

FROM A LOCAL PROTEST TO AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT MASS
MOVEMENT:
A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF GEZI PARK PROTESTS

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CAHİDE ZEYNEP ENGİNAR

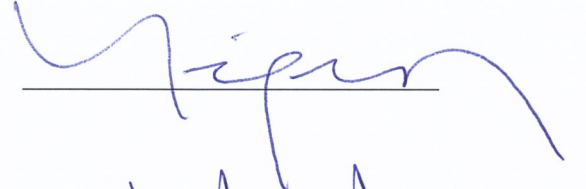
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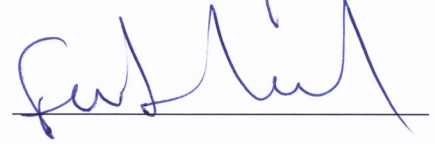
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Examining Committee Members:

Prof. Mesut Yeğen (Thesis Advisor)



Prof. Ferhat Kentel



Assist. Prof. Ebru Kayaalp



This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the Graduate School of Social Sciences of İstanbul Şehir University:

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First Name, Last name: Cahide Zeynep Enginar

Signature:

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ABSTRACT

FROM A LOCAL PROTEST TO AN ANTI-GOVERNMENT MASS MOVEMENT: A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF GEZI PARK PROTESTS

Enginar, Cahide Zeynep

MA, Department of Sociology

Supervisor: Prof. Mesut Yeğen

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This study aims to analyze the extent to which the Gezi Park protests achieved to become hegemonic. The protests commenced locally with a group of protesters who opposed to the project of reconstructing an old barrack which had existed in the Gezi Park in the past. However, the protests turned into an anti-government mass movement with an unprecedented heterogeneity thanks to the participation of groups with different demands and identities and they mobilized people for several weeks. This study uses discourse analytical theory of Laclau and Mouffe to analyze the Gezi Park protests as a political struggle. Based on the interviews conducted with the Gezi Park protesters from different identity groups, the study seeks to understand how so many diverse and opposing groups having different demands came together, how they managed to stay together in the park and what they proposed to transform social relations through their struggle. The study investigates the protesters' reasons for participation, the conflicts among different groups of protesters which undermined their unity, how these conflicts were managed, the protesters' problems with the government and the demands of the protesters. The study concludes that the Gezi Park protests displayed an antagonistic relation with the government. This, it is argued, made it possible for the protests to bring together a wide range of groups having different demands. However, despite its initial success in mobilizing people having different demands, this study argues, the protests failed to produce a collective identity out of its heterogeneous fabric and this was due to the fact that the act of naming the protests was not achieved. The protests, it is concluded, failed to initiate a hegemonic construction which would aim to change social relations in Turkey.

Keywords: Discourse analysis, Gezi Park, social movements, hegemony, antagonism



ÖZ

YEREL BİR PROTESTODAN HÜKÛMET KARŞITI KİTLESEL HAREKETE: GEZİ PARKI PROTESTOLARININ SÖYLEMSEL ANALİZİ

Enginar, Cahide Zeynep

MA, Sosyoloji Bölümü

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Mesut Yeğen

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Bu çalışma Gezi Parkı protestolarının ne ölçüde hegemonik olabildiğini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Protestolar Gezi Parkı'na Topçu Kışlası'nın yeniden inşa edilmesi projesine karşı çıkan bir grup eylemciyle başladı. Fakat Protestolar farklı kimlik ve taleplere sahip grupların katılımı sayesinde Türkiye tarihinde benzeri görülmemiş bir heterojenlik arz eden hükûmet karşıtı kitlesel bir harekete dönüştü ve haftalarca insanları sokağa döktü. Bu çalışma Gezi Parkı protestolarının siyasi bir mücadele olarak analizinde Laclau ve Mouffe tarafından geliştirilmiş olan söylem kuramını kullanmaktadır. Çalışma, Gezi Parkı protestolarına katılmış çeşitli gruplardan eylemcilerle gerçekleştirilen mülakatlar üzerinden karşıt grupların nasıl bir araya geldiklerini, haftalarca parkta birlikte kalmayı nasıl başardıklarını ve bu siyasi mücadeleleriyle sosyal ilişkileri dönüştürmek için ne önerdiklerini anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Bu amaçla eylemcilerin katılma sebepleri, farklı gruplar arasındaki eylemlerdeki birliği zayıflatacak çelişki ve çatışmalar, bu çelişkilerin nasıl idare edildiği, eylemcilerin AK Parti hükûmetiyle olan sorunları ve eylemcilerin talepleri araştırılmıştır. Çalışmada Gezi Parkı protestolarının hükûmetle antagonistik bir ilişki sergilediği sonucu çıkarılmıştır. Bu durumun protestoların farklı taleplere sahip çok sayıda grubu bir araya getirmesini mümkün kıldığı iddia edilmektedir. Fakat protestoların farklı kimlik ve taleplere sahip insanları harekete geçirmekteki başarısına rağmen, bu heterojen dokudan bir kolektif kimlik üretmeyi başaramadığı ve bunun protestoların adını koyma eyleminin gerçekleştirilememesine bağlı olduğu öne sürülmektedir. Protestoların Türkiye'deki sosyal ilişkileri değiştirmeyi amaçlayan bir hegemonik inşa başlatmakta başarısız olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Söylem analizi, Gezi Parkı, toplumsal hareketler, hegemonya, antagonizma



canım babama...



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality had been planning the Taksim Square Pedestrianization Project, which included building of tunnels in order to direct traffic into subterranean and to keep the square open to only pedestrians since 2007 (IBB, 2007). The pedestrianization project was widened in 2011 so as to reconstruct the Topcu Barrack¹ which once existed in today's Gezi Park.² The plan of reconstructing Topcu Barrack on Gezi Park was criticized and opposed since the very inception of the plan on the ground that this would destroy the green public area. The Istanbul Chamber of Architects and the Istanbul Chamber of Urban Planners, for instance, brought lawsuits against the municipality and the preservation board to prevent building of the old barrack (TMMOB - Chamber of Architects Istanbul Buyukkent Branch, n.d.). On 3 February 2012, a lot of academics from Architecture and Urban Planning departments of several universities applied to the Preservation Board for the registration of Gezi Park as cultural property to be protected (“Taksim Gezi Parki Korunsun!’ Basvurusu,” 2012). In the meantime, initiatives of Taksim Solidarity and Taksim Platform³ were established, both of which were aiming to protect Gezi Park.

¹ The 19th-century Ottoman Artillery Barrack. Topcu Barrack was built in 1806 during Selim III. After 1921, Topcu Barrack was used as stadium. The barrack was demolished in 1940 in order to turn the area into an urban park i.e. Gezi Park according to the plan of Henri Prost, a French planner who aimed at modernizing Istanbul (Birsal, 2011). Nearby Armenian cemetery was destroyed in 1939 and a part of it included in Gezi Park according to Prost's plan.

² On 9 February 2011, the first decision about Topcu Barrack, also referred as Taksim Barrack, was taken by the Istanbul's number II Cultural and Natural Heritage Preservation Board, a board of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (Istanbul Cultural and Natural Heritage Preservation Board II, 2011). The board registered the barrack as cultural property to be protected and decided reconstruction of the barrack in integration with urban design projects regarding Taksim Square. On 1 June 2011, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared that Topcu Barrack, which is demolished by single-party government of CHP (Republican People's Party) without considering its historical value, will be reconstructed (“Erdogan Istanbul, Izmir ve Diyarbakir projelerini acikladi,” 2011). On 16 September 2011, the Istanbul Municipal Council approved the change in master plan to reconstruct the barrack by unanimous vote (IBB, 2011). On 14 February 2012, the Municipality declared the new master plan regarding the Taksim Square Pedestrianization Project. On 23 August 2012 Kalyon Building got the tender of the project. (Ayata et al., 2013, p. 3) On 5 November 2012 first construction works started in Taksim Square (IBB, 2012).

³ Taksim Platform was established in early 2012, and its first press meeting was held on 17 January 2012 (“Taksim'i Yayalastirma(ma) Projesi,” 2012). Taksim Solidarity was established on 2 March 2012 upon call of the Chamber of Architects Istanbul Buyukkent Branch to protect Taksim square and Gezi Park (TMMOB - Chamber of Architects Istanbul Buyukkent Branch, 2012). It was an initiative with many components including Taksim Platform, political parties (CHP, BDP (Peace and Democracy Party), TKP (Communist Party of Turkey), Workers' Party), Istanbul's chambers of professionals

These two initiatives organized many activities including petitions, protests, marches and press briefings after they were established. This was followed by the inception of the Stand Up for Taksim Gezi Park campaign organized by Taksim Gezi Parki Dernegi⁴ in March 2013. The campaigners interviewed with celebrities, journalists and writers who opposed demolishing the Gezi Park and broadcasted their videos on Youtube (Taksim Gezi Parki Dernegi, 2013). On 13 April 2013, the campaigners organized a festival with shows and concerts in Gezi Park to protect the park (“Taksim Gezi icin Ayaga Kalktilar,” 2013).

However, construction vehicles entered Gezi Park on 27 May 2013 to cut down the trees in the park in order to start the reconstruction of the old barrack. A group of protesters with environmentalist concerns staged a sit-in and prevented the vehicles from operating. Afterwards, protesters set up tents and started guarding the park. On 28 May 2013, BDP (Peace and Democracy Party) deputy Sirri Sureyya Onder and CHP’s (Republican People’s Party) vice president Gursel Tekin visited the park and announced their support for the protests.

On the 28 of May, the police used tear gas to disperse the protesters in Gezi Park yet the sit-in continued and more protesters participated into the protests day by day (“Gezi Parki'nda direnise polis mudahalesi,” 2013). On 31 May 2013, the protest movement spreaded outside the Gezi Park. In many districts of Istanbul and in other cities in Turkey, protests and marches were organized to support the Gezi Park protests. Turkey witnessed one of the largest protest movements in its history that continued for months and challenged the political authority. During the protests many people injured and six people, including a police, were killed.⁵

First, the protesters were environmentalists and members of organizations that are against the building of Topcu Barrack in Gezi Park. Later, the protests went beyond a local protest and turned into a general political protest against government with the engagement of parliament members, academics, celebrities, students, ethnic groups, gender based activists, political groups and fans of football teams. Different and even opposite groups, which do not compromise in general, came together and stayed

(architects, city planners, doctors, and engineers), different labor unions, different environmentalist, feminist, and queer organizations, and many regional associations

⁴ This association is also referred as Taksim Gezi Parki Koruma ve Guzellestirme Dernegi. It was established in early 2013.

⁵ Ethem Sarisuluk, Mehmet Ayvalitas, Abdullah Comert, Ali Ismail Korkmaz, Mustafa Sari (Police officer), Berkin Elvan (Died on 11 March 2014 after 269 days in coma)

together in Gezi Park. In the end, the Gezi Park protests turned into a political carnival, i.e. a ‘new social movement’ with an unprecedented heterogeneous social composition.

1.1. The Gezi Park protests: a radical democratic imaginary?

The protests, starting with a small group with environmentalist concerns, have gone beyond a local protest against building up of the old barrack in Gezi Park and turned into massive anti-governmental protest. The groups that one would think would never come together actually came together in the Gezi Park. Kurds, Alevis, feminists, queer groups, socialists, liberals, Kemalist nationalists, football fans and anti-capitalist Muslims were all present in the protests. What is said to be impossible happened in Gezi Park. Groups that have very fundamental antagonisms stayed together such as the Kemalist nationalists and Kurdish movement members, feminists and football fans who use a sexist language, the bourgeois and the workers, liberals and socialists. Although there was a multiplicity of the groups in Gezi Park, it cannot be said that all the segments of the society joined the protest. Those who did not join the protests were mainly the AK Party supporters. Considering that the majority of the AK Party supporters are conservatives, they did not join the protests while people from almost all other sectors of society joined. It is true that the anti-capitalist Muslims joined the Gezi Park protests. However, they were far from representing the main body of conservatives in Turkey.

In the Gezi Park protests, in addition to plurality of the participants there was a plurality of the forms of participation. Some protesters joined the sit-in in Gezi Park and stayed in the park peacefully. There were organizations in the park and they set up their stands, distributed leaflets introducing themselves. Many of the protesters in the park were unorganized and they stayed in the park creating a solidarity with each other. In addition, there happened protests, sit-ins and marches outside the Gezi Park in many districts of Istanbul and in other cities. Some participated in the protests using social media and some others participated by banging pots and pans to make noise. On the other hand, there were also some protesters who were more aggressive and often clashed with the police and they marched towards Prime Minister’s Office in Dolmabahce with an aim to occupy it.

After Gezi Park was evacuated, another form of participation emerged in the forums that were organized in other parks of Istanbul and in other cities. Forums were

the places that participants discussed their ideas to map out a route to maintain the protests. Although Gezi Park was evacuated and closed to the protesters after twenty days, protests and different reactions continued in other places for months. The Gezi Park protests stayed in the country's agenda for months.

It is evident that the Gezi Park protests may be registered as one of the rare instances of recent Turkish political history. The protests started with a small group willing to protect Gezi Park but turned into massive movement challenging the political authority. That the Gezi Park protests included protesters having quite diverse and opposing political identities and that protesters developed some unseen forms of resistance also make the protests unprecedented.

This research aims to examine the Gezi Park protests to understand both its successes and failures. I will mainly try to search the hegemonic capacity of the protests to understand how so many diverse groups with such different backgrounds and aims came and stayed together for a couple of weeks on the streets of many cities in Turkey. I will also try explain how Gezi Park protests, which started as a local protest with some limited demands first turned to become an anti-government mass movement shaking the whole country with participation of millions and then disappeared in a few months.

As a theoretical approach, I benefit from social movement theories in general in their conceptualization of new forms of political identities as 'new social movement' and their discussions of different movements under this name. The concept of new social movement is used to denote struggles that are distinct from being working class oriented and revolutionary. (Cohen, 1985; Habermas, 1981; Touraine, 1985; Offe, 1985; Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). New social movements group together diverse range of struggles: peace, feminist, queer, ecological, anti-racist, ethnic, regional, student and anti-authoritarian movements. Instead of forming unions or political parties, new social movements form collective identity and targets "civil society" (Cohen, 1985; Offe, 1985; Touraine, 1985; Melucci, 1994). Despite new social movements appear outside the institutional politics, they take place in the political space and conduct a political struggle that demands from the authority. Specifically I preferred to use the theories of Laclau and Mouffe to understand the Gezi Park events. This is because, the discursive approach of Laclau and Mouffe avoids essentialism by analyzing the social field as a discourse.

According to Laclau and Mouffe, discourse is the terrain in which every 'object' is constituted (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 107). By the discourse they do not simply mean what is said or written but something which refers to all practices, institutions and social relations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 109). Discourse is a system of meaning, wherein elements are positioned differentially. It is argued that discourse is cannot be a sutured totality because all differences within the discourse are contingent and they all are subject to change (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 111). The final suture of any discourse is impossible, Laclau and Mouffe argue, because any and every discourse is characterized by an antagonism, that is, failure of difference (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 125). However antagonism threatens and affirms the existence of a discourse at the same time (Laclau, 1990, p. 27). It becomes a condition for the constitution of a discourse by showing exclusively what it is not. As such, antagonism, in Laclau and Mouffe's approach is that which both establishes the limits of a discourse by reference to something negative yet threatens the very existence of a discourse by showing its contingency.

Applying this logic to the social field, Laclau and Mouffe mainly deal with the ontology of the social and investigate the construction of meanings and identities (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). According to them, the social is constituted through political struggles. They analyze the social movements as political struggles that have capacity to constitute the social field and transform social relations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). In the social movements, groups with different unsatisfied demands get together and establish an equivalential link (Laclau, 2005, p. 93). In this aggregation of different groups, there is an internal antagonism that eliminates their differences by equating them and threatens their existence as a unity by showing their contingency, conflicts and contradictions. Frontiers of a social movement, they claim, are drawn according to what is included in the equivalential link i.e. 'we' and what is excluded i.e. 'other'. Laclau set forth that during the social movements the power is constructed as an antagonistic force (Laclau, 2005, p. 74). However, this negative formation of the frontier is not sufficient to change social relations. Hegemony can be achieved only if positive construction follows from the negativity. This positive construction corresponds to unifying of these groups around a name i.e. collective identity. It is only after this unification, new relations and differences among them is established and social relations can be transformed (Laclau, 1990).

Laclau and Mouffe consider social relations as power relations (Laclau, 1990) and they see an emancipatory possibility in the political struggles because they can transform existing social relations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Political struggles can aggregate diversity of democratic demands including that of the underdogs who do not have a representation in the existing power relations. They define and offer this as a radical democratic imaginary. However according to them political struggles are not always emancipatory, they might lead to fascist ways too. This depends on the hegemonic struggle given in the process and how the frontiers of 'we' and 'other' is defined (Mouffe, 2005).

In this regard, I will try to investigate what kind of political struggle is conducted during the Gezi Park protests. For each participant group, unsatisfied demands within the existing social relations in Turkey will be analyzed. How these separate and contrary groups stayed together in the park will be scrutinized. What were the protesters struggling against and how was the constitutive other of the protests was defined will be discussed. What were their problems with the government will be searched. Rhetorical mechanisms to mask the intrinsic antagonisms and to project them to government will be explored. The study will also evaluate hegemonic capacity of the Gezi Park protests. What kind of political subjectivity was formed during the protests and what it proposed to change in social fabric of Turkey will be searched. What was the meaning of the protests, what do the protesters offer to constitute the positivity of the social and to what extent it was successful will be asked. Whether the multiplicity in protests enrich the political space and have emancipatory potential and whether this is possible by exclusion of conservatives will be questioned.

1.2. Method

Discourse analytical approach deals with meaning and identities, therefore grasping and capturing the meaning is required for analysis. For this reason, observation of the protests or evaluating the results is not sufficient, rather an investigation into the protest discourse is necessary. In this study, I adopt a qualitative research method which includes conducting of in-depth interviews. I also refer to written sources, news and previously conducted surveys about the Gezi Park protests. The scope of this study is limited to the discourse of the protesters therefore only the persons who joined the protests have been interviewed. The semi-structured in-depth interviews are conducted with protesters. I assume the protest period started on 27 May

2013 and continued until the clearing of Gezi Park on 15 June 2013. I consider all the protests during the period in Gezi Park, in other parts of Istanbul and in other cities of Turkey, which should be assumed as a part of the Gezi Park events. People joined the protests by going to the park, by using social media or banging pots and pans to make noise. Therefore, among the interviewees there are ones who are from other cities and who joined by diverse methods. The interviews are conducted with protesters two years after the protests took place, between May 2015 and August 2015. In order to reflect the diversity of the protesters I interviewed protesters from different identity groups: Kemalist nationalists, professionals, anti-capitalist Muslims, leftists, Kurds, Alevis and gender based activists. By the interviews, I sought to understand the driving forces of the people to join the protests. Against what were they protesting? What were their problems with the government and what unsatisfied demands had they had during the rule of the government? What they aim by demonstrating and what they demand to establish through their struggle? Other than protests, I also investigate and analyze their ideas about Erdogan, the AK Party, conservatives, and Turkish politics in general.

1.3. Literature on Gezi Park protests

Hundreds of articles, books, surveys, commentaries, columns, theses and interviews were published on the Gezi Park events. Also, there are many visual materials such as magazines collecting photos of the protests, short films and documentaries. Many of the materials are descriptive and give the account of the course of the events or include the personal stories and experiences of the activists. There are also scholarly works analyzing the events with regards to media (Yilmaz, 2013; Altinoz, 2014; Balikci, 2014; Bulduruc, 2014; Taneri, 2014; Tanis, 2014; Gunaydin, 2015; Kabas, 2015; Karkin et. al., 2015; Kilic, 2015; Nuran, 2015; Ozel and Deniz, 2015), architecture (Gul et. al, 2014), urbanization (Gokay and Sahin, 2013; Gole, 2013; Sezer, 2013; Gogus, 2014; Ilter, 2014; Dorroll, 2015; Koyuncu 2015), art (Firat, 2014; Tas and Tas, 2014), culture (Gurel, 2015), psychology (Kaptanoglu, 2013), gender (Bedir and Bedir, 2013; Batur, 2014; Canli and Umul, 2015), environment and international relations (Oguzlu, 2013; Erdogan, 2014). There are some works that analyze the social and political dimensions. Here, I will evaluate these scholarly works and show where my thesis is situated and how it differs from the existing studies.

Starting with the surveys, there is one work by Konda (2013), which was conducted in Gezi Park with 4411 protesters on 6-7 June 2013 during the protests (Konda, 2013). The survey concludes that the average age of the participants are younger and the average education level of them are higher compared to average of Turkey. 45 percent of the protesters never joined a demonstration before. It is understood from the survey that most of the protesters were CHP supporters (41 %), and only a few of them were the AK Party supporters (0.3 %). 49.1 percent of the participant protesters said that they joined the protests because of the police violence and 19 percent said that they joined the protests because of cutting of trees. 14.2 percent came to the park after hearing Prime Minister Erdogan's statements, according to the survey. The survey also found that most of the participants (34.1 %) protested for their liberties. Evaluating this survey, it can be seen that it is limited to the protesters in Gezi Park and it provides important demographic information about the protesters in the park. However, for the reasons and aims for protesting, the alternatives seem to be imposed. For example, alternatives of answer to the question 'Why you are in the park?' are: for liberties, demand for rights, for peace and democracy and against dictatorship. Another research was published by SAMER (Strategical Research Center) which was conducted in December 2013 in Istanbul and Izmir with 3944 participants (Yoruk, 2014a). The survey asserts that there was over 16 percent participation in Gezi protests in Istanbul, corresponding to almost 1.5 million protesters. The research also argues that class is not an explanatory variable for the Gezi protesters. Because rates of different income groups in Gezi was close to that of general population. The survey also gives information regarding participation of Kurds into the Gezi protests. The rates of Kurds to total number of Gezi protesters, the research found out, was very close to the rate of Kurdish population to total population of Istanbul and Izmir. It is also understood that the Kurds who joined the Gezi protests were aligned themselves with the left and they were less pious and younger than the general population. In a different article which is based on the same SAMER research, Yoruk and Yuksel conclude that for the Gezi protesters rather they main triggers were cultural and political not economical (Yoruk and Yuksel, 2014). Another survey based research about the Gezi protests is made by Bilgic and Kafkasli (Bilgic and Kafkasli, 2013). They conducted the survey online, on Twitter, and they conclude that the protesters were young people protesting not only for the trees but also for their freedom and they demanded deliberative democracy. However, the

reliability of the survey seems rather weak. Because it was conducted online, and it was not mentioned how they overcome the restrictive conditions such as the repeating participation and the socio-cultural similarity of the respondents. Further, there is contextual manipulation and the alternatives are imposed upon respondents. For example, there is one question, 'How do you define yourself?' with 28 choices, and the choice "I am libertarian" gets the most of the votes. This method is applied for all questions regarding the reason of participation, demands and expectations.

The Making of a Protest Movement in Turkey #occupygezi (2014) edited by Umut Ozkirimli is an example to the books written in the field. It mainly consists of a collection of articles published in jadaliyya.com. The foreword is written by Judith Butler. She emphasizes that today many states present securitarianism as a necessity for liberal democracy but securitarianism can make a state authoritarian as in the example of Turkey. According to her, Gezi is an experience of direct democracy that questioned the legitimacy of the state. In the Introduction, Ozkirimli writes that the Gezi protests were an opposition to the authoritarian tendencies of the AKP. He states they aim, not to analyze the dynamics of Gezi, but to name, direct and give a goal to this struggle. He explains that the spirit of Gezi is not a uniform identity but something that is continuously negotiated, tested and renewed. In the book, there are articles claiming that the government is institutionalizing neoliberalism (Igsiz, 2014), the AKP government relies upon the Gulenist idea of democratic authoritarianism (Tugal, 2014) and Gezi is a new horizontal politics that rejects hierarchy and organization (Gambetti, 2014). Evaluating the book in general, most of the writers use post-structuralist theories and they deal with Gezi as something that has the potential of democracy and freedom against an authoritarian government. Most of the analysis focus on the government. Their evaluate Gezi as something that is leaderless, unorganized, horizontal and heterogeneous and dignify all these aspects of the protests rather than identifying the meaning of the protests. Another example is *Direnisi Dusunmek* (2013) edited by Volkan Celebi and Ahmet Soysal. The work consists of articles dealing with Gezi as something revolutionary that turns what previously was conceived as impossible into possible (Celebi and Soysal, 2013). The book includes letters by Jean-Luc Nancy and Alain Badiou during the protests. Nancy argues that Gezi is a departure towards the 'people'. Badiou states Gezi is an uprising including the students and intellectual but it should also include workers, officers and housewives in order to be

against capitalism. Letters of both are points to a potential in Gezi rather than analyzing the protests.

Continuing with the articles, there are works that try to determine what the reasons of the protests were and what previous events lead to the Gezi Park protests (Celikkol, 2014; Yoruk, 2014b; Abbas, 2013). According to Celikkol, burning of the tents was shocking and unexpected act from the government and explained it as a dislocating act. Abbas says that protesters were opposing AK Party's policy on neoliberalism, privatization, urbanization and authoritarianism. He adds that AK Party mishandled the process and it escalated the events. There are works that dignifies Gezi because there was a plurality and it does not represented by a universal identity and always in state of becoming. (Karayali and Yaka, 2014; Eken, 2014; Ors and Turan, 2015) There is also a work by the Institute of Strategic Thinking that claims Gezi turned into an attempt for coup d'etat however analyses does not depend on a research data but columns and articles in the media (SDE, 2013).

The existing studies on the Gezi protests mostly focuses on the reasons of the protests and the conditions that lead the emergence of the protests. They mostly analyze the protests as a reaction to "authoritarian" or "neoliberal policies" of the AK Party government. However, they do not investigate what change the protests offer in social relations. This study mainly will focus on what the Gezi protests offer in its multiplicity and will be grounded by a fieldwork.

CHAPTER II

DISCOURSE THEORY

In this chapter I will give an account of discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe by highlighting its relation with social movements. I will begin by examining foundations of their theory. Subsequently, I will investigate roots of their approach in Marxism, Foucault, Derrida and Lacan. Lastly, I will investigate their main concepts which are antagonism, subject, hegemony and the political.

The discourse analytical theory of Laclau and Mouffe brings a new and different approach to the social. By discourse, they do not only refer to what is said or written but also refer to practices, institutions and social relations (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 109). They analyze the social as a discursive field a system of meaning wherein objects are positioned differentially and relationally. No discourse is stable, closed totality; yet established relations among elements of a discourse are always subject to change. Their main focus is on the constitution of the social as a discursive space and they assert that it is constituted through political struggles. In other words, in political struggles, they see a potential to transform social relations.

For a discourse, limits are necessary in order to construct it as a totality and to differentiate it from others. What is beyond the limit is not something objective and positive but something negative: antagonism. Limit of a discourse shows itself as a negative reference to the antagonism. Antagonism shows the impossibility of final suture for a discourse and threatens the existence of a discourse (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 125). Similarly, the limit of the social is given within the social as something subverting itself, not allowing it to constitute a full presence (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 127). On the other hand, considering that all meanings and identities are relational, antagonism is needed for true construction of a discourse by showing exclusively what it is not. Some categories are excluded from a certain discourse to form the antagonism (Laclau, 1996a, p. 39). Through the antagonism, it becomes possible to distinguish a totality with regards to something external to it (Laclau, 1990, p. 21). Appealing to Zizek, this implicit negativity for a certain social formation is masked and projected to some figures that embody it (Zizek, 1989). Therefore,

antagonism becomes a constitutive outside that both threatens and affirms the existence of a discourse simultaneously.

In dealing with the constitution of the social, the central category of Laclau and Mouffe is hegemony. This is the relation that a particular difference assumes the representation of an incommensurable totality i.e. discourse, society (Laclau, 2005a, p. 70). Hegemony is the situation through which the management of the positivity of the social is achieved (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 189). The political struggles are given in order to establish hegemony.

2.1. Foundations

The discourse analytical theory of Laclau and Mouffe rejects essentialist universalism. Essentialism refers to the presumption that the social is organized around certain principles (Sayyid and Zac, 1998). Laclau and Mouffe refuse the idea of underlying principles and assert that social reality is constructed through meanings and identities.

Because Laclau and Mouffe analyze the social through discourse, some criticized them for being idealist (Geras, 1987; Woodiwis, 1990). However, they refuse the perception of discourse as mental and they affirm the material character of every discursive structure. Discourse is not purely linguistic phenomena but it is constituted by the articulation that “pierce the entire material density of the multifarious institutions, rituals and practices” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 109).

According to theory of Laclau and Mouffe, rhetorical mechanisms assumed to constitute the anatomy of the social world (Laclau, 2005a, p. 110). Their adoption of discursivity allows the interpenetration of the categories, which have been excluded before, which can explain social relations, “Synonymy, metonymy, metaphor are not forms of thought that add a second sense to a primary, constitutive literality of social relations; instead, they are part of the primary terrain itself in which the social is constituted” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 110).

2.2. Roots

In this section I will investigate the roots of the discourse analytical theory of Laclau and Mouffe that resides in Marxist tradition, Derridean deconstruction and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

2.2.1. Post Marxism

In this section I will investigate the relation of Laclau and Mouffe with Marxist tradition. This will help to understand how they develop their theories regarding new social movements and new collective identities. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, Laclau and Mouffe do a deconstruction of Marxist literature by evaluating their theories and the practices. They reject assumption of social division around class and assert that there are many social antagonisms belonging to contemporary societies (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). According to Laclau and Mouffe, socialism gives a centrality to working class, which does not provide meaningful framework to explain the social phenomena, especially after the emergence of new social movements.

Starting with contributions of Gramsci, Laclau and Mouffe takes the concept of *hegemony* from him. Gramsci undertook a critique of economism in Marxism to develop this concept. He asserted that bourgeois hegemony is based on voluntary consent and in order to create a new hegemony there must be a struggle over not only economic forces but also political, ideological and cultural forces (Gramsci, 1971). However, according to Laclau and Mouffe, there are essentialist approaches in Gramsci's thought since he assumes a single unifying principle for hegemonic formation and he has a naturalist conception of the economic space (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 69). Therefore, Laclau and Mouffe radicalize the concept of hegemony by asserting the plurality of political spaces and existence of antagonisms.

Althusser formulates society as a 'complex structured whole' and asserts *overdetermination* of identity that assert fixing of identity is not possible and it is always determined by economy, politics, ideology and culture (Althusser, 1969). He uses the notion of overdetermination appealing to Freud and opens Marxism to psychoanalysis. However, Althusser retains the idea of determination in the last instance by the economy and this is criticized by Laclau and Mouffe (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 98). Laclau and Mouffe radicalize his idea of overdetermination by abandoning the priority given to economy and they also develop their theories further by applying to psychoanalysis.

2.2.2. Derrida

Some aspects of discourse analytical theory of Laclau and Mouffe resides in Derridean deconstruction. Their approaches of discursivity, anti-essentialism,

constitutive other, impossibility of the closure of the social, impossibility of fixing system of meanings and precarious character of every identity has its roots in Derrida.

Derrida influenced by Saussure (1974) who asserted in his theory of signification that language is a system of signification which is formed differentially and relationally. In addition, there is no necessary but purely arbitrary relation between the signifier and the signified (Saussure, 1974). However, Saussure ends up being structuralist and concludes that all differences constitute a linguistic structure, a closed totality. Derrida also says system of meaning is formed differentially and relationally, but he disapproves Saussure's idea of closed totality (Derrida, 1967). He asserts that any system and any meaning is incomplete, there are other possibilities which are postponed. In constitution of meaning, he defines his concept of *differance*, which is combination of difference and deferral, and refers meaning is the result of play of differences and there are other possibilities that are suppressed and postponed. Derrida concludes that system of meanings has open, precarious character and they need an externality to be constructed: constitutive other. It is only by constitutive other, partial closure of the system becomes possible.

Laclau and Mouffe follows Derrida and assert that "any discursive formation is never a fully sutured totality, it always has an open and contingent character" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 106). They approve that every social identity has an open character:

There is no social identity fully protected from a discursive exterior that deforms it and prevents it becoming fully sutured. Both the identities and the relations lose their necessary character. As a systematic structural ensemble, the relations are unable to absorb the identities; but as the identities are purely relational, this is but another way of saying that there is no identity which can be fully constituted. (...)The incomplete character of every totality necessarily leads us to abandon, as a terrain of analysis, the premise of 'society' as a sutured and self-defined totality. 'Society' is not a valid object of discourse (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 110-111).

Laclau and Mouffe also apply Derrida's ideas to the social and political field. After assuming open character of the social, they investigate constitution of the social field and assert antagonism as constitutive other. They also say that because the social has an open character it is always subject to subversion, change and transform. This is where the political struggles come into play, impossibility of closure of the social

becomes a possibility of new projects aiming reconstruction of social identities (Laclau, 1990).

2.2.3. Lacanian psychoanalysis

Discursive theory of Laclau and Mouffe have its roots in psychoanalytical approach of Lacan. They also appeal to works of contemporary Lacanian theorists Zizek and Copjec. Laclau says psychoanalysis do not only deal with ontology of the subject however describes the general field of ontology, then uses it to the field of social ontology (Laclau, 2005, p. 114). Lacanian real, nodal point, aspiration to fullness and *objet petit a* are important tools in Laclau and Mouffe's approach.

Lacan categorizes three order to describe psychoanalytical phenomena, symbolic order, imaginary order and the real. The symbolic order refers to set of differential signifiers, while the real emerges as what "resists symbolization absolutely" (Lacan, 1988, p. 66). The real is the impossible kernel that cannot be integrated into the symbolic order (Lacan, 1977). This Lacanian real is translated as antagonism in Laclau and Mouffe's approach. The social field is founded on notion of antagonism, original 'trauma' that resists symbolic integration and prevents closure of the social field (Zizek, 1989, p. 5-6).

In Lacanian psychoanalysis there are privileged points that quilt the signifying chain i.e. *nodal points*. Nodal points is "the signifier stops the otherwise endless movement of the signification" (Lacan, 1977). Nodal points produces the necessary illusion of a fixed meaning. Laclau and Mouffe adopts this concept and assert that nodal points fix the flow of differences and construct a center in constitution of a discourse:

Even in order to differ, to subvert meaning, there has to be a meaning. If the social does not manage to fix itself in the intelligible and instituted forms of a society, the social only exists, however, as an effort to construct that impossible object. Any discourse is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a center. We will call the privileged discursive points of this partial fixation, *nodal points*. (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 112).

Laclau uses nodal point as interchangeably with *objet petit a* (Laclau, 2005, p. 103). In Lacanian theory, *objet petit a* is the partial object to which aspiration to the fullness i.e. *jouissance* is transferred. Aspiration to the fullness refers to mythical

wholeness of the mother/child dyad⁶ which is always aspired and to which a *jouissance* i.e. enjoyment is attached (Copjec, 2002, p. 36). Any unfulfilled demand, any privation, any lack both dislocates and evokes that fullness. *Jouissance* to the fullness is not lost after separating mother because traces of it transferred in *objet petit a* (Copjec, 2002). Copjec says about the nature of this relation that *objet petit a* becomes itself a totality and source of enjoyment (Copjec, 2002). In this relation, *objet petit a* does not act as a representative of the inaccessible Thing but what Lacan defined as sublimation occurs: the elevation of an ordinary object to the dignity of the Thing (Copjec, 2002). Therefore, *objet petit a* is substituted for the Thing. The logic of the *objet petit a* is identical with logic of hegemony in discourse theory, as Laclau puts:

The mythical wholeness of the mother/child dyad corresponds to the unachieved fullness evoked — as its opposite — by the dislocations brought about by the unfulfilled demands. The aspiration to that fullness or wholeness does not, however, simply disappear; it is transferred to partial objects which are the objects of the drives. In political terms, that is exactly what I have called a hegemonic relation: a certain particularity which assumes the role of an impossible universality. Because the partial character of these objects does not result from a particular story but is inherent in the very structure of signification, Lacan's *objet petit a* is the key element in a social ontology. The whole is always going to be embodied by a part. In terms of our analysis: there is no universality which is not a hegemonic one (Laclau, 2005a, p. 115).

As Žižek asserts, *objet petit a* embodying the whole and substituting the Thing is only possible retroactive effect of naming (Žižek, 1989). Similarly in the discursive theory, identities are grounded in the performative dimension of naming. What gives the unity of a discursive formation is the name of the nodal point i.e. *objet petit a* (Laclau, 2005a).

Laclau asserts that this transition, naming of *objet petit a* that embodies the whole, portrays a 'radical investment'. It is an investment because it belongs to the order of *affect* as in being in love, or feeling hatred and it constitutes itself only through the differential cathexes of a signifying chain (2005a, p. 110). Investment in the name of *objet petit a* is a process in which the object is sublimated and idealized. "Investment in the object of love means that the narcissistic libido overflows on to the object. This can take various forms or show various degrees, their common

⁶ This has its roots in Lacanian primordial duality. "Psychoanalysis rewrites this mythical state as the primordial mother - child dyad, which supposedly contained all things and every happiness and to which the subject strives throughout life to return"(Copjec, 2002, p. 32).

denominator being the *idealization* of the object, which thus becomes immune to criticism.” (2005a, p. 55)

In Laclau and Mouffe’s theory constitution of the social is possible only through the hegemonic logic, a part embodying the whole. During political struggles groups with unsatisfied demands get together and there established an equivalential chain among these demands. This chain of equivalence is signified by a demand that gains centrality i.e. popular demand. This popular demand functions as Lacanian master signifier, signifier without signified that represents the whole signifying chain. Laclau refers to this popular demand, which both represents and constitutes an equivalential chain, as *empty signifier*. The empty signifier “means that there is a place, within the system of signification, which is constitutively irrepresentable; in that sense it remains empty, but this is an emptiness which I can signify because we are dealing with a void *within* signification” (2005a, p. 105). Empty signifier is a void within signification because it is what constitutes that system as a totality, it embodies that mythical fullness in its own particularity. During popular struggles, naming this empty signifier is crucial that collective identities are constituted by the performative act of naming.

2.3. Main concepts

In this part I will investigate main concepts of Laclau and Mouffe which are antagonism, subject, hegemony and priority of the political.

2.3.1. Antagonism

Antagonism is a key concept in Laclau and Mouffe’s analysis of the social. Antagonism, Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 128-129) argues, establishes itself as the limit of the social. It is a discursive form and ‘experience’ of vanity of deferring the ‘transcendental signifieds’ (society et. al.), the final impossibility of any stable difference and of any ‘objectivity’ (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 122). Insofar as there is antagonism, no object can be full presence for itself; antagonism is a symbol of object’s non-being (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 125). If language is a system of differences, antagonism is a failure of difference (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 125). On the other hand, antagonism is also required for the constitution of an object, identity or discourse. Because all identity is relational, antagonism becomes a condition of existence and a constitutive other for an identity by showing exclusively what it is not

(Laclau, 1990). It becomes possible to distinguish a totality with regards to something external to it i.e. antagonism (Laclau, 1990, p. 21).

There are variety of possible antagonisms in the social, many of them in opposition to one another. The chains of equivalence will vary radically according to which antagonism is involved (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 131).

In order to understand the logic of antagonism, I will also make use of Zizek's fantasy. He assumes Laclau and Mouffe's notion of antagonism and take a step further to explain how antagonism is masked. He wrote:

The notion of social fantasy is therefore a necessary counterpart to the concept of antagonism: fantasy is precisely the way the antagonistic fissure is masked. In other words, fantasy is a means for an ideology to take its own failure into account in advance. The thesis of Laclau and Mouffe that 'Society doesn't exist', that the Social is always an inconsistent field structured around a constitutive impossibility, traversed by a central 'antagonism' - this thesis implies that every process of identification conferring on us a fixed socio-symbolic identity is ultimately doomed to fail. The function of ideological fantasy is to mask this inconsistency, the fact that 'Society doesn't exist', and thus to compensate us for the failed identification. (Zizek, 1989, p. 142).

He asserts that certain figures, in their positive presence, becomes representative of this impossibility (Zizek, 1989, p. 142). In this thesis by appealing to Lacanian distinction of real and symbolic, I will refer Laclau and Mouffe's antagonism as real antagonism and Zizek's fantasy as symbolic antagonism.

2.3.2. Subject

According to discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe, the subject is neither the origin of social relations, nor a rational unified agent (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 115). The subject is penetrated by overdetermination (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 121).

In his early writings, Laclau assumed subject as a complete entity that fills the gaps within the undecidable structure with one's decisions. After Zizek's critique and contributions, Laclau modified this conception of subject and approved there is a split implicit in the subject. Zizek states on subject and identity:

[I]t is not the external enemy who is preventing me from achieving identity with myself, but every identity is already in itself blocked, marked by an impossibility, and the external enemy is simply the small piece, the rest of reality upon which we "project" or "externalize" this intrinsic, immanent impossibility' (Zizek, 2005, p. 252).

Later, Laclau wrote, “The negativity of the other which is preventing me from achieving my full identity with myself is just an externalization of my own auto-negativity, of my self-hindering” (Laclau, 1990, p. 252-253). The antagonistic force in this way embodies the blockage of the full constitution of an identity.

2.3.3. Hegemony

Hegemony is the other central concept of Laclau and Mouffe. They take this concept from Gramsci and radicalize it. In their theory, hegemony is the political process of constituting empty signifier of a community. It is the operation in which “one difference -without ceasing to be a *particular* difference- assumes the representation of an incommensurable totality” (Laclau, 2005a, p. 70). Hegemony is basically metonymical relationship that “its effects always emerge from a surplus of meaning which results from an operation of displacement” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 141).

Hegemonic struggles articulate particular demands of different groups to create chains of equivalence against antagonism (Laclau and Mouffe, 2005). Laclau refers to these particular demands as floating signifiers whose meaning is ‘suspended’ in a sense that their meaning is indeterminate between different equivalential frontiers (Laclau, 2005a, p. 131). Hegemony can only be achieved when the whole equivalential chain is represented by a particular demand which functions as an empty signifier. Laclau calls this particular demand which embodies that totality as popular demand. During popular struggles, naming the popular demand is crucial that collective identities are constituted by this performative act of naming.

2.3.4. The priority of the political

In Laclau and Mouffe’s theory there is an analytical distinction between the social and the political. They approach the *social* as a system of difference and “sedimented forms of objectivity” (Laclau, 1990: 33) which “never manages to constitute itself as an objective order” (1990, p. 18) and “an infinitude not reducible to any underlying unitary principle” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 139). They mean “an ensemble of empirically given agents” by a given social formation (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 143). The social is a non-sutured totality and has the character of openness, contingency, precariousness, relationality, differentiability, and plurality. “The social only exists as a partial effort for constructing society - that is, an objective

and closed system of differences”(Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 125). Beyond the social there is not a positive differentiation but something negative: antagonism (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 143). Antagonism constitutes the limit of the social and “final impossibility of any stable difference and any 'objectivity' (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 125). Antagonism is the case that “all the differential determinations of a pole have dissolved through their negative-equivalential reference to the other pole, each one of them shows exclusively what it is not”. (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 128). Antagonism both threatens and affirms the existence of something simultaneously (Laclau, 1990, p. 19). “The moment of antagonism where the undecidable nature of the alternatives and their resolution through power relations becomes fully visible constitutes the field of the ‘*political*’” (Laclau, 1990, p. 35). Laclau and Mouffe conceive of the political “as having the status of an ontology of the social” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. xiv). The possibility of the political stems from the impossibility of society which can only represent itself through the production of empty signifiers as the signifiers of an absent totality (Laclau, 1996a, p. 44). Political aims at the constitution of the social and creation of social relations in a field of antagonisms. In their approach, the political have the ethical task of “transformation of a social relation which constructs a subject in a relationship of subordination” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 153). Therefore, the political is both subversive of the existing order and constitutive of a new order. This distance between the ontic contents of politics and their ability to represent radical fullness is always present, but it becomes particularly visible in critical periods when radical shifts and conversions in the public mood are quite common (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 132).

Laclau and Mouffe consider that the first of political problems is the production of ‘frontier effects’, the referential framework of separation and “the constitution of the very identities which will have to confront one another antagonistically” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 134). The production of frontier effects is necessary in contemporary societies because there is no given or evident frontiers⁷ and division of the social into two antagonistic camps (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 134). After the

⁷ “In the present industrial societies, the very proliferation of widely differing points of rupture, the precarious character of all social identity, lead also to a blurring of the frontiers. In consequence, the constructed character of the demarcating lines is made more evident by the greater instability of the latter, and the displacement of the frontiers and internal divisions of the social become more radical. It is in this field and from this perspective that the neo-conservative project acquires all its hegemonic dimensions.” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 171).

democratic revolution⁸ and complexity and institutionalization due to mature capitalism there are “constant processes of displacement of the limits constructing social division”, multiplicity of antagonisms and “the essential instability of political spaces” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 151). Therefore, the political is aimed at the constitution of frontiers. Frontiers are constituted at a different level than simple referential entity of the agents i.e. the social (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 144). What makes them coincide is practice of articulation (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 144). Articulation is the practice of establishing a relationship among elements that modifies their identity as a result (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 105). Articulation implies that the identity of the elements is “never positive and closed in itself but is constituted as transition, relation and difference” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 95). The connection between elements is not fixed but there are articulations. Articulation is an attempt to a partial fixation, which also causes the dislocation of existing connections. Therefore, articulation challenges the existing established discourse and opens up the possibility of the constitution of a new one. Articulation corresponds to dialectic between differential and equivalential logics (Laclau, 2005a, p. 231). Differential logic refers to the relational and differential position of an element within a discursive formation. In other words, logic of difference refers to conceptual determination of an element considering that it can only be derived by its relation to other elements i.e. play of differences. On the other hand, equivalential logic is what constitutes the frontiers of a discursive formation by establishing an equivalential chain. The equivalential chain articulates different elements by their common reference to something external i.e. antagonism (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 127). The chain of equivalence is held together and fixated by nodal points and the chain is represented by an empty signifier. The logic of equivalence articulates elements in their reference to common enemies and it causes the elements to lose their positive differential determinations. However, in order to be equivalent, elements must be different, “otherwise, there would be a simple identity” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 128). Articulation always works within

⁸ “This decisive mutation in the political imaginary of Western societies took place two hundred years ago and can be defined in these terms: the logic of equivalence was transformed into the fundamental instrument of production of the social . It is to designate this mutation that, taking an expression from de Tocqueville, we shall speak of 'democratic revolution' . With this we shall designate the end of a society of a hierarchic and inegalitarian type, ruled by a theological-political logic in which the social order had its foundation in divine will.” (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 154-155).

this tension between differential and equivalential logics. What articulatory practices can mostly achieve is 'hegemonic universality'.

Laclau and Mouffe's central category of political analysis is hegemony. Hegemony is a political relation that a certain particularity assumes the role of an impossible universality. Laclau and Mouffe radicalize Gramsci's concept of hegemony by asserting the plurality of political spaces and antagonisms. According to them political struggles aim at and can only be successful by establishing hegemony.

Laclau uses 'demand' as a basic unit of social analysis in his analysis of political struggles. Demands have a nature that challenges a certain established order. He asserts that demand is in a peculiar relationship with the order: being both inside and outside of it (Laclau, 2005a). In a historical terrain where there is a proliferation of antagonisms and points of rupture, unsatisfied demands increase and political forms of social reaggregation are required. The emergence of the equivalential chain of unsatisfied demands forms the internal frontier of political spectrum (Laclau, 2005a, p. 74). "In an equivalential relation, demands share nothing positive, just the fact that they all remain unfulfilled. So there is a specific negativity which is inherent to the equivalential link" (Laclau, 2005a, p. 96). The articulation of these unsatisfied demands constitute a broader social subjectivity: representation by popular demands. Popular demands are what signify and unify the equivalential chain of unsatisfied demands. This is the point where condensation around a popular identity is started and the 'people' is constituted as a potential historical actor (Laclau, 2005a, p. 74). An internal antagonistic frontier separating the 'people' from power is formed. The popular demand represents fullness, which is constitutively absent (Laclau, 2005a, p. 96) and becomes the signifier of a wider universality (Laclau, 2005a, p. 95) i.e. populist identity. When the political mobilization reaches a higher level, the unification of these popular demands and turning them into a stable system of signification is required (Laclau, 2005a, p. 74). This is the point that hegemonic struggle starts. Hegemony refers to the universalization of a particular demand, in other words the naming of a popular demand and the carrying out a 'political' struggle to establish hegemony. When the universalization of a demand occurs, particularism is not eliminated: "as in all hegemonic formations, popular identities are always the points of tension/negotiation between universality and particularity" (Laclau, 2005a, p. 95). There is an internal split in both popular demands and particular demands in the chain. The popular demand while remaining particular also becomes the signifier of a

universality. Other demands of the equivalential chain are split between the particularism of their own demands and the popular signification imparted by their inscription within the chain (Laclau, 2005a, p. 95). In their theory, difference and equivalence are both antagonistic and constitutive of one another; there is tension and reflection between them (Laclau, 2005a, p. 120).

Laclau analyzes popular struggles as a hegemonic political logic that aims at the constitution of collective identities i.e. the 'people'. The emergence of the 'people' requires the passage from isolated, heterogeneous demands to a 'global' demand. This is achieved through the discursive formation of the equivalential chain and political frontiers against power as an antagonistic force (Laclau, 2005a, p. 110). The 'global' demand or popular demand is an empty signifier that articulates an ensemble of equivalential demands and constitutes the people. The name of the empty signifier "does not express the unity of the group, but becomes its ground" (Laclau, 2005a, p. 231). Despite the construction of hegemony that starts from negativity, it can only be successful and consolidated "to the extent that it succeeds in constituting the positivity of the social" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 189). 'People' as a hegemonic subject presents two faces: rupture with an existing order and 'ordering' function (Laclau, 1990, p. 122). Therefore, more than the equivalential displacement, a set of proposals for the positive organization of the social is necessary (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 189). "If the demands ...are presented purely as negative demands subversive of a certain order without being linked to any viable project for the reconstruction of specific areas of society their capacity to act hegemonically will be excluded from the outset" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 189).

With their theory of hegemony, Laclau and Mouffe do not only analyze the social and the political but also offer an ethico-political project of radical democracy. Unlike Ranciere, Laclau thinks the possibility of politics does not always mean emancipatory politics. It might lead to fascist ways too. Because of this, considering the system of alternatives is important. Laclau's choice from the alternatives is "redefining the project of the Left in terms of a radicalization of democracy" (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. xv). Mouffe defines their project as:

For us the radicalization of democracy requires the transformation of the existing power structures and the construction of a new hegemony. In our view, the building of a new hegemony implies the creation of a 'chain of equivalence' among the diversity of democratic struggles, old and new, in order to form a 'collective will', a 'we' of the radical democratic forces.

This can be done only by the determination of a 'they', the adversary that has to be defeated in order to make the new hegemony possible (Mouffe, 2005, p. 53).



CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The data to study a social movement by virtue of discourse theory may best be collected through a qualitative research since the main focus of the discourse theory is constitution of meaning and identities. Accordingly, I tried to analyze the Gezi protests mainly by means of the empirical data I gathered through in-depth interviews. Needless to say that I also examined the literature on the Gezi Park protests. As a matter of fact, I conducted my interviews once I finished reading the written material, which includes the academic literature on Gezi movement and the news on the media. I also investigated the documents and announcements in the websites of the Taksim Solidarity, Taksim Platform, and Chamber of Architects Istanbul Buyukkent Branch. To these must be added the fact I made some participant observation during Gezi Park protests in 2013 and in its first anniversary.

The scope of this study is limited to the discourse of the protesters, therefore only the persons who joined the protests were interviewed. Sixteen interviews with Gezi Park protesters were carried out. Fifteen interviews were conducted between 20 May 2015 and 19 June 2015 and the last one was conducted on 10 August 2015 in Istanbul. As I mentioned earlier, I consider anyone who joined the protests by going to Gezi Park or other squares in other cities, by participating into the demonstrations on the streets of Istanbul and other cities, by using social media, or by banging pots and pans as protesters. Among the interviewees two protesters are from other cities. In fact both of them came to Gezi Park during the last days before the evacuation of the park. Some of the interviewees spent the day and night in Gezi Park, some visited after work every day, and some visited the park several times and were more active on social media. One person lost his eye during police intervention and spent the rest of the days in the hospital. One interviewee abandoned the protests while it continued. In fact, all of the interviewees, in a way, were in the Gezi Park between the dates where the protests started and ended: 27 May 2013- 15 June 2013.

For the interviewees, not the most active, professional and educated members of organizations, but ordinary members were selected, since not all Gezi Park protesters were organized. A survey, conducted in the park with 4411 protesters during

the protests, shows that 45 percent of the protesters engaged in a public demonstration for the first time (Konda, 2013, p. 16). Additionally, 79 percent of the protesters were not members of a political party or a non-governmental organization (Konda, 2013, p. 13). The survey only asks for membership, and this does not mean that they are not related to or have sympathy for any organization or party. Therefore, interviews used in this research were mostly conducted with those who were not active members of organizations or who had sympathy for some organizations. Several representatives of organizations were also interviewed.

As criteria of the distribution, the diversity of the identities is given priority. Considering the studies, the news and my personal observation, I made seven categories: Kemalist nationalists, professionals, different Muslim groups, leftists, Alevis, Kurds, and gender based activists (LGBT and feminists). The interviews include a minimum of two persons in each group and there are also intersections. Among Kemalist nationalists, there are interviewees who have sympathy for TGB (Youth Union of Turkey) and TKP (Communist Party of Turkey). Among the professionals, there are interviewees from academia, social media specialists and organizers. For this group I also will be using announcements and press releases of the Taksim Solidarity and Taksim Platform and existing interviews carried out with their founding members. Among the Muslim groups, there are interviewees from anti-capitalist Muslims and from the Gulen community. Among the leftists, there are interviewees that are close to the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Partisi, ESP), Federation of Democratic Peoples (Demokratik Halklar Federasyonu, DHF), Mucadele Birliđi and the Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (Devrimci Sosyalist Isci Partisi, DSIP). For interviewing the group of Alevis, I went to the Gazi neighborhood and interviewed persons who are Kurdish Alevis. Among the Kurds, in addition to the Kurdish Alevis, there is an interviewee who has sympathy for the Labour Party (Emek Partisi, EMEP) and the Peace and Democracy Party (Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP). Among the gender-based activists, there are interviewees that have affinity to Istanbul Feminist Collective (Istanbul Feminist Kolektif, IFK), Socialist Feminist Collective (Sosyalist Feminist Kolektif, SFK), LGBT Blok, and KAOS GL. These were the groups that I could reach and at the same time limitations of the data of this study.

I reached the interviewees by different methods: asking acquaintances, mailing organizations, asking the interviewees' connections, going to the anniversary of the

protests, and going to Gazi neighborhood. I had difficulty in reaching Kemalist nationalists namely CHP youth organization members and TGB supporters. In the anniversary of Gezi, in Abbasaga Park, several women in Ilerici Kadinlar stand, refused to give interview and said they did not have time.

After the people accepted to talk, I asked for a proper time and place from them and meetings were arranged. For me, conducting the interviews were easy and enjoyable. I did not have difficulties in communication. Most of the participants were willing to speak and some of the interviews lasted for hours. It should be noted that I did the interviews as a Muslim women wearing headscarf. My appearance might had an influence on the attitude of the interviewees.

Some interviews were conducted in cafes, some in universities, and some in parks and some in the places of the interviewees. I carried out three interviews in the Gazi neighborhood where there is an Alevi population and leftist tendencies are predominant. During the Gezi Park protests, protests and clashes with the police within the neighborhood had happened. In the course of the evacuation of the park, groups departed from Gazi walking towards Taksim in order to support the protesters and clash with the police. I went to this neighborhood and asked people on the streets for interviews. All people I encountered were the participants in the protests. One young man at the entrance of one central avenue rejected to talk to me saying he does not know me and I might be a spy. He also added that by studying the Gezi Park protests, I am doing a good thing but he could not trust me. Another group in the DHF office said they could talk later because on that day they were busy with the discharging of their friends who had been arrested during the May Day protests. I interviewed one young man in a tent named Gazi Halk Meclisi on the central avenue. Another man said the tent was their police station where they solve their own problems. The existence of the tent gives clues as to the distrust towards the police and state, and marks the tension that can be traced back to the Gazi Events of 1995. I conducted another interview in the HDP promotion office. I also talked with a woman who works voluntarily in an independent library and cultural center.

Interviews were conducted with the protesters with the guarantee that their names and any information disclosing their identities would not be used. Therefore, I will be using pseudonyms in the study. All of the interviews were conducted one-by-one and were tape-recorded with the permission of the interviewees. The length of the

interviews are one hour in average that included minimum of half hour and maximum three hours. All interviews were transcribed for the analysis.

I prepared for the questions before the meetings and I did not use any notes during the meetings. In the interviews, I asked the respondents to tell their stories of joining the Gezi Park protests such as when they joined the protests, how they protested, until when they continued, if they ever think about quitting. I also asked why they engaged in the protests, what their demands were, what were they opposing to, whom were they opposing to, what they expected from the protests and what they thought about the consequences.

3.1. An introduction of the interviewees

I will start by introducing the protesters I interviewed. The introduction will be done by giving an account of the socio-demographic characteristics, which includes information about gender, age, birthplace, level of education and occupation. Then, the affinities of the protesters with the organizations will be mentioned. Lastly, information regarding when they joined the protests, until when they continued to protest and how they protested will also be given.

Umut is 28 years old; he is a man who was born in Kirikkale. He is doing his doctorate and is a research assistant in Political Sciences. He is close to the Gulen community and has sympathy for the Revolutionary Socialist Workers Party (Devrimci Sosyalist Isci Partisi, DSIP). He joined the protests on the 1 June. He had been in Gezi Park several times and he also used social media to support the protests until the end.

Berke is 25 years old, he is gay, and he was born in Adana. He is a student in Political Sciences and also a LGBTI activist; he has affinities with the LGBT Blok and KAOS GL. He comes from an Alevi family. Berke joined the protests in Kugulu Park in Ankara in 31 May. He says he already knew the struggle of the Taksim Solidarity against the urban transformation plan a year prior to the Gezi Park protests, since he was in contact with his organized activist LGBTI friends who live in Taksim Tarlabasi. They were affected by the urban transformation plan and became active components of the Taksim Solidarity. Berke is not only a LGBTI activist but also he joins many protests against racism, nuclear plants, and the privatization of ports etc. On the same day, he joined the protest of Kurdish mothers, the remembrance of Metin Lokumcu, and then, he passed on to Kugulu Park and was surprised by the crowd. For the protests

in Ankara he says there was no unity, and different groups wanted to gather in different places. He was angry because of this, and decided to go to Istanbul. He had been in Gezi Park for three days before the evacuation of the park.

Efe is 27 years old, and a Turkish socialist from Izmir. He is a master's student in Cinema and Television Studies. He has affinity to the Federation of Democratic Peoples (Demokratik Halklar Federasyonu, DHF). His parents are also socialists. He had been following the Taksim Solidarity's protests and concerts since 2012. He joined the protests after he saw the news on the Internet on 27 May that some trees in Gezi Park were cut down. He stayed in the park until the evacuation.

Ayşe is 39 years old, and she is a feminist who has sympathy for the Socialist Feminist Collective (Sosyalist Feminist Kolektif, SFK). She works as a teacher of mathematics and she has a master's degree. She is from Konya and she comes from a conservative family. She had environmentalist friends joining the protests and she had been supporting the protests on twitter. She went to the park after the police burned the tents and sprayed pepper gas towards the faces of the people. After several day, she left the protests because she only wanted to protect Gezi Park while the protesters wanted to overthrow the government.

Çağdaş is 25 years old, and he is a student in Mechanical Engineering. He is also a Kemalist nationalist who is close to the Youth Union of Turkey (Turkiye Gençlik Birliği, TGB). He is from Kayseri. He went to Gezi Park on 1 June and visited frequently until the evacuation of the park.

Ali is 19 years old, he is a Kurdish Alevi man who is unemployed and quitted high school. He is from Sivas and he lives in the Gazi neighborhood.

Onur is 55 years old, and he is a retired man. He is a Kurdish Alevi from Sivas and he lives in the Gazi neighborhood. He graduated from high school. He was a volunteer activist for the Peoples' Democratic Party (Halkların Demokratik Partisi, HDP)'s election campaign. He went to Gezi Park regularly until the evacuation.

Çağla is 26 years old; she is a student in the Music Teaching department. She is a revolutionist and is close to the Mucadele Birliği. She is also a Kurdish Alevi from Sivas living in the Gazi neighborhood. She works in an independent library in the Gazi neighborhood voluntarily and spends some of her time with children by reading books. When the protests started, she was in Sivas with her family and she followed all the events on the Internet. Later, she came to Istanbul to join the protests on 14 June, the last day before the evacuation.

Gizem is 25 years old, she is a feminist and a social worker in Istanbul Feminist Collective (Istanbul Feminist Kolektif, IFK). She lives in Burgazada. She graduated from university, however, during the Gezi Park protests she was an undergraduate. Gizem says she had already been protesting before the Gezi Park protests because she had problems with the interventions in her living space, in the streets, in the city and in her way of living. She joined the Gezi protests in the first week of June with her organization. They stayed in the park until evacuation and their work continued with the forums.

Aydin is 32 years old; he is an insurance agent from Izmir. He is a university graduate. He is a socialist and Kemalist nationalist close to the Communist Party of Turkey (Turkiye Komunist Partisi, TKP). Aydin had been following the activities of the Taksim Solidarity. He went to Gezi Park after work every day since the protests began, and he stayed in the park until the evacuation.

Emre is 38 years old; he is a worker and an anti-capitalist Muslim. He is from Mersin and is graduated from high school. Emre visited Gezi Park on 28 May, after someone in the anti-capitalist Muslims' weekly meetings told him what was happening. Later he, with his group, joined the protests permanently. They set up their tent in the park and they hung a banner stating, "All property belongs to Allah, be gone capital!"⁹ They also established a masjid. He and his group stayed in Gezi Park until the evacuation.

Selin is 32 years old, and she is a social media expert and an anti-capitalist Muslim. She was born in Istanbul and has an associate degree in Green Housing. She was one of the organizers of the Abbasaga Forum. She introduces herself by stating she had known the organization structures in Turkey but had stayed away from them until the Gezi protests. Because she was behaving individually. She says, "We went to Gezi, one by one, as independent individuals who don't know each other. Then, we returned united."¹⁰ When the protests started she was writing about it on social media. On 31 May 2013, joined the protests and stayed in the park until the evacuation of the park. After the evacuation, her 'resistance' continued in the Abbasaga Park.

Mehmet is 25 years old and he is an accountant. He is from Istanbul and he has an associate degree in Logistics. He became an anarchist in the period following his participation to the Gezi Park protests. He was a nationalist who was close to the

⁹ Mülk Allah'ındır, sermaye defol!

¹⁰ Biz birbirimizi tanımayan bağımsızlar olarak gittik, bir bir gittik. Birleşerek döndük.

Nationalist Movement Party (Milliyetçi Hareket Partisi, MHP) when he joined the Gezi protests. He stayed in the park until the evacuation and later, he attended the forums.

Baris a 28 years old socialist from Malatya, graduated from marketing college and is unemployed. He spends most of his time with political activities of the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Partisi, ESP). He had been following the Gezi Park protests on the media and he joined the park after several days. On 30 May, during a harsh police intervention, one of the tear gas canisters hit his face, damaged his nerves and caused him to lose his eye. Then, the days in the hospital started for him and he followed the protests from his bed.

Eren is from Bursa and he is 25 years old. He is a Law student. His family belongs to the Gulen community and they raised him in that way too. After coming to Istanbul for university, he started to dislike the Gulen community and eventually he broke from them. He has sympathy for anti-capitalist Muslims.

Talha is 28 years old, and he is a master's student in Cultural Studies. He is from Adiyaman and he is Kurdish. During the Gezi Park protests he had sympathy and was close to the Labor Party (Emek Partisi, EMEP) and the Peace and Democracy Party (Baris ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP).

CHAPTER IV

A DISCURSIVE ANALYSIS OF THE GEZI PARK EVENTS

In this chapter, I will mainly analyze the hegemonic capacity of the Gezi Park protests based on my interviews. In the first section, I will start by examining protesters' reasons for participating in the Gezi Park protests. In the second section, I will investigate fundamental antagonisms among different groups that undermine any possible unity of the protesters. In the third section, I will scrutinize how the antagonistic frontier is defined during the Gezi Park protests and how the internal antagonisms were masked. In the fourth section, I will analyze the problems of the protesters with the government. In the last section, I will evaluate demands of the protesters and analyze if a name could be given to the Gezi Park protests.

4.1. Why to take part in Gezi

For the protesters' reasons for participation in the Gezi Park protests, I identified four categories on the basis of interviews. Protesters joined the Gezi Park protests to oppose the police violence, the privatization of public areas, destruction of green areas and the ruling government. There are also those who joined the protests out of curiosity or following their friends without knowing what the protests were about. From the discourse analytical perspective of Laclau and Mouffe, times of crisis that temporality of the existing structure prevails and the structure fails to constitute meaning and identities is called moments of dislocation (1990, 47). However, because dislocation corresponds to displacement of an order in general and no such situation is occurred throughout the Gezi Park protests. Therefore, I prefer to refer the motives of protesters to join the protests as disappointment. All these aforementioned points of disappointment played an important role in articulating different groups in the Gezi protest movement.

It is understood from my interviews that the police violence was the most disappointing factor for the Gezi Park protesters and it became a turning point for many protesters' decision to join the protests. The burning of the tents of protesters, the intense use of tear gas and pepper spraying of the woman in red by the police have been symbols of the police violence. Baris (Socialist, 28) decided to join the protests

because the police intervened in the peaceful protests. After the tents were burned, he and his group arranged a press statement in Gezi Park with “an anti-fascist sensitivity against the police attack”.¹¹ In a similar vein, Ayse (Feminist, 39) decided to join the protests after the police burned the tents and sprayed pepper gas towards the faces of the people. Cagdas (Kemalist nationalist, 25) was following the protests on social media and he decided to join the protests in Gezi Park after he saw disturbing scenes of the police attacking people on Twitter. Selin (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 32) also followed the protests on social media and supported them with her tweets. One day, while she was returning home she noticed an intense tear gas odor in Kabatas coming from Taksim. Then, she then decided to join the protests. “The violence performed by the police on us”, she says, “was what pulled most of us to the area”.¹² Mehmet (Ex-nationalist, 25) would despise the protesters at the beginning and he would tell them: “What’s up? Are you making a socialist revolution?”¹³ Later, however, he decided to join the protests because of the police violence. He was deeply affected by the picture of the woman in red, who became the symbol of Gezi because she did not run from the police. He states that he told to himself if she stayed and was not afraid, he himself would also resist the police.

The interviews reveal that the second important disappointment for the protesters was to oppose the plan to build a shopping center on a public field which was used as a green area. Those protesters had an anti-capitalist motive in opposing the privatization. For example, Umut (Academician, 28) states that he got angry when Erdogan announced that despite the otherwise decision of the court the government would build the shopping center. It seems that Umut was fed up with having over a hundred shopping centers in Istanbul while there are not many big malls in city centers in Europe. So, he was against building a shopping center in the last green area in the middle of Istanbul. Similarly, Gizem (Socialist Feminist, 25) also joined the Gezi protests in order to oppose the privatization of public spaces and Aydin (Kemalist nationalist, 32) opposed the urban transformation and the privatization plans implemented by the government. Emre (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 38) also joined the protests in order to oppose the turning of a public area used by everyone into an area used for profit. Talha (Kurd, 28) decided to join the protests because he was annoyed

¹¹ Polis saldırısına karşı antifaşist bir duyarlılık

¹² Polisin bize uyguladığı şiddet birçoğumuzu alana çeken şeydir.

¹³ Zamanında çok gülüyordum. N’oluyor? Sosyalist devrim mi yapıyorsunuz!?

with the aim of building of a shopping center on a public field and the state violence coming into play in favor of private companies.

Government's disregard of protesters' demand to protect Gezi Park have been the third important motive for the protesters to join the protests. The toppling of trees by the construction vehicles caused a disappointment for the protesters. Efe (Socialist, 27), for instance, states that Taksim is his living space and when he saw the news on the Internet that some trees in the Gezi Park were cut down, he joined the protests to defend his living space. Onur (Kurdish Alevi, 55) states that he decided to join the protests after the unfortunate statements of the government that ignore people by declaring that they would destroy Gezi Park.

The interviews I made indicate that the fourth important motive for the protesters to join the protests was the opposition to Erdogan and the government. For example Berke (Queer, Alevi, 25) joined Gezi protests to oppose the conservatism brought about by the government. In his own words: "The most important mission of the Gezi resistance was the search for a scream against new conservatism."¹⁴ Cagdas (Kemalist nationalist, 25), who explained his participation into the protests in terms opposing the police violence, states that he also wanted to say "Enough!" against the existing policies of the government which "came to the point of strangling the people"¹⁵. Selin (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 32) also maintains that besides the police violence she was saying "enough" to the AK Party governance because she defends "as a Muslim individual, what AKP does is not Muslimhood"¹⁶. When the protests started, Cagla (Socialist, 26) was in Sivas and she was following the events on the Internet to understand if they promised a revolution. According to her, at the beginning, most of the leftist organizations either reformist or opportunist or revolutionist considered this protest as a short term 'Saturday protest'. But later she noticed her own organization, Mucadele Birliđi, summoned into a revolt. They demanded on their website the abolishment of the government and its replacement with a temporary revolutionary government. "They were saying very further things"¹⁷ that she got excited and thought a revolution would arrive. Then, she decided to go to Istanbul to be a part of the revolution. Because her family would not allow her to leave,

¹⁴ Gezi direnişinin en önemli misyonlarından biri o yeni muhafazakârlığa karşı bir çıđlık arayışı olması.

¹⁵ İnsanların boğazını sıkma noktasına gelmesi

¹⁶ Ben Müslüman bir birey olarak AKP'nin yaptığının Müslümanlık olmadığını savunuyorum.

¹⁷ Kitlelere o kadar ileri şeyler söylüyorlardı ki acayip heyecanlandım.

she sold her instrument, a Yamaha transverse flute, for 500 liras, although it was worthy of 2000 liras in order to join the Gezi Park protests.

Lastly, there are the protesters who did not know what had been happening, and who joined the protests just by following their friends such as Ali (Alevi, 19) or out of curiosity such as Eren (Ex-Gülenist, 25). Regarding his reason of participation to the Gezi protests Eren says, “I, frankly speaking, wondered what was happening there. I didn’t go for the purpose of demonstration. I left from Kadikoy and went to the Gezi Park as if I went for a promenade.”¹⁸ After seeing the harsh police intervention he decided to stay. In fact, he was not expecting any police attack because there was nothing to intervene in; everyone was drunk and singing etc. Then he continued to stay to see what would happen and he wondered how violent the interventions can become. He says that it was worse than he could imagine. He explains his decision to stay as follows: “I had private reasons for being there. I was in a difficult situation. My relationship had ended and I was feeling empty. I went there because of that. But, of course the attitude of the government, disregarding people is also one reason of me being there.”¹⁹ Ali (Alevi), on the other hand, joined the protests with his friends and the second day they were taken under custody. He said:

Behind bars, we had been already talking with friends and illuminating our consciousness that they are doing all these things there, it is wrong for us to wait around here. Then we went there with enthusiasm. Then we clashed with the police. Namely, it was like a kind of entertainment. It might also be troublesome. A lot of people got shot. Our friends got shot, too. Later the death of Berkin Elvan happened.²⁰

About why he joined the protests he stated:

The policies of the government are against all those people, against their sitting. I am against that bars and *pavyons* (saloons) on the Taksim road. There is no such thing that everybody would be annoyed with [the cutting of] trees, one can also be annoyed with the *pavyons*. They go there, drink alcohol and go out screaming and yelling. People are uncomfortable with

¹⁸ Ben açıkçası merak ettim ne oluyordur orada diye. Herhangi bir eylem amacıyla gitmedim. Kadıköy’den çıktım normal gezmeye gider gibi gittim Gezi Parkı’na.

¹⁹ Orada bulunmamın özel sebepleri vardı. Kendim kişisel olarak zor bir durumdaydım. Bir ilişkim bitmişti, kendimi boşlukta hissediyordum. O sebeple oraya gittim. Ama tabi iktidarın halkı yok sayan tutumu da benim orada bulunma sebebim.

²⁰ Gözaltından çıktıktan sonra tekrar eyleme katılmak için biz can atıyorduk. Zaten arkadaşlarla içerde konuşuyorduk, onlar orada onları yapıyorlar bunları yapıyorlar, bizim burada olmamız yanlış diye düşünerek bilincimizi aydınlatarak daha çok hevesle geldik oraya. Devam etmeye başladık. Polisle çatıştık. Yani bir nevi eğlence gibi bir şey diyebilirim sana. Zor da olabiliyordu. Birçok insan vuruldu. Bizim de arkadaşlarımız vuruldu. Sonra Berkin Elvan’ın ölmesi zaten denk geldi.

this, too. There cannot be a single reason. For me, what I consider as opponent is only them. It is a kind of corruption.²¹

An overall assessment of all the interviews I made indicates that the police violence was the most important disappointment that motivated people to join the protests. The burning of the tents and the woman in red facing tear gas seem to have been important symbols of the police violence. Some protesters followed the events on social media and decided to participate into demonstrations after seeing the violent acts of the police. The opposition to the privatization of public areas to build a shopping center was the second important motive. The attempt to destroy the park had been another disappointment. Some protesters joined the protests after seeing the toppling of trees by the construction vehicles. Some people participated in the protests to oppose to the government or for a possible revolution. Some protesters, like Eren, were in Gezi Park out of curiosity. It should also be noted that there are also people, like Ali, who did not know what had been happening and were there just by coincidence. He only joined the crowd and did not have any idea about the protests. It can even be said his ideas were imposed on him by his friends. Having not much idea about why he joined the protests, he was decisive until the point he was taken into custody for fighting against the police.

4.2. Real antagonism in Gezi

As explained in detail in the theory chapter, I follow the view that the final suture of any discourse/totality is impossible. Because the relations and differences among elements that constitute a discourse are contingent and always subject to change. Therefore there is no fully constituted discourse and existence of a discourse is always threatened. The experiences that prevents any discourse from fully constituting itself is called antagonism. Antagonism threatens the existence of a discourse by showing its contingencies and undermining its unity (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985, p. 125). I will refer to this internal antagonism as real antagonism, alluding to Lacanian real. During social movements a struggle is given to constitute a unity out of all different participant groups. Wide range of groups having different demands

²¹ Hükümetin politikaları o kadar insana karşı, o kadar halkın oturmasına karşı. Mesela ben o Taksim yolundaki barlara, pavyonlara karşıyım. Millet sadece ağaçtan rahatsız olacak diye bir şey yok. Pavyondan da rahatsız olur. Gidiyorlar orada içki içiyorlar, çıkıyorlar bağıryorlar, çağırıyorlar. İnsanlar bundan da rahatsız oluyor. Tek bir nedeni olamaz yani. Benim tek karşı gördüğüm onlar. Bir nevi yozlaşma diyebilirim yani.

participated in the Gezi Park protests. New relations are established among these groups that articulated them within 'Gezi community'. However, there are also conflicts and contradictions among different groups that undermine any possible unity throughout the protests.

In this section, I will analyze the particular situations that threaten existence of the Gezi community. Based on my fieldwork, conflicts among Kurds and Turkish nationalists, anti-capitalist Muslims and secularists, socialists and Kemalist nationalists, queer activists and sexists, football fans and feminists had been significant sources of real antagonism in the Gezi Park protests. They were disturbed by the participation of each other and there happened disputes, fights and harassments in the encounter of these groups.

Gender based activists in the park, namely feminist and queer groups were disturbed by certain protestors who display sexist, homophobic and transphobic attitudes during the Gezi Park protests. Such attitudes raised difficulties for gender based activists to identify themselves with the Gezi community and they started their own struggle to remain articulated. To start with an example from Berke (Queer, Alevi, 25), he thinks that not all the protestors were libertarian but among the protestors there were "sexist idiot people"²². Protesting in Kugulupark, he was disturbed by fans of Ankaragucu football club who chanted homophobic, transphobic, prostitute-phobic slogans. Together with LGBT groups in the park they reacted with their slogans that claim being a person from the LGBT or being a sex worker is not something of which to be ashamed. Ayse (Feminist, 39) and Efe (Socialist, 27) also felt discomfort with sexist slogans in the Gezi Park. Ayse maintains that the sexist language against Erdogan and his family bothered her a lot in the park. Gizem (Socialist Feminist, 25) also mentions a similar discomfort with a lot of sexist language use, she adds "We did a workshop called 'Resist with insistence not by swearing' in the feminist tent in Gezi. We did not approve a resistance by cursing the wife of then Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan."²³ Gizem and her group covered the swear words on the walls with spray paint. She also says despite all these efforts they were not successful because the resistance was dominated by the slogans of football fans. For the sexual harassment

²² Cinsiyetçi hödük bir sürü insan

²³ Hatta biz bir küfür atölyesi, "küfürle değil inatla diren" diye bir atölye yaptık o zaman Gezi'de, feminist çadırı vardı orada yaptık. O zaman Başbakan olan Tayyip Erdoğan'ın eşine küfür etmek üzerinden direnmeyi tabi ki biz doğru bulmuyorduk.

incidents she says they self-organized in Gezi and volunteers patrolled during the night. Baris (Socialist, 28) states that there were groups who did not want the LGBT members in the Gezi Park and he struggled against them.

Continuing with other sources of internal antagonism, some protesters seemed disturbed with the participation of Kemalist nationalists in the Gezi Park protests. Based on my interviews, these disturbances mostly stemmed from Kemalist nationalists' efforts to dominate the protests and their attitude towards Kurds and anti-capitalist Muslims. For instance, Talha (28), as a Kurd, was so much disturbed by the Kemalist nationalists' domination that he thought to abandon the protests. When he went to the park, he expected to see heterogeneity that includes people from different sections who supports the environmental movement against violence. However what he saw was different:

When I went there for the first time in the evening, it reminded me of the Republican Meetings.²⁴ We saw this from the slogans. Secondly, it was [like a Republican Meeting] because the carried Turkish flags and Atatürk flags were directly rendered into a merely political message. Because there is such a situation. The people who faced the violence at 5 o'clock in the morning on 30 May were the people who are not organized or are not involved in a political party so much or if involved, they are those who do not bring this to the forefront. While this was the case, seeing all this in the evening that is the very beginning the protests disturbed me. And in that night I asked myself this question. What am I in here for? I asked this question to myself time after time.²⁵

Talha returned to the park after seeing the news of the injured protesters and stayed in the park but he always had a hesitation. During the *halays*²⁶ of Kurds in Gezi, he was upset to encounter many times that a Kemalist nationalist was coming and shouting: "You [Kurds] have no business here"²⁷. Efe (Socialist, 27) also utters his discomfort with the Kemalist nationalists assaulting *halays*:

²⁴ Republican Meetings were series of rallies that took place in Turkey in 2007 in support of secularism after the ruling AKP presented a presidential candidate whose wife has a headscarf.

²⁵ Fakat gittiğimde ilk akşam, bana biraz Cumhuriyet Mitingini anımsatır gibi oldu. Ki sloganlardan bunu gördük. İkincisi, taşınan o Türk bayraklarının, Atatürk bayraklarının doğrudan bir tamamen politik mesaj haline getirilmesinden kaynaklıydı bu durum. Çünkü şöyle bir durum var ortada. O 30 Mayıs saat 5te bu şiddete maruz kalanları örgütlü olmayan ya da doğrudan herhangi bir siyasi bir partiye çok da fazla dâhil olmayan, dâhil olsa da bunu çok fazla ön plana atmayan insanlar olarak biliyorum ben. Böyle bir durum olunca o gece, o eylemlerin ilk başladığı gece bunları görmem bende fazlasıyla bir rahatsızlık uyandırdı. Ve o gece kendi kendime şu soruyu da sordum açıkçası. Benim burada ne işim var. Bu soruyu kendime defalarca sordum.

²⁶ Folk dance style in southeastern Anatolia in which dancers form a circle or a line while holding each other.

²⁷ Sizin burada işiniz yok

Our hevals [Kurdish expression which means friends] are performing the *halay*. Then Kemalist nationalists come and tease. Do you know how many fights we, the Turkish Left, intervened in and broke up? All right friends you [Kemalist nationalists] go away now and you [Kurds] continue the *halay*. But, at some places where we could not prevent fights, several kids from TGB stabbed several Kurds. Serious wounds occurred, on calves or such. And really there is self-abnegation of Patriotic Youth²⁸, they didn't get into any incident. In fact they broke the world record by performing the *halay* since they came.²⁹

Baris (Socialist, 28) was also disturbed by the attitudes of the Kemalist nationalists in the park. He says there were attempts to trigger disputes claiming “There are no Kurds”³⁰. He says it was the Kemalist nationalists who said ‘we are the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal’ and what they wanted to express with their claim was “we wish there were no Kurds”³¹. In a similar vein, Ayse (Feminist, 39) was bothered by the reactions of Kemalist nationalists towards Kurds. Cagla (Socialist, 26) was also disturbed by Kemalist nationalists forcing to remove Abdullah Ocalan flags in Gezi Park. It can be inferred from the interviews that Kemalist nationalists’ exclusionary attitude against Kurds not only prevented Kurds from identifying themselves with the Gezi community as an ideal totality but also bothered anti-nationalist protesters.

Some protesters seemed annoyed by Kemalist nationalists’ attempts to dominate the protests. For instance Ayse (Feminist, 39) says: “What had disturbed me too much since the first day and that increased more and made me say ‘why am I here’ is: the soldiers of Mustafa Kemal. It felt like the air of a Republican Meeting. And they were too many.”³²

She thinks despite her friends and many others went Gezi Park as independent libertarians, Kemalist nationalists were the most represented group because they were organized. Similarly Efe (Socialist, 27) and Gizem (Socialist Feminist, 25), seemed disturbed by Kemalist nationalists’ hanging of Turkish and TGB flags everywhere.

²⁸ YDG-H (Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement) is a youth organization founded by PKK (Kurdistan Workers’ Party) sympathizers in early 2013.

²⁹ Hevaller yoldaşlar halay çekiyor. İşte ulusalçılar geliyor sataşiyor tamam mı. Kaç defa kavga ayırdık biliyor musun. Türk solu olarak aralarına girip. Haydi arkadaş siz gidin, siz de halaya devam edin. Ki engel olamadığımız bazı yerlerde TGBli birkaç tane çocuk birkaç tane Kürdü bıçakladı zaten. Ciddi bıçaklanmalar yaşandı, baldırlardan falan. Orada gerçekten Yurtsever Gençliğin çok özverisi var, hiçbir olaya karışmadılar. Adamlar gerçekten dünya rekoru kırdılar, geldikleri andan itibaren halay çekiyorlar.

³⁰ Burada Kürtler yok

³¹ Keşke Kürtler olmasa

³² Ama beni çok rahatsız eden şey ilk günden itibaren hatta sonrasında çok daha fazla rahatsız edip niye buradayım dedirten şey: Mustafa Kemal’in askerleriydi. Bana bir Cumhuriyet Mitingi havası verdi. Ve onlar çok fazlaydı.

Other protesters who had difficulty in articulating within the Gezi community due to Kemalist nationalists' reaction were anti-capitalist Muslims and women wearing headscarves. My interviewees gave accounts of such incidents they witnessed. Once the anti-capitalist Muslims entered the park, Efe (Socialist, 27) saddened to hear a Kemalist nationalist woman shouting "I don't want these either."³³ He maintains that this Kemalist mentality should not have joined the Gezi Park protests and he was worried that this mentality would not want them, the socialists, in the park too. Ayse (Feminist, 39) thinks that women wearing headscarves were harassed everywhere during Gezi Park protests. She says that before the Kabatas incident, her sister who also wore a headscarf was stopped in her car in Bakirkoy, and some people hit her car and screamed "Go away AKP supporter women. No more right to live for you."³⁴

On the other hand, Kemalist nationalists were somewhat disturbed by the Kurds. Among my interviewees Aydin (Kemalist nationalist, 32) maintained that the ones performing the *halay* in the park, implying the Kurds, annoyed him. Cagdas (Kemalist nationalist, 25) was unhappy with the Apo posters:

In the first days of Gezi, the PKK flags and Apo posters disturbed me like everybody. Because we were standing there for unity and changing some things and it was a completely opposite move aimed at dividing people, creating dissidence and separating the mass.³⁵

Some protesters had difficulty in articulating within the Gezi community due to language of the protests which they deem secular and distant from regular people. Emre (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 38) says the way of the resistance in the park was very far away from the sociology of the people in Turkey especially from the conservative sector e.g. they were playing the guitar or piano. He thinks it could be *baglama* instead or folk songs which would seem more real and would not be marginalized. He also criticizes the protesters who, in a clear contrast with claiming a revolution, do not understand people of Turkey in general and insult the conservative AK Party constituent. As anti-capitalist Muslims, in order to remain articulated in the Gezi community, they organized the Friday Prayers and celebrated the *Kandil* night (a holy night) in the park. He says such activities got a significant support and many protesters wanted to get to know them. He also thinks that some others pragmatically used their

³³ "Ben bunları da istemiyorum ki."

³⁴ "AKP'li teyzeler çıkın, bundan sonra size hayat hakkı yok."

³⁵ Gezi'nin ilk günlerinde PKK bayraklarının açılması, Apo posterlerinin açılması herkes gibi beni de rahatsız etti. Çünkü biz orada birlik için, hep beraber bir şeyleri değiştirmek için bulunurken tam tersine insanları bölmeye, fikir ayrılığı yaratmaya, kitleyi ayırmaya yönelik bir hareketti o.

existence in the park against the government. Mehmet (Ex-nationalist, 25) was also disturbed by some protesters' propaganda in the park insulting conservatives. He maintains that although they aimed at making revolution, "Instead of understanding AKP supporters, they [protesters] ridiculed that "They say huloog, they say this and that".³⁶

As can be seen in the examples portrayed above, there were irreconcilable disputes and conflicts among different sections, which would undermine any possible unity between the protesters. Feminist and queer activists were disturbed by the sexist protesters and sexist cursing stemming from domination of football fans over slogans. There were some protesters who do not want LGBT activists. Kemalist nationalists' reaction against Kurds and anti-capitalist Muslims threatened these groups' articulation within the Gezi community. Some protesters were disturbed that protests had a secular character in general and there was a tendency to insult conservatives. During the protests, there happened provocations, disputes, harassments and fights that go far to stabbings among different groups. All these conflicts indicates real antagonism in the Gezi Park protests and they undermine the constitution of Gezi community.

4.3. Symbolic antagonism in Gezi: the government

Despite all the disputes, different groups stayed together in Gezi Park and the protests continued. This association was only possible by masking internal antagonisms and referring them to the excluded meanings and identities. I will refer to these excluded meanings and identities as symbolic antagonism because signifying the antagonism is the starting point for the constitution of a totality by drawing the frontiers. Laclau asserts that in the social movements, the power is discursively constructed as antagonistic force against the people i.e. emergent totality (Laclau, 2005a, p. 110). This study claims that in the Gezi Park discourse, the government was constituted as symbolic antagonism of the Gezi community. In this section based on my fieldwork, I will analyze against what the protesters struggled against and how it helped to constitute a Gezi community.

It is understood from my fieldwork that the Gezi community is formed by drawing an antagonistic frontier against the government. Protesters can be analyzed in

³⁶ AKPlileri anlamak yerine "Hülög dedi, şunu dedi, bunu dedi" diye dalga geçtiler.

three groups according to how they defined what they are against. First, many interviewees maintained that they are protesting against the government. Second, some protesters struggled against broader phenomena, namely capitalism or patriarchy. However they deemed the government capitalist or patriarchal. Third, some interviewees were disturbed that the protests turned anti-government.

Starting with the first group, among them there are the ones who wanted to oust the government and there are also those who only wanted the government to take a step back. Berke (Queer, Alevi, 25) maintains that Gezi was something against the government and he himself participated in the protests to overthrow the government. Ali (Alevi, 19) verbalizes that he wanted the AK Party to denounce the government. Onur (Kurdish Alevi, 55) sees the Gezi protests as an uprising challenging the government:

In fact the Gezi event in Taksim was a popular uprising. Why was it a popular uprising? It was a civil demonstration and an important resistance of people who no longer endure the oppressions and dictatorship, it went further challenging the government. It was a huge resistance. If a revolution was not achieved in that period, believe me, it is because of the military and other factors. If it were in Europe, the government would already be toppled and a lot of people would be punished. Because the people are oppressed by the guns and killed by sticks.³⁷

Aydin (Kemalist nationalist, 32) says government should resign because during such great demonstrations governments resign in Europe and in other democratic societies. However the AK Party government would never take a step back, he thinks.

When Cagdas (Kemalist nationalist, 25) joined the protests, he did not want the government to resign. However, in thrill of the protests, he found himself gathering people behind him to raid the Prime Minister's Office in Dolmabahce. He would not stop until the people asked why they were walking towards Dolmabahce and he did not have any answer. Despite Cagdas states that it was a moment of furor during the protests, the attempt to raid Dolmabahce amounts to a desire to oust the Prime Minister.

³⁷ Aslında Taksim'deki Gezi olayı bir halk ayaklanmasıydı. Neden bir halk ayaklanmasıydı? Bu kadar sıkıştırmaya, diktatörlüğe tahammülü kalmayan insanların, hükümeti yıkmaya gidecek sivil bir eylem yapacak kadar önemli bir direnişiydi. Çok büyük bir direnişti, bu dönem eğer bir devrim yapılmadıysa inanın ki, askeriye ve diğer unsurlar sebebiyledir. Avrupa'da olsaydı çoktan hükümet yıkılırdı ve birçok insan da ceza alırdı. Çünkü halka zulüm yapıldı silahlarla, insanlar öldürüldü sopalarla.

Mehmet (Ex-nationalist, 25) states that by joining the protests he only wanted the government to take a step back, not to resign. However, he does not oppose the idea of overthrowing the government, “The ones overthrowing the government [in the history] were the people, our predecessors. Are they traitors? They overthrew the government because of oppression. This time it is not about race, religion or sect. It is really about humanity and consciousness.”³⁸

Continuing with the interviewees who protested against the government without expecting a resignation, Eren (Ex-Gülenist, 25) is an example of them. Umut (Academician, 28) is another example who expected the government, which he deemed was democratic at the beginning but took an authoritarian turn later, to question itself. Selin (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 32) says she protested against Tayyip Erdogan being the single man. Talha (Kurd, 28) says he was protesting against the arbitrary state violence that became evident again. He talks of a turn where the AK Party came to defend the rights of the oppressed but evolved into neo-Kemalism and started oppressing its opponents. He also adds he did not want the government to resign and he was troubled by the ones in Gezi who wanted to overthrow the government in order to restore Kemalism instead of neo-Kemalism.

Second, some feminist and socialist protesters define designate their enemy as capitalism or patriarchy. Some socialists pursued a revolution out of Gezi Park protests and they think ousting the government is a precondition for it. Cagla (Socialist, 26) is among them who expects a revolution, which is not restricted to the ruling party, but the parliamentary system in general. Baris (Socialist, 28) is also a socialist who thinks a revolution could arrive after an uprising like Gezi. When he is asked about what he opposed in Gezi Park, he says:

There it is reified as the AKP government for me. For me the AKP government is the ‘order’ there. It is the power at the end of the day, the one which executes, conducts, determines all these. Therefore I am actually an AKP opponent too. But mine is not merely an opposition to AKP, I was opposing other previous governments too. For me, this order must change altogether, with all its dirt.³⁹

³⁸ Hükûmeti yıkan halktı, atalarımızdı. Onlar vatan haini miydi? Baskıdan yıktılar. Bu seferki ırk, mezhep, din üzerine değil. Hakikaten insanlık, vicdan üzerine olur.

³⁹ AKP hükûmeti orada benim için cisimleşiyor. Benim için AKP hükûmeti orada “düzen”. İktidar sonuçta, bütün bunların uygulayıcısı, yürütücüsü, karar alıcısı. Dolayısıyla ben de AKP karşıtıyım aslında. Ama benimki kuru bir AKP karşıtlığı değil, bundan önceki diğer iktidarların da karşıtıydım. Benim için bu düzenin topyekûn değişmesi gerekiyor, bütün pislikleriyle birlikte.

Efe (27) is another socialist who considers the government as an agent of bourgeois democracy and he wanted resignation of the government and walked towards Dolmabahce. He thinks if Erdogan had made his mass go out to the streets this might have led to a civil war after which they can walk towards revolution. As a socialist feminist Gizem (25) maintains that she was protesting against patriarchy and capitalism and she thinks the government represents both. She says: “Gezi was something more extensive that cannot be reduced to opposition to the government. It was more of a rebellion against the neoliberal transformation itself and the role of the government in this”.⁴⁰ Besides holding the government responsible for neoliberal transformation, she also states that government adopts a patriarchal language and implements policies restricting women.

Lastly, some protesters were frustrated that protests became anti-government. Emre (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 38) is an example to them who thinks Gezi Park protests should oppose capitalism and the owning of property by a single class but it mostly turned into a protest against the government. For him this demand that can be compromised but cannot be the single aim. He maintains that the struggle must be directed against capitalism that occupies each place. He believes that the protests were degraded to the level of party politics while their real opposition should have been the parliamentary democracy driven by the financing of the capital. He was annoyed with the groups trying to get supporters for their political parties in Gezi Park. Ayse (Feminist, 39) is another example who joined the protests only to oppose destruction of Gezi Park. She left the protests when she noticed that the only agenda of the protesters was the resignation of the government.

According to my field work, antagonistic frontier during the Gezi Park protests was formed against the government. Opposition against the government created an equivalential relation among different groups in the park. Many of the interviewed protesters directly opposed the government. They had different levels of enmity, some of them expected a change in policies and others wanted to overthrow. Some interviewees considered themselves a part of more global anti-capitalist or anti-patriarchal struggles however they deemed the government in the service of capitalism and patriarchy. Some interviewees who do not designate the government as their enemy were unhappy that protests turned anti-government. Yet all of the 16

⁴⁰ Gezi biraz daha kapsamlı bir şeydi, hükûmet karşıtlığına indirgenemeyecek kadar. Biraz daha neoliberal dönüşümün kendisine ve hükûmetin bundaki rolüne bir isyan gibi bir şeydi.

interviewees approve that protests were basically against the government. Laclau anticipates that during popular struggles the frontier is less determinate and the identity of the enemy is not obvious, they depend on a process of political construction. (Laclau, 2005a, p. 86) At this point, I may assert that the Gezi Park protests had a different characteristic that antagonistic pole, the government, was relatively determinate and stable.

Having defined the antagonistic pole of the Gezi Park protests, it is now time to explain the ways in which this antagonistic pole worked. There have been three main operations: First, some signifiers gained centrality and metonymically represented the government. Second, internal antagonisms within the Gezi protests were masked and projected to an outside, i.e. the government. Third, by the drawing of the frontiers separating inside from outside, Gezi community is constituted and sublimated. These operations will be analyzed in the following sections.

4.3.1. Erdogan as master signifier

In discursive construction of the enemy, some privileged signifiers “condense in themselves the signification of a whole antagonistic camp” (Laclau, 2005a, p. 87). These privileged signifiers functions as a master signifier that embodies the enemy. According to my fieldwork, ‘Erdogan’ functioned as a master signifier that metonymically represented the antagonistic pole in the Gezi Park discourse.

How Erdogan embodied the enemy of Gezi community is visible in Aydin (Kemalist nationalist, 32)’s thought. He thinks after millions of people took to the streets against his government, Erdogan not only should resign but also should commit suicide. However, he says Erdogan would cling to his armchair further. Berke (Queer, Alevi, 25) is of the opinion that only one common ground for all protesters is their anger against Erdogan. Selin (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 32) joined the protests because she opposed to Erdogan. Efe (Socialist, 27) maintains that Erdogan is a dictator and should resign during protests. Umut (Academician, 28) says he along with his friends were in the protests because “We had some criticism for the government, especially for the personality of Tayyip Erdogan.”⁴¹ Ali (Alevi, 19) was protesting against Erdogan’s “exploitation of people”. Onur (Kurdish Alevi, 55) refers to Erdogan’s governance indirectly when he says Gezi was a resistance against dictatorship.

⁴¹ Hükûmete karşı, özelliklede Tayyip Erdoğan’ın şahsına eleştirilerimiz vardı.

Similarly Baris (Socialist, 28) implies him when he says fascist dictatorship is in rule in Turkey.

In my observations in Gezi Park, there were cartoons of Erdogan and writings on the placards and on the walls that swear Erdogan. I also witnessed that the protesters were jumping, beating out and screaming “Jump! Jump! If you don’t jump you are supporter of Tayyip!”⁴² During Gezi Park protests there happened also burning of placards with pictures of Erdogan (IHA, 2013).

All these examples shows that signifier of Erdogan had been highly invested in the Gezi Park protest discourse. It turned into a master signifier that embodies antagonism of Gezi community.

4.3.2. Masking antagonistic fissure of Gezi

Antagonistic fissure in Gezi Park, in other words, conflicts and contradictions among different groups were masked and projected to the government. This is the process defined by Zizek as *fantasy* (Zizek, 1989). Fantasy functions to mask and to compensate the inconsistency implicit in any social formation. Protesters projected the implicit negativity for the formation of Gezi community to the government and it had turned into a figure that embodies this impossibility. In this section, I will analyze the tactics used by protesters to mask real antagonism of Gezi community. Protesters prioritized the evil of the government and remained within the movement despite the groups to who they oppose, neglected the problems they encountered in Gezi Park and blamed the government for the conflicts during protests.

To begin with protesters who gave precedence to opposition to the government and remained in the Gezi Park protests despite the existence of the people whom they oppose, Berke (Queer, Alevi, 25) is an example to them. He is aware of the fact that not all of the protesters were libertarian and there were also ‘sexist idiots’ whom he cannot agree as a queer activist but he bore with them because he only wanted to overthrow the government:

My greatest demand was overthrowing the government, but this did not happen. I wanted a lot. I still want this. Because Gezi was something against the government. I also know this. There were people who came there with zero environmental consciousness or there were a lot of sexist idiot people, who have only one common point that is the anger against Tayyip Erdogan. Even there were people I encountered who said this: “I

⁴² “Zıpla! Zıpla! Zıplamayan Tayyipçi!” See some examples Akpınar (2013), Karabiber (2013), Occupygezi (2013).

am for AKP, until now I've voted for AKP. Today, if the leader is changed, Arinc may come or Abdullah Gul may come to lead again; I will vote again. But I will not vote for this man."⁴³

Gizem (Socialist Feminist, 25) was another example who never thought of leaving Gezi Park despite she and her group could not prevent the use of a sexist language in the protests. She was annoyed that that some protesters in the park were resisting by cursing the wife of Erdogan and the slogans were sexist because football fans were dominating the slogans. Her group, Socialist Feminist Collective, organized a workshop against the sexist language but she thinks it was not successful. Other than the sexist people she also tolerated Kemalist nationalists during protests: "For me, as I define myself as a person against nationalism in Turkey, it was little bit difficult to stay together with the TGB, Turkish flags and all. But we tolerated each other. Not understanding but tolerating."⁴⁴

Similarly, Efe (Socialist, 27) utters his fear of Kemalist nationalists as follows: "I knew that if the revolution occurred, firstly they would shoot me. Because I belong to a lower class than them, besides I am a socialist. They are Kemalist nationalists and so on"⁴⁵. He also criticizes the mass in general for lacking class consciousness. However, despite all these inconveniences when I asked if he thought about giving up the protests he said: "No, not really."⁴⁶

Some Kurdish protesters remained in the protests despite that they were bothered with the attitudes of Kemalist nationalists. For instance, Talha (Kurd, 28) was uncomfortable with the Kemalist nationalists and he hesitated to join the protests. Police violence had been a priority for him and he decided to join the protests on 1 June 2013 after seeing the news on the social media about the injured and murdered protesters. It is interesting that there were no deaths yet in the days he joined. But it is also true that there was a propaganda on social media which exaggerated the violence

⁴³ En büyük talebim hükümetin devrilmesiydi, olmadı. Çok istiyordum. Hala da istiyorum. Çünkü Gezi hükümet karşıtı bir şeydi. Şeyi de biliyorum yani. Oraya gelip de çevre bilinci sıfır olan veya cinsiyetçi hödük bir sürü insanın da tek ortak noktası, Gezi'ye gelenlerin yüzde yüz ortak noktası Tayyip Erdoğan'a olan kızgınlıktı. Hatta şey diyenler bile oldu. Ben şeyle bile karşılaştım: "AKPliyim, şimdiye kadar hep AKP'ye oy verdim. Eğer bugün bu lider değişsin Arınç gelsin ya da Abdullah Gül tekrar gelsin partinin başına yine oy veririm. Ama bu adama oy vermem."

⁴⁴ Benim için, ben Türkiye'deki milliyetçiliğe karşı duran bir insan olarak kendimi tanımlıyorum, mesela TGB ile Türk bayraklarıyla ve o halle de birlikte durmak birazcık zordu ama birbirimizi biraz tolere ettik. Anlamak değil, tolere etmek.

⁴⁵ Şeyi biliyordum, devrim olsaydı bu insanlar ilk başta bana sıkacaklardı. Çünkü ben sınıf olarak onlardan düşük bir sınıftayım, hem de ben sosyalistim. Onlar ulusalcı vesaire.

⁴⁶ Hayır [düşündüğüm] olmadı. Gerçekten.

in the demonstrations by means of sharing fake photos of death and injured as if they were taken in Gezi Park.

Some protesters believed that the government was responsible for the conflicts that occurred within the park and for the ones stoning the police. For instance, according to Umut (Academician, 28), if there were any conflict within the park it must be related to the MIT (National Intelligence Organization) and this is a provocation. He also thinks that it is possible that some leftist high-school students smashed the windows of local shops with the energy of the youth, an act he deem unimportant. Aydin (Kemalist nationalist, 32) holds the undercover police responsible for the conflicts in the park: “The state is very much interested and wise in sowing seeds of discord. I assume that obviously there were undercover policemen who introduce themselves as TGB supporters to infiltrate TGB and later they say they support BDP and cause quarrels or they do the opposite. Or there were obviously undercover policemen who said “Let’s go, stone”. The state knows dispersion methods well and mercilessly set people against each other.”⁴⁷

Some Gezi Park protesters swept the problems they encountered aside. For example, Baris (Socialist, 28) was annoyed with the Kemalist nationalists who did not want the Kurds and some narrow-minded protesters who opposed LGBT members however he thinks they were not effective at all and the mass did not allow such exclusionary attitude. Cagla (Socialist, 26) was disturbed with the ones who did not want Ocalan flag and had the Turkish flag [Kemalist nationalists]. However she endured them in pursuit of revolution: “We should not have any problems with the flag and those who believe in that idea sincerely. After all, we will achieve a revolution together with them.”⁴⁸ She thinks disagreements are normal when there is a riot including all the colors and she prefers to emphasize the photograph of the two people running hand in hand and one having a BDP flag and the other a Turkish flag with an Atatürk figure. Cagdas (Kemalist nationalist, 25) was unhappy with the PKK flags and he deem those who hang that flags are separatist. He relieved after the park was cleared

⁴⁷ Devlet nifak tohumu sokma konusunda çok ilgili ve bilgili. Atıyorum TGB’liyim deyip TGB’lilerin içine girip BDP’liyim ben deyip olay çıkartabilen ya da tam tersini yapan sivil polislerin olduğu aşikâr. Ya da “Hadi gelin taş atalım” diyen sivil polislerin olduğu aşikâr. Dağıtma yöntemlerini iyi biliyor devlet ve insanları acımasızca birbirine kırdırabiliyor.

⁴⁸ Bizim bayrakla da o düşünceye samimi bir şekilde inanan insanlarla da aslında bir sorunumuz olmamalı. Onlarla birlikte yapacağız devrimi zaten.

of all flags and political signs except the Turkish flag and he thought they no longer pose a problem.

Lastly, it should also be noted that, there are also protesters like Ayse (Feminist, 39) who abandoned the protests after encountering the protesters that she could not condone, especially Kemalist nationalists. She also regrets for joining the protests in the first place.

Opposing groups in Gezi Park managed to stay together by drawing an antagonistic frontier against the government and projecting the antagonistic fissure to the government. The government turned into something that threatens the unity of Gezi community and at the same time what constitutes their unity by showing what they are not. The protesters transferred an aspiration to a fullness to the constituted Gezi community as will be analyzed the next section.

4.3.3. Sublimation of Gezi

Gezi Park protesters who are disappointed by the government, whose demands were not fulfilled by the government came together on the ground of their antagonistic relation to the government. Unfulfilled demands evoked an aspiration to a fullness which contains everything. Protesters transferred that aspiration to the constituted Gezi community. This transfer is only possible by elevating constituted totality to the dignity of the 'thing' through idealization and sublimation. Masking real antagonism of Gezi facilitated this sublimation and protesters further attributed a perfection to the Gezi community which will be examined in this section.

Some protesters considered Gezi as something unimpeachable. For example, Berke (Queer, Alevi, 25) says "There is no bad criticism we could make about Gezi. I am a person who criticizes everything. But really even I cannot find anything. Because it was such a peaceful thing above politics."⁴⁹ Efe (Socialist, 27) thinks everybody was living in the park in solidarity and nobody was committing crimes. He says "We tasted statelessness, we tasted policelessness. I think this is very important. There is no police no security, but nothing was stolen, nobody was got harassed."⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Gezi'yle ilgili yapabileceğimiz kötü hiçbir eleştiri yok. Ben böyle otu b.ku eleştiren bir insanım. Gerçekten ben dahi bulamıyorum. Çünkü böyle o kadar barışçı o kadar siyasetler üstü bir şeydi ki.

⁵⁰ Biz devletsizliği tattık ya biz polissizliği tattık. Bence bu çok önemli bir şey. Polis yok güvenlik yok, kimse kapkaçta tacize uğramadı.

Some protesters idealize Gezi as a model of perfect place that they struggle to establish. For instance Baris (Socialist, 28) says “Gezi remained as something pure. Because there was will to collective ownership, collective production, common use, reading and debating together. Those who want, miss and struggle to establish another world are the ones who colored Gezi.”⁵¹ Aydin (Kemalist nationalist, 32), as a communist, deems Gezi as example of commune. He maintains that in Gezi Park everybody was helping each other, doing whatever needs to be done, sharing their foods and clothes and establishing their own library and medical room. He thinks that the decisions in Gezi were taken with the consensus of 100 percent after different ideas were discussed. Emre (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 38) attributes an excellence to Gezi based on Islamic teachings: “In Gezi, what we see in Qur’an was experienced. The ones who never read Qur’an does not know it but because of their characteristics coming from creation, because of their *fitrahs* [innate inclination] they noticed and experienced a thing that they long for.”⁵² Onur (Kurdish Alevi, 55) thinks that Gezi was a great popular uprising uniting all people of Turkey. He goes so far as to claim there were AK Party tents in Gezi Park: “There were AKP supporters too. All parties were there, we saw. MHP, CHP, AKP, HDP tents stood side by side. Socialists protected their praying Muslim brothers from gas by encircling them. What a beautiful thing it was, uniting all people.”⁵³

In conclusion, the protesters sublimated Gezi community by considering it as pure, ideal and peaceful. Some of them attributed a perfection that they aspire to make real in their life to Gezi.

4.4. What is the matter with the government?

The Gezi Park protests have a general character of opposition to the government as it has been explained in the preceding part. This fact brings upon the questions as to what problems the protesters had with the government. In order to understand this antagonistic relationship in detail, I asked the protesters what disturbed

⁵¹ Gezi ‘temiz’ bir şey olarak kaldı. Çünkü orada ortak mülkiyet, birlikte üretme, birlikte kullanma, birlikte okuma, tartışma iradesi var. Geziye rengini verenler başka bir dünyayı isteyen, özleyen, kurulması için mücadele verenler.

⁵² Gezi’de bizim Kur’an’da gördüğümüz, ama hiç Kur’an’la haşır neşir olmamış insanların bilmediği ama yaratılışından gelen özelliklerden dolayı, fitratlarından dolayı, bir bilinç olarak farkında oldukları, özlemini duydukları bir şey yaşandı.

⁵³ Orada AKP’li de vardı. Orada bütün partiler vardı, biz gördük. MHP, CHP, AKP, HDP çadırları vardı yan yana. Oradaki Müslüman kardeşler namaz kılarken, sosyalistler gaz gelmesin diye etraflarına çember oluşturdu. Ne güzel bir şeydi bu, halkı birleştirmek.

them with the rule of AK Party government. I also searched if their opinions changed in any way about the AK Party government since its emergence in 2002 and if there were any moments of rupture in their views.

It is understood from my interviews that some of the protesters are disturbed with the AK Party since it came into power and their problems are related to anti-Kemalism, neoliberalism or conservatism. Some interviewees see an authoritarian turn in the AK Party line. They are the ones who were hopeful about the AK Party at the beginning but at some point they were disappointed with its policies. Some interviewees relate their daily problems with the government and some others seem to have some fantastic convictions about AK Party. I will analyze the disturbance with the conservatism of AK Party at the end of this section. Since many interviewees maintain that the government is intervening their way of life in a conservative manner, I will scrutinize the issue of 'way of life' in a subsection.

Protesters such as Berke (Queer, Alevi, 25) regards the AK Party as anti-Kemalist and was never hopeful about the AK Party. He criticizes some leftist groups such as the DSIP for supporting the AK Party during the 2010 referendum by means of saying "Not Enough But Yes"⁵⁴. "I said no because the new constitution would not be more democratic. I am sure about it."⁵⁵ He warns that all the events are an illusion and people are too naive in trusting the AK party. He utters his discomfort with the anti-Kemalist discourse of the referendum period as follows:

There were people saying, "I hate the Kemalists so much that the AK Party is better". How come you infer this? They are not as bad as you thought. Kemalists are not as bad as you knew; please do not consider them in single way anymore. They are not simply elitists. There are people not like that but ordinary secular Sunnis and Alevis. On the one side of polarization there are ones who becomes more conservative and on the other side there are ones who cling to Kemalism.⁵⁶

Cagdas (Kemalist nationalist, 25) was also disturbed by the government for being disrespectful to Kemalist values. He states "I am disturbed by the government's efforts to discredit the heroes of the republic who hold an important place in the

⁵⁴ Yetmez Ama Evet

⁵⁵ Hayır dedim çünkü yerine gelecek anayasa daha demokratik olmayacak. Ben bundan eminim.

⁵⁶ Şey diyenler oldu: "Kemalistlerden o kadar nefret ediyorum ki gene Ak Parti daha iyi ya." Ben de pardon hani nasıl bunun çıkarımını yapabiliyorsun diyordum. Kemalistler bu kadar da bildiğiniz gibi kötü insanlar değiller, lütfen artık Kemalistleri bu kadar tekil okumayın. Kemalizme tutunanları sadece elitist olarak görmemek lazım. Öyle olmayan sıradan seküler Sunniler ve Aleviler var. Kutuplaşmanın bir tarafında muhafazakârlaşanlar bir tarafta Kemalizme sarılanlar.

anti-imperialist struggle during the war of independence.”⁵⁷ referring to Erdogan’s expression of ‘two drunkards’ which are discussed as he meant Atatürk and İnönü. He maintains that the government is directed, even commanded by imperialist powers and as a result Turkey is having conflicts with its neighbors.

Some protesters define their problem with the government as neoliberalism. For instance Emre (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 38) considers the AK Party as a conservative neoliberal party. He is very annoyed that the AK Party articulated the conservatives to capitalism. He also thinks that the government adopted a domination process similar to Kemalism and subdues anyone who is not from their side. Gizem (Socialist feminist, 25) is also disturbed by the neoliberal policies of the government which include urban transformation and gentrification.

Some protesters are disappointed with the government and they see an authoritarian or Kemalist turn in the policies. For instance Umut (Academician, 28) is an ex-voter of the AK Party and now he is annoyed with the party for taking an authoritative stance. He thinks the constant increase of votes gave the government too much self-confidence that they made mistakes. He says:

During the protests the authoritarian personality of Tayyip Erdoğan relapsed the most. Before, especially before 2011, we knew Tayyip Erdoğan as a person who was more reconciliatory, and that negotiates with his circle, and has wise elder brothers and intelligent people around him. But, for the first time during the Gezi Park protests with the attitude, “this is my word, how come my word is not applied” he revealed his authoritarian nature. He used an incredibly angry, nervous and offensive language of violence.⁵⁸

Efe (Socialist, 27) had been hopeful about the AK Party at the beginning. He is of the opinion that Erdoğan made young people believe him when he was on Genç Bakış before 2002 elections. He expected that things would change, however, later he noticed all that was said was only for show and Erdoğan turned into a dictator. Talha (Kurd, 28) was also disappointed with the AK Party. He maintains that the party came to power and made a pledge to defend the rights of the oppressed but it evolved into a

⁵⁷ Hükümetin ülkenin kurtuluş savaşında verdiği anti-emperyalist mücadelede önemli yere sahip kahramanlarını itibarsızlaştırma çabalarından rahatsızım.

⁵⁸ Tayyip Erdoğan’ın otoriter kişiliği orada ilk defa o kadar nüksetti. Ondan önce, hele hele 2011 den önce Tayyip Erdoğan’ı daha uzlaşmacı, etraflıyla istişare eden, yanında akıl sahibi ağabeyleri ve âkil insanlar olan bir insan olarak biliyorduk. Ama ilk defa Gezi Parkı eylemlerinde “dediğim dedik, benim dediğim nasıl olmaz” düşüncesiyle o otoriter yönünü orada ortaya çıkartmış oldu. Zaten inanılmaz sinirli, gergin, hakaretler eden bir şiddet dili kullandı.

neo-Kemalist government that oppress its opponents. For him, KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union) arrests and neoliberal policies had marked breaking points.

Some protesters relate their daily problems with the government. For instance, Cagla (Socialist, 25) lists her problems with the government as subcontracting, unemployment and difficulties of university graduates in finding work. In a similar vein, Ali (Alevi, 19) relates his daily problems to the Erdogan. He maintains that Erdogan exploits people. Then he defines the exploitation as the government on one hand, provides, but on the other takes back what it provided by different means. He thinks the money from everything goes to state via taxes, expensive cost of travel and constant price increases in electricity and natural gas. Such examples show that interviewees see Gezi protests as a way of expressing their very daily problems. These show enormous investments made in the signifiers of Erdogan and Gezi. They became nodal points in which vast range of heterogeneous issues were quilted.

Some interviewees seemed to have some fantastic convictions about the AK Party, which reveals that one of the motives of the Gezi protests was an ungrounded fear or anxiety about the future. Ali (Alevi, 19) is a specific example who assessed the AK Party on quirky grounds. One of the disturbances he felt was, as aforementioned, the existence of the bars and saloons in Taksim, and the drunk people making too much noise. He also states his anxiety about the future as follows:

There is a constitution made by Ataturk. It has a specific year [Current Constitution of Turkey was made in 1982 under military junta]. In 2023, this constitution will end and a cancellation agreement will come [There is no such agreement]. If the AK Party stays as the government, if Erdogan continues leading, he will make his own constitution. I believe there will also be a curfew in 2023. There will be famine in 2025. I believe this. Because the AK Party is in power, and nothing will be done. After that date if there is any wealth in the market, Erdogan will continue exploitation. He will put forth enquiries; make people become more destitute. This is so.⁵⁹

If the disturbances of the interviewees with the government are considered according to their identities, the role of antagonism as constitutive other is very much

⁵⁹ Şimdi Atatürk'ün koyduğu bir anayasa var. Bu anayasanın belirli bir yılı da var. 2023'te bu anayasa sona erecek. Fesh anlaşması gelecek. İktidarda Ak Parti olduğu sürece, Erdoğan devam ettikçe başta bu sefer kendi anayasasını kendi koymaya başlayacak. Ben şuna inanıyorum ki 2023'te sokağa çıkma yasağı da olacak. 2025'te de kıtlık olacak. Ben buna inanıyorum. Ak Parti iktidarda olduğundan dolayı yine hiçbir şey olmayacak. 2023ten sonra zenginlik zaten piyasaya çıkmaya başladıktan sonra Erdoğan sömürüye geri devam edecek. Tahkikler çıkaracak, insanları kendine daha çok muhtaç etmeye devam ettirecek. Yani budur.

visible. It constitutes the identity by a negative reference, by showing what it is not. In the discourse of Gezi Park protesters, the government functions as such and each identity group in the park attribute the government different characteristics opposite to their identity. According to socialists the government is capitalist, for feminists it is patriarchal, for Alevis it is Sunni, for anti-capitalist Muslims it is capitalist and Kemalist, similarly for Kurds it is Kemalist and for Kemalists it is anti-Kemalist. Protesters linked both daily and global problems to the government. Some protesters had ungrounded convictions about the government that they worry about their future.

Some protesters' problem with the AK Party is conservatism. For instance, Berke (Queer, Alevi, 25) has a secularist worldview and he maintains that the country is becoming conservative and there is a potential danger of Sharia. He states his trouble with the AK Party government as follows:

Because this government is a religious government, it interprets everything with religion. And with its policies it pulled the accent of the politics over religion. Therefore, other dissident political parties also justify themselves with religion. Look we are Muslim, too. Look at a lot of statements of Demirtas, he always *says* I am also Muslim and so forth. Was the politics in Turkey like that before? We are even obliged to justify ourselves with religion when we refer to the LGBT rights and women rights.⁶⁰

He states that he has a fear of Sharia inherited from his father. On the night that the votes were counted and AK Party came to power in 2002, his father was drinking with his friends and saying "This is the night that we are over."⁶¹ When his mother objected and said it might be better because they are Muslims and fear God, his father replied "You don't have them pegged, I do. Tomorrow they will take revenge. We as Alevis, what harm did we do to this country? But they will firstly hunt us. We will suffer with torment."⁶² He thinks that what his father said has come true. He thinks that all Sunnis watched the Madimak massacre in cold blood during the conservative government of Erbakan and Ciller. He believes that the AK Party follows the mentality

⁶⁰ Bu hükümet dindar bir hükümet olduğu için her şeyi din üzerinden yorumlayan bir hükümet. Ve ülkedeki siyasetin eksenini de hep yaptığı politikalarla dinin üzerine çekti. Haliyle diğer muhalif partiler de hep kendilerini din üzerinden aklıyorlar. Bakın biz de Müslümanız falan. Demirtaş'ın birçok açıklamasına bak adam hep böyle ben de Müslümanım falan. Daha önce böyle miydi Türkiye'de siyaset. Biz LGBT haklarından, kadın haklarından bahsederken bile kendimizi din üzerinden aklamak zorunda bırakılıyorlar.

⁶¹ "Bu gece bittiğimiz gece."

⁶² "Asıl ciğerini sen bilmiyorsun, ben bunların ciğerini biliyorum. Bunlar yarın bürgün hepimizden çok ağır intikam alacak. Bizim mesela, bizden kasıt Aleviler, ne zararımız oldu bu ülkeye. Ama ilk bizi avlayacaklar. En büyük acısı bizden çıkacak."

of perpetrators of Madimak. He thinks that currently in the country, conservatives have all the power and are abusing the country.

Aydin (Kemalist nationalist, 32) is also disturbed by the conservative government and states that the government only takes decisions representing its conservative grassroots not the whole country. Onur (Kurdish Alevi, 55) states that he is annoyed with the conservative government because it says “one language, one religion, one sect”.⁶³ Gizem (Socialist feminist, 25) thinks that this government implements patriarchal state logic in a conservative manner. She explains her trouble with the government as follows:

I, as a feminist, have diverse problems with the government. Mainly, how to be a woman is defined by the existing family policies of the government. Not only this government but also previous ones defined it as well, this government is defining it in a conservative manner. But it also decides how conservative women should be. Even if you are conservative you might not be “that woman” actually.⁶⁴

Many interviewees say that the government intervenes in their way of life and they consider it is related to the conservatism of the government. In the following subsection, I will investigate the issue of ‘way of life’ by appealing to Zizek.

4.4.1. Government as thief of enjoyment

Zizek deals with the way of life in his *Tarrying with the Negative* (Zizek, 1993). He asserts that the way of life is the way a community organizes and experiences its enjoyment (Zizek, 1993, p. 201). As explained in theory chapter, enjoyment is the aspiration to an impossible fullness, a ‘thing’. Enjoyment has the same hegemonic logic of ‘we’ that it holds a given community together. While the ‘thing’ cannot be reduced to the way of life, the existence of the ‘thing’ is experienced through ambiguous way of life of ‘us’ (Ogut, 2010, p. 93). The Other threatens the ‘thing’ which appears as something only ‘we’ can reach, as “what gives plenitude and vivacity to our life” and as something the Other cannot conceive (Zizek, 1993, p. 201). The Other of ‘us’ appears as something that subverts ‘our’ enjoyment and threatens ‘our’ way of life. Zizek names this menace to our way of life presented by the Other as “theft

⁶³ Tek dil, tek din, tek mezhep

⁶⁴ Feminist olarak benim hükûmetle çeşitli derterim var. Temel olarak da hükûmetin mevcut aile politikalarıyla nasıl kadın olacağımızın tanımlanıyor olması. Bunu sadece bu hükûmet değil başka hükûmetler de tanımlayıp durdu, bu hükûmet de muhafazakâr bir şekilde tanımlıyor. Ama muhafazakâr kadınların da nasıl olması gerektiğini tanımlıyor. O yüzden muhafazakâr da olsan aslında “o kadın” olamayabilirsin.

of enjoyment”. The ‘Other’ here conceptualized by Zizek corresponds to antagonism in Laclau’s approach, specifically to ‘symbolic antagonism’ in my analysis. Later Zizek asserts that ‘we’ hate the Other in its very being because it essentially steals our own enjoyment (Zizek, 1993, p. 203). According to him, this is the general formula of racism. However, he asserts, there is a paradox that the Other is the Other in our interior, it is the inner antagonism inherent in any community (Zizek, 1993, p. 203). The ‘Other’ here corresponds to real antagonism in my analysis. “What we conceal by imputing to the Other the theft of enjoyment is the traumatic fact that *we never possessed what was allegedly stolen from us*: the lack is originary, enjoyment constitutes itself as ‘stolen’”(Zizek, 1993, p. 203). Therefore, considering the symbolic antagonism as thief of enjoyment is a way of concealing the originary lack, i.e. real antagonism, impossibility of any totality. In this way symbolic antagonism embodies the innermost split of totality and at the same time prevents that totality from achieving full identity with itself.

According to my fieldwork, for the Gezi Park protesters, the government appears as something that threatens their way of life. Among the threats to their way of life, the issues of alcohol, sexual liberties and abortion come to the forefront. Putting forward these elements of enjoyment to be stolen is related to conservatism of the government. This theft of enjoyment is mostly defined by their fears of Islam considering that Muslims are supposed not to consume alcohol, not to have abortion except for strictly defined cases and not to have sexual relationship outside marriage. By designating the government as thief of enjoyment protesters able to constitute that enjoyment as an aspiration to an unachieved fullness i.e. Gezi community.

Berke (Queer, Alevi, 25) is an example who maintains that the government intervenes in his way of life. He states that due to new conservatism brought by the AK Party government that young people are accused of kissing in the metro lines, holding hands in parks. Aydin (Kemalist nationalist, 32) states that his way of life is being interfered by the government. He describes this interference as destruction of bars and cafes to which he used to go in Taksim. Cagdas (Kemalist nationalist, 25) thinks that this government intervenes in his private life too much. When he is asked about these interventions, he says “For example, the ban of alcohol, the restraints of the government against abortion.”⁶⁵ Eren (25, ex-Gülenist) thinks the government does

⁶⁵ Örneğin alkol yasağı, kürtaj hakkındaki hükûmetin uygulamaları.

not let people breathe and does not leave them any space to live in. He asks to the government “I was saying that the alcohol I drink should not annoy you, my sexual life should not annoy you.”⁶⁶ Efe (Socialist, 27) states that what disturbs him the most about the AK Party government is the intervention in his life. He specifies the events that disturbed him as Tarlabasi and Sulukule urban transformations, the destruction of Emek Cinema and Inci Pastry Shop, the restrictions on alcohol sales, the increase in prices of alcohol and cigarettes, the closing of Taksim on mayday and the banning of marches on Istiklal Avenue. He thinks that all these practices of the government are direct intervention to his life:

I keep referring to alcohol but it is not only alcohol. It is a direct intervention in your life. Yes, you don't die if you don't drink, you don't die if you don't walk around, you don't die if you don't go out. But there is an intervention in your living space. You cannot breathe. You cannot go out and shout with three people. You cannot use your most natural right, you cannot criticize. All these [problems] amass on top of other and finally exploded in Gezi.⁶⁷

Similarly, Baris (Socialist, 28) also complains about intervention of the government in every field of people's life. He says “People fell into a situation that they cannot breathe in any field of life.”⁶⁸ Gizem (Socialist Feminist, 25) says that the government is meddling in their different ways of lives. Selin (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 32) thinks that because the AK Party is in rule, conservatives are too offensive against others and they intervene other people's lives. She gives the example of her Christian friends whose child was baptized at night because they feared from the reactions of their conservative neighbors. Given that one of their pro-AK Party neighbor once said “What was baptism? You must circumcise the child. If you don't, I will abduct the child and do.”⁶⁹ She thinks that what the AK Party practices is not Muslimhood and neither atheists can live atheism and nor minorities can practice their religion under the AK Party rule.

All these examples show that the government appeared as something that threatened the way of life of Gezi Park protesters. In other words, government

⁶⁶ Ben diyordum ki benim içtiğim alkol seni rahatsız etmesin, benim cinsel hayatım seni rahatsız etmesin.

⁶⁷ Hep alkole bağıyorum ama aslında bunlar sadece alkol değil. Senin hayatına birebir müdahale. Evet, onu yapmazsan ölmezsin. İçmezsen ölmezsin, takılmazsan ölmezsin, sokağa çıkmazsan ölmezsin. Ama senin yaşam alanına müdahale var. Nefes alamıyorsun. Üç kişi sokağa çıkıp bağıramıyorsun. En doğal hakkını kullanamıyorsun, eleştiri yapamıyorsun. Bunların hepsi birikiyor birikiyor, Gezi'de patladı.

⁶⁸ İnsanlar artık hayatın her alanında nefes alamaz duruma geldiler.

⁶⁹ “Vaftiz de neymiş, sünnet ettirin çocuğu, siz fark etmezsiniz ben kaçırıp yaptırırım.”

intervened in the way they experienced their enjoyment as an unachieved fullness. In this way, Gezi community is constituted around a stolen enjoyment. Its impossibility as a fullness is concealed by designating the government as a thief.

4.5. Naming Gezi: failure

In discourse analytical theory ‘demand’ is the basic unit of analysis. Any political movement or program starts with negativity i.e. aggregation of unsatisfied demands against an antagonism, but it can be successful only when it achieves to construct something positive i.e. establish hegemony. A social movement may become hegemonic when a social subjectivity is constituted around a popular demand. A popular demand is what articulates all unsatisfied particular demands in an equivalential chain against antagonism. Articulation is an operation that changes identities of particular demands and they are identified with the popular demand. In this way, popular demand assumes the representation of an incommensurable totality. It can only embody such totality by turning into an empty signifier: something unrepresentable within totality as a differential position because it deals with the very constitution of that totality. Empty signifier, on the other hand, can be represented by a name. According to discourse theory, act of naming is at the very heart of a popular demand that its name grounds unity of the totality. In other words, popular movements can become hegemonic if heterogeneous demands crystallize in a unified collective will through a name. It is only through that crystallization, the ‘people’ is constituted as an historical actor that has potential to challenge the existing order and to reconstitute the social by transforming the existing power relations. To show how naming the popular demand brings about a possibility of change in the social order, Laclau gives the example of Russian Revolution in 1917. ‘Bread, peace and land’ became the popular demands and turned into “the names of a universality that transcended their actual particular contents” (Laclau, 1990, p. 97). All Russian grievances and social demands including empty terms of ‘justice’ and ‘freedom’ were invested into those three demands. If a name could not be given to the aggregation of unsatisfied particular demands against antagonism, it is not possible to constitute a totalizing horizon and this aggregation will only be a vague solidarity.

Considering the demands and the aims of the protesters based on my fieldwork, it can be asserted that during Gezi Park protests almost unlimited particular demands had been inscribed in an equivalential chain against the government. However,

transition to a popular demand could not be achieved throughout the protests and the consolidation could not go beyond negativity. The protection of Gezi Park had been the most spelled out demand throughout the protests, however it could not become a popular demand. A popular demand is what universally represents all other particular demands in the chain of equivalence. In other words, particular demands must be identified with the popular demand and this operation may necessitate compromise or sacrifice of the requests involved in those demands. However, demand to protect Gezi Park could not gain such a universal position that most of the protesters refused to confine their struggle only to protection of Gezi park and they prioritized their different particular demands. Considering the name of 'Gezi' itself, it could not function as an empty signifier representing mythical fullness for two reasons. First the name of Gezi was restricted by its conceptual determination that prevents it from having a performative function. By the conceptual determination I mean that Gezi is already a name of place, a park. Despite the name of the popular demand gains a universal empty character, it does not entirely lose its particular conceptual dimension. Second, there is an operation to empty 'Gezi', however, I claim based on my fieldwork that the name of 'Gezi' did not function to constitute something positive but only took the meaning of being against the government. In other words, it functioned similar to the master signifier of 'Erdogan' in reverse and represented the equivalential chain in its negativity. Laclau discusses a case in which the empty signifier becomes entirely empty and equivalentially articulates contradictory contents which do not cohere with each other (Laclau, 1990, p. 217). He evaluated it as an extreme situation in which, in Freudian terms, the only link between the brothers is love for the father/leader. He assesses that in such a situation constituted unity is extremely fragile and the antagonism between contradictory demands can burst at any moment. "A love for the leader which does not crystallize in any form of institutional regularity -in psychoanalytic terms: an ego ideal which is not partially internalized by ordinary egos- can result only in fleeting popular identities" (Laclau, 1990, p. 217). I argue that what happened in Gezi is the other extreme situation: the link between protesters is hate for the leader. Other than this difference, it displays the same characteristics anticipated by Laclau.

In this section, I will analyze hegemonic capacity of the Gezi Park protests in details. First, I will scrutinize the demands of the initiative that organized the protests in the first place, Taksim Solidarity, based on written materials. Later, I will analyze

the characteristics of the unity in Gezi based on my interviewees' answers to what are their demands and aims by protesting.

In March 2012, upon the call of the Chamber of Architects Istanbul Buyukkent Branch, Taksim Solidarity was formed as an initiative that included a wide range of participators: political parties, chambers of professionals, different environmentalist, feminist, and queer organizations and regional associations as well as Taksim Platform and Taksim Gezi Parki Dernegi. The initiative penned petitions and organized protests and concerts against the project of building of an old barrack in Gezi Park. They also brought lawsuits and organized marches and press briefings in order to protect Gezi Park.

Despite their campaign against the project, the municipality started on the construction work and vehicles entered Gezi Park on 27 May 2013. A sit-in was organized at Gezi Park with the support of above-mentioned organizations to prevent vehicles from destroying the green area. In the beginning, the demands of those who gathered were limited to the protection of the Gezi Park. However, after the protests turned into massive demonstrations and assumed an anti-governmental character, components of the Taksim Solidarity increased further and their discourse changed accordingly. They articulated demand to protect Gezi Park with other demands of the protesters in the park. In a very short period of time, discourse of the Taksim Solidarity turned anti-government. On 3 June 2013, the Taksim Solidarity issued a press release stating that, "The common voice that raises from all of the squares of Turkey says: 'government, resign'. We will strengthen this voice! The meaning of this outcry is unequivocal!"⁷⁰ (Taksim Dayanismasi, 2013).

The Taksim Solidarity had two meetings with government representatives. In their meeting on 5 June, they put their main demands as the protection of Gezi Park, the ending of police violence, the resignation of the governors and police commissioners of Istanbul and Ankara, and the release of the detained protesters. They also added:

The content of this reaction is an objection against the third bridge, third airport, the Kanalistanbul project, Ataturk Forest Farm, hydroelectric power plants and all pillaging of our ecological values and against the draft law of Protecting Nature and Biological Diversity. It is also an opposition to the politics of war regarding our country and our region and a demand for peace. Sensitivities of our Alevi citizens, right demands of

⁷⁰ Tüm Türkiye'nin meydanlarından yükselen ortak ses "hükümet istifa" olmuştur. Bu sesi büyüteceğiz! Bu haykırışın anlamı açıktır!

victims of urban transformation, voice raising against conservative masculine policies that controls bodies of women, a resistance against crackdown on universities, jurisdiction and artists, demands against seizing rights of all workers especially workers of Turkish Airlines, a struggle against discrimination regarding sexual orientation and gender and a request for removing the obstacles that prevents citizens from reaching right to education and health (Taksim Dayanismasi, 2013).⁷¹

This list of demands put forth by Taksim Solidarity represents that protecting the park was not the name of the struggle that prevails over other particular demands, however vast range of particular demands along with protecting Gezi Park were all articulated in a chain of equivalence which is established against the government.

On 14 June 2013, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan met with a committee consisting of the representatives of the Taksim Solidarity and some celebrities. In the meeting, Erdogan wanted the protests to come to an end and protesters to leave Gezi Park and said otherwise the police would intervene to evacuate. After the meeting, Halit Ergenc, an actor, conveyed the results of the meeting with the prime minister in the following words: “[The members of the cabinet] repeated that they would respect the decision of the court. If the court cancels the project they will concur and protect Gezi Park. If, however, the court approves the project they said that they would have a plebiscite concerning the Gezi Park project.” (“Halit Ergenc Basbakanla gorusmeyi anlatti,” 2013). After the same meeting the Taksim Solidarity secretary-general Tayfun Kahraman also stated the government would abide by the decision of the people and the outrageous violence of the security forces would be investigated (“Basbakan'la yaptıkları o gorusmeyi anlattılar,” 2013). He added that the prime minister said clearing of the park is necessary and he would return to Gezi Park to discuss and evaluate the situation. However, protesters did not leave Gezi Park and the Taksim Solidarity announced that the protests would continue (Taksim Dayanismasi, 2013).

In conclusion, Taksim Solidarity was established to protect Gezi Park and to oppose the urban design projects in Taksim. It conducted various protests to express

⁷¹ Yükselen bu tepkinin içeriğinin; “başta 3. Köprü, 3. Havaalanı, Kanal İstanbul, AOC ve HES'ler olmak üzere ekolojik değerlerimizin talanına ve güncel olarak Tabiatı ve Biyolojik Çeşitliliği Koruma Kanunu Tasarısına ilişkin itirazların, ülkemize ve bölgemize ilişkin savaş siyasetine karşı duruşun ve barış talebinin, alevi yurttaşlarımızın hassasiyetlerinin, kentsel dönüşüm mağdurlarının haklı taleplerinin, kadınların bedenleri üzerinde denetim kuran muhafazakar erkek politikalarına karşı yükselen sesin, üniversite, yargı ve sanatçılar üzerindeki baskılara karşı direncin, başta Türk Hava Yolu işçileri olmak üzere tüm emekçilerin hak gaslarına karşı taleplerinin, tüm cinsel yönelim ve cinsiyet kimliği ayrımcılığına karşı mücadelenin, yurttaşların eğitim ve sağlık hakkına ulaşımının önündeki tüm engellerin kaldırılması istemleri” olduğunu iktidar sahiplerine iletmek istiyoruz. <http://taksimdayanisma.org/turkiye-cumhuriyeti-hukumeti-ve-kamuoyuna>

these demands before Gezi Park protests erupt. However, after the Gezi protests joined by the masses, the protest discourse gained an anti-governmental stance where these organizations could no longer continue with limited demands. They got articulated with the dominant Gezi Park discourse and uttered demands varying from cancellation of the third bridge project to ending crackdown on artists and changing the international policy of Turkey. In this transition, demand to protect Gezi Park lost its centrality and the Solidarity even demanded resignation of the government.

Continuing with my fieldwork, protection of Gezi Park could not gain centrality when my interviewees' demands are considered. They maintain that their struggle is far greater than Gezi Park. For example, when Baris (Socialist, 28) from the Socialist Party of the Oppressed was asked about his demands, he replies:

A section having certain environmental conscience was leading. I joined due to anti-fascist responsibility against police attack. I didn't have a special demand there. I wasn't very aware of the issue. I didn't have environmental conscience. I was acknowledging the struggle as right but, frankly speaking, I wasn't standing in any place of it. In fact, it became an illumination for us when experiencing. I don't think the issue was only three trees. There was an anger accumulated in all sections of society. All sections came together, the sections feeling anger against the system and the sections reacting against the AKP united in the conjuncture of events. It was a common broad front.⁷²

Cagdas (Kemalist nationalist, 25) maintains that protecting the park was important however he had greater wishes for the country by joining the protests. Efe (Socialist, 27) says during the Gezi Park protests his demand was only to protect Gezi Park. However, as the conversation became more in-depth, he reveals that he was in favor of a possible revolution out of Gezi protests and he presents many other demands to the government. Onur (Kurdish Alevi, 55) states his demands as follows: "Unconditionally that project must be renounced. An apology must be released for the killed people and condolences should be given to their families. These people should not be declared as terrorists."⁷³ On the other hand, he also says Gezi demanded to

⁷² Öncülüğü belli bir çevre duyarlılığı olan kesimler yapıyordu. Bendeki oradaki polis saldırısına karşı antifaşist bir duyarlılıktı. Orada çok özel bir talebim yoktu. Meselenin çok farkında da değildim. Çevre duyarlılığı olan bir insan değildim. Mücadeleyi haklı buluyordum ama çok bir yerinde durmuyordum açıkçası. Bizim için de bir aydınlanma oldu aslında o pratiği yaşarken. Ben de meselenin sadece 3 ağaç olduğunu düşünmüyorum. Toplumun bütün kesimlerinde biriken bir öfke vardı. Toplumun sisteme öfke duyan bütün kesimleriyle, konjonktürel olarak AKP'ye tepki duyan diğer kesimlerinin bir araya gelmesiydi aslında. Ortak geniş bir cepheydi.

⁷³ Kayıtsız, şartsız o projeden vazgeçilmeliydi. Öldürülen insanlar için özür dilenmeliydi, ailelerine taziyede bulunmalıydı. Bu insanları terörist ilan etmemeliydi.

topple the government and ending the dictatorship. Gizem (Socialist Feminist, 25) was not simply satisfied with the protection of the park, and she gives voice to her demands based on her feminist and socialist background:

One demand was, of course, the maintenance of Gezi Park as a park; it was an urgent demand at that moment however this resistance, which expanded to every district of Turkey, had a lot of different demands. I think every section there had diversified demands. For me, really, the issue was the need for change in the system of justice, which was based totally on protecting men and absolving men.⁷⁴

Ayşe (Feminist, 39) is an example who limited her demand to the protection of Gezi Park but she quit protesting because she thought other protesters wanted to topple the government. She states her demand as follows:

I wanted to make the government hear that people living in the city have something to say about urbanization. My aim was purely and simply standing there against the urbanization policies of the government. Yes, you cannot transform Gezi Park without asking people living there. You don't have to cut down the trees there.⁷⁵

She felt very uncomfortable by the attitude of the participants who aimed to topple the government:

I was saying that I don't want to overthrow the government. My aim is very limited, I want to protect Gezi Park. Abolishing the state, changing the government, I didn't know what; I didn't have such goals. I have no such goal of swearing at Tayyip. I got very annoyed by seeing they were also swearing at Muslims. They turned the discourse into a narrow goal of toppling the government and animosity against Tayyip Erdogan. If they didn't, it would be a plausible demonstration; it would be a beautiful demonstration I mean. They turned it into this. I am angry with them. It could be a good thing. To my surprise, everybody had an agenda. I learned this. I will never participate in large-scale social movements. I can only be involved in minimal protests that have a specific purpose. I can only be involved in something with limited issues and of which the limits are drawn very well. But I never will be involved in a protest without limits, this turned out to be a great lesson for me.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Bir talep tabii ki Gezi Parkı'nın park olarak kalması, o andaki aciliyetli talepti ama Türkiye'nin her yerine yayılan bu direnişin tabii ki bir sürü farklı farklı talepleri vardı. Sanırım oradaki her kesimin de farklı farklı talepleri vardı. Mesele benim için gerçekten tamamen erkekleri korumaya, erkekleri aklamaya dayalı adalet sisteminin değişmesi.

⁷⁵ Şehirleşmede şehirde yaşayanların da sözünün olduğunu hükûmete duyurmak istiyordum. Benim amacım sadece ve sadece hükûmetin şehirleşme politikalarına karşı bir duruş olarak orada olmaktı. Evet, bir Gezi Parkı'nı sen burada yaşayan insanlara sormadan daha başka bir şeye dönüştüremezsin. Ya da oradaki ağaçları kesmene gerek yok.

⁷⁶ Ben diyordum ki ben hükûmeti düşürmek istemiyorum ki. Benim amacım çok sınırlı, Gezi Parkı'nı korumak istiyorum. Devleti yıkmak, hükûmeti değiştirmek bilmemne gibi hiç öyle bir amacım yoktu. Tayyip'e küfredmek gibi hiçbir amacım yoktu. Ve orada Müslümanlara da küfredildiğini falan da görmek beni çok rahatsız etti. Söylemi dar bir kalıba hükûmeti düşürmeye ve Tayyip Erdoğan'a

Ayşe stopped protesting because the general demand of the protests did not correspond to her own demands which are far more limited. She even regrets her participation and decided to never join protests of which the aim is not predetermined. She says she does not want the government to resign despite its mistakes. As Laclau indicated in his theory, this uncertainty is always implicit in popular movements. The direction of a movement cannot be controlled and it always evolves into something else with different articulations and disarticulations. In this way, Ayşe was disarticulated when the protest discourse became anti-government.

According to my fieldwork, Gezi Park protests articulated wide range of unsatisfied demands in an equivalential chain against the government. Depending on their different backgrounds, my interviewees uttered different demands. For example, Efe (27) as a socialist demanded from these from government:

Urban policies should be changed. The third bridge should not be built. Urban transformation projects must be renounced. Clear. Because it is not urban transformation but urban destruction. You cannot remove the working class but you can relieve them. You will do very simple things. You will give good union rights, everyone should have a union. The state should remove its own syndical networks. Subcontracting must be revoked. Minimum wage must be increased, we shouldn't be exploited further. You should change the constitution immediately. You should give the Kurds their right to be educated [in their own language]. In addition, as my personal demand inner-city transformation should be free.⁷⁷

Baris (28), as another socialist, believes that democratic revolution is the first step of revolution towards socialism and he considers Gezi as a democratic front. He says that these democratic demands united the people in Gezi:

Removal of the Council of Higher Education for the university youth, dismissal of subcontracting system and assured job for the workers. An also pulling of minimum wage at a level of earning humanely living. Regarding women, we live in a time too much femicide committed, we face with a system that aims at confining women to home. The system

düşmanlığına dönüştürmeselerdi bence mantıklı bir eylem olacaktı, güzel bir eylem olacaktı yani. Buna dönüştürdüler. Onlara da kızgıyım. Yani iyi bir şey olabilirdi. Ama herkesin ajandası varmış. Ben bunu öğrendim. Bir daha büyük toplumsal hareketlerin içerisine asla girmem. Minimal küçük eylemlerde bulunabilirim belli bir amaca binaen. Sınırlı sorunlu, sınırları çok iyi çizilmiş bir şeyin içerisinde olabilirim. Ama sınırları çizilmemiş bir eylemin içerisinde asla olmam yani, bu bana büyük ders oldu.

⁷⁷ Kent politikalarının değişmesi lazım. Üçüncü köprü'nün olmaması lazım. Kentsel dönüşüm politikalarından artık vazgeçilmesi lazım. Net. Çünkü kentsel dönüşüm değil kentsel öldürme politikası güdüyorlar. İşçi sınıfını kaldıramazsın ama biraz daha rahatlatılabilirsin. Çok basit şeyler yapacaksınız. Adam akıllı sendikalar, sendikal haklar vereceksin, herkes sendikal olacak. Devletin sendikal ağlarını kaldırması lazım. Taşeronu kaldıracağız. Asgari ücretin artması lazım, daha fazla sömürülmememiz lazım Anayasayı değiştireceksin, derhal. Kürtlere eğitim hakkı vereceksin. Bir de ek olarak kendi talebim şehir içi ulaşımında paralar kaldırılmalı.

decides on and impose how many child to have. Similar things for LGBTs. Political demands of Kurds, Armenians are obvious. Alevis have demands of cemevi.⁷⁸

Aydin (Kemalist nationalist, 32) comes from a communist background and he desires a state to which all property belongs:

Equality for all, for whomsoever. All the goods, property and everything must belong to the state. They should become the means of the state and ownership must be stripped completely. We produce an incredible amount of high capital within this area by the contribution of everybody and we can share it equally. There must be equality in the salary you receive, and in the tax you pay and in all of your lives. This is what the Communist Party says. At least, the opinions and the theory that I set my heart on say this.⁷⁹

He believes in revolution and does not trust the results of the ballot box:

I don't have any democratic expectation from the ballot box, I never had. I, a person who believes in revolution, know that revolution never arrives through the ballot box. Revolutions don't arrive by voting like lambs and cheering. Under normal democratic conditions, I don't have any expectations from this country and I don't believe that something will happen. Nothing will change. Similar people, derivatives will come. It will say this instead, I will say something more severe, and each party will change methods in their own way. By such methods, this system will go on. They push people to unhappiness, I am unhappy.⁸⁰

Aydin gave meanings to Gezi protests by articulating it with his communist ideals. He thinks Gezi was an experience of small commune where everybody shared goods and tasks. He says, "Those assemblies [in Gezi] were places where suggested

⁷⁸ Üniversiteli gençler açısından YÖK'ün ortadan kaldırılması. İşçiler açısından, taşeron sisteminin ortadan kaldırılması, güvenceli iş. Asgari ücretin insanca yaşanabilir seviyeye çekilmesi, artan iş kazalarının önüne geçilmesi. Kadınlar açısından, kadın cinayetlerinin çok fazla işlendiği bir dönemdeyiz şu anda. Kadınları daha fazla eve kapatmayı amaçlayan bir sistemle karşı karşıyayız. Kaç çocuk yapacağını salık veren, bunu dayatan doğurmayacağına karar veren bir sistem var. LGBT'ler açısından da benzer şeyler. Kürtlerin, Ermenilerin zaten politik talepleri ortada. Alevilerin cem evleri talepleri var mesela.

⁷⁹ Herkes için, kim olursa olsun eşitlik. Bütün malın, mülkün, her şeyin devlete ait olması. Devletin araç gereçleri olması, mülkiyetin tamamen kaldırılması. Hepimizin katkısıyla inanılmaz yüksek bir sermaye üretiyoruz bu coğrafya içerisinde ve bunu eşit bir şekilde paylaşabiliriz. Aldığın maaşta da eşitlik olması gerekiyor, verdiğinde de eşitlik olması gerekiyor, yaşamında da eşitlik olması gerekiyor. Komünist Parti bunu söylüyor. En azından benim inandığım benim yoluna baş koyduğum fikirler ya da teori bunu söylüyor.

⁸⁰ Demokratik olarak sandıktan bir beklentim yok benim, hiçbir zaman olmadı. Ben devrime inanan bir insan olarak biliyorum ki devrim hiçbir zaman sandıkta olmaz. Paşa paşa oy verip de aman ne güzel diye devrim olmaz. Normal demokratik şartlar altında bir beklentim yok bu ülkede ve olacağına da inanmıyorum zaten. Hiçbir şey değişmeyecek. Benzerleri gelecek, türevleri gelecek. Öyle demeyecek böyle diyecek, daha sertini söyleyecek, her parti kendine göre yöntemler değiştirecek. O yöntemlerle bir şekilde bu saçma sapan sistem devam ediyor olacak. Çok mutsuzluğa sevk ediyorlar artık insanları, mutsuzum.

ideas were discussed, why something needs to be done is negotiated and the decisions were taken with unanimity.”⁸¹ He thinks that all objectors would be persuaded and agree with the decisions in the park. However he did not expect a revolution from Gezi. “Revolution only winked at Gezi. It gave hope, it motivated and excited us, but it was obvious that a revolution would not arrive from there.”⁸² According to him, the revolution has its own stages including a guerilla fight:

The event begins with resistance and civil disobedience. After that it changes dimension and leads to taking up arms. It should have large organizations within itself, there must be areas, channels and resources where you can declare your autonomy. And after one point, you come to a position that you can clash with your opponent. Because the state is very powerful, states are very powerful against their people. A revolution cannot be made by standing against three TOMAs in Gezi, there is no such world. The state has minimum ten thousand tanks at present, and it takes only three minutes for it to get there and kill you by crushing. You cannot resist physically. If someone or some party was expecting this, alas. First, you need to take the hills by means of guerilla fight, like the PKK reality. It is certain that such a thing would not arise from there (Gezi). But it is true that it (revolution) winked there. Because the mass did not hesitate, resisted what they regard as wrong and stand together against its opponent. They put their inner conflicts aside and opposed.⁸³

Aydin demanded cancellation of the Gezi Park project as well as ending of projects of the third bridge and the third airport. In addition, he has other goals, such as the protection of nature, the prevention of the climate change. He states his demands as follows:

My word is rejection of intervention in way of lives of people in many ways. Turning to the nature much more. It is not a matter of accepting or not, there are scientific realities. As long as concrete increased and green decreased in the world, we upset the balance of the nature. We are burning a lot of things irreversibly. Now we get cold in Istanbul and sit with our coats in June. Why? Because there is no nature anymore, no

⁸¹ O meclisler bir fikir ortaya atıldığı zaman tartışılan, neden yapılması gerektiğinin tartışılıp oy birliğiyle kararlar alınan yerlerdi.

⁸² Gezi’de devrim sadece göz kırptı. Umutlandırdı, heveslendirdi, heyecanlandırdı ama oradan bir devrimin çıkmayacağı çok barizdi.

⁸³ Önce olay direnmeyle başlıyor, sivil itaatsizlikle başlıyor. Sonra artık boyut değiştirerek biraz daha silahlanmaya gitmeli. Kendi içerisinde büyük örgütlenmeleri olmalı, özerkliğini iddia edebileceğin alanların olmalı, kanalların olmalı, kaynakların olmalı. Ve bir yerden sonra artık karşı tarafla çatışabilecek pozisyona gelinmeli. Çünkü devlet çok güçlü, devletler halklarına karşı çok güçlü. Gezi’de üç tane TOMA’nın karşısında durarak devrim yapılmazdı, öyle bir dünya yok. Devletin şu anda sahip olduğu minimum on bin tane tankı vardır, üç dakikasını alır oraya tankla girmesi, seni orada ezerek öldürmesi. Fiziken karşılayamazsın. Eğer bunu bekleyen bir taraf ya da kişi vardırıysa yazık. Zaten gerilla usulü dağa çıkman gerekiyor en başta, PKK gerçeği gibi. Öyle bir şeyin oradan çıkmayacağı kesin de ama göz kırptığı doğru. Çünkü sözünü söylemekten esirgemeyen kitle, karşı tarafta yanlış olduğunu düşündüğü şeye hep beraber başkaldırdı ve birlikte durdu. Kendi iç kavgalarını rafa kaldırıp karşı durabildi.

trees, no green, no air. It rains and causes flood this time, causes hail another time. We really already harmed nature until the degree that cause climate change. When you build the third bridge and the third airport, you dry the ponds that kills lives of the all birds there. After five years I'm sorry but you cannot say we changed the nature irreversibly let's restore, remove concrete and rebuild the ponds. A lot of things have no comeback.⁸⁴

In the park, he also voiced all his ideals without a hope for change: "I spoke out there, I said everything I wanted to say. Were the ones I spoke to able to change things that I wanted to change? No, they weren't. But anyhow I could say, it was a beautiful environment for me."⁸⁵ Aydin puts forward many demands by protesting, however he does not consider the Gezi community as something that may bring about change. This indicates that his articulation with the protest discourse was rather weak.

Emre says (38) ideal system that he wants to establish is best described in anti-capitalist Muslims' slogan: "All property belongs to Allah. There is no authority other than Him."⁸⁶ According to him, in such an order there is neither exploitation nor competition; everybody produces based on needs and shares justly. Emre considered the Gezi Park protests as a way of spreading their message and he explains his group's demands as follows:

It was, in specificity of there, giving a general message. Standing against the capital that obtains any place it wills, commodifies any place it wills and restrains people to purchase from these places. At the same time it determines what to buy and where to buy things. It [our aim by protesting] was taking a stand against the capital, not only against the government but against the system.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Benim sözümlerim gerçekten insanların hayat tarzlarına müdahale edilmemesi, bu birçok yönden böyle. Gerçekten daha fazla doğaya dönülmesi, kabul edeyim veya etmeyeyim diye bir şey değil, bilimsel bir takım gerçekler vardır. Dünyada beton arttıkça yeşil azaldıkça tabiatın dengesini bozuyoruz. Birçok şeyi artık geri dönüşümsüz şekilde yakıyoruz. Artık İstanbul'da Haziran ayında montla oturur pozisyondayız, gayet üşüyoruz. Neden, çünkü artık gerçekten doğa yok, ağaç yok, yeşil yok, hava yok. Yağmur yağıyor, bir yağdığında sel yapıyor, bir yağdığında dolu yapıyor. Artık gerçekten iklimi değiştirecek kadar doğaya zarar vermeye başladık. Üçüncü köprüyü yaparken, ya da üçüncü havalimanını yaparken siz oradaki bütün kuşların yaşamını öldürecek seviyede onlarca gölet kurutuyorsunuz. Beş sene sonra burada, kusura bakmayınız, doğayı geri dönüşümsüz şekilde değiştirdik, hadi burayı geri yapalım dediğinizde ortadaki betonu kaldıramazsınız, tekrar o göletleri inşa edemezsiniz. Çok şeyin artık geri dönüşümü yok.

⁸⁵ Ben orada söylemek istediğim her şeyi söyledim. Söylediğim insanlar benim değişmesini istediğim şeyleri değiştirmeye muktedir miydi? Hayır, değildi. Ama ben yine de söyleyebildim, benim için güzel bir ortamdı.

⁸⁶ Mülk Allah'ındır ve O'ndan başka otorite yoktur.

⁸⁷ Oranın özelinde, bir genel mesaj vermektir. Yani kapitalizmin istediği her yeri elde edebilmesi, istediği her yeri metalaştırabilmesi ve insanların satın alma gücünü belirlerken buralara hapsedmesi aynı zamanda, neyi, ne kadar ve nereden alabileceğini belirlemesine bir karşı duruştu. Yani sermaye karşıtı, sadece iktidar karşıtı değil, sistem karşıtı bir duruştu. Yani sermaye karşıtı, sadece iktidar karşıtı değil, sistem karşıtı bir duruştu.

Cagdas (Kemalist nationalist, 25) demands freedom which is, he thought, threatened by the government:

My demand, the one I shared with people is the demand for freedom. In other words, I thought my freedoms are restricted too much, my private life is being intervened in too much. I wanted to say ‘that’s enough!’ A step back must be taken on these issues.⁸⁸

Gizem (Socialist Feminist, 25) demanded ending of capitalist security and urban transformation policies. She also wanted to change the patriarchal language and policies of the government:

The change should spread to the language of the government and turn it into something that pays attention to the equality of women and men and to the rights of women to live, as they wish. In line with this, turning the streets into places that women feel safe inside without any need of security precautions. This means getting out of the perception of the city and living where security corresponds to police, armor, shields, more cameras, more surveillance; and transcending a perception of life where we see each other as security. Our cities are places with more surveillance cameras, more shopping centers and security staff of shopping centers. We want to change them into places where we share together and take responsibility equally. Stopping of our public spaces being places that are taken away from us, that are changed and transformed by owners of capital, government and government related capital. This was my main problem. That is enough that our homes are being transformed, people are displaced, but we cannot not able to say anything.⁸⁹

Umut (Academician, 28) demanded these from the government: cancellation of construction plans in Gezi Park, solution for traffic congestion in Istanbul and caring for nature and environment sensitively.

⁸⁸ İnsanlarla paylaştığım talebim özgürlük talebimdi. Yani özgürlüklerimin çok fazla kısıtlandığını, özel hayatıma çok fazla müdahale edildiğini düşündüm. Bu konuda ‘yeter artık’, bunlarda geri adım atılması lazım demek istedim.

⁸⁹ Aynı zamanda iktidarın diline değişimin sirayet etmesi ve kadın-erkek eşitliğini gözeten bir yerden, kadınların istedikleri gibi yaşama hakkını gözeten bir yerden konuşmasıydı. Bununla doğru orantılı olarak da sokakların, kadınların kendilerini içerisinde güvenlik tedbirlerine gerek olmadan güvende hissettikleri yerlere dönüşebilmesiydi. Yani güvenlik denen şeyin polis, zırh, kalkan, daha fazla kamera, daha fazla gözetim olduğu bir şehir ve yaşama anlayışından çıkıp, biraz birbirimizi güvenlik olarak görebileceğimiz bir yaşam anlayışına geçebilmek. Kentlerimizin böyle daha çok mobese kamerası, daha çok AVM ve AVM’lerin özel güvenlik görevlileri bilmemne olan yerler olmaktan çıkıp, hep beraber paylaştığımız, sorumluluğunun hepimizin üzerine düştüğü yerlere dönüşürebilmektir. Yani devamlı olarak bu kamusal alanlarımızın birileri tarafından sermaye sahipleri de olabilir, iktidar da olabilir, iktidarla ilişkisi olan sermaye de olabilir, onlar tarafından değiştirilen dönüştürülen, elimizden alınan yerler olmaktan çıkmasıydı. Temel derdim buydu benim. Yeter artık yani evlerimiz dönüştürülüyor bizim bunda sözümüz yok, insanlar yerlerinden ediliyorlar.

As I mentioned earlier, Ali (Alevi, 19) demanded bars on the Taksim road to be closed while important majority of Gezi Park protesters were against any restriction on alcohol consumption imposed by the government.

All these examples reveal that the protest discourse succeeded in articulating vast range of demands in an equivalential chain. However there was lack of coherence among different demands and the links among them were weak. Protesters did not make concessions from particularity of their demands in favor of protecting the park, instead each group emphasized its own goal. Thus, protesters' identification with the Gezi community on a positive ground could not have been achieved.

Unifying principle in Gezi Park protests had been antagonism to the government. The name of 'Gezi' turned into a signifier of that antagonism. In my fieldwork, protesters' designation of their demand or their goal as something negative indicates that the unity in Gezi Park could not go beyond the negativity.

Some protesters mainly demanded the fall of the government. Berke (Queer, Alevi, 25), Ali (Alevi, 19), Cagdas (Kemalist nationalist, 25) and Onur (Kurdish Alevi, 55) are among them. As mentioned earlier, Berke maintains that his major demand was toppling of the government. This aim made his articulation in the protests possible that he endured too many 'thugs'. When asked about his demands, Ali replies that "I wanted the AK Party to quit government."⁹⁰ Cagdas thinks the protests happened because the main oppositional party did not oppose the government:

I believe that it taught to supposedly oppositional parties how to oppose the ruling party. Somewhat, Gezi was that sort of thing. Real opposition that cannot be engendered in the parliament was created by the people themselves.⁹¹

He says he aimed to prevent the oppressive government from going so far and he did not expect to overthrow the government. However he acted differently when he gathered people to raid the Prime Minister's Office in Dolmabahçe. He stopped when some other protesters asked their aim in walking to the Office and he had no answer. Later he thinks he got carried away at that moment. Despite his level of opposition is indeterminate, his articulation in the protests based on anti-governmental stance of the protests.

⁹⁰ Ben Ak Parti'nin iktidardan çekilmesini istiyordum.

⁹¹ Baştaki iktidar partisine muhalefet etmesi gereken partilerin muhalefeti nasıl etmesi gerektiği konusunda da öğretici olduğuna inanıyorum. Biraz da Gezi böyle bir şeydi. Mecliste yaratılamayan muhalefeti, gerçek muhalefeti halkın kendinin yaratmasıydı.

Onur (Kurdish Alevi, 55) says no one would continue to protest if Erdogan gave up the project, however, his stubbornness give an edge to anger. He deems Gezi as an unorganized grassroots movement that go further to demand resignation of the government. He thinks the government could not be toppled because political parties did not support the protests: “None of the parties supported them unconditionally. If they had supported, the government would be overthrown. None of the organizations came to prominence, otherwise this power (of the protests) would break down.”⁹² His comment on lack of any prominent organization corresponds to Gezi Park protests’ failure to constitute a popular demand. In this way, only ground for all contradictory groups had been their opposition to the government.

Some protesters demanded the government to take a step back. Selin (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 32), Eren (Ex-Gülenist, 25), Umut (Academician, 28) and Aydin (Kemalist nationalist, 32) are among them. Selin states that her goal was protesting against the AKP rule and the emergent one man regime of Tayyip Erdogan. For Eren, Gezi had been a way of criticizing the conservative government and the Gülenist environment he grew up. He does not seem to have any proper demand: “Frankly, I was there with wonder. I was there without having my own demands rather I thought those who had demands are rightful.”⁹³ Umut wanted the government to question itself and retreat from authoritarianism. However, he maintains that Erdogan did not take a step back and provoked the protesters by insulting them. He thinks Gezi united people against the mistakes of the government. Aydin (Kemalist nationalist, 32) wanted to oppose the oppressive government. He voices anger at the government:

Stop and listen once, look that much scientist are working here. Let’s find a reasonable way together and make things. Do not go that much headstrong, do not meddle in people that much. Do not oppress that much. Unfortunately, we are recently discussing the topics of those many countries, cultures and societies gone through and passed 50 years ago. We come from 50 maybe 100 years behind.⁹⁴

Demand to end police violence functioned as another negative ground considering that some protesters deemed it as their only aim. Some others maintained

⁹² Hiçbir parti bunlara kayıtsız şartsız destek vermedi. Verseydi zaten hükümet yıkılırdı. Hiçbir örgüt ön plana çıkmadı, çıksaydı zaten bu güç kırılırdı.

⁹³ Bir merakla orada bulundum açıkçası. Daha çok talepleri olan biri olarak değil ama talepleri olan kişilerin haklı olduğunu düşünerek oradaydım ben.

⁹⁴ Bir dur, dinle, bak bu kadar bilim insanı çalışıyor burada. Hep beraber gel bir akıl yöntemini bulalım da yapalım bir şeyleri. Bu kadar dikine gitme kafanın, bu kadar karışma insanlara, bu kadar baskı yapma. Birçok ülkenin, kültürün ya da toplumun bundan 50 sene önce yaşayıp geçtiği konuları biz daha maalesef yeni konuşuyoruz. 50 yıl, belki 100 yıl geriden geliyoruz.

that the source of unity in Gezi Park was opposition to the police. For instance, Mehmet's (Ex-nationalist, 25) sole demand was an end to the police violence. Talha (Kurd, 28) was in the protests to oppose the state violence. Gizem (Socialist Feminist, 25) thinks what united the people in Gezi was the opposition to the police brutality:

There was essentially a unity against police violence, this is very important. One of our demands was as to this police violence. We wanted the prohibition of the police exercising this much violence at the entrance [to the park], for instance, we wanted the police not to use so much tear gas, we all wanted this. A lot of sections, having no close contact with each other, opposed the police violence and the oppression of their rights to object by the state. Really, there was cooperation at this point, certainly. All people together saw that the state and its use of violence were not something absolute, unconditional.⁹⁵

Some socialists in Gezi demanded a revolution and they think it necessitates toppling of the government. Cagla (Socialist, 26), Efe (Socialist, 27) and Baris (Socialist, 28) are examples of them. Efe thinks Turkey is ruled by bourgeois democracy and oligarchy. He aims to establish socialism which can only be brought by a revolution. Despite he did not join the Gezi Park protests for a revolution, he changed his mind during the protests and expected a revolution. His perspective even runs the risk of a civil war: "Either he [Erdogan] would wither the crowd or his men would go out. Those who had night sticks already went out. If they had more weapons there would be a civil war in this country. If there were an outbreak of civil war, we might walk towards the revolution. There is no revolution without blood."⁹⁶

Despite his passion for revolution, Efe does not agree with the people in Gezi. He was disappointed with the absence of workers. He expected all labor unions to go on strike and to join the protests. Then, it would be possible to stop the governors directly by ending the production. Further, he does not trust the protesters and fear if the revolution arrives by means of them:

Ok, we didn't take the road of the revolution, we didn't want to make a revolution. But after a point we were scared, personally I was scared. Because, man, I hope the revolution would not arrive by mistake.

⁹⁵ Orada en temelde polis şiddetinin karşısında bir birlik vardı, önemli bir şey yani. Oradaki taleplerimizden bir tanesi de polisin bu şiddetine dairdi. Girişte polisin bu denli şiddet uygulamasının, mesela biber gazı kullanılmasının yasaklanmasını istiyorduk biz, hep beraber istiyorduk. Genel olarak birbiriyle daha önce pek dirsek teması olmayan çok farklı kesim, polis şiddeti ve devletin kendilerinin itiraz etme hakkını baskılama haline karşı çıktı. Gerçekten burada bir ortaklaşma kesinlikle oldu yani. İnsanlar hep beraber şunu da gördüler devlet ve onun tekelindeki bu şiddet kayıtsız, şartsız bir şey değil.

⁹⁶ Ya kitleyi sindirecekti ya da işte adamları sokağa çıkacaktı. Eli sopalılar çıktı zaten. Onların daha fazla silahı olsaydı bu ülkede iç savaş olacaktı bence. İç savaş olsaydı belki devrime yürürdük. Kansıız devrim olmaz.

Because it (Gezi protests) was not a class based thing and people from various classes and sections were there. I knew that if the revolution were achieved, those people would shoot me first. Because I belong to a lower class and also I am a socialist. They are Kemalist nationalists etc.⁹⁷

He describes a moment of fear as:

At one point I was scared. We were walking towards the Prime Ministry from Dolmabahce. At one point I said: Ah, where are we going? I was looking around, slogans were shouted, “Soldier don’t sleep, protect your people!” Boy, what business would a soldier have there? Why are you still trusting him? We were walking towards the Prime Ministry and the crowd was a strange crowd. Everyone was there except revolutionists. Everyone was there. From nationalist to I don’t know what, everyone was there. And we walked along them. At one point I honestly questioned myself, all right. Where are we going? What is going to happen?⁹⁸

Efe fears the potential fraction that might capture the actual revolution was the Kemalist nationalists. He thinks they came to Gezi part-time when there were no clashes and they showed off. He says “They are the ones who were absent in the other protests [than Gezi]. They are still absent, we are a handful of people on the streets.”⁹⁹

He states that his demands would not be represented if the revolution happened:

Something would slip from my hand. For instance, it happened in Egypt. At the beginning the revolutionists went out to the streets, all right. Later the Muslim Brotherhood came and seized it. Revolution evolved to elsewhere. This is the same thing. It would slip from my hand and go away, seriously. But I didn’t want it to slip because I clashed there. I stayed up all night there, I slept there and I woke up there. I was even about to die there.¹⁰⁰

To conclude, Efe hoped that his dream of revolution might arrive during the protests if the government is overthrown. However, he does not trust the crowd and

⁹⁷ Tamam devrim için yola çıkmadık, devrim yapmak da istemiyorduk. Ama bir yerden sonra korktuk, kendi adıma korktum. Lan yanlışlıkla devrim olmaz herhalde diye. Çünkü sınıfsal bir şey olmadığı için ve birçok sınıftan kesimden kimseler orada olduğu için. Şeyi biliyordum devrim olsaydı bu insanlar ilk başta bana sıkacaklardı. Çünkü ben sınıf olarak onlardan düşük bir sınıftayım, hem de ben sosyalistim. Onlar ulusalcı vesaire cart curt.

⁹⁸ Ya bir noktada korktum. Dolmabahçe’den Başbakanlığa yürüyoruz. Bir noktada şey dedim: Abi nereye gidiyoruz yaa? Etrafıma bakıyorum, “Asker uyuma, halkına sahip çık!” diye sloganlar atılıyor. Oğlum askerin ne işi var orada. Niye ona güveniyorsun ki hala? Bir noktada başbakanlığa doğru yürüyoruz ve kitle acayip bir kitle. Kitlede devrimci dışında herkes var. Herkes var. Milliyetçisinden tut bilmem nesine kadar herkes orada. Ve onlarla beraber yürüyoruz. Bir noktada gerçekten kendimi sorguladım tamam mı. Nereye gidiyoruz? Ne olacak?

⁹⁹ Onlar diğer eylemlerde yoktular, hala yoklar. Sokakta biz ne yazık ki bir avuç insan olarak kaldık.

¹⁰⁰ Ya elimden bir şeyler kayardı. Mesela Mısır’da bu oldu ya. İlk başta devrimciler sokağa çıktı, tamam mı. Ondan sonra Müslüman Kardeşler geldi buna el koydu. Devrim başka bir yere evirildi. Aynı şey. Elimden kayıp giderdi, ciddi anlamda. Ama elimden kayıp gitmesini istemezdim çünkü ben orada çatıştım. Orada sabahladım, orada kalktım, orada yattım. Neredeyse ölüyordum.

doubts that Kemalists may sacrifice socialists. He also thinks the results of a possible seizure of power. His account reveals that his articulation with Gezi community was weak and based on negative grounds rather than a common horizon.

Cagla (26) is another socialist who aimed at revolution during the protests. She was very excited about the demands of her organization, Mucadele Birliği, and sacrificed her instrument to arrive at Gezi Park:

I was browsing our website, they were making a call for revolt as you know. They stated their demands, the underdog demands their own rule. The government to be abolished, a temporary revolutionary government to replace, troops and the army to deliver weapons, the people's assemblies to be instituted etc. They were saying very further things that I get very much excited.¹⁰¹

After getting to Gezi Park, she was disappointed with the demands of other organizations:

Many (socialist) organizations couldn't see the revolt as a revolt. Think of a huge armed organization demanding the ban of tear gas and the resignation of the governor. You say you will start a revolution, this is a fascist country; you will mess up the government, power and everything of this country and replace this. There is a revolt, 5-6 million people are out in the streets saying "government resign" and these people are unorganized. Think of that instead of taking them forward, you say the resignation of the governor is enough when they are saying "government resign". They attempted to take (people) back as much as possible. From the TMMOB (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects) to the Taksim Solidarity and fifty thousand organizations etc. all looked when it will [the protests] end and we will get off. Yet we might take them forward, it was in our hands.¹⁰²

Similar to Efe (Socialist, 27), Cagla awaits a revolution and no other gain would please her. She considers ballot box as evil and condemns the groups who call for political representation. She thinks masses do not prefer the way of revolution

¹⁰¹ Bizim siteye bakıyorum, bildiğin ayaklanma çağrısı yapıyor. İşte güçsüzlerin hükümet talebi, taleplerini ortaya dökmüşler. İktidarın derhal feshini, yerine geçici devrim hükümetini, asker ve ordunun derhal silahlarını teslim etmesini, halk meclislerinin oluşmasını vs vs. Kitlelere o kadar ileri şeyler söylüyorlardı ki acayip heyecanlandım.

¹⁰² Ayaklanmaya ayaklanma gözüyle bakamadı birçok örgüt. Yani düşünsenize koskoca silahlı örgüt talep olarak; gaz bombası yasaklansın, vali istifa etsin gibi şeyler yazmıştı. Sen diyorsun ki ben devrim yapacağım, bu ülke faşist bir ülke artık diyorsun, ben bu ülkenin hükümetini, iktidarını, her şeyini darma duman edeceğim yerine şunu koyacağım diyorsun. Ayaklanma çıkıyor, yaklaşık olarak 5-6 milyon kişi sokağa dökülüyor "hükümet istifa" diyerek ve bu insanlar örgütsüz. Düşünün yani sen onları ileri bir şeye götürmek yerine, onlar "hükümet istifa" diyor sen vali istifa etsin yeter diyorsun. Olabildiğince geri çekmeye çalıştılar. TMOBB'undan tutun Taksim Dayanışması'ndan elli bin tane örgütünden vs. hepsi ne zaman bitecek diye kurtulalım gözüyle baktılar. Oysaki onları daha ileri taşıyabilirdik, aslında bu bizim elimizdeydi.

because there is death at the end. She says they try easier ways including the ballot box and they may prefer revolution when there is no other choice. She maintains that the mass in Gezi Park is in the service of revolution unconsciously: “Though they didn’t go out on the streets for revolution, but to hug trees, to protest the banning of alcohol etc; what they were doing serves the revolution. Maybe they were doing this consciously maybe unconsciously.”¹⁰³ However, she thinks the protests failed to provide grounds for a revolution:

If the TOMAs were not brought from Diyarbakir, and a lot of other things could not be done, there might be more progress. We might not arrive at a revolution but we could gain more experience. Because this is a very serious war, a civil war is more serious than trench warfare. Think of it, you will get on the same bus, eat at the same table with the enemy you are fighting; but when the time arrives you will fire bullets to each other. It is not an easy thing. People’s arrival of this consciousness is also not easy. As long as the state oppresses and when people oppose with a higher consciousness and higher will, solely then some things can happen.¹⁰⁴

As it is visible in her comments, she considers the oppression of the state as a way of increasing people’s consciousness. In a sense, she desires the oppression of the state because it would contribute to the arrival of the revolution.

Baris (Socialist, 28) pursues socialism in general: “My struggle is for establishing socialism. I endeavor to create an order in which labor-capital contradiction is abolished. I am ready to pay any kind of price for this.”¹⁰⁵ He thinks socialism can only be obtained through revolution and Gezi had a revolutionary potential to change existing order:

We have thought of revolution and we think it will arrive by the way of popular uprising. Coming together of the crowds that generally do not meet up, make us think such a moment can arrive. I thought it can be a proper ground to change the order. My personal demand and also demand of our organization in general was resignation of the government with all

¹⁰³ Devrim yapmak için sokağa çıkmaya bile, ağaca sarılmak için, içkisi yasaklandığı için vs. sokağa çıkmış bile olsa; yaptıkları şey devrime hizmet ediyordu. Bunu belki bilinçli belki bilinçsiz yapıyorlardı.

¹⁰⁴ Diyarbakır’dan TOMA’lar gelmeseydi, başka birçok şeyler yapılamasaydı, çok daha ilerleyebilirdi. Yine devrime varamayabilirdik ama daha çok tecrübe edinebilirdik. Çünkü çok ciddi bir savaş bu, iç savaş cephe savaşından daha ciddi bir savaştır. Düşünün yani karşında savaştığın insanlarla aynı otobüse bineceksin, aynı masada yemek yiyeceksin belki ama, yerine geldiğin zaman da karşı karşıya kurşun sıkacaksın birbirine. Yani bu kolay bir şey değil. İnsanların bu bilince ulaşması da kolay değil. Devlet baskı uyguladıkça, kişiler de o şiddete karşı daha yüksek bir bilinç, daha yüksek bir irade ile karşı koydukları zaman, ancak o zaman bir şeyler olabiliyor işte.

¹⁰⁵ Ama benim yürüttüğüm mücadele sosyalizmi kurmak. Emek-sermaye çelişkisinin ortadan kalktığı bir düzeni yaratmaya çalışıyorum ve bunun için de her türlü bedeli ödemeye hazırım zaten.

ministers. In particular it was remaining of Gezi Park as park again, starting of a prosecution against police who harmed people.¹⁰⁶

He thought idea of a revolution could be compromised with different groups of protesters in Gezi:

An anti-imperialist, democratic revolution is something that can be realized by the widest oppressed section of the society. People demanding democracy who may not be socialist, who can be a liberal but stands at a point that supports the change at that moment. It (Gezi) was important to consolidate that widest community. Later on, Taksim Solidarity was established. Despite the Solidarity didn't have such a perspective, communists and liberals united there under definite demands. No one imposed upon their substantial demand or said this will happen that won't happen. If someone said, it is solved in discussions or in practices there. So, if the government would resign, a solidarity including representatives of all sections could be established and a joint demand could be determined for later.¹⁰⁷

He says that his organization, the ESP, was not taking the lead in the Gezi protests because it did not have such an organizational power. "If there was a communist system directing the masses during the period of Gezi, the process could be taken forward to revolution. However it (ESP) unfortunately didn't have that power."¹⁰⁸ He thinks socialist organizations had an important role in confronting the police because they had experience of building barricades against the police. However, he thinks they could not lead the movement in general; it developed spontaneously and ended within the limits drawn by the Taksim Solidarity. He says about the Solidarity:

Taksim Solidarity was not a leader [initiative] that can provide radical change. It stands in a local position and does not have an objective such as changing Turkey. It is impossible, it is against its nature. It is a quite different means. A communist party is necessary to do so. In order to

¹⁰⁶ Devrim düşüncemiz var onun da halk ayaklanması yoluyla gerçekleşeceğini düşünüyoruz. Çok fazla bir araya gelmeyen kalabalıkların bir araya gelmesi, öylesi bir anın olabileceğini düşündürdü. Düzeni değiştirmek için uygun bir zemin olabileceğini düşündüm. Benim kişisel talebim de, örgütümüzün talebi de geniş anlamda Hükümetin bütün bakanlarıyla birlikte istifa etmesiydi. Daha dar anlamda ise Gezi Parkı'nın tekrar park olarak kalması, insanları yaralayan polislerle ilgili soruşturma yürütülmesiydi.

¹⁰⁷ Antiemperyalist demokratik bir devrim, toplumun en geniş ezilen kesimiyle olabilecek bir şey. Demokrasi isteğinde olan insanlar sosyalist olmayabilir, liberal olabilir; ama o anda o değişimi destekleyecek bir yerde durur. O en geniş çevreyi toplamak açısından önemliydi. Sonrasında Taksim Dayanışma kuruldu. Dayanışmanın öyle bir perspektifi olmasa da komünistlerle liberaller orada belli talepler altında birleştiler. Kimse bizim ağırlıklı talebimiz bu diyerek dayatmada bulunmadı ya da bu olmayacak bu olacak demedi. Dediye de oradaki tartışma içinde ya da pratik içinde bunlar çözüldü. Dolayısıyla hükümet istifa etseydi de, bütün kesimlerin temsilciler düzeyinde de olsa bulunduğu bir dayanışma kurulup, ortak bir talep belirlenebilirdi sonrası için.

¹⁰⁸ Komünist bir önder olsaydı Gezi döneminde, kitleleri peşinden sürükleyen, süreci devrime kadar bile götürebilirdi. Ama ne yazık ki o güçte değildi.

make radical change, a populist, democratic, powerful organization is necessary.¹⁰⁹

He says there was no communist unity in Gezi, however there was a democratic one. He thinks a revolution takes place in two stages: first a democratic revolution, second a socialist one. A democratic revolution is necessary against fascist dictatorships: “This is not only related to the AKP, but to the Republic. Now a fascist dictatorship is ruling.”¹¹⁰ He thinks the labor - capital contradiction is covered by other political contradictions such as Alevi - Sunni, Turk - Kurd, woman - man. He maintains these contradictions must be eliminated by forming the widest democratic front as the one that took place in Gezi. He states that a socialist revolution is the second stage, struggle for the demands of the working class can be given after political contradictions are solved. He thinks the widest democratic front had been spontaneously formed in Gezi and the angry masses even demanded the resignation of the government. According to the report of the Ministry of Interior, he says, the state came to an inoperative situation during Gezi. “If this state became inoperative, if there hadn’t been a leader gap, it might have ended with revolution.”¹¹¹

He says now the ESP, as an active component of the HDP, foresees a democratic struggle. He states that a democratic front in Gezi has not been developed by will and now his organization works to constitute that front in Gezi actively and voluntarily.

On the basis of the above, it can be concluded that Baris’ aim by protesting mainly remained in negative grounds. He expected a revolution to arrive in the wake of the protests and he thought the toppling of the government would solve political problems.

Emre (Anti-capitalist Muslim, 38) adopts a class-based perspective and he aimed to oppose capitalism by participating the Gezi Park protests. However, he thinks the protesters were from the middle class and they wanted to oppose the AK Party government rather than the capitalism:

¹⁰⁹ Taksim Dayanışması radikal bir değişikliği sağlayabilecek bir önder değildi. Yerel bir yerde duruyor aslında. Türkiye’yi değiştirelim gibi bir amacı yok. Olmaz da, kendi doğasına aykırı. Bambaşka bir araç o. Onu yapmak için komünist bir parti gerekir. Radikal bir değişiklik sağlamaya yönelik kitleye önderlik edebilmesi için halkçı, demokratik, güçlü bir örgütün olması gerekiyor.

¹¹⁰ Sadece AKP’yle değil, Cumhuriyetle ilgili bir şey. Şu anda faşist diktatörlük hâkim.

¹¹¹ Eğer bu devlet işleyemez duruma geliyorsa, gerçekten orada önder boşluğu olmasaymış, devrime kadar gidermiş.

Gezi was a middle class revolt. They were engineers, doctors and ones who have good positions in companies. They earn 3-4000 liras or more salaries and they were there because of their identities and freedom. Their expectations were not class-driven or related to economy. They were there with reactions of “Don’t fight with our identities”, “Don’t mess too much with our freedom of drinking”, “Leave us an area”. I cannot call it [the Gezi Park protests] a class-based revolt. When we look from outside, Gezi has a general character of opposition to the AKP. After some time, it assumed that language. It was what we never wanted here.¹¹²

He was disturbed that protests turned anti-government and some people wanted to profit from Gezi in favor of the other political parties such as the BDP and the CHP. He was against such attempts because he thinks capitalism cannot be overcome through representative democracy: “In a place where representative democracy remains, it is impossible for a party to become the government unless it is financed by capital or itself becomes capital. This means that you have to articulate with the capital.”¹¹³ He says “Representative democracy is ‘opium’. A Muslim strives to gain consent of even the last man. If 99 persons out of 100 agreed and 1 has reservations, the consent of that single man is needed.”¹¹⁴ He thinks Muslims in Turkey were mistaken when they quit saying “Voting means committing *shirk* [Associating partners with God]”¹¹⁵ and they voted for Erdogan and later for the AK Party. According to him this canalized Muslims into a system of exploitation and articulated them with capitalism.

Considering Emre’s account in general, he articulated with the Gezi protests in order to oppose capitalism which basically has a negative character. He was disturbed and his articulation was weakened when the protests turned anti-government. However, he continued to stay in the park and unwillingly became a part of another negativity.

¹¹² Gezi büyük çoğunlukta bir orta sınıf kalkışmasıydı. Yani şirketlerde yönetici pozisyonunda olanlar, mühendis, doktorlar, maaşı 3-4000 lira belki daha fazla olan, asgari ücretli işçi gibi standartları olmayan insanların; yalnızca aidiyetleri ve özgürlük beklentileri üzerinden orada olmasının etkisi var. Yani sınıfsal bir beklenti değil de, ekonomi politikalarından değil de, “bizim aidiyetlerimizle uğraşma”, “bizim içme özgürlüğümüze çok fazla bulaşma”, “bize alan bırak” gibi tepkilerle oradaydılar. Sınıfsal temeli olan bir kalkışma diyemeyeceğim. Gezi’nin aslında genel karakteristiği, dışarıdan bakıldığında sadece bir AKP karşıtlığı söz konusuymuş gibi duruyor. Bir süre sonra aslında o dile de büründü. Burada hiç istemediğimiz bir şeydi.

¹¹³ Temsili demokrasinin sürdüğü yerde bir partinin iktidar olabilmesi, sermaye tarafından finanse edilmesi yahut kendisinin sermayeleşmesi dışında mümkün değil. Bu sizin sermayeyle eklemlenmek zorunda olmanız anlamına geliyor.

¹¹⁴ Temsili demokrasinin “afyon” olduğunu düşünüyoruz. Müslüman son kişinin dahi rızasını almaya çalışır. 100 kişiden 99’u razı olmuşsa ve 1 kişinin çekinceleri varsa, onunla bile rızalaşmalı.

¹¹⁵ “Oy vermek şirkettir”

In conclusion, during the Gezi Park protests, an equivalential chain is established among different groups, organizations and the non-organized people based on their antagonistic relation with the government. Almost unlimited unsatisfied demands of protesters were inscribed in this equivalential chain. However, my study reveals that the protest movement failed to constitute a popular demand representing this chain. Therefore the protests could not achieve to start a hegemonic construction which requires a political subjectivity around a popular demand. The unity in Gezi Park could not go beyond a vague solidarity among protesters against the government.

Opponents of the system such as socialists, anti-capitalists; groups having problems with the government policies such as environmentalists, feminists, queers, Kurds and Alevis and the political opponents of AK Party such as Kemalist nationalists got together in the park. Socialists employed elements from the leftist ideology and constructed a new discourse that deems the government as capitalist. Most of the socialists pursued a revolution and wanted to seize the power. Kemalist nationalists employed ideas from the values of the republic and they designated the government as a threat to those values in their discourse. Some protesters aimed to oppose the government on different issues. Different and even contradictory demands were inscribed in the equivalential chain against the government. Protesters present demands about the issues ranging from transportation fees, traffic, urban transformation, labor rights, and women's rights to international politics. Amongst all of the demands, the protection of Gezi Park became prominent. However, it did not turn into a popular demand. Because the protesters, primarily the Taksim Solidarity, refused to identify with the demand to protect Gezi Park. Each group prioritized their own particular demands and they wanted something more than protecting the park. Gezi could not be the name of that something more, aspired fullness. Conceptual determination of 'Gezi', name of a park, precluded it from turning to a name of a political horizon. Rather, 'Gezi' acquired meaning of being against the government. Instead of demanding to establish something positive, many protesters' main goal of had been toppling of the government or making the government draw back or stopping the police violence. Therefore the protests remained on a negative ground and failed to constitute a collective identity around a popular demand.

In conclusion, the Gezi Park protests were successful in establishing an equivalential chain to which wide range of particular demands were inscribed. The protest movement mobilized millions for a couple of weeks on the streets of so many

cities in Turkey. However, a name could not be given to the Gezi struggle and it failed to offer anything to transform social relations.



CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study has been to analyze the hegemonic struggle of the Gezi Park protests which was the largest protest movement in the history of Turkey. For this purpose, this study began by developing a theoretical framework for the analysis of the Gezi Park protests. The protests were joined by groups with multiple identity groups including socialists, feminists, queers, ethnic groups and nationalists; therefore it displayed characteristics of new social movements. To develop a theoretical framework for this study, I used discourse analytical theory of Laclau and Mouffe. Instead of other social movement theories, I preferred their discourse theory because their approach avoids essentialism and provides the advantage of using rhetorical devices to analyze the social space. They assert that a discursive space is a system of meaning wherein elements are positioned differentially and relationally. Discourse is not purely linguistic phenomena but has a material character including institutions, rituals and practices. The social is analyzed as a discursive space which has a contingent, relational, differential and heterogeneous character. Beyond the social there is not a positive differentiation but a negativity: antagonism.

Laclau and Mouffe are mostly interested in the constitution of the social, which corresponds to the political. The political has the status of an ontology of the social. It constitutes the social through articulatory and hegemonic practices. This constitutive role corresponds to creation, reproduction and transformation of social relations. They approach new social movements as having political potential. In the social movements, groups with particular unfulfilled demands get together and establish an equivalential link. There is an internal antagonism in this aggregation that there are conflicts and contradictions among elements. However, this internal antagonism is masked and projected to an outside i.e. antagonistic pole. A social movement can enter into a hegemonic struggle if a positive construction follows from antagonism. This positive construction corresponds to unification of all unfulfilled demands in the equivalential chain around a popular demand. In this way popular demand starts representing an unachievable fullness, it turns into a part embodying the whole. This embodiment is only possible by naming the popular demand. Name becomes ground of the constituted

totality and it turns into a collective identity of different groups in the movement. It is only after naming, a social movement can enter into a hegemonic struggle, challenges the existing order and transforms social relations.

The Gezi Park protests turned into a social movement that was unique in its multiplicity in the history of Turkey. The protests were joined by Kemalist nationalists, feminists, queer groups, Kurds, socialists, football fans, and anti-capitalist Muslims. Due to this multiplicity the protests had a significant political potential. The aim of this study has been to analyze the hegemonic capacity of the Gezi Park protests and what they offered as an alternative to existing order.

The Gezi Park protests have been the subject of a number of studies. Considering the works that analyze the social and political dimensions of the protests, most of the studies dignify pluralistic, egalitarian, horizontally organized character. However, these approaches overlook the antagonistic dimension in the protests. There are also some other works that analyze the reasons of the protests and they mainly focus on activities of the AK Party government. This study aimed at analyzing the political capacity of the Gezi Park protests itself.

This study primarily used in-depth interviews as the basis for analyzing Gezi Park discourse. Sixteen semi-structured in-depth interviews with Gezi Park protesters were carried out with interviewees from diverse identity groups: Kemalist nationalists, professionals, different Muslim groups, leftists, Alevis, Kurds and queers. Questions were asked to understand why they engaged in the protests, what they were opposing, what they expected from the protests, what their demands were and what their aims were.

The empirical study showed that there were irreconcilable disagreements and conflicts among the protesters. There were controversies between Kemalist nationalists and Kurds, feminists and football fans, Kemalist nationalists and anti-capitalist Muslims, and queers and homophobes that undermined any possible unity in the park. Despite all their disputes, different groups stayed together in Gezi Park and the protests continued. This association was only possible by masking internal antagonisms and by referring them to an antagonistic pole. It is by negative reference to the antagonistic pole that a totality manages to signify itself.

To determine how the antagonistic frontier was defined during Gezi Park protests, interviewees were asked about what they were protesting against. Almost all of the answers were centered on opposition to the government. Some of the

interviewees wanted to overthrow the government, some others opposed certain policies of the government. Socialists were against capitalism and they assumed the government to be a representative of capitalism. Some socialists wanted to seize power and make a revolution. Feminists were against patriarchy and for them this state and especially the AK Party government represents patriarchy. Anti-capitalist Muslims also thought that Gezi was something against the government. Some of them had no problems with this situation while some were bothered because according to them capitalism should have been the primary target. Despite the fact that some protesters did not want the government to resign, they were aware and approved that the protests were against the government. Some protesters quit the protests thinking that it only aimed to force the government to resign. It can be concluded that antagonistic frontier of Gezi community is drawn by excluding the government. Laclau asserts that an antagonistic frontier might be continuously changed and redefined during the process. However, during Gezi Park protests, after the government was designated as the symbolic antagonism, this frontier remained relatively stable. All conflicting groups in the park managed to stay together by projecting their internal antagonisms to the government.

The protesters were also asked about their problems with the government. Interestingly, most of them felt their way of life to be under threat. The issue of way of life is analyzed by appealing to Žižek's conceptualization of "thief of enjoyment". He asserts that enjoyment is aspiration to unachieved fullness and it holds a given community together. The way of life is the way of organizing the enjoyment. The other of any community i.e. symbolic antagonism always appears as thief that subverts their enjoyment and threatens their way of life. Besides, the theft of enjoyment is the process of concealing the fact that the community is constituted around a lack and an antagonism inherent in any community. The community never possesses the allegedly stolen enjoyment but the enjoyment constitutes itself as stolen. Therefore considering the symbolic antagonism as thief of enjoyment is a way of concealing the originary fissure i.e. impossibility of any totality. For the Gezi community, the government appears as something that threatens their way of life. Restrictions on abortion and alcohol were prominent fears described by the protesters and these can be related to conservatism of the government.

While the inner conflicts in Gezi Park are masked and projected to the government, the limits are drawn between inside i.e. Gezi community and outside. The

protesters transferred their aspiration to an unachieved fullness to Gezi community. The protesters sublimated and idealized Gezi by attributing a perfection. They considered Gezi as a unique, ideal, pure, good, beautiful and extraordinary place. Some socialist protesters think it was an example of a commune where everybody was helping each other. Some anti-capitalist Muslims considered that a solidarity described in Qur'an was experienced in Gezi.

The aspiration to totality brought about by unfulfilled demands, which is well explained in psychoanalysis, is transferred onto partial objects. In this way, a certain particularity assumes the role of an impossible universality. This is the logic of hegemony: a popular demand which signifies all unsatisfied demands becomes an empty signifier i.e. the name of an impossible totality. The name of the popular demand starts giving identity and establishing hegemony. Therefore, any political construction starts from negativity, i.e. antagonism, but can only be successful to the point that it establishes hegemony. The hegemonic struggle can only be conducted through the constitutive act of naming. There is a tension between the particularity of different demands and popular demand that articulates them all. Particular demands should retreat from their particularities for negotiation, otherwise hegemonic articulation would be impossible. Hegemonic construction is possible with this unification around popular demand and must turn into a stable system of signification. This also corresponds to the fact that a set of proposals for the positive organization of the social must be made. If the name of the popular demand cannot be given, the result would only be pure solidarity against an antagonistic pole.

In this study, the demands of the Gezi Park protesters are analyzed in order to investigate the hegemonic capacity of the Gezi Park protests. While protecting the park remained at the forefront, it could not turn into a popular demand because almost none of the protesters identified with this demand and they always said there was more to it. Even the initiative that carried out different demonstrations and campaigns to protect the Gezi Park long before massive protests, Taksim Solidarity, was not satisfied with the demand of protecting the park. After the protests, Taksim Solidarity turned into a platform with many components, including organizations of feminists, socialists, queers, environmentalists, health-care providers, etc., as well as different labor unions. A week after the protests started, Taksim Solidarity issued a press release that called on government to resign. The Solidarity also negotiated with the government. During the negotiations, Taksim Solidarity stated not only its demands

regarding the park, but also demands to ensure maintenance of the protests and almost twenty other extra demands that included objections to the third airport project, to the masculine policies of the government, to the foreign policy of Turkey and to policies interfering with sensitivities of Alevi citizens. During the protests Taksim Solidarity made many public statements, starting with reference to protecting the park and its importance, the statements related the police violence to general cruelty of the government and all other dissatisfactions with the government were articulated. Before the evacuation of the park, Taksim Solidarity entered a second negotiation, this time with the Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Despite his guarantee to protect the park until the court decision or offered plebiscite, they decided to continue protesting. Therefore, Taksim Solidarity itself did not view the goal of the protests merely as protecting the Gezi Park but put forward many other demands at the same time.

Empirical research carried out within the scope of this study also shows that popular demand was not defined by the protesters as protecting Gezi Park. Some of them stated that they joined not only for the trees. Some others said their aim in joining the protests was protecting Gezi Park, however they added that their demands were not restricted to that goal. Some of them said they joined to topple the government and some socialists expected a revolution. One interviewee was disturbed because she only wanted to protect the park but the protesters had further aims and they wanted the government to resign. Eventually she quit protesting.

When the demands of the protesters in general are examined, most of the socialists expected there would be revolution. One of them was unhappy with the attempts that channel the protests into the ballot box. She hoped that a government of people's assemblies will arrive after the revolution. Another of them was not expecting a revolution because it was not an armed struggle, he only expected the resignation of responsible government members. One socialist was expecting social democracy to arrive after the revolution but noted that there was lack of working class involvement in the protests. Another socialist considered the class differences in the park to be unimportant because he believed the first the democratic revolution, like in Gezi, would arrive and that later a class based revolution would be possible. Feminists demanded that the government change its policies regarding women. Kurds were against state violence. Kemalist nationalists were demanding resignation of the government. Anti-capitalist Muslims were not happy that the Gezi Park protests took on a character of opposition to the government because they were against the capitalist

system in general. During the Gezi Park protests, an anti-governmental stance brought solidarity among many different groups. However, the naming of a hegemonic demand was not achieved. Each group prioritized their own particular demands.

Although the Gezi Park protests had the political capacity to reconstitute the social order due to their ability to bring different groups together, they could not enter into a hegemonic struggle. The equivalential articulation of different demands never went beyond a vague feeling of solidarity against the government because they did not crystallize in a particular popular demand. Therefore, a name could not be given to the protests and this equivalential articulation could not be turned into a collective identity. The name of Gezi turned into a signifier that took the meaning of being against the government. Opposition to the government became both a condition of possibility and impossibility for the protests. Popularization occurred after the antagonistic pole was defined as the government, however, it could not be possible to offer a foundation for the demands of these different groups. Because transition to a popular demand could not be achieved and the protests could not go beyond negativity.

In conclusion, the Gezi Park protests were successful in mobilizing millions for several weeks in almost all cities in Turkey. The protests displayed an unprecedented multiplicity considering the participating groups. Gezi Park remained untouched, as a result of the protests. However, a name could not be given to the protests and they failed to offer anything to transform social relations and to constitute positivity of the social.

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