my Marxist interlocutor’s bleak vision of the event in general, throughout my interviews I also forced the boundaries of the constituent power of the commune. Expressed differently, I questioned whether other platforms beside the TD sowed the seeds for a better democratic society for future generations of Turkey or whether the communards witnessed quarrels or any sorts of undesired encounters. Has the commune really created a network of trust amongst the crystallizing new left in Asia Minor by transforming the space it was founded in as well as remodeling old webs of new social relations?

During the interviews, I fulfilled my role as critical insider and brought up the matter of constituent power by hypothetically pointing out that there are many people “still romanticizing Gezi” or saying “perhaps” it could have yielded abstract political and social implications if it had been organized from the very beginning. In this way, I tried dig out the unwanted encounters where relics of the old hierarchy of organizational relations could still exist. Against my critical stance, Nihilist said “each group got closer with one another in the park. It was something that nobody fabricated it, sort of a condition getting together without authority. The park had a common sense of its own. I do not remember anything really disturbing happened.” I would suggest that Nihilist’s response not only points to the self-organizing and organic, live aspects of the communes, but shows us how the younger generations of Asia Minor could actually live in harmony along with stateless formations without authority. Another communard
verified Nihilist’s account as she was thinking about “incidents that would involve tensions” in the park.

“I think this [the park experience] proved [to] me that those people could actually live together without hegemony,” Telos responded after thinking for a time, as a communard introducing herself as a socialist. I took this statement as a confession signaling a change of mind in the logic of old forms of politics.

Except for a few incidents, I would argue that based on the recounts of the communards, Gezi seemed to have laid the foundations of a new democratic tradition in a new space without state authority. But which actors and collectivities crossed paths with one another in and through the commune? In what ways did this communal harmony, this spring of pure possibility project itself over the biographic personal stories and rigid political visions? Can we really talk about permanent positive consequences for the future of the crystallizing new left and atomized Turkish society in general, as the communards’ impressions on the very first days of the encampment show us? Answering these questions requires a deeper dig into anecdotes and memoirs. And such inquiry shall start with the uncanniest subjectivity.

Ahmet visited the park after the insurrection night along with his wife to bring the food they “together cooked” for the communards. I could not stop myself from asking the motivation behind his second visit since he seemed to be very cautious about articulating his opinions and feelings freely over the event in general, presumably due to his political views, which were aligned with the government in power. In a sense, he was not willing to be seen as praising the commune, but paradoxically, at the same time he tried to prove that he did everything to be part of it. “It was like open wound bleeding. As it kept on bleeding, people poured into the park and I thought if more people fill up there that bleeding would stop, it would bleed out and this gangrene, craziness would come to an end.” When he was asked whether he met new people in the park or visited any of the tents set up there, after sipping on his tea, he enthusiastically mentioned the ACM, the group founded by dissident young Islamist theologians that became more celebrated following Gezi. His anecdote about the group was as follows: “I just wanted to check what they are and they are not, they welcomed us. We exchanged ideas about some verses of the Quran. We just wanted to understand their philosophy.” As a critical insider aiming to maintain and
revitalize the momentum of the solidarity formed in the park going, hearing about such an encounter gave me goose bumps. I was really curious whether a progressive and dissident Muslim positionality in the Turkish cosmos left any trace on Ahmet’s contradictory, paradoxical, elusive, ambiguous subjectivity. I asked whether their “philosophy” made sense for Ahmet and his wife, a hard-working attorney and independent woman, who exemplify a contradiction to the common image of a conservative family of 1990s. “You cannot practice the lifestyle they defend in city unless you go up and settle down in a remote village on top of a mountain. But they are interesting to be honest,” he replied with a teasing expression on his face. I could not get into the details about their exchange since theology was not my area of expertise and also as a person who has never been to mosque for prayer. It nonetheless seemed to me that Ahmet did not find the group very convincing. Even the fact that such an encounter raised question marks in his mind nonetheless may be considered as a positive implication given the fact that he was among the very few regime supporters who visited the park.

Encounters made among the communards whose lifestyle is shaped by Islamic principles and ethos were not the only intriguing cases to be addressed with respect to the constituent power of the commune. Not only the regime supporters, in other words, dropped in the ACM tent. The TGB members whom I was able to get in contact with explained to me that they had “cordial” relations with what they dub “the Revolutionary Muslims.” Young, proud neo-nationalists told me they stopped and swung by each other’s tents during late hours at night. Green Raincoat shared his memory of one of those exchanges as follows: “Once they came and gave a speech in a forum organized around our tent. They showed reference to Quran so as to legitimize Gezi as an uprising against what they call ‘oppression’ (zulûm).” “What did that make you feel, being in the presence of Muslims, as a member of an organization that puts secular norms and values before anything else?” I interrupted so as to see the boundaries of the commune’s constituent power. “I could never imagine an Islamic group coming to us and making speech before Gezi” Green Raincoat responded in a very sincere tone as if indicating they were not the kind of “Islamists,” he was expecting to see.
Thus the dissident Muslims not only captured the attention of the regime supporters, but also members of the TGB organization that vehemently defend the logic of French laïcité and Enlightenment values against what they characterize as the regressive threat of Islam. Such an encounter between the dominant religious belief system in the country and the founding ideology of state, which is generally criticized for suppressing Islam in public life, seems positive in general, since the younger generations of the secularists enthusiastically mentioned their sincere relationships with the revolutionary Muslims. At the very least they seemed to be genuine in order to demonstrate that they contributed to self-organizing solidarity.

The TGB was certainly one of the most intriguing and uncanny popular groups that shined in the commune not only because of their rigid secular visions, but also because of the very sensitive Turkish ethnicity perception they have in their own life-world, as most of the communards suggested. Paradoxically but understandably, they have grown more famous thanks to the events. Because of their nostalgic yearning for the militarist spirit and the republican state of the 1920s, as well as the activist philosophy that forces boundaries—which gave me the inspiration to call them young neo-nationalists—I assumed their presence or encounters with other groups would have resulted in undesired situations, especially when one takes into account the Kurdish movement’s presence there. I thought that perhaps instead of the ACM, the encounters they made with the Kurds would have created tensions.

Despite a few squabbles addressed by other communards, they seemed to prove me wrong. As the “leader” of the “Istanbul headquarter” of the organization, Uğur told me how they, as a group, acted in a careful manner so as to avoid any “manipulation” and “undesirable” situation with the Kurds who set up one of the biggest tents in the commune, which was decorated with Öcalan’s\(^{31}\) posters as well as Kurdish flags. He told me about a “ghost” organization called “Young Turk,” and how a “false alarm” initiated by this underground organization created an excuse to drop by the Kurdish tent. “Young Turk is a racist

\(^{31}\) As I pointed out in the introduction and methodological chapters, Öcalan is political prisoner and one of the founding members of the outlawed PKK organization in Turkey.
organization, manipulated by some unknown forces; we really do not know who or what actors are behind them. One night we heard of one tweet writing the TGB would attack the Kurds. We suspected that the source might be them, we paid several visits to the Kurdish tent in order to dismiss the tweet and cordially explained them we had no intention for an attack,” he added in response to my critical questioning about the constituent power of the commune.

Such a visit indeed shows us the ways in which the repertoire along with the space itself set in motion positive transformations for the future generations of Turkey. Most of the communards interviewed noted that the presence of these politically polarized groups during the two-week occupation period was one of the most “positive outcomes” of Gezi in general. Throughout the commune, I instinctively and subconsciously also tried to drag as many Turkish secularists as possible to the Kurdish tent where I knew many friends through my social circles. A close friend of mine, who was raised in a secular family in Ankara, told me how she felt really “uncomfortable” seeing Öcalan’s poster. I reminded her that just like Öcalan, Deniz Gezmiş (a Che Guevara-like Turkish socialist archetype), was labeled as a “terrorist” back in the 1970s. I tried to convince her, along with her friend, another secularist and strong-willed lawyer, to join the Kurds’ folk dance ritual, which lasted for days without interruption around their tent. I thought that a close performative touch could have changed her mind and heart instead of a lecture given in an academic manner. My efforts were in vain; she and her friend disappeared into the crowds after giving me a dirty look and shouting out “he [Öcalan] is a baby killer.” I joined the ritual, forgetting how terrible I could be at folk dances. I was not the only one getting caught up in the allure of this ritualistic ebbs and flow of bodies.

Sherriff noted he usually “wandered around” the TGB tent, the members of which he views as “friends” for the same “cause” (dava arkadaşları). As an inexperienced field researcher and critical insider back then, I was actually very hesitant to bring up the matter of the encounters that made him “uncomfortable.” Of course, I was curious as to whether the self-organizing nature of the commune, that state of finding oneness, gave the chance for an ultranationalist to get in touch with subjectivities that
were allegedly attempting to carve another nation-state out of the so-called sublime and ancient nation. In an unexpected way, it was Sherriff himself who asked whether I wanted to know if he visited the Kurds. “I went to the BDP—Turkish abbreviation for the Peace and Democracy Party back then—tent, I really like folk dance (halay çekmeyi severim). Yet to be honest, Kurds are terrible at the issue of folkloric dance. As we were dancing, I said to one of them how will you establish your own state, you can not event dance properly.” He told me that someone at the far side of the dance circle approved his comment by laughing in a loud way. “But not all of them have the intention of establishing their own state,” I mumbled to myself as Sherriff was narrating his story; anarchist Kurds like Kara Block flashed into my mind. The Kurdish movement itself actually began to defend the notion of a canton structure in the war-torn region lying in between Turkey, Iraq and Syria more or less around same time, as verified by one of my interviewees who had close organic connections with the movement. I felt I was forcing the boundaries too much as the critical insider. Against my silent and shy interruption, Sheriff surprisingly and warmly nodded his head in agreement as a young law student knowing much about political philosophy and history.

The contentious relations between the Turkish state and the Kurdish movement, which are expressed through cultural and political means as well as through low-intensity armed conflict, has been shaping the country’s political rhetoric and agenda starting since the early 1980s, as addressed in the political analysis section. As a critical insider, one of my biggest objectives was to understand and to test to the extent to which the commune repertoire and the encounters made within the park were able to lessen the intensity of this antagonism running in the veins of the society, at least within the context of future generations of Asia Minor. That was in fact the genuine reason behind my motivation and eagerness to speak with and meet communards coming from non-Marxist traditions so as to hear about different views with respect to the post-Gezi political climate. Understandably, I assumed the encounters made around the Kurdish tent could give me enough insight to test the solidarity and network of trust maintained in the park.
During the transcription process of my field research findings into readable texts, I realized that I was mistaken in imagining and framing the Kurdish identity as a unified entity around a single political tradition. In other words, the fact that there would be drifting subjectivities within the Kurdish singularity did not pass through my mind. In fact, it was Kara Block who told me he was raised in a “fascist, racist, conservative” family that migrated from Kurdistan to Istanbul in the early 1990s. Giving a nudge, his biographic background, in other words, reminded me of the plural aspects of seemingly unified stationary political identities. His critical insight into his own subjectivity in that way helped me to modify and question my own ethnographic approach with respect to the subjectivities involved in the commune. His biographic story, therefore, made me realize the fact that there may be atomized Kurdish subjectivities that became more cautious and conservative due to the oppression they have been exposed to as well as their younger generations that became critical of that bitterness like Kara Block. As someone affiliated with various Anarchist organizations, his anecdote about the “positive or negative encounters” he made in the commune showed me that I was actually looking for answers in the wrong sites of the park.

His anecdote about one of the encounters he made in the park was as follows: “Once I took one of my veiled friends (türbanlı arşkadaşımt) to a forum held in the TGB tent. She was not really willing to go there; I hardly convinced her.” At that moment, I thought his story would not end well considering the intention behind my ethnographic journey was also to dig up the inadvertent implications of such encounters. In my experience, the idea of sneaking into a neo-nationalist meeting along with an anarchist Kurd and veiled girl corresponds to setting a time bomb in an already atomized cosmos. I could not stop myself from asking why he dragged her there if she was not willing to be involved in such an environment. “I just wanted her to see what solidarity really means, liberate her from her the prejudices. I wanted her to see what she actually can be, can become and cannot become. She seemed to be content about our visit. ‘Those guys are not maniacs’ she said to me,” he responded with a smile.

Without a doubt, Kara Block’s friend was not the only veiled young female subjectivity coming from an Islamic family background who made herself a part of the repertoire. Many devout young
Muslim women mingling with other communards also caught my attention. Some of them were even brave enough to kiss their partners in open public space or accompany their friends who were sipping on booze. As I was commuting during the high the days of occupation between the commune and my hometown Üsküdar, known for its Islamic-conservative social fabric, I came across one of someone putting on a turquoise turban on the last boat crossing the Bosphorus. I assumed she was a communard because of her backpack and her curious, excited eyes that seemed to be shifting around to share her experiences. I chatted several times with this presumably high-school student with big almond eyes; she would speak of her friends from “the rock group” and live gigs they staged in various sites of the commune. At the end of the short journeys we made together, her dad usually picked her up from the pier. I never attempted to dig deep into her source of motivation for being part of the commune because in an instinctive way I knew that in the encampment there was no place for subjectivities handcuffed by the old politics. The state of being there held more meaning than the poisonous collective memories of old political understandings.

Overall, the encounters made between the young dissident Islamists, neo-nationalists and critical Kurds appear to have had positive consequences. The commune repertoire, I would argue, seemed to have had laid the foundations for changes in the local political culture for the younger generations by at least providing them with hitherto unthinkable first contacts. For more of mainstream subjectivities like Ahmet and Sheriff, it was actually this state of being open to serendipities and the self-organizing state of being binding protesters to one another that attracted them to the park. They both repeatedly emphasized that one of their sources of motivation for being part the commune was its heterogeneous crowd that was not solely dominated by the “traditional left we know,” as Sherriff put it. “When we saw people lining up to carry plastic water bottles to the park in chains,” says Ahmet, “I actually came to understand that the left in Turkey was not just about people raising left fists in times of demonstrations; a sense of thrilling excitement covered inside me as we kept on watching them. Actually, I realized there was a petit anarchist (anarşik) lying inside me at that moment. I understood what a commune life would actually be
and really look like there.” Undoubtedly, such expressions by this capitalist-Islamist subjectivity, a fervent supporter of the regime and system, assured me to coin the term commune repertoire from an ethical point of view.

There were undoubtedly limits to Ahmet’s idealization of the commune. After encouraging him to tell me about the uncomfortable situations he experienced, just like my secularist friend, he mentioned Öcalan’s poster. His elusive and uncanny subjectivity once again surfaced when I asked about his thoughts and feelings with respect to that. “I thought to myself what I was doing there; I would not want to see that face there.” I reminded him the fact that the state, along with “the party he supports” and the Kurdish movement under Öcalan’s leadership were actually negotiating the so-called peace treaty during the occupation. He seemed not very content with my question; he was very critical of my word choice and terminology from the beginning. He asked if I meant “the outlawed PKK,” by the word “movement,” and then he jumped to stories about the visits and encounters he made in the commune as he sipped on his tea again with an assassin smile on his face. Such a moment of silence gave me an understanding of the extent to which the use of terminology with respect to politics could play a significant role in accessing actors coming from different political and social traditions.

6.3 The Politicization of the LGBTQ community in and through the Commune: The Defeat of the Turkish Machismo and Heterosexism

The controversial issues in the local political realm were undoubtedly not the only site where the constituent power of the commune was able to penetrate. There were several other groups beyond the dissident Muslims and neo-nationalists that became more celebrated and known in and through the commune. These agents also include neo-Marxist party frictions and new offshoots like Ahmet Saymadi’s SDKP that blended itself with the new left stream and ecological discourse, also known for draping a placard saying “Shut up Tayyip” on the façade of the cultural center by the commune. Through the prism of a critical insider, I also investigated which of those groups, organizations or even individual actors
stood out more in the eyes of the communards. In other words, I asked the communards to “list the most celebrated groups in Gezi.” The objective behind such an inquiry was again to see whether previously disconnected subjectivities and collectivities made encounters and first contacts with one another, and if so whether such serendipities had prepared a solid fertile ground upon which to build dialogues between the future generations of Asia Minor.

Interestingly, very similar to the responses given with respect to the macro-motivational reasons for the mobilization night, the answers to this question also varied according to biographic positionality in the social cosmos and ideological views. Telos for instance pointed to the TGB as a socialist adding that she was born into a secular-army officer family when I asked her “reason” to place this group in the first place on her list. Ahmet, nonetheless, noted the ACM “deserves credit” for channeling the voices of conservative segments. Kara Block on the other hand came from an angle entirely opposite to his own subjectivity and suggested the CHP and the “Kemalist Turks” stood out more in the commune by reminding me that they for the first time seized the “opportunity” to get access to an electoral base they could not have “dreamed of” before. This was, I think, the most accurate observation among others I heard for this question, considering the party’s parliamentarians running around in the park. In a very similar spirit, for Sheriff it was the minor “socialist organizations” that utilized the commune for refurbishing and replenishing themselves in accordance with the new protest repertoires and class dynamics of the new millennium. As such, Virgo pointed out how feminist organizations recruited members at “unthinkable scales” throughout the two-week commune experience. But when asked which collectivities or groups they would place as their second choice most of the communards without a second thought listed the homophile movement of Turkey either by enthusiastically articulating the serendipitous encounters they had made with them or by recounting the memories they personally witnessed.

Without a doubt, not only were the LGBTQ people the most shining actors of the commune, but they were very much active and visible starting from the embryonic phase of the occupation as well. Leven Pişkin reminded me of the big rainbow flag nailed to one of the trees in the park during the initial
sit-in stage and explained to me the symbolic and historical significance of the park for them. “We were in the park before everything erupted… The park is still important to the working class gay people who do not have access to luxurious clubs in Taksim. Some still are using it, cruising around in order to make dates and meet other gays.” But more important than that, he also admitted the commune provided them with a “ground” to gain “legitimization” in the eyes of other communards. “People came to understand we were not just about sex thanks to Gezi. We actually had been politicized much before Gezi, but nobody paid attention unfortunately.”

By sharing Pişkin’s visions, I would further argue that the oppression imposed upon the LGBTQ people and the politicization process of their subjectivities can even be traced to the day they were born. It certainly would not be entirely wrong to say that the commune repertoire enabled them to gain more acceptance among the crystallizing new left tradition in general. This does not mean that they were entirely segregated or shielded from the old forms of politics, or at worst that they were persecuted for projecting a sexually alternative lifestyle and vision of society to others. Without a doubt there may be cases of people like me being tagged with sexist insults by the METU sociologists and hardcore orthodox feminists. Nonetheless, considering most of communards’ answers with respect to the most celebrated groups, especially the ones given by the subjectivities that leaned towards heterosexual normativity, I would argue that the de-gendered people emerged as a political force in the imaginations of communards. Perhaps such approval required seeing heroic acts and stances at the night of the uprising. In other words, homophile subjectivities and so-called “manly” physical attempts were gifted with social acceptance, which I think corresponds to conforming to the norms and rules of patriarchal society. In any case, Pişkin’s assessments seem to confirm other communards’ accounts.

Nihilist, for instance, pointed to the rapport that developed between his community members and anarchist soccer fans, and told me that he views such an encounter between a male-dominant group and LGBTQ people as a “cultural gain worth for taking into attention.” He noted that he would not have “thought of” such “intimate” concurrence between his own people and “soccer fans,” an expression that I
suggest shows Nihilist also had never before imagined these football fanatics as progressive actors open to dialogue from the point of gender politics. As a bisexual subjectivity, Action echoed Nihilist’s anecdote and pointed out how the perception of “both femininity and gays in society” has changed in and through Gezi. “It was the first day occupation, you know how anarchist Çarşı is male-dominant group. I heard one of his members talking to one his friends on the phone and calling him to the park by saying ‘Brother, even the gays have been resisting since last night, you have to make it to the park.’” Thus their politicization process in the eyes of others even operated as a recruitment tool for the commune itself.

Such recounts seem to echo back from the other side. As a member of various anarchist organizations, including Çarşı, Kara Block suggested that he observed a sudden change in “the perception towards trans and gay people,” starting with himself, in the groups and organizations with which he is affiliated. He noted that his friends and himself become more open to dialogue with the LGBTQ community, which they never imagined as “political force” before then. He also suggested that they—Çarşı and another so-called outlawed organization waging an arms struggle against the state—now view the sexually dissident people as “friends” and “comrades” battling for the same cause. “We even participated in the pride parades after Gezi maybe you won’t believe but it is true,” he added with a sincere tone in this voice.

The black anarchists were not the only group for which views of the rainbow community changed. As a group organized and mobilized in very militaristic fashion, the young people of the TGB also made intriguing comments. Following the question asking about his second choice for the “glowing” groups in the commune, Dawn mentioned the gay community and recounted a “change” in the perception of them as a group. When I asked him to elaborate what he meant by “change,” he responded: “We began contemplating the extent to which the LGBTQ organization can be compatible with the republican spirit” starting from what they call “the June uprising.” The republican spirit, I would suggest, corresponds to the Turkish nation of the 1930s, which is associated with, or at least is imagined as a corporatist and solidarist organic social fabric unifying against a common enemy like “imperial forces” or gathering around a
common cause like the mission of modernizing a backward society. It seemed to me the heroic acts by sexually dissident communards have forced the young neo-nationalists to question whether there is room for flamboyant subjectivities like the LGBTQ people in their nostalgic imaginations. This changing mindset, I suggest, also manifested itself in the symbolic realm such that one of the communards I interviewed told me s/he once saw a “bear flag” waving over the TGB tent. Perhaps the guardians of the republic found the darker colors of the bear flag and the masculine aura it projects more compatible with the militaristic aspects of Turkish nationalism.

Not only the secular-republican youngsters, but also their elders become more open and receptive towards the sexually dissident subjectivities. Hard-nosed Pişkin noted that their tent was visited by what he calls “Kemalist aunties” (Kemalist teyzeler), who wandered around the park several times and seemed so keen to learn and know more about them. He noted those “old fogeys” also bought some products they were selling in their tent in order to “show their support” for the “LGBTQ cause.” “I would ever think of elders of the secularists showing such an overwhelming eagerness to learn about our lifestyle before Gezi,” he added.

Pişkin’s anecdotes about other visitors also shows us how such encounters also functioned as a sort of learning process for himself as well as other members in his own community. Understandably, the homophile movement of Turkey is not very tolerant towards subjectivities leaning towards both nationalist and secularist poles given the fact that the notion of the corporatist organic unity arises as a social threat to their individualistic lifestyle. This is a condition that acquires more radical rhetoric especially in the context of the post-modern belated milieu. But such perceptions and prejudices seem to be undermined, or the very least toned down though the state of being there enabled the disconnected subjectivities to cross paths with one another. Pişkin’s anecdote with respect to the “lessons they take from” the commune is as follows: “In one of the very first days of the commune, a nationalist (ulusalcı) [by which he means a Turkish secularist] fag came to our tent and told us he was willing to hang the Turkish flag beside our rainbow flag. I immediately opposed and got into fight with him.” I interrupted
saying “perhaps, you overreacted a bit, perhaps he did not have a intention.” I was hesitant because Pişkin did not seem to be a public intellectual open to such criticism. In fact, he struck me as a militant activist, rather than a lawyer. Surprisingly, he nodded his head in agreement and told me that he let another MHP supporter “fag” hang the “bloody” flag another time following a critical self-retrospection after the first incident.

This anecdote, I would suggest, shows how the commune repertoire itself also functioned as a social laboratory for the self-critique of LGBTQ people in general and the ways in which such experiences or a warm welcome could actually give courage to the members of this community that are leaning toward homo-nationalism and usually hiding in the closet in their own socio-political spheres. How can one LGBTQ person with homo-nationalist aspirations float freely and find her/his own true self if rejected by his/her own community? The communal occupation repertoire that provided sexually dissident people with a “space of hope” to channel their voices through a politicization process in the eyes of others indeed helped some of those circulating in male-dominant spaces to come out. Nihilist for instance told me that he witnessed one Çarşısı member coming out one night after loudly shouting out “I am one of you” in teary eyes toward the LGBTQ tent. The echoes of this social encouragement that came along with Gezi even reached beyond the borders of the park. Another communard mentioned his workmate coming out of the closest after they went to the commune together and how he himself heard of many other similar incidents happening in other workplaces and offices during the two-week occupation.

The logic of heteronormativity was therefore undermined to some extent, or at least derailed through the encounters made between the communards. The reverberations of the momentum ramified throughout the life-world of the homo-nationalists, male-dominant anarchists and white-collars hiding in the closet. Indeed, I would argue that I had never been part of a public space or a protest repertoire like the commune where mainstream gender roles and the representational systems of patriarchy were collectively problematized by a cluster of people coming from different segments of society including heterosexuals. The presence of the organized and independent feminists in the park without a doubt
contributed to that momentum. Virgo for instance reminded me that heterosexist slogans, banners and rhetoric were common to the extent that she, as a feminist, did not feel comfortable and “safe” on the first day of the commune. She also pointed out how the “gays vehemently” accompanied the sexist slogans shouted out by Çarşısı during the big parade and how hard the feminists, both systematically and through personal initiatives, struggled against such slangs and slogans, which associate women’s body with the image of a devilish and sexualized enemy to be penetrated. It would not be entirely wrong to say they succeeded in their objectives because I remember many communards, including the Çarşısı members, warning the communards not to shout out sexist slogans in the last days of the commune as they were resisting police forces, which forced a gradual withdrawal from the area through various abusive ways. After hearing my agonized swears and cries for help after being hit by one of the canisters raining down from the sky over the commune, one anarchist, presumably a Çarşısı member, warned me loudly saying “no insults to women,” after lifting me from ground.

6.4 The Return of the Logic of Old Forms of Politics: The Dilemma of the Self-Organizing Repertoire vis-à-vis Revolutionary Desires

Towards the end of the first week, performing the commune repertoire in a persistent way revealed the differences of opinion amongst the different flanks of the ruling party. Party members who held seemingly more liberal visions began to take more moderate stances against the commune. Thus, the one-week Gezi experience caused cracks that surfaced on the ground of the political ecosystem. The prime minister at the time, Erdoğan, was on his way to abroad for an “unplanned” diplomatic trip and news about this unexpected and surprising foreign visit reverberated across the commune. Unlike Erdoğan’s uncompromising stance, the nation’s president along with the governor of Istanbul and vice prime minister thereupon announced the cancellation of the controversial project and made an invitation to the constituents of the TD to negotiate the withdrawal process. They seemed to willing to settle the unfolding crises by a compromise. In very diplomatic but clear language they basically said you got what
you wanted “but it is time to leave,” as the muffin-faced president of the era put it. It was as if the clocks were ticking for the commune because the repertoire succeeded in shaking the regime’s seemingly strong economy, which basically depended on the circulation of hot money by causing an exponential increase in the interest rates in just a couple of days and pulling the dissident, secularist capitalists into the repertoire itself.

The secular flank of the manufacturing bourgeoisie, which was overwhelmed by the marriage of global financial capital and the local Islamic bourgeoisie, provided logistics after the 1980s, and medical and food supplies for the communards when the repertoire was going into the second week. Some catering company owners and tourism entrepreneurs from the surrounding neighborhoods were among them. They actually gave shelter during the uprising night even before the occupation was restored. In this sense, I argue that the part such dissident capitalists played in the course of events along with the cracks, differences of opinion seemingly appearing between the ruling elites rerouted the march of the self-organizing repertoire to hegemonic desires because the communards began to contemplate the prospect of “overthrowing” the government as well as changing the nature of the regime, rather than performing the repertoire in and of itself. This wishful thinking was indeed not baseless, at least from a theoretical point of view, and as Marx put it “when the class conflict nears the decisive hour… some sections of the ruling class cuts itself adrift, and joins the revolutionary classes” (Marx and Engels 2011, 19). That seemed to be materializing in Asia Minor.

It would not be an overstatement to say that the drifting secular bourgeoisie in the case of Gezi therefore joined the new urban middle classes along with the old forms of politics. This is not to say that the secular bourgeoisie had genuine revolutionary desires in a Marxist sense nonetheless. In retrospect, I would say they appeared to be pragmatists who were just not content with the notion of another five-star hotel rising in the area. In fact, I am not the only communard who thinks this way. Action told me that she

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32 For a visual account of actors and groups in the commune see documentary by Brandon Jourdan and Marianne Maecikelbergh, “Taksim Commune: Gezi Park and the Uprising in Turkey,” 2013.
came across a bistro-bar sticking up in the middle of the park along with two men in fancy suits having
drinks on it in the second week of the commune. When asked about her opinions about the vignette, she
responded saying, “Gezi was a yearning for a commune… the rich people did not fit in there… Those like
them like Koç Family [a group of very well-known secularist entrepreneurs in the country that explicitly
gave their support to Gezi] they just wanted to be part of this bohemian rebellion. They just did not want
to miss the chance of being part of this big opportunity.”

Perhaps some segments of the Turkish secular bourgeoisie just aimed to seize the opportunity and
they mostly likely had hidden agendas for using the communal occupation repertoire to regain the ground
they lost against the financial capital, which has burgeoned as the dominant ideology since the 1980s.
Perhaps some among them did not really want to miss the chance of being part of such a bohemian
uprising, the harbinger of the profitable cultural forms to come. Not all of them, I suggest, had such
subtle, hypocritical aspirations. On contrary, some of the dissident entrepreneurs had real genuine
revolutionary intentions that encouraged the communards. For instance, one catering company owner,
who was a socialist Alevi back in the 1970s, said to me as he was enthusiastically organizing a food
delivery to the commune in the second week of the repertoire: “it is time to regain the revolutionary
momentum that was left behind in the 1980s. I am ready to sacrifice my job for the sake of overthrowing
this system.” To some extent, his comment may be considered as a nostalgic yearning for the old forms of
politics. Ironically, I was also too naïve to believe in such romantic daydreams then.

As the occupation repertoire leaned more towards revolutionary fantasies and possibilities, I
would argue that the self-organizing nature of it was eclipsed and clouded by the surfacing reformist paths
and political strategies that were being articulated. The communards, in other words, began discussing the
possibility of overthrowing the Islamic-neoliberal government, rather than maintaining their space of
living founded in the midst of urban vortex. In other words, the prospect of the gains at the macro-
political realm gradually began to undermine the new left alliance formed around the logic of right to the
city as well as the improvisational affective aspects of the occupation. To some extent, it meant the
sacrificing effect of individuality/multiplicity and that state of being there for the sake of political unity. I recall one of my Marxist friends being mesmerized by these developments and preaching about the strategies to take down the state. She began hoping for a vanguard party that could come out of the commune following the cracks and rifts surfaced among the state authorities and owners of the means of production. “This is a great opportunity to unify the fragmented Turkish left under one red flag. This reminds me the May 1 demonstration in 1977,” she whispered in my ears enthusiastically as if she were physically present there; we were discussing whether to withdraw upon the call at that point.

She was not the only one getting caught in the allure of the revolutionary fantasies. As I wandered around the tents, I noticed that most of the talks and chats revolved around the possibility of “overthrowing the government,” more so than the ones that were shaped around the notion of creating future in present encounters and social relations. Most of the encounters I addressed thus far in fact happened in the first week of the commune. Along with the reformist and revolutionary desires came the organizational logic. The communards, especially the ones around the tents of Marxist party factions, began debating how they could get more organized so that they would succeed in taking down the building blocks of the regime.

For sure, achieving a successful socialist revolution in the unfavorable climate of Asia Minor was no more than a dream. Nonetheless, I think the question of whether Gezi really would have had immediate political implications with respect to the betterment of the general condition in the country had it organized in a way to overthrow the government or challenge the regime space is something that needs to be discussed from a both practical and ethical point of view. In retrospect, considering the increasing authoritarian and fascistic tendencies of the government and the predicaments of the occupy movements before Gezi, answering such a question requires, I would suggest, addressing vital ideological debate topics; that is, the rift between the anarchist and Marxist visions of the politics.

It is hard to deny the fact that the most organized ones on the ground are always capable of making inroads into the regime space in the long term, thereby setting up the ground for the immediate or
medium-term political gains, which I associate with reformist paths in general from a Marxist-
functionalist perspective. Such a strategy may very well seem to be more plausible given the ecumenical
and paradoxical reflections of economic post-modernization in a belated socio-political context. In other
words, the chance of trading the Islamic-neoliberal government with a social democratic coalition—
assuming that there was such a political base in the Turkish political culture of the 2000s even if that does
not exist as I explained in the chapter 3—or sowing the seeds of a potent vanguard party that could
potentially evolve into a challenger in the regime space in the long term, of which many Marxist-Leninist
communards dreamed, seem to be outweighing the benefits of self-organizing repertoire that appeared to
be stuck inside the space in which it was performed.

With this perplexing dilemma in mind along with the political climate going dull and south after
2014 in Asia Minor, reminiscent of the weakening democracy of Egypt after Tahrir, as a critical insider I
also looked for answers to the question of whether the commune repertoire was practiced in a more
organized way that could have had immediate implications or long-range implications, or at least political
consequences for healing the wounds of Turkish democracy. In this spirit, together with the interviewees,
I searched for clues to whether the communards would rather be an organized protest repertoire that
specifically aimed at social and political gains or a self-organizing one only, which just remodeled the
social relations in the space to which it is related. Answering this question indeed acquired a more
important sense and became vital considering the elections that happened in the aftermath of Gezi; the
2015 general elections helped me to bring this predicament up for discussion during the interviews.

As a socialist, Action, who appeared to hold reformist-revolutionary views, mentioned an
intriguing anecdote when I asked for her “opinions” on the dilemma that was pre-occupying my mind
back then. “I went to the Oak Periodical tent for several times because there was good food there. They
are old-school socialists who were constantly bringing food to the commune; they were like feeding their
children. Once, I heard they were talking about getting organized. Yet this happened in the second week
of the commune. They wanted the park to get more organized. They wanted more people to participate in
and criticized unions for not mobilizing enough people.” “You think they were right. Perhaps we could have made political and social gains in that way,” I interrupted once again playing the role of critical insider so as to reflect the commune’s overall impression and generate a common body of knowledge with the people coming from different political traditions. “To me, we did not need to get organized. There was already a state of being organized in itself. That multitude would not have come together if we had tried to organize it I think.”

One of the very intriguing comments about the occupy predicament came from Sherriff, a Pan-Turkist with views defending strong state tradition but paradoxically criticizing the organizational logic of the left, as I reminded him of this sudden change of discourse and atmosphere in the encampment after the prime minister’s so-called diplomatic trip. I was really curious about his input with respect to the dilemma of political implication versus organizational logic because of his liminal positionality throughout the events. Confirming that he also observed this change of air in the commune after the first week just like Action and I did, he spoke of his “socialist friends” debating the future of the encampment. “The story is always predictable for socialists. They dreamed of establishing a state coming out of Gezi. But that was more of a social experiment. You cannot produce political implications out of tryouts.” He was smiling again for scoring a philosophical goal against his socialist friends.

Not all of the socialists were stuck in the mindset of which Sherriff was critical and cynical. The dilemma of “gains through ballots” versus “politics on the street” also came up for discussion with Demet. She did not seem to like the question I raised. Although she did not make her stance utterly clear in this ideologically-based discussion, she tried to help by taking me to one of the quorums of the BHH, the umbrella organization founded by the fragmented Marxist-Leninist parties, think-tanks and organizations right after Gezi.

Demet was the representative of her own CP in the meetings that were held in Taksim and explained to me that the movement was basically founded upon the notion of keeping the “momentum” of Gezi going. The agenda of the meeting I attended mostly revolved around the upcoming elections and the
matter whether the BHH, allegedly channeling the voice of encampment, should enter the election race or “publically declare” its support to the recently founded pro-Kurdish People’s Democratic Party, (HDP), which took the support of the Gezi spirit behind following their disappointment in the peace negotiations with the state.

The party representatives of the BHH and independent speakers took turns making speeches and voicing their opinions. What was interesting was that, in a contrasting fashion to Action’s anecdote, it was those old-school leftists who were for the “politics on the streets,” rather than the young representative of Marxist-socialist parties who, I suggest, seemed to have given upon the strategy of self-organizing repertoire because of the Coalition of the Radical Left’s victory in the other side of Aegean in 2015. In other words, the younger socialists who were presumably daydreaming that Asia Minor had a socio-political base and tradition akin to Greece repetitively addressed the case of SYRZA. They appeared to believe that the BHH had the potential to make the same achievement.

In contrast to this wishful thinking, elder socialists understandably approached the predicament based on their own previous experiences. An old-school Marxist and a former member of Revolutionary Path Organization of the 1970s, Mustafa Kocagül, for instance, quoted as saying: “Socialism has failed us. You cannot expect revolution from this society. We, as the left, are not patient, we have to learn to be patient and perform politics in that sense,” as he was delivering a speech over the matter of election. In a similar vein, Ahmet Aslan, made parallel comments by recalling the fact that elections had been regularly held in “these lands since the 1870s” and warned other representatives not to “sacralize elections” and any other political means because of the fact of the “overwhelming power of the right” in the Turkish political culture.

Not all of the younger left generations appeared to be under the ecstatic influence of the SYRZA’s victory at the polls though. Toward the end of the quorum, one independent and shy speaker reminded listeners of the significance of the self-organizing repertoire by pointing out the ways in which a “struggle from the bottom” is not only is capable of challenging the AKP’s dominance in the politics, but
also capitalism itself, which nourishes and feeds such regressive hegemonic formations inside the state structures. Despite his shaky voice, this shy defender of the politics on the street roared, “there shall be a second Gezi.” The following speakers, presumably encouraged by him, re-emphasized that the movement was actually founded for “a purpose” transcending the logic of the election. In other words, they underlined the significance of “politics on the street” and accordingly suggested the ways in which struggles at the ballots and political spaces can be extended to “every realm of itself.” As such, both of these two passionate Gezi people indicated that politics on the street might eventually be tied to grassroots and civil society movements, which would operate as a unifying force not only for the left itself, but for other people coming from different systems of beliefs and ideological traditions.

Such inputs did not seem to convince another pessimistic Marxist, who also acted as the chair and ended the quorum by saying: “What happened after the Spanish Civil War, what would happen after another Gezi, one tear gas; we would be scattered like flies again. We must be an actor in the elections,” as if the commune was not the conduit that enabled the Turkish fragmented left to speak to one another, thereby giving birth to the movement of which he was speaking on behalf.

The BHH’s quorum was not the only post-Gezi organizational formation in which I searched for clues to answer the dilemma of practical political implications in regime space vis-à-vis the commune repertoires. After asking if the TGB saw any noticeable increase in the number of members following the downfall of the commune—I was trying to decipher the mobilization codes of the post-Gezi social movement climate—Uğur also put me up in one of the quorums of the TGB that was organized in sort of an educational seminar manner for the high school students around similar times.

The quorum was held in a café located on one of the isolated streets of Kadıköy—known as the fortress of the secularists—right next to a small mosque. During the quorum, call for prayers was drowned out by the slogan of “we are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal,” which was chanted collectively in militarist collectivity. I did everything not be caught in this alluring spirit. Just like Uğur, other TBG
members welcomed me with warm smiles and told me they were happy to have me at their “meeting.”

The matter of elections and organizational logic also came up for discussion after long hours of lectures given by the elder members over the “well organized” Turkish independence war fought against the “imperialist invaders” and “regressive Islamic” mindset in the 1920s. Toward the end of the meeting, the regional president of Istanbul, Üğur, pointed out that Gezi became “a lost cause” (mundar oldu) because “everybody picked one part of it.” By reminding everyone of the “successfully organized war against the regresssivism (irtica) and imperialism, the “TGB must play the leader role,” he roared toward the young people who were mesmerized by his speaking skills, which appealed to the emotions of the audience with his strong persona filling up the space. In fact, the confidence he projected over the crowd almost convinced me, though I was more on the side of a going with the flow logic.

Based on the naturalistic observations made on the post-Gezi organizational formations and the interviewees’ personal thoughts over the matter of the self-organizational nature of the communal occupation repertoire, I would argue that the communards appeared to be more for the alternatives that transcended the logic of old forms of politics despite the crystallizing fascistic regime in the aftermath of Gezi. This post-commune anarchistic tendency, I suggest, seems to be in harmony with the response that the TD gave against the cancellation of the so-called restitution project, which the muffin-faced president tried to sell as the only viable option left during the occupation. Following the invitations made by several other state authorities and the warnings to evacuate the area, the platform re-emphasized that they would not withdraw from the site unless the commune’s demands were fulfilled. Those demands, primarily pointing to the betterment of ecological conditions across the country, extended throughout the every realm of life. In other words, the solidarity responded by lining up requests that ranged from the abolition of the heteronormativity and the release of imprisoned protesters to the amelioration in working conditions and living conditions of minorities and marginalized groups. The commune’s manifesto also called for an immediate halt of the legal/economical processes that was threatening livings spaces and lifestyles (“Taksim Dayanışması 9 Haziran Tarihli Konuşma Metni” 2013). Thus, it would not be entirely
wrong to state that the multiplicity itself in parallel to the intersectional systems of oppression projected themselves over the requests that could not be narrowed down to a single political or revolutionary prescription.

### 6.5 The Last Days Before the fall: Global Solidarity and Aestheticized Resistance

The commune’s self-organizing repertoire was no match for police forces in terms of the resources spared for physical resistance. Adopted to strategies and tactics implemented during the mobilization night, police hit back with military-style weapons in a more organized fashion on the last days of the encampment to clear the square of communards, adjacent to the park. Along with some of communards that I did not know before, I took shelter in a public washroom in the park. One young woman terrified by the attack asked for a cell phone to call her parents to say she was all right. I passed my smart phone that I borrowed from my friend to her. At that moment, I thought to myself I did not usually trust a stranger easily before Gezi because I gave my phone without a second thought. I would not normally act this way. I consider myself skeptical, particularly when it comes to humans.

The smell of pepper spray bombs started reaching inside the washroom, which was almost packed. For the first time during the protests, my allergic asthma flared up, possibly because of the stronger chemicals the police used for the evacuation. I do not usually carry a ventilator on me because it is not chronic condition, but my breath started quickening and my heart started racing. It felt as if there was no way out because other communards were blockading the exit way. They were terrified and they seemed to be remaining there for good. I was trying to stand up at the back of the space. My body slowly surrendered to gravity. Nobody noticed me. “Open the way for the poor boy, give him some space,” the woman who borrowed my phone yelled. Among all the others, she was the only one brave enough to carry me outside. As thick layer of gas cloud was hovered over the commune, she took me to the medical unit of the hotel located by the park. I came to understand what trust meant during that attack.
Following that brutal assault, many of the communards who were dedicated to protecting the park gathered around a piano placed at the main entrance to the park at that night. As the fingers of David Martello, a German-Italian musician, gently touched the keys, somber concertos, melodies and tunes that he composed himself kept hovering over the park throughout night as it drizzled. This dramatic scene, which also found a place in the communards’ narrations, points to another defining characteristic of the repertoire itself that stood out in the second week of the commune: the resistance praxes that are expressed in an artistically aestheticized fashion and experienced in a ritualistically collective state of being. Undoubtedly Martello’s concerto, which lifted the communards’ spirits following the loss of the square, was indeed not the first nor the last sacred moment of the commune. This collective state of joy and sorrow also shows us the ways in which the Gezi became part of anti-globalization struggles by weaving the melancholic Turkish romanticism into the global repertoire.

As I pointed out in the beginning of this section by channeling Dawn’s comments, besides the self-organizing nature, one of the salient features of the commune was its overwhelmingly colorful scenery and carnivalesque background that actually manifested itself more in the organized art performances and counter-cultural activities. Undoubtedly, one may point to many other political demonstrations, rallies or eventful protests where means of arts and aestheticized social protest forms were used to draw attention to certain social problems and political injustices in Asia Minor. But those performed in the Istanbul Commune, such as Martello’s mini-concert, I would argue, enabled the communards coming from different segments of society to experience the collective joy of being together in a sacred manner (Turner 2012), thereby raising the self-organizing repertoire to another affective level that can be likened to quantum consciousness. In other words, art performances, bringing together protesters with different biographies, were encoding new social relations into cultural and sacred praxes to be deciphered by the next young generations in future.

Through the prism of a cultural analysis, the subtitles, meanings of these new cultural codes can certainly be distilled from the caricatured humor, satire, graphite and poems that covered up every inch of
the encampment. Understandably, the threat of authoritarian oppression kindled a creative spirit in almost all of the communards. It was as if musical notes, art stages and tirades were cementing the collective identity in the making, thereby carrying the occupied space itself up to sacral spatio-temporality. All the encounters made by the communards through the artistic performances and cultural activities seemed to be the delayed rendezvous of the alienated, isolated, atomized and fragmented Turkish individual actors and collectivities in a hollowed out metropolis, which had hitherto prevented them from channeling their voices harmoniously, simultaneously and artistically,

As I expressed in the beginning of this section, the Gezi commune was mostly experienced and lived as a microcosm of Turkey due to the conditions peculiar to the belated modern milieu. In other words, the communards were not consciously concerned with other anti-globalization struggles that were flowing, unfolding and disappearing in other parts of the globe. Despite this local apathy towards other similar causes like the one that occurred in Cairo, many activists, students and arts people like Martello came to the park from all across Europe to give their support for the emerging solidarity in Istanbul. In this sense, I suggest that the participation of global activists carried the event itself to the international arena. Turkish romanticism became a source of inspiration for anti-globalization struggles such that the protests in Brazil, which began as a reaction to the increase in public transpiration fees, culminated with a slogan saying “the love is over here in Turkey” (Bevin’s 2013). These two cycles of protests coinciding with one another even inspired some of the Brazilian protesters to fly from the southern to northern hemisphere to psychically give support to their comrades in Istanbul. Has the commune repertoire resulted in changes in the perception of the Gezi people towards other exemplary cases in the world? This is a question that will find its answer in time through new ethnographic and quantitative studies of the commune.

The absence of the notion of a common struggle against globalization processes does not necessarily mean that the commune repertoire in the Turkish experience cannot be related to a broader global historical context. The Paris Commune as well as other revolutionary situations incarnating and
reverberating across the life-world and memories of the communards show us the fact that the temporary autonomous zone in Istanbul may certainly be viewed as a beacon of light aimed at a global audience who tended to overlook the power of progressive politics in Asia Minor until Gezi. The fact that the political imaginaries of past centuries consciously or subconsciously, bodily and affectively, were factors at play in the self-organizing repertoire shows us that we will all be sharing a common history that will take shape around our global cities in the near future.

This esoteric quantum connection to the genesis of the communes not only manifested itself in the narrations and expressions of the Istanbul Communards, but also, I suggest, in the symbolic realms and verbal exchanges that took place between the power holders and claim-makers in the course of two weeks. Right after Prime Minister Erdoğan dismissed the protesters as “a few looters” in the very first days of the occupation, the communards embraced the label and began calling themselves “the looters.” By doing so, they resituated its derogatory and condescending connotation on a new semiotic ground that evoked a stateless, non-hierarchical, communal citizenship imagination. Ironically, no one, except the common enemy that activates and draws the lines of collective identity, would have had found a better expression to describe the state of nature that the Gezi people were living in and desiring—a non-capitalist, immaterial space of hope, where food, drink, medicine, knowledge, humor and art circulated without the presence of the invisible hand. A liberated zone was dislocated from the spatio-temporality of the neo-Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic and the global economic system itself, but was affectively directed toward the Paris Commune and other similar historical moments of madness.

The commune repertoire along with its self-organizing nature, leaderless and horizontally structured podiums, serendipitous encounters, and aestheticized resistance praxes in Istanbul came to an end following another forceful evacuation on June 14. Ironically, the state officers and municipal authorities blamed for “undermining the secularist state structure” draped a grand portrait of Atatürk and two national flags on the cultural center; it was covered up with the protesters’ placards, banners and flags as noted above. The spirit yearning for the Commune disappeared.
But can the nostalgic yearning for the Paris Commune resonating across the affective domains be viewed as the only source in understanding 21\textsuperscript{st} century communes, which I also consider as the harbingers of the new century’s citizenship imaginations from a general sociological perspective? Are desires for such communal ways of living merely rooted in the past political temporality? Answering this question, I suggest, requires placing a larger spotlight on the counter-cultural activities of Gezi, which were organized and performed by neo-bohemian, nomadic groups and subjectivities. Parallel to this, it also requires discussing and questioning to what extent the environmental concerns and ecological sensitivities were part of the mobilization process throughout the events. With these questions in mind, we will keep on approaching Gezi in the following penultimate section of this dissertation through the prism of affect, the bodily state of being together, as well as within the context of new ways of doing religion, which will be conceptualized in detail under concept of the “postmodern sacred.”
As I pointed out before, Gezi first started as a small environmentally oriented occupation attempt in the last week of May 2013. Understanding and revealing mobilization ingredients related to environmental sensitivities and the overwhelming urbanization process that was destroying Istanbul’s last remaining green spaces was among the objectives of the field research I conducted following the fall of the commune. In fact, investigating to the extent to which environmental concerns and issues were contributing causes that prompted the uprising was necessary from an ethical point of view because among all other occupy movements, the Commune of Istanbul, I argue, comes forward with its small-scale green grassroots movement, which triggered tens of thousands of bystanders to take to the streets. More importantly, such an inquiry was also necessary in order to critically approach my positionality, as an independent protester, in the panorama of the incident in general. Because, to me Gezi was more of an environmentalist reflexive that gathered the fragmented Turkish left, thereby enabling the young generations to channel their visions of society, politics and lifestyle collectively and harmoniously. Thus, I had to find other communards who imagined more of a gray commune, than a green one.

Looking at the commune of Istanbul through the prism of eco-politics and eco-sensitivity certainly paints an entirely different picture. A different glimpse into the past of Gezi, a journey into its parallel universe, I would say, not only tells us to the extent to which worsening living conditions in Istanbul’s ecological landscape played a role during the mobilization process, but also, I suggest, enables us to make some projections over the constantly evolving nature of protest repertoires in the local culture as well as citizenship imaginations of 21st century on a global sociological ground. Expressed differently, the differentiated retrospective analysis I am presenting in this chapter will provide insights into the newly crystallizing subjectivities of the new millennium, which attempt to fill the void left by hyper
capitalism in their life-world, by creating new meanings that take shape around sacralized objects, causes and lifestyle as well.

At the dawn of May 11, right after the call for prayers, police used brutal force including tear gas and pressurized water to evict the vanguard eco-protesters from Gezi Park. In response to this surprise assault that came at a strategic time (which raises doubts over the security officers’ neutrality with respect to their ideological background), eco-protesters tried to hold their ground by forming human chains and using bodies as barricades in order to protect the small encampment they set up in the site. All efforts were in vain. Resistance at that point seemed to be futile. As the bodies locked to one another were rolled over, backup security forces waiting behind set the tents on fire. They eventually succeed in opening enough space for the excavators that were waiting behind to come in. Hazar B. Büyüktuna was recording this chaotic scene unfolding before his eyes on his camera. In the hope of spreading the news and bringing a larger group of defenders, he tilted his camera towards the greenness that was fading into the darkness of the dawn to capture the moment of impact when the bulldozer fell on of the trees. In one of the accounts he gave after this small battle he said the “dozer’s blade was up about to fall down on top of the tree… I did not take picture instead I ran and hugged the tree.”

But why would someone risk his life for a form of life that is thought to be as not equally important as other living creatures or humans? What reasons triggered Büyüktuna to act in such risky way? SEZEN

As I pointed out in the theoretical discussion, in today’s liberal democratic societies, in which time and space configurations are accelerated at unprecedented levels, the meaning that fills our social cosmos is emptied because of the digitalization of labor, intensified urbanization processes and decaying institutional agencies of the crumbling nation-state structure. Moreover, the imposition of a mechanistic profane, anthropocentric worldview as a legacy from an Enlightenment mindset, which per se actually operates as a sort of a subtle disciplining mechanism to maintain and preserve social order, is another ingredient that lessens the meaning. As old forms of politics, family institutions buckling under

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33 For a visual account of Büyüktuna’s comments and Gezi from a more environmentalist perspective, see documentary by Ersin Kana, “The Fall of the Heaven,” 2014.
worsening economic conditions, professional lives that are squeezed into digital screens and gradually disappearing Abrahamic religions lose their functionality to generate meaning for life-worlds of secular subjectivities like Büyüktuna, and new forms of social movements take shape around abstract cultural notions. These include the environment, new communitarian living forms that pop up on the fringes of sprawling metropolitan areas and new ways of doing religion, which may be simply defined as new age belief systems, emerge as sacralized phenomena, which ties the citizens of 21st century to the social cosmos in constant turbulence. Thus, as I have suggested, subjectivities of hyper-capitalism are creating their own sacred institutions, spaces, activities and objects, and in doing so they are crystallizing as atomized individual agencies that are ready to sacrifice their lives for causes they believe in, a tendency that is reminiscent of the heydays of religious fanaticism and pre-modern pagan communities.

In light of this ethical critique of today’s liberal democratic societies and the trajectory of mainstream religions—of which inspiration I drew from critical sociologists like Touraine and Szerszynski—and Büyüktuna’s comments over the May 31 incident, the questions to be posed with respect to Gezi are: Can we mention other communards like Büyüktuna who were ready sacrifice their life for one of the last remaining green spaces left in in the middle of the whirling urban vortex? To what extent did eco-sensitivity and environmental motivational reasons play a role in the mobilization process in general? Were the Gezi people who were prefiguring a communal way of life in the middle of one of the largest and busiest global cities aware of the fact that they were sacralizing the space in and through the counter-cultural performances and mystical art-stages of the repertoire itself? Or were the “a couple of trees just an excuse,” as most of the communards expressed? Is it really a coincidence that one of the significant contentious episodes in Asia Minor’s history commenced as a small-environmentalist resistance encampment? Where has the commune repertoire of Istanbul taken the Gezi people?
7.1 Was Gezi Really All About “A Couple of Trees”?

In the chapter on the uprising night, we observed the ways in which the main motivation for mobilization varied based on the subject’s positioning and personal biography. Accordingly, we analyzed how the communards prioritized and foregrounded one or a cluster of motivation factors over others depending on their social, cultural and political background. Understandably, green spaces and trees inside the park surfaced as the primary mobilization reason for more environmentally sensitive people like Efe, Arya and myself. Other communards lined up other triggering factors before the park itself.

During the occupation period, there in fact arose common rhetoric that verified and overlapped with the field research findings. Towards the end of the first week, the communards began debating whether “a couple of trees were just an excuse,” when the political body of the Kurdish movement revoked their support for the commune after making a public statement that “they” were not as dignified as “3 or 5 trees” in the park as if reminding the new left the implications of the bloody civil war of three decades and demanding an account for the apathy towards their own cause. This incident along with the discourse it was entangled within enabled me to play the role of critical insider once again with respect to environmental sensitivity during my interviews. How could its own people deny the title of “eco-protest” despite the fact that one of the most transformative protest the repertoires in Asia Minor commenced as a small environmentally oriented resistance?

As my mind was buzzing with these ideas related to ethical and theoretical concerns, after my interviewees lined up their “main” reasons for participating in the cycle of protest, I immediately directed a volley of questions with respect to the general rhetoric that surfaced during the second week of the encampment. Most of my interviewees were in agreement on the statement of “a couple of trees were just an excuse,” and suggested that there was actually a bigger picture beneath the protests. Undoubtedly hiding my own positionality as independent eco-protester in the panorama of Gezi as well as the cynical tone I adopted encouraged them to overtly express their views over the matter.
Not surprisingly, it was those who held more rigid views of old Marxist politics and secularism who, without a second thought, almost enthusiastically underlined the significance of so-called bigger factors in the place of trees. Against my volley of questions seemingly encouraging—perhaps deceiving—her to criticize the green aspects of the commune, Demet without thinking pointed to the “threat of Islam to the secular structure” and “labor exploitation” in the work realm by nodding her head agreement again. “Gezi was not just about a couple of trees. Of course! That was an excuse for sure!” she responded with a determined expression on her face. Perhaps showing not the same degree of determination, as a feminist socialist, Virgo pointed out how restrictions on the matter of abortion were “more significant” than the trees inside the park. “I think so too, yeah trees are important too for sure, but that should not prevent us seeing the big picture behind Gezi,” she added.

Given the tumultuous nature of the Turkish composite regime, especially when coupled with the political Islam’s increasing blunt authoritarian discourses that began to threaten lifestyles in the post-Gezi Turkey, such a degree of underestimation of an urban park may be expected. Nonetheless, right after the end of formal interviews, both Virgo and Demet ironically complained how it sometimes might become “overwhelming” to live in Istanbul—a city where air quality and green space have become vital issues—when I asked them about their “daily life routines.” These two, one feminist socialist and one secularist communist, who first vehemently directed attention to the increasingly authoritarian aspects of the regime, suggested that they were willing to move to a smaller coastal town where they could enjoy themselves and a cleaner air and meet “nice neighbors” they can get along with instead of “soulless” Istanbulites. Both communards also enthusiastically noted how in such resort and isolated places, the sense of “being in touch with nature” would lift up their spirits and help to change “this city mood.”

Perhaps “a couple of trees” did not really resonate across and surface in conscious realms during the uprising night. Perhaps that is why most of the communards prioritized their own macro-subjective reasons that turned them out to the streets. Despite that, nonetheless, I would argue the Gezi trees in parallel to the state of living in a constantly growing metropolitan city seemed to be part of their
mobilization in affective domains. Perhaps they seemed to be eclipsed by other factors in the conscious realm, but I suggest, they undoubtedly played their part in these two communard’s decision to take to the streets. Has the two-week commune experience succeeded to salvage ecological concerns from the deep affective domains that of Virgo and Demet and situate in place on the realm of perception where we can see it clearly? In other words, has the commune repertoire unearthed a collective eco-consciousness amongst the communards? Did the commune function as a learning mechanism that kindled the love of nature?

Another critical sociologist, Kay Milton, points to the ways in which “emotions” may function as learning mechanisms in the context of nature and eco-protest repertoires. Drawing attention to the affective aspects of human nature, he suggests how one can develop a sensitivity for nature or even begin fighting for it by observing and getting in touch with other environmentally sensitive subjectivities and their actions (Milton 2003). From a more psychological point of view, it would not be entirely wrong to suggest that he actually emphasizes the act of bodily mimicking or mirroring, the sticky feature of affect, which functions as a learning mechanism in human nature. Based on the ethnographic findings, I would argue that Gezi seems to ignite the sparks of eco-consciousness among the communards even though that seems to be lost and less prominent among other factors in the participants’ narrations, memories and imaginations.

As a Kurdish anarchist, Kara Block for instance recounted how the “intensity” of the Roboski Massacre and restrictions brought on the matter of abortion were buzzing in his mind before “a couple trees” when he decided to mobilize on the uprising night. “Perhaps the Kurdish movement was right when saying and complaining they do not have value as much as the trees,” I prompted in order to dig deep into his memories left from the mobilization and commune repertoire. He directly disagreed my assessment. Responding in a poetic spirit, he emphasized that he had come to realize how “important” the park itself actually was as a “tiny green” in the middle of a giant metropolis since the “occupation.” “When it (the park) is looked in the bird-eye photographs, you can see it! A green pearl in the middle of the waves of
concrete building, it is a green space, just a small one perhaps, but a green space. I come to understand this treasure after Gezi,” he added.

The two week of commune experience, through which eco-sensitivity and discourse were felt in every corner of the park, was indeed a learning mechanism that unearthed the green consciousness in the desolate spirits of most of the communards like Kara Block. When asked about his “opinions” of trees, cynical Nihilist also pointed out in the beginning of his interview that “the green cause” was just an “excuse.” “Yes! Of course! There were more important matters than a couple of trees,” he said. But later on to the question of “what Gezi has changed in him in general,” he passionately recounted his experiences during the “park cleanup” activities. He noted that he could never imagine himself cleaning dirt on the streets before the commune as someone “who barely cares about the conditions of his own living space at home. He said in a deeply sincere tone “I do not even lift my finger to clean my own habitat, but that sense of collective cleaning activity, that was different. I just felt the urge to be part of it, believe or not I cleaned every corner of the park.”

The park cleanup activities were initiated in the very first days of the encampment as the clashes with police and the intensity of the atmosphere lessened. During these very first days the surrounding spaces as well as interior sections of the park were indeed not really in good shape. Flocks of the communards as well as temporary cruisers swinging by to check out and experience the commune repertoire itself increased the chaos as well as the amount of the waste to be disposed. Garbage bags began to pile up and here and there, and pieces of papers and plastic bottles and organic waste reached disturbing levels and became more visible around the tents. Without losing time, the prime minister, who was ready to undermine the legitimacy of peaceful eco-protest, immediately highlighted the so-called “sanitation” problems in the commune in his official statements. In one the very first speeches given at the parliament following the insurrection, he questioned how someone could become an environmentalist if s/he uses “the place they use for sleeping as toilets.” Of course, this statement hardly reflected reality itself and in fact, it was not very much different than other blacking tactics directed to other occupy
movements. Most of the communards actually used bathrooms inside hotels around the park, which opened up their doors to give support to the resistance. But against this insult, the real help came from the secularist municipal administration, Şişli—known for its populist Alevi mayor as well as other surrounding hotels. They placed a well-organized portable bathroom system right by the commune on the road that stretches down Beşiktaş. Some of the communards, especially more environmentally sensitive ones, took on the responsibility for the maintenance of the portable washroom and even helped the municipal officers as drainage trucks came by the commune.

Accordingly, not as a direct response to the prime minister’s provocative comments, but through the eco-activists’ initiatives there emerged communal cleanup activities organized spontaneously after the portable bathrooms were set up. In time, the communards began to perform this activity in a ritualistic manner in the early morning hours each day. Virgo described the scene she witnessed after the first cleaning session as follows: “The park was really dirty. ‘Clean up Gezi’ campaign spread on social media. People were in fact talking about this inside the park too. We cleaned up the park. Rain that came down gently that night washed out the remaining dirt. The following morning the park was really glowing; I mean really literally shining. It felt like home to me at that moment. You could smell purity, crispy feeling in the air after the rain.” What is interesting and ironic is that Virgo recounted her experience as the most “memorable moments” left from the commune, as a feminist and journalist who did not hesitate for a second to place the social media bans and abortion restrictions over trees in terms of mobilization reasons.

Not only did the park cleaning activities ignite the sparks of eco-sensitivity in the conscious realms of individual subjectivities such as that of Virgo and Nihilist, but it also influenced and shaped agendas of the groups and collectivities in the commune. Three of the TGB members in separated interviews mentioned the park cleaning activities in response to the question of what sort of “new things” or “innovations” they as a group “brought to the commune.” Against this open-ended question, Üğur first responded by saying “discipline” in a very determined way. That was not the answer I was really
expecting considering the self-organizing nature of the repertoire. As one of the prominent figures of a youth group organized, which has a tendency to mobilize in a militarist fashion, he recounted the cleaning activities when I asked him to elaborate what he meant my “discipline.” He told me that they took the park cleanup activities seriously to such an extent that they named it “sector cleaning” (minitka temizliği). In a contrasting fashion to the first determined expression on his face, he told me how much effort they put in sweeping the area surrounding their group tent, even sometimes more than once a day and how they assigned other younger TGB members “to the bigger sweeping” activities taking place around the park.

The matter of ecological struggle may be shadowed by other intervening macro-structural factors during the mobilization night. Perhaps a couple of trees are still being considered just as an excuse in the consciousness domains of the communards. As the bodies of communards engaged and encountered with other environmentally sensitive people in and through collective performed activities, eco-consciousness nonetheless began to show itself in the daily routines and chores of their activities as well. Such everyday practices, I suggest, seemed to stimulate all the communards to subconsciously form organic and emotional linkages with the green space left in the heart of a big metropolitan area. For some of those the park began to feel like barracks, while for more individualized subjectivities like Virgo it felt like home after rain; a force of nature wiping out all the unwanted, heavy memories of the uprising night. Such metaphorical descriptions, I would argue, point to the ways in which the space itself began to incarnate as a sacred, living site that is associated with intimate living or private sphere in the sentimental cosmos of the communards. Without a doubt, the collective cleaning up activities were not the only incident in which the sacralization process of the park surfaced from the cracks in the commune’s soil; the movement is claimed to be playing a bigger role than “environmentalism.”

7.2 The Ritual and The Sacred

As I expressed in the penultimate section of the previous chapter, art stages and performances acquired a more sacred tone and sense through the collective state of being together. This state of
sacredness was indeed felt more and widespread in the activities organized by the neo-bohemian, nomadic communards. Akin to the direct-democracy practices, such counter-cultural activities, workshops, ritualistic artistic performances also enabled the communards to make encounters and exchange their lifestyles and worldviews with one another, thereby contributing to the consolidation process of the affective collective identity. They were, in other words, sowing the seeds of new social relations in the fertile lands of new cultural, spiritual and post-sacred values and visions.

One of the most memorable of these new age activities was undoubtedly morning yoga sessions. Communal yoga sessions actually started with the initiatives of a small group of professional yogis in order to display to belligerent police and state elites the non-violent nature of the resistance. What started as a symbolic passive bodily resistance protest form nevertheless in time blossomed into a big workshop activity performed by a larger crowd in the following days? Just like the cleanup sessions, it became a part of the daily routine and quotidian world of the communards in the early morning hours. The bodies of many of the communards, including myself who had never before practiced yoga, oscillated under the shade of trees, almost in a state of collective trance. In the following days, the workshop had grown popular through increasing participation and attention as if were a religious, ritualistic ceremony, even alluring many communards who had a distanced stance toward esoteric new age belief systems. The communards who first hesitated to join the sessions, especially males, surrendered to the flow and made themselves part of the ceremonial activity in time almost in a natural way. Each session ended with mantras and prayers blessing the forces of nature—air, fire, soil, earth—forces that give life to the trees and to the ecosystem we dwell in and share with other living creatures. It was as if the park acquired a sacred sense through this communally performed activity. At the end of the session one communard asked: “Are you feeling the same thing that I feel,” with expression of epiphany on her face. “Like what?” I prompted in order to understand what she really was feeling. “It feels like I am tied to the trees, to other people in the park,” she responded with excitement.
Besides such mass bodily activities kindling participles of spiritualism and a sense of unity in a Gaianian sense in the souls of communards, there also flowered small-scale new age workshops and debate forums in which existential and theological themed discussions brought the more spiritually-oriented communards closer to the ones whose semantic world was more shaped around mainstream religions. In the first week of the repertoire, during the times when it was leaning toward the self-organizing side as it was leaning toward sacredness as the threat of police disappeared, I stopped by a group discussion where a heated existential debate about the nature of god and universe was unfolding.

One communard, presumably a member of Anti-Capitalist Muslims, was defending the notion of one true god against those who held more spiritual and esoteric views of the universe. What was remarkable is that, at least from my point of view, both sides reached a consensus on the notion of a higher, transcending power(s), whether that was in the form of one true deity or entities that cannot be known but felt by human perception.

The discussion went on in such an articulate and informative manner that it even pulled in other curious visitors like me who were glued to this extraordinary scene that was taking place between one Islamic subjectivity and two neo-bohemians. The visitors were sometimes asked to participate and tell their own opinions when the debates seemed to get stuck. They were nonetheless more inclined to listen to the intriguing discussion instead of actively contributing given the fact and assuming, at least in my case, that theology and belief systems were out of their field of expertise. Yet everyone seemed to be enthusiastic and all ears. The discussion finally revolved around the matter of anthropocentrism rooted in Abrahamic religions including Islam. The communards who seemed to be more profane directed blame at all mainstream religions for depicting nature as a limitless resource to be exploited in the service of humanity. The communard with views leaning toward the one true god attempted to disprove their mates by reciting particular verses from the Quran. He, in other words, tried to prove the extent to which his religion could actually be in harmony with nature. At that moment, I called one of my friends, who lives in a coastal town in the Aegean region and was writing a dissertation on the very exact ton the exact topic
that was being debated there. “You have to be here, your area of expertise is needed in Gezi,” I yelled at her on the phone. “I am there, we are all together, knowledge I have would be transmitted there if needed; no worries my friend,” she responded in a puzzling way. I was not very much familiar with the spiritual terminology back then. At that moment her comments did not make sense in other words. But my curiosity for the esoteric new-age belief system began to surface as the fruitful discussion unfolding before my eyes ended with an intriguing vignette that stunned me again; when the spiritual subjectivities began mediating, the believer accompanied them by praying in a traditional Islamic fashion by turning his hands toward the sky. For me, it seemed in that moment that members of different tribes were attempting to communicate via their own religious ceremonies, thereby making the space they stand and live on sacred. It was as if the commune was back to the age of antiquity.

I would argue that such an anecdote was also telling us that the ways, in which critical Islamic vision may be in harmony with postmodern sacred worldviews in which nomadic subjectivities of the millennium search for meaning that could bind them to the toppling, materialistic, profane and eviscerated social cosmos. Expressed differently, it shows us how future protest repertoires in the Turkish experience might be shaped by post-Islamic values together with new ways of doing religion, neo-spiritual and esoteric belief systems that draw in more and more secular people to themselves through the crumbling social.

Not so long after the fall of the commune, Taksim Area witnessed an innovative collective protest performance that was unprecedented in Asia Minor. I would argue that this innovation—I consider it novelty again because of its new participant texture—was the harbinger of such social protests of the future. In this repertoire, which coincided with the holy month Ramadan in the country, the ACM teamed up with the secularist Gezi protesters and they together formed chains of what they called “earth tables”(yeryüzü sofralar) on the crowded, touristic İstiklal Street leading to the park. One of the ultimate objectives of this demonstration was to draw attention to the “conspicuous” and “luxurious” Ramadan dinner events organized by the AKP and its municipals branches, which claim to be the “representatives”
of oppressed, “neglected” segments of society. In this set of episodic protest events that lasted almost throughout the holy month, protesters brought their “humble” bites along with them and attempted to occupy the street. As well, they symbolically tried to reach out to the park as if it became a sacred place, sort of a temple following the fall of the commune. Police officers, who were determined to disperse any kind of the gathering in the area, did know how to deal with this new tactic since protesters were breaking their fasts, the sacred moment in Islamic culture. I recall one young police officer saying to his superior that he could not use physical force against “those people,” an argument that almost turned the command hierarchy inside out. Nonetheless, unlike Gezi, police officers managed to shut down this new innovation in the Turkish protest repertoire immediately. Security officers used their own bodies as barricades in order to prevent the chain of earth tables from reaching out to the site.

What started as a small eco-resistance in May 2013 therefore paved the way for an improvising new tactic that kept on bringing the future generations of fragmented Turkish subjectivities together. No one could have imagined secularists joining with the dissident flanks of Islamists, and as a result of this fusion they together would stand up against a neoliberal regime colored with conservative and Islamic motifs. Such coalescence seemed to even affect the communards holding rigid nationalist-secularist views. To the question of whether he “came across any scene he could not have imaged before Gezi,” Dawn told me that he was really touched with the scenery when he saw the “communist and secularists” communards standing guard as the “revolutionary Muslims” performed their morning prayers back in the commune. To some extent, I took this as a confession made by a militarist group member whose political concerns seemed to be oscillating between Islamophobia and secularism.

7.3 New Solidarities through Green Politics

The matter of eco-justice not only has the potential to drive religiously-oriented movements toward more progressive politics, even at times to the anti-capitalist political positions (Gottlieb 2007, 86), as seen in the case of the ACM that has grown famous through the commune repertoire, but also to render such conservative-oriented political visions open to dialogue with competing or clashing
ideologies. In fact, at a more personal identity level, it would not be oversimplification to suggest that identification with nature and ecological causes and struggles actually widen and deepen one’s subjectivity (Milton 2003, 74–76), thereby providing a critical mindset and worldview that enable one to approach and become open to dialogue with rival political ideologies and system of beliefs previously falling far. The solidarity formed by the young generations of fragmented and polarized Turkish society indeed seemed to retain its momentum in the realm of new crystallizing ecological consciousness and its grassroots organizations formed after Gezi in Asia Minor.

The KOS organization had taken shape in the small forums that were organized sporadically in various small urban parks in different neighborhoods of Istanbul following the evacuation of the big park. Such direct democracy initiatives not only kept the momentum of Gezi spirit going in those small park forums throughout the summer of 2013, but also gave birth to new groups, collectives, webs of social relations and organizations like ones like Forest Defense, which I also became a member of during my field research. Arya, one of the founding members of this eco-movement, recounted that Yeniköy—a small neighborhood in the northern belt of Istanbul—forum contributed to the formation of their “cause” as much as the encounters made in the park did. In these meetings, she noted that most of the talks and discussions revolved around the third bridge project that was planned over the northern green belt of the city, which is in close proximity to the neighborhood of the forum. She said “once we realized that there were more than 200 people ready and keen to assemble once in every two weeks a big network of environmentalists emerged by itself,” including a group of cyclists who biked around the area in order to draw attention to the gigantic and cataclysmic project, which would mean the end of last remaining green belt that harbors the reaming water supplies and sanctuaries for migratory birds.

The KOS began to assemble on a regular basis following the initiatives made by Efe and Arya. Both passionate eco-warriors indicated this “horizontally” structured “self-governing” group includes members coming from different political views and social backgrounds. When I asked about whether they witnessed anything “interesting” or any “memorable” events in those meetings, Arya recounted an
anecdote about one former army officer who became an enthusiastic eco-defender. “Özden Abi (brother) is a relatively elder member attending to our meetings regularly. He used to hold extreme nationalist and secularist views, and sometimes put them into words in our meetings. I am ok with nationalists (Kemalists) but you know they sometimes become headache. But somehow, all of a sudden, I heard he began working for the HDP. I think such a dramatic twist his attitude and political visions can be related to the importance of eco-struggle. We are building the future in the KOS. We are protecting the life and we are creating rhetoric about the life itself. We create new methods of communication.”

In a similar vein, Efe also told me about their “close touch” with the activists coming from the Aydınlık newspaper, known for its sharp nationalist-secular sensitivity. “We were invited to give speeches on their TV broadcast for a couple of times, that I would say that is interesting because I could not have imagined Kemalist aunties (teyzeler) going live during our broadcasts and talking about their green struggles in their own neighborhoods.” Efe also added that “ecologically-sensitive parliamentarians” from both the CHP and HDP attended to the KOS’s regular Friday meetings. He emphasized the importance of such encounters that had the “potential” to carry the momentum of the “Gezi spirit” to the realm of macro politics by forming inter-party connections between the Kurds and secular republicans. In one of my visits to these meetings, which coincided with the June 2015 general election campaigns, I fortunately witnessed a visit made by a young republican parliamentary candidate who was challenged by the KOS members for his party’s twisted municipal policies on environmental issues. This observation made me think about the CHP’s general agenda in the Turkish politics and enabled me to make projections about how that would be shaped in accordance with the post-Gezi organization dynamics.

Certainly, the KOS was not only case through which the traces of crystallizing new collective eco-consciousness can be found. There seems to have emerged new sub-eco groups and formations that have gained more momentum under the umbrella of various organizations that were part of Gezi. The TGB members, for instance, pointed out that they formed a new “scout team” to keep an eye on the
controversial third bridge construction. Dawn also indicated that they attended the regular Friday meetings of the Forest Defense in order to pool their knowledge and “intelligence” together about the incident. He nonetheless also emphasized that they did not make speeches under the name of their own organization in those meetings, thinking that they would not be welcomed in an organizational environment where even moderate republicans are harshly criticized.

In a similar vein, as a prominent figure in the Revolutionary Anarchist Action—a manifold anarchist group that also has grown more popular after Gezi—the communard whom I dubbed the red beard told me that he observed a notable increase in their recruitment activity, especially at the level of the subgroup of eco-anarchists. Besides, he also added that there was an increasing interest in the environmentally themed articles in their monthly periodical called Meydan, which is roughly translated as the “Square” in English. Green sensitivity also seemed to be diffusing into the party politics as well. Ahmet Saymadi pointed out how they reframed the SDKP’s constitution and emblem in accordance with this newly surfacing green consciousness, of which they were doubtful of its “potential” in the context of Turkish macro politics before Gezi. To my question “what Gezi has changed in general in their party,” without thinking he noted that Gezi was “influential” in “raising the significance of eco-politics” in their own party agenda. The Turkish socialists, I suggest, are not only ones subjectivities that were caught up in the allure of green momentum.

The most surprising prevision on the future of green politics came from the pan-Turkist side, as if proving Touraine’s remarks on party politics. Just like other communards, Sheriff was the most critical communard with respect to the matter of “a couple of trees,” as I indicated in the chapter on the mobilization night. He nonetheless immediately and paradoxically took me on when I said “I think they are right about that; it (Gezi) was not just about those trees.” “No! Green is national treasury, just like rivers, mountains and plateaus. How come one could think they are not important? We must green everywhere,” he responded passionately and in an eloquent way with the tone of future lawyer. As I toned down my critical stance and told him that my primary reason for mobilization actually depends on eco-
sensitivity he began to talk about the declining popularity of Pan-Turkism among the future generations and at the macro-political level. “Unless the ülkücü (pan-Turkist) youths find something meaningful for themselves,” he said, “I see a bleak future for the party and us.” As a curious intellectual, he also pointed out how “green politics” operate as an umbrella formation that aligns people with different political and social backgrounds around common agendas, and enthusiastically explained to me how such potential can save his “dying” party and Pan-Turkist ideology in general. Despite the fact that he seemed to be prioritizing political gains over environmental concerns, I encouraged him to give a speech about the future of MHP[^34] and green politics in the KOS meetings, where I thought he could find some other heroic activists both to be inspired and inspire them. I mentioned Sherriff to the KOS representatives as well. They told me they would be happy to welcome him to their group. In that sense, I would say I made a small effort to keep the solidarity in the commune going, hoping that small changes would sow the seeds of big transformations and ideological alliances in the future.

The commune repertoire without a doubt did not create an environmentalist movement out of nothing in Asia Minor. The origins of green politics can be traced back to the mid 1970s, as I addressed in the introduction as well as in the political analysis chapter. On top of that, there has been a great ecological awakening taking place in the countryside before 2013 (Harmanşah 2014). Dwellers of small villages and communities, especially in the northern Black Sea region, where the AKP paradoxically tended to come as the first party in the ballots, have been standing up against the hydro dam, mine, infrastructural and touristic projects, which disrupt their natural life patterns and damage agricultural fields separated for tea plant growing. Over the green mountains of Anatolia, dozens of protests have erupted prior to Gezi and are still taking place. Especially after the commune, there have emerged events where people of those communities including elder women would put their own bodies up against bulldozers. Some of those attempts do succeed in halting such devastating projects as seen in the case of

[^34]: As I am writing these lines, an internal opposition inside the MHP began to take shape around a woman leader who is known for her accounts of animal activism. Although she is may be comparable to the iron lady considering her rigid views of ethnicity it would not be entirely wrong to state that something is changing inside the party of which historical legacy is built upon patriarchal imagination.
Cerattepe protests (“Davutoğlu on Cerattepe: Mining Activities to Be Halted until Judicial Process Completed” 2016), while some unfortunately do not. Such incidents not only point to the operational logic of neoliberalism during times of crisis— it expands its spatiality so as to accelerate the circulation of liquidity— but also, I would argue, are harbingers of new repertoires toward the green and the sacred in the making, through which provincial classes would come together with the progressive politics as well as urban-based struggles like Gezi. Perhaps the repertoires to come will expand the solidarity maintained at the park by paving the way for common intersecting grounds between struggles in the name of urban commons and environmental protests taking place at the fringes of country.

The prospective implications of such a momentum that is taking shape around green politics would not go beyond speculation, but resistances simmering in the name of a couple trees, even in neighborhoods, towns and cities where the neoliberal-Islamic party wins the majority of votes, should certainly be taken into account from political sociology perspective. Recounting the growing linkages of the KOS with other eco-movements in the periphery and greater Istanbul region, Efe lined up a few cases where the hegemonic parties’ projects was encountered with resistance even by his own “voters” as happened in case of another park, Dede Park, Bursa. Verifying Efe’s insight, I also witnessed another small green protest incident that took place in 2015 in Üsküdar, a neighborhood known for its conservative-Islamic social texture. In this comparatively micro-scaled event, locals and students teamed up together to stop the construction machines from taking down the trees to open space for a new bus station. Young female, veiled protesters bravely confronting police—perhaps knowing that police are more tolerant towards them— for the sake of environmental concerns certainly gave new an outlook to the perpetually evolving Turkish protest repertoires in this case. Perhaps, the eco-spirit of Gezi is ramifying through the conservative segments of society. That will undoubtedly be an intriguing question to be answered by future studies of the post-commune Turkey.
7.4  The Gezi Spirit: The Sufi-Dervish and the “Invitation”

Following our meeting, Kara Block took me to an anarchist collective in Taksim Area in order to help me to reach out to other communards who he thought would be keen in recounting their own experiences. He told me that he knew some anarchists who participated in the event and now striving to raise funds to buy land in a remote village of Anatolia or in one of the Aegean towns in order to lay the foundations of a communal way of live on the fringes of state. They are willing to keep the “Gezi spirit” going, he added. I asked him to advise me in advance about the project so that I would be able to ask some questions to those anarchists who were embarking on a thrilling journey. He noted that the commune would be a self-sufficient entity and open to everyone “willing to contribute to and be part of it.” As he was talking about the next-generation commune, he kept using the expression of “the Gezi spirit” as if personifying and sacralizing the park and the collective experience we shared back in the summer of 2013. When I asked him what he meant by that expression, after giving me dirty look he responded “the sense of being together, that festival atmosphere, don’t you remember that?”

When a certain group of people comes together through bodily motions, that collective state of being together reaches beyond the realm of consciousness, as I suggested. This is in reference to Turner, an anthropologist who likens collectively felt and experienced revolutionary situations and eco-protest repertoires like Gezi to “Les Rites De Passages,” which incarnate in the form of a sacred joy or what she calls “communitas.” Based on the metaphorical descriptions used by communards pointing to the self-organizing nature of the repertoire, I would suggest that what Kara Block refers to as Gezi spirit also corresponds to such a liminal spatio-temporality that the communards went through in the commune. The collective joy of being together that Kara Block described to me indeed not only incarnated in the commune repertoire itself in general, but certainly was felt in a more intense way through micro-scale post-sacred, new age activities as well as art-performances, some of which I have touched upon above and in the previous chapter.
In one of those performances, one virtuoso dancer with a gas mask on his face whirled at different spots of the park around the commune. At first glance, his choreography seemed to be resonant with mystical Sufi-dervish tradition in an Islamic sense. Nonetheless, given the fact that Sufism is a critical, humanist reinterpretation of orthodox Islamic principles and given the oscillation of the toned body in an ecstatic fashion in the space of contemporary commune repertoire, I would argue that the performance itself perfectly exemplified what Szerszynski characterizes as a postmodern sacred condition. Dozens of communards and visitors also became part of this experience of collective joy without questioning the religious taste in it. At some points, in a remarkable way, spectators also joined the ubiquitous performance by improvising rhythmic chants and slogans. This Sufi-dervish inspired improvisational choreography grew popular to such an extent that the dancer himself became one of the iconic representations of the communal repertoire, like the Red Woman. I was also an onlooker in one of these ritualistic ceremonies where communards succumbed their bodies to the flow of rhythms and claps. To me it felt like a surreal scene that reminded me of ancient tribal dance rituals through which godly figures of nature were invited to come down on the earth. My body also flowed with the ecstatic motion. As my body modulated into a medium channeling the grievances of my biographic journey, I felt a deep spiritual connection with the other communards accompanying the ritual. Just a few steps further away another avant-garde artist was staging a very similar performance. This theater actress was personifying the Turkish romantic communist Nazım Hikmet who was “acclaimed for lyrical flow of his statements” (Hikmet 2002) as well as his translations of his poems during his exile in the 1950s. She was reading one of his poems aloud, almost roaring and going into tirades at some points. As I was dancing, Nazım’s “invitation”—the heading of the poem—was resonating in my ear: “To live as a tree; sole and free; to live as forest, brotherly. This longing is ours…”

Perhaps it will be this yearning for the communitas and the green that will give inspiration for the future generations of Turkey to form another affective commune in Asia Minor, sacred lands that harbor the relics of ancient civilizations by “coming at a gallop from Far Asia,” as Nazım himself put it.
Perhaps the Armenian cemetery lying beneath Gezi Park and dozens of Greeks that were slaughtered in the pogrom of 1957 will be remembered in and through this new sacred green repertoire, which hopefully will reach beyond the citizenship imaginations of 20th century. I may be daydreaming but perhaps old party politics of Turkey will never poison the ancient lands of Anatolia when the green and the sacred blossom everywhere.

Figure 6. The Sufi-Dervish

The Whirling Dervish of Gezi
Chapter 8  Conclusion: The Last Man
Standing in the Square

This study offers an analysis of Istanbul’s Gezi Park protests of 2013, the Gezi Commune that combines self-reflexive and common knowledge production methodologies. The two-year field research involved semi-structured one-on-one interviews carried out with the participants in the 2013 Gezi Commune who were drawn from different groups and was supplemented by participatory research principles. The researcher was positioned as a critical insider throughout the time spent on the grounds of protest and as an interlocqutor during interviews. The data thus obtained was additionally filtered through critical, epistemological matrixes derived from memory studies and approaches to narrative analysis. These interviews and experience are key component of my research: they direct scholarly attention to how subjectivities in contemporary societies are able to give new meaning to older forms of protest while imbuing the spaces in which these protest forms are performed with quasi-sacred associations.

The analysis of protest is also framed with a peculiar spatial context: the post-modern neoliberal metropolis. In effect, my research brings an emerging literature on affect and emotion, humanist/structuralist urban geography, and radical/communitarian visions of revolutionary politics into dialogue with sociological theories of collective action and mobilization. Of course sociologists employ a wide range of tools and models to investigate and question in understanding why and when movements crystallize, emerge and attract support. Special attention is paid to many factors, including shifts in political landscapes, already existing social network connections, windows of opportunities arising out of increasing/decreasing state repression, worsening economic conditions as well as demographic factors, and the role of social media which are brought into relationship with both state-making processes and newly emerging market dynamics. More cultural approaches underline the role of moral shocks, libidinal ties, collectively constructed identities and or common causes that hold symbolic meanings for protesters. Despite differences in emphases, they share certain assumptions: cultural and structural theorists assume
that protesters or social movement participants are groups of people who come to a protest with a relatively clear understanding of what they hope to gain and why they are mobilized by certain issues or by the leading figures in movements. Moreover, there is an assumption that participants feel that at least some of their goals might meet with success.

My interviews and my own experience suggests a heterogeneity of demands, desires and dispositions motivated the Gezi Park participants to engage in diverse protest strategies and performances that took shape during and through the process of mobilization. I have explained how such protest dynamics are shaped by the space of action. In this regard, this study views collective action as an experiential affect that emerges when participants of social movement come to see the experience of mobilization and spaces in which new protest tactics crystalize in a new light. Accordingly, this study demonstrates that protesters on the ground do not necessarily take into account the expectations regarding the outcomes of movements. Instead of resources, motivations, identities and sentiments prior to mobilization, I pay particular attention to the affective interactions between actors within the movement and turn the spotlight on the ways in which the space of protest action itself molds social and cultural ties among protesters into protest forms.

My research on the Istanbul protests of 2013 points to the fact that a new collective identity emerges according to the form, duration, composition and setting of the protest. This results in a peculiar affective dynamic that issues from the physical setting and the relationship of protestors to one another. It is in this setting and the proximity of groups and individuals that influence in emotional terms ‘political’ consciousness and dynamics of the movement itself. Yet it is precisely these subtler dimensions of interpersonal interaction and over-lapping micro-processes that are not easily discerned through the prism of political process theories or rational actor models. They may even be overlooked by cultural explanations given that for them emotive aspects of social protest are conceptualized in terms of commonly known categories such as moral shock, grievance and outrage. In order to reimage emotion beyond the conscious and deliberate, this study prioritizes the notion of protest actors thinking through bodies in
motion. By turning the Cartesian duality upside down, it reframes the emotive domain in social protest as a collective sensation that emerges as a response to common problematic that is in turn conditioned by the physical space in which actions unfold. This means social protest has its own unique emotional chemistry that is created by actors and the inter-subjectivity they develop in the site of collective action.

Such an inversion between bodies and minds, by prioritizing the former, is I believe, a useful and appropriate model for understanding many of the occupation-style protests that became common in the post-2000 political scene, witnessed in particular during the so-called “Arab Spring” of 2011. This new form of sustained mobilization that is composed of heterogeneous groups and individuals who take to street marches and typically occupy geographically and politically strategic areas of the city defies more traditional forms of sociological analysis. They have become, I argue, a peculiarly 21st “repertoire” of protest which distant origins may be traced in form and spirit to the 1871 uprising in Paris.

Here I intentionally borrow the concept of “repertoire” from Charles Tilly’s well know theories that tie modes of protest and their outcomes to particular forms of regimes. Interestingly enough Tilly, who died before Cairo’s Tahrir Square protests, never considered the “commune” as a particular type of protest repertoire. There are many explanations for this: he was more inclined to look for repetitive patterns of collective action in relationship to processes of state formation and industrialization. Moreover, his general framework does not encompass may cases of spontaneously mobilized community networks because they do not involve more homogenous groups or leave a discernable impact on state policies or regimes. For Tilly, repertoires must be observed over time at multiple locations in explicitly political configurations that involve confrontations and contestation between power-holders and claim-makers with clearly defined identities and interests.

Nonetheless, Tilly’s notion of repertoire is I believe particularly applicable to the urban occupation of Gezi Park in Istanbul in 2013, as well as earlier occupation-protests that occurred over 2011, such as the Tahrir Square protest in Cairo and the Zuccotto Park encampment in New York City: each was composed of different performances, the “commune repertoire” in Tilly’s terms is thus “loosely
scripted,” “contagious” and “spontaneous” form of protest. In effect these small-scale group performances give birth to innovations or modifications in the pool of possible protest repertoires. The affective mobilizing power of these repertoires at times result in a radical turn in rule, as they did temporarily in Egypt or have the potential for influencing the regime and political space over the longer term.

I found that many of my participants were not only aware of but also invoked the Paris Commune of 1871. Although a distant precedent, this first example of a “commune repertoire” shared certain structural features including its emergence in the context of a radically restructured urban space. After 2010, its re-invention roughly corresponds to the praxis of occupation of symbolically or strategically significant urban centers of global cities, which transformation is the result of unchecked neoliberal policies and economics on the metropolitan plan. As I have suggested in the introduction, a commune repertoire does not necessarily aim at making immediate changes in the regime in terms of social claims or political transformation; nor do its actors mobilize by considering the outcome of their own protest action. The process itself yields a type of utopian political space imagined beyond the sway of parties, the state and traditional politics in which a new, radical understanding of popular power emerges. The transformative potential of the commune repertoire resides in its unique form of socialization of all participants that, in turns, lays the groundwork for intersectional alliances. Many of the performances of a commune unfold on a symbolic stage and reflect an often unarticulated but deeply felt set of shared grievances and concerns but they also draw upon established performances of the groups and actors involved in this collective recital. In this regard, this study attempts to decode the cultural symbolism embedded in the performances of communards not just to understand biographic background of individual subjectivities or groups involved at Gezi Park, but also to see how these subjectivities and interactions among them change over time. Without qualitative research using ethnographic methods, it is not possible to understand either the political meaning or potential of this newly revived protest repertoire.
In Turkey, the Gezi Park protests of 2013 quickly spread beyond the point of origin to cities across the country and captured many of the problematic urban community-state relationships exhibited in Istanbul. Protestors and participants responded to a shrinking urban “commons” and a rapidly contracting public sphere under the brunt of the ruling AKP’s economic and political agenda. The hegemony that the AKP established over society and politics since the early 2000s involves an alliance, that dates back to the 1980s, of upper echelons of urban capitalists, sub-state municipal actors, global capital and a social base of classes who are invested in conservative and religiously-inflected values as well as reinvented cultural motifs and daily life practices.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that the participants in the Gezi Park commune proactively or consciously mobilized against the neoliberal-Islamic block, which began to exert pressure over alternative lifestyles and remold the symbolic/historical content of shared public spaces in line with their explicitly religious values. It is this urban transformation that had enveloped and matured a defensive multi-legged social reaction that culminated in the “affective singularity” at the uprising night of 27 May 2013 over the threat to the park’s trees. Based on the responses elicited from the communards, in the chapter “Getting There” I also explained the commune cannot be separated from earlier protests, particularly demonstrations against the demolition of the Emek Theatre (on Istiklal Avenue, in proximity to Gezi Park) as well the protests on International Labor Day that took place in 2011 and 2013 respectively. In the chapter, “Being There” Gezi communards pointed what was new in the commune: the horizontal and self-organizing nature of the park occupation as well as personal encounters between individual communards, groups and identity communities within and across the park. The highly symbolic and often artistic nature of protest performances that took place in the park, as described in this chapter as well as in the following chapter “Greening Everywhere,” helped to derail conventional stereotyped political, identitarian binaries: LGBTQ/straight, Turkish/Kurdish nationalists, secular/religious, Muslim/non-Muslim. Despite a few isolated incidents, the experience of the commune appeared to open up new channels of communication in a fragmented nation-state and portended a renewed sense of citizenship.
Participants viscerally reacted to the regime’s ersatz-Ottoman commercial use of shared urban spaces and the commandeering of public nature for private use. As a concrete and quotidian expression of political hegemony in the city, these policies produced a profound sense of displacement in the city and feelings of violation of common living and socialization areas, feelings shared by all the communards interviewed for this study regardless of their ideological, social and cultural background and orientations. But the Gezi Commune is not simply a physical space; it resides in the collective memories of protest and insurrection. The “Gezi spirit” still echoes through the memories of former participants. As I pointed out in the methodology chapter, mnemonic research methods only captures one snapshot of the subject that is being investigated in the stream of temporality. While I was conducting my field research, the afterglow of Gezi lingered on all the communards, including myself. Emotions, affects left from the struggle remained raw. In recounting their stories, communards prioritized their feelings and serendipitous encounters over the so-called serious matters of politics. Considering the rapidly changing developments in Turkey since the Gezi Commune, especially the so-called 2016 coup d’état attempt, it is understandable communards of Istanbul would probably remember and frame the Gezi Park events in a new light had the field research been conducted more recently. Without a doubt, future ethnographic studies will tell us new things about the place of the commune of Istanbul in the memories.

Yet there is evidence to suggest “Gezi spirit” persists despite the violent repression that ended the commune. In fact, in the immediate aftermath of the Gezi Commune, Istanbulites awoke to find a new set of performances that raised many questions about the commune’s afterlife. After fully clearing the relics of the commune off the square, the police, the party, and the municipal authorities paradoxically decided to drape a grand portrait of Atatürk along with two huge national flags over the façade of cultural center by the park, where only a few days before, posters, placards and flags of the commune had hug. One might well ask: why would a neoliberal Islamic government display an enormous portray of Atatürk who is the symbolic expression of and laic and étatist values that long repressed the Islamist lifestyles and beliefs of the current party in power? Perhaps it betrays the fact that despite its hegemony over political
institutions and coercive means, the so-called moderate Islamic government in Turkey had yet to build a new symbolic center of gravity as potent as the secularist Kemalist ideology it had disavowed.

In response to the state’s show of power, a last, lone communard staged his own protest at Taksim Square as rush hour traffic subsided. His individual protest performance captured the public imagination in very much the same way as the image of the unnamed tear-gassing of the woman in red had done at the beginning of the protest. In this case, it was a performance artist, a man Erdem Gündüz. He stared straight ahead at the grand portrait of Atatürk and the huge national flags solemnly waving from the old cultural center right. Curious news reporters approached him and asked what he intended to say. The volley of questions ricocheted off the Gündüz’s motionless, speechless body, the so-called “Standing Man”35 as he became known in live broadcasts from the site. Other Gezi supporters joined him in this silent protest that took the form of a collective recital that lasted for more than eight hours.

How should we read this mute protest? What was/were the unspoken message (s) in this final act of protest? Was the Standing Man turning to Atatürk, the Turkish leader who for many Turkish citizens still represents the nationalist general and political founder of the nation-state after World War I and the War of Independence, for succor? Or was he telling us that the Gezi Commune would continue to live in the memory as a type of new Turkey, a more inclusive nation-state? Rather than signaling, as many have suggested, that the 2013 Istanbul uprising was a secular backlash against an Islamicist government, this dissertation argues this repertoire involved performances that reclaimed the streets, urban commons, green areas and public spaces for all of its citizens, in the face of the neo-liberal policies transforming the city and state over the past two decades. Indeed, the Standing Man I would argue was not looking toward Atatürk. Rather he was looking through him, at the invisible legacy of the Gezi Commune. The commune as a repertoire lives on in the memories and political imaginaries of participants and observers; as a

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35 Even in Canada in 2013, in a CBC-2 radio broadcast, a music program called “The Signal,” the Standing Man in Istanbul became a topic of discussion. The program’s announcer attempted to interpret this action in terms of the lyrics of the song she was about to play. Hearing this Canadian radio broadcast during my very first week in the country was totally unexpected. It strengthened my resolve to write my dissertation on the Gezi Park protest movement.
repertoire it redefines and inspires the future of politics of liberation and its modalities. In the process, it sows the seeds of new citizenship and a revitalized urban community. Gezi lives!

Figure 7. The Standing Man

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