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# Cinema-going during the Gezi Protests: Claiming the right to the Emek Movie Theatre and Gezi Park

Ozge Ozduzen[*]

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This paper explores the relationship between social movements, urban regeneration programmes and media outlets in cities, with a focus on the transformation of urban culture in regards to people's engagement with the spaces of media platforms. The argument is based on the study of cinema-going practices of an audience community in Istanbul, during and preceding the Gezi uprising. By employing ethnographic methods, this paper interrogates the activism of an audience community against the impact of shopping-mallisation and commodification of Istanbul's urban spaces under AKP rule. In order to reclaim ownership of their spaces and future, this audience community claimed their right to the Emek movie theatre, Gezi Park, and other parks whilst creating their own outdoor screenings and social media platforms. This paper also provides an interpretation of social movement development attached to media outlets such as film festivals and screenings, particularly the development of spatial activism in relation to people's use of films, streets, and movie theatres, thus illustrating, challenging and reinforcing rights to the city. More broadly, it gives new insights on the film and protest culture of a 'secular' group within a predominantly Muslim population and shows alternative and creative methods of protesting during a popular uprising.
**Keywords:** Gezi Park; Contemporary Social Movements; Right to the City; Cinema-going; Audience Ethnography; Film Festivals

# Aller au cinema pendant les protestations Gezi: Reclamer le droit a la salle de Cinema Emek et le Parc Gezi

Cet article explore la relation entre les mouvements sociaux, les programmes de régénération urbaine et les acces média dans la ville avec l'accent sur la transformation de la culture urbaine en ce qui concerne l'engagement du peuple avec les espaces de plateformes media. L'argument est basé sur l'étude des habitudes d'aller au cinéma d'une communauté d'audience a Istanbul pendant et précédent le soulévement Gezi. A travers les méthodes éthnographiques, cet article interroge l'activisme d'une communauté d'audience contre l'impact et l'emprise des centres commerciaux et la marchandisation des espaces urbains d'Istanbul sous le régime AKP. En vue de réclamer le droit a la propriété de son espace et de son avenir, cette communauté d'audience a déclaré son droit a la salle de cinéma Emek, le parc Gezi et d'autres parcs tout en créant son propre affichage de plein air et ses plateformes de médias sociaux. Cet article fournit aussi une interprétation du développement des mouvements sociaux attachés aux acces médias comme les festivals de cinéma et de projection, en particulier le développement d'un activisme d'espace en relation avec l'usage dont le peuple fait des films, des rues, et des salles de cinéma, en illustrant, en défiant et en renforçant ainsi son droit a la cité. Plus généralement, il donne de nouvelles idées sur le film et la culture de protestation d'un groupe 'séculaire' dans une population a prédominance musulmane et des méthodes créatives de protestations pendant un soulévement populaire.
**Mots-clés:** Parc Gezi; Mouvements Sociaux Contemporains; Droit a la Cité; Ethnographie du Spectateur; Festivals de Cinéma; Aller au Cinéma

[*] Email: ozge.ozdu@gmail.com

## La difusión cinematográfica durante las protestas de Gezi: Reclamando el derecho al Cine de Emek y el Parque Gezi

Esta tesis explora la relación entre los movimientos sociales, los programas de regeneración de la urbana y los medios de comunicación en las ciudades, centrándose en la transformación de la cultura urbana en lo que se refiere a la participación del público en los espacios de las plataformas de los medios. El argumento se basa en un estudio de las prácticas de la difusión cinematográfica de una comunidad de espectadores en Estambul durante y anterior al levantamiento Gezi. Mediante el empleo de los métodos etnográficos, esta tesis interroga el activismo de una comunidad de espectadores contra el impacto de la comercialización y la mercantilización de los espacios urbanos de Estambul bajo el gobierno de AKP. Para reclamar sus espacios y su futuro, esta comunidad de los espectadores demandó su derecho al cine de Emek, al Parque Gezi y a los otros parques mientras creando sus propios proyecciones y plataformas de redes sociales. Este trabajo también interpreta el desarrollo del movimiento social relacionado con la difusión del medio como los Festivales de cine, las proyecciones, en particular el desarrollo del activismo especial sobre el uso de las películas, las calles y los teatros del cine los cuales ilustran, desafían y refuerzan los derechos a la ciudad. En líneas generales, este trabajo sugiere una mirada a la cultura del cine y la protesta de un grupo 'secular' dentro de una población predominantemente musulmana, demostrando métodos alternativos y creativos de protesta durante el levantamiento popular.
**Palabras claves:** Parque Gezi, Movimientos Sociales Contemporáneos, Derecho a la Ciudad, Etnografía de Espectadores, Festivales de cine, Difusión Cinematográfica

## Introduction

Uprisings are not only political but also cultural gatherings where people participate in shared spaces whilst creating a common political culture. Motivated by a desire to gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between spaces, social movements, and cinema-going in the context of changing urban space in Turkey, this paper interrogates an audience community's engagement with the spaces of cinema around the time of the Gezi uprising, such as its use of the Emek Movie Theatre (EMT) and its political action against the top-down urban renewal programmes. Employing an ethnographic approach, the paper studies the role of offline media in uprisings by examining how alternative exhibition avenues and film festivals feed social movements. This implies that in addition to the effects of online media platforms on social movements, such as Twitter's impact on the Arab Spring or the Occupy movements (Hamdy, 2012; Gerbaudo, 2012; Juris, 2012; Bonilla & Rosa, 2015), offline media platforms like film festivals and cinema-going activities can also rally communities around a cause. This paper relates media outlets to social and cultural geography in its discussion that audiences' engagement with media can become spatio-political activities during social movements. The aim of this article is to account for what makes cinema-going geographic in its close affinity with urban culture and social movements, by employing and challenging Lefebvre's (1996) concept of right to the city. Thus this paper aims to bring the questions of cinema and social change (Ahmed, 1992; Whiteman, 2004), film festivals and political activism (Archibald & Miller, 2011; Torchin, 2012; Tascón, 2015) into social and cultural geography.

The majority of the literature on Gezi Park mainly focuses on the park itself (Kuymulu, 2013; Catterall, 2013; Örs, 2014; Gül, Dee & Cünük, 2014; Karakayalı &

Yaka, 2014), whereas this study pulls away from the park as a reflection on how the Gezi uprising was situated in everyday lives of the participants. Sofos and Özkırımlı (2016: 139) define the Gezi uprising as a 'moment in a long sequence of moments, as part of a constellation of contention, of events that interrupted the otherwise linear time of Turkish politics over the past few years'. While the Gezi uprising disrupts the linear time of politics in Turkey, I argue that 'the Gezi culture' or #GeziSpirit owes itself to people's engagement with previous social movements, symbolic spaces in Istanbul and media events. This research explores the broader cycle of urban culture, revolving around film festival attendance and DIY spaces of cinema-going in the face of authoritarian urbanism in Istanbul in the 2000s, stemming from AKP's[i] clientelistic efforts (Marschall, Aydoğan & Bulut, 2016) as well as neo-liberal and Islamist agendas (Öktem, 2011; Moudouros, 2014). Hence, the first half of the paper introduces the context of the study in relation to the specific urban regeneration in Istanbul, which heavily relies on shopping-mallisation (Ringmar, 2005). The following section posits the argument that contemporary social movements are built upon people's engagement with spaces and media against neo-liberalism. The subsequent methodology section provides a discussion on the audience and social movements' ethnography in use, while the paper places the concept of 'the right to the city' in the second half, in order to shed light on the cinema-going in Istanbul preceding and throughout the Gezi uprising.

## Shopping-mallisation and festivalisation of Istanbul

In the last two decades, shopping malls and festivals have increasingly become larger and more influential features of urban landscape and culture in cities. Representing 'the dream-worlds of capitalism' (Pusca, 2008, p. 371), 'shopping malls are products of global capitalism, particularly the economic liberalisation' (Gökarıksel, 2012, p. 7). They strengthen the global expansion of capitalist economy and culture. Ringmar (2005, p. 11-12) coins the term shopping-mallisation, which implies that 'instead of living in a society, we live in a gigantic shopping mall because everything is commodified. The activities previously thought of as off-limits to markets, such as the growing market in body parts like kidneys, are now part of the shopping culture.' In this framework, 'even activities that used to be more independent, such as airports, railway stations, libraries and museums, now include spaces for shopping. Today, more parts of public space are being used by commercial activities' (Kärrholm, 2009, p. 421). Accordingly, as a space incorporating the culture of shopping and cinema, the main avenue for film consumption has become the multiplex. While Turkey's first shopping mall, Galleria, was opened in Istanbul in 1988 (Gökarıksel, 2012, p. 7), wider exhibition of films in multiplexes dates back to the mid-1990s[ii].

Although multiplexes have been the main outlet of film consumption in Turkey since the 1990s, film festivals as alternative avenues of film consumption have also mushroomed in the urban areas. These 'alternative' events can also commodify the cities by branding them as creative cities (Landry & Bianchini, 1996; Florida, 2005) or turning the industrial 'Event City' into its late-capitalist form of 'City as Event' (Evans, 2003). 'Film festivals constitute a complex global platform that is simultaneously a marketplace, a cultural showcase, and a competitive venue, where diverse professional agendas converge and different agents interact through an overlapping set of exchanges' (Peirano, 2016, p. 114). Despite being another form of marketplace, film festivals serve as alternatives to the shopping mall oriented activities and their limited distribution avenues. Within the framework of

marketisation and competition, the peak of both Istanbul's shopping-mallisation and festivalisation dates back to the same period in the 2000s. While the first film festival emerges in Istanbul namely the International Istanbul Film Festival (IIFF) in the immediate post-coup d'etat[iii] period in April, 1982, the proliferation of film festivals originates in the 2000s, for example the Istanbul Independent Film Festival (2001), the Autumn Film Week (2002) and the Documentarist (2007). Today, festivals are one of the contemporary urban regeneration tools of neoliberal governance through the conjunction of business, play and fantasy (Waitt, 2008, p. 513), whilst affording opportunities for resistance to the impacts of these policies. This study explores the activist functions of film festivals and alternative exhibition avenues in focusing on their use by audiences as a panacea against neo-liberalism and Islamism in Turkey at a highly politicized time period.

Turkey's shift into neo-liberalism dates back to 1980s, it has integrated into capitalism following the military coup of 1980. Corporate globalisation has stream-rolled the landscape of Istanbul with the post-coup d'etat policies. 'Urban change, the transformation of urban space and the increasing deployment of the construction sector as tools of hegemony have been common desires of the Turkish conservative right wing and political Islam' (Moudouros, 2014, p. 186). 'If one thing is unique to the late AKP period[iv], which represents a combination of neo-liberal and Islamist ideologies, it is the penetration of construction-sector led policies to vast and widespread areas of the country with aggressive projects such as "mega projects" or hydroelectric power plants' (Alkan, 2015, p. 850). Similarly, Marschall, Aydoğan and Bulut (2016, p. 204-205) exemplify the housing projects sponsored by TOKI[v] in order to examine the rise and consolidation of the AKP, allowing it to consolidate its clientelistic efforts. These projects also 'develop AKP's influence on the rates of economic growth, as it uses them as tools of macroeconomic stability' (Moudouros, 2014, p. 187).

In this framework, 'Istanbul has become the privileged arena of operation for the AKP government' (Aksoy, 2012, p. 97-98). Erdoğan, the first avowedly Islamist mayor of Istanbul in 1994, explained his approach as follows: 'Istanbul is a global city, which is accepted not only by the world but also the prophet Mohammed. Istanbul should have an Islamic identity'. Topbaş follows Erdoğan's mayorship in 2004, which still continues and is similar to Erdoğan's mayorship, as they are both members of the AKP government. Today, Istanbul's globalisation can be defined as an 'Islamic global city project' centred on Islamising the city (Öktem, 2011, p. 35-36). This project implies the increasing penetration of mosques, the boom of the neo-Ottoman style and decreasing numbers of alternative spaces for any other religious, ethnic, and sub-cultural groups, apart from the majority Sunni Turks.

One of the most radical effects of urban regeneration programmes is seen in the Beyoğlu district, where global chains, studio flats and shopping malls have replaced independent shops and historical sites while its previous communities such as transgender, Kurdish and Roma communities have slowly left the area. In addition to neo-liberalism, I identify political Islam as one of the reasons for Beyoğlu's turistification and spatial cleansing[vi]. The recent rise of political Islam has led to limits on the consumption and selling of alcoholic beverages, the transformation of urban spaces into commercial undertakings, the bans on drinking and eating outside in Beyoğlu, the police's enforced removal of people sitting in front of the Galata Tower and the cutting down of trees in the Gezi Park (Candan & Özbay, 2014, p. 14). While global chains such as Mango or Starbucks have mushroomed on Istiklal Street since the 2000s, the emergence of its first shopping mall, Demirören, dates back to 2011.

This is followed by the opening of the Grand Pera shopping mall next to Demirören, in place of the Cercle d'Orient complex that hosted the EMT[vii] for more than a century. The movie theatres which were parts of the local arcades have also disappeared, apart from a few notable exceptions, such as the Atlas and Beyoğlu, which still participate in the main film festivals (see Figure 1 & 2).

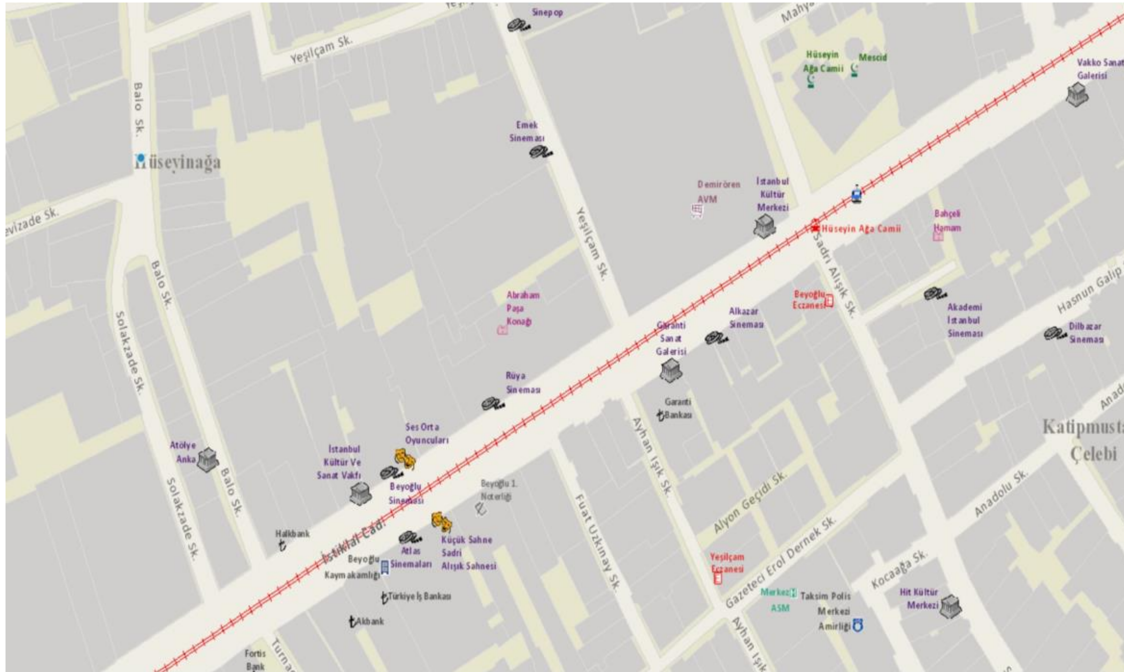


Figure 1. The Yeşilçam Street on the Istiklal Street circa 2011, when the EMT and the Rüya Movie Theatre were not in use but were not demolished. On this map, you can still see the Sinepop and Alkazar movie theatres but they were not active at the time.

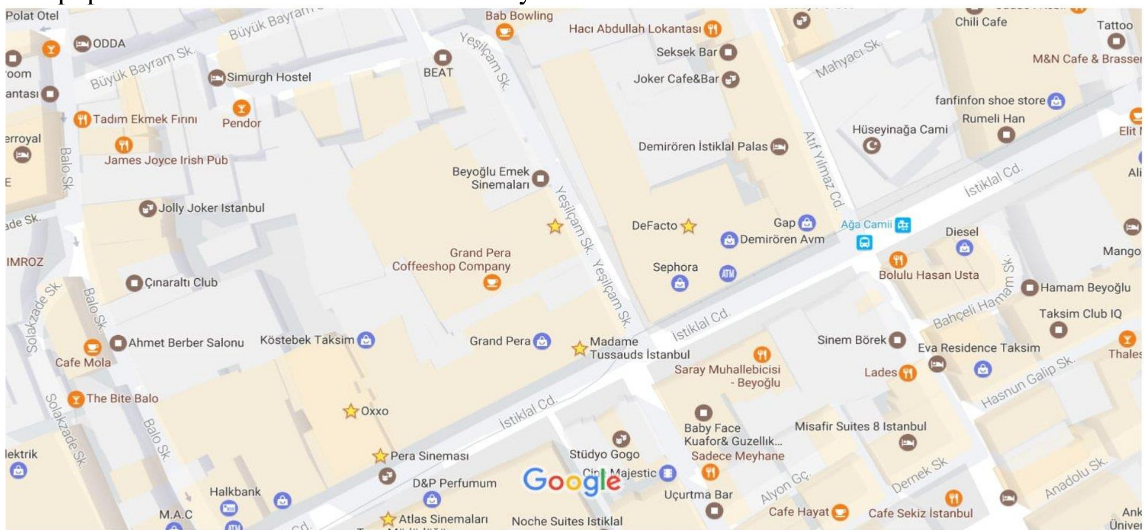


Figure 2. The Yeşilçam Street on the Istiklal Street circa 2017, when the Rüya and Emek Movie Theatres were replaced by Grand Pera Shopping Mall and specifically by Madame Tussauds Istanbul and The House and Grand Pera Coffeeshops. This map also show the 'fake' Emek Movie Theatres.

## The spatial context of new social movements

While the 2000s and 2010s are marked by falling numbers of independent venues in the face of shopping-mallisation in Istanbul, creation of DIY media outlets and political use of alternative spaces have proliferated at the same time[viii]. Although the 2000s are a microcosm of the rise of the neoliberal city, the pace of urban social movements and political spaces have quickened in Istanbul. From a broader perspective, the 2010s have seen a global increase in the usage of social media and social spaces in the formation of social movements. Today, social movements primarily consist of rituals and community building based around the occupation/appropriation of certain spaces in order to challenge dominant cultural norms and economic conditions in these spaces (Marcuse, 2009; Sassen, 2011; Harvey, 2012; Kuymulu, 2013; Lelandais, 2014). Historically, street struggles have primarily been limited to domestic social movements, but today they happen simultaneously in many parts of the world as part of globalized social movements: 'the uprisings in the Arab world, Occupy Wall Street spreading to other global cities, the daily neighbourhood protests in China's major cities, Latin America's piqueteros etc. The city is a space where the powerless can make history. Becoming present and visible to each other can alter the character of powerlessness' (Sassen, 2011, p. 574). The assembly of previously isolated and disenfranchised individuals, and the shared use of large-scale spaces such as squares and parks empower the communities that previously felt powerless.

The concept of space resides at the core of the Occupy movements. The use of parks is an indispensable part of the new wave of activism, beginning with the launch of the Occupy movements in New York and London in 2011, which have extended all over the world. In opposition to the restricted use of public spaces and their exclusivity to certain groups, the Occupy movements prove that these spaces should be used and owned by all people. This shared use of public space also leads to an alternative use of economic capital instead of a traditional capitalist economy. In the same year as the Occupy movements, the Arab Spring began in Tunisia following the self-immolation of Mohammed Bouazizi on December 17, 2011. The crisis of representation in the Middle East from 2011 onwards (Castells, 2012) has mobilised diverse groups of people in search of their rights to the city. What started in Tunisia rapidly spread to Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt, Morocco, Syria, Yemen, Libya, and Algeria. 'The social mobilisations in the Middle East attempted to overturn a widespread form of government in the region: the neo-patrimonial state led by the so-called New Sultan' (Comunello & Anzera, 2012, p. 454). The most important shared characteristics of the Arab upheavals across different countries have been their anti-government/anti-Sultan features and reliance on the activists' use of spaces and social media in order to resist the repressive governments.

'Similar to movements such as the piqueteros and asambleas barriales in Argentina, the Arab Spring has been characterised by a new meaning of public spaces, from the streets of Tunis to the Tahrir Square in Cairo. Protests in public spaces in Tunisia and Egypt, reported through social network sites and the visual media, helped ignite protests in other countries. The use of social media has not rendered face-to-face contact, go-ins and sit-ins, superfluous' (Lopes de Souza & Lipietz, 2011, p. 620). Although the majority of scholarly discussions on the Arab Spring focuses on the use of social media in mobilizing people across the region, the role of physical spaces is still quite central, 'both when the activists enabled political mobilisation across the Arab peninsula and later when the states repressed the protests' (Monterescu & Shaindlinger, 2013, p. 229).

Coinciding with the Occupy movements and the Arab Spring, there have been many small and large-sized social movements in Istanbul in the 2010s. Tension has been an ever-present part of Turkish culture since the country's beginning – between Islamists and secularists, as well as between the state and ethnic or religious minority groups, such as the Alawites and Kurds, in the form of state violence. These sources of tension have increasingly formed the foundations of social movements in the 2010s. The culmination of women's and LGBTI communities' movements, as well as urban social movements and workers' resistances in the 2010s led to a popular uprising in 2013. Small movements like the Emek movement[ix] resulted in the Gezi uprising as the collective solidarities between various small movements taught people to stand together with different groups and create their own democratic spaces. During the uprising, the city became a dynamic and complex territory in which different communities with a plethora of concerns intersected. The Gezi uprising, which began on the 28th of May and lasted until the 30th of August, 2013, has been vital in understanding the transformations in the urban structure of Istanbul and people's responses to them. It turned into an Occupy movement when the government decided to replace Gezi Park and Taksim Square with a shopping mall and mosque. In 2013, millions mobilised in Istanbul as a reaction to the radical urban restructuring programmes and the commodification of Istanbul (Kuymulu, 2013; Karakayalı & Yaka, 2014).

The discontent stemmed mainly from the neo-liberalisation of spaces in Istanbul but was also directed at the overall authoritarian and Islamist neo-liberal features of the AKP government. In Butler's (2016, p. x-xi) words, 'a wide range of groups opposed the privatisation of the park and the broader implications of privatisation, the authoritarian decision-making of Erdoğan, his undue influence over the media and dismissal of taskforces and courts that disagree with him. The 'mosque' proposed for the Taksim Square[x] was an incursion of religion into centre stage but the Gezi mosque may make most sense once we understand that it was linked to luxury apartments and shopping malls'. The core of the protests both in the Gezi uprising and other urban social movements lay in the authoritarian urbanism, which commodified Istanbul by replacing historical buildings and heterogeneous neighbourhoods with mosques, offices, shopping malls and hotels.

## Methodology

I did my fieldwork during a specific period in Turkey, preceding and throughout the Gezi uprising when people took to the streets to fight for their rights against the top-down agendas of the government. I conducted an audience and social movements' ethnography in the politicized screening avenues at the IIFF, Documentarist and the uprising from 2013 to 2014. This included 62 in-depth interviews, and participant observation with the cinephile activists. Initially, the axis of this paper was an audience ethnography, which is used in film and media studies mainly to comprehend the practices of television, film and/or game audiences (Gillespie, 1995; Rao, 2007), workers' experiences in various media production networks such as newsrooms (Ganti, 2012; Cottle, 2007) or people's everyday practices in relation to the circulation of media (Walby, 2005; Koçer, 2013).

In the existing literature, there is no ethnographic research on film audiences' engagement with film festivals, outdoor screenings and/or media workshops at the time of social movements. Frohlick (2005), Khorana (2012) and Dickson (2015) deal with Canadian, Australian and Scottish film festivals respectively, with an ethnographic approach to examine audiences' engagement with films showcased in

festival settings. Additionally, Archibald and Miller (2011) analyse the activities of juries and directors opposed to Israeli funding of the Toronto Film Festival, and Torchin (2012) and Tascón (2015) look at cultural activism within human rights film festivals. However, the intersection between film festivals, screenings, political activism and human geography has not been examined through the lens of audiences, although previous research has studied activism during film festivals.

As my intention was to capture audiences' activist engagement with cinema-going, I also employed social movements' ethnography. I benefitted from an activist ethnographic perspective (Hale, 2006; Juris, 2008, 2007, 2012; Petray, 2012), which is commonly used in the research on new social movements. Much of the activist/militant research with social movements highlights the importance of the long-term relationships within the field and the sharing of emotions with the activists. An activist research strategy implies that as the researcher I shared in the actual spaces, political values, and emotions with audiences in social movements. I immersed myself in the creative and activist communities in Istanbul first as a student beginning in 2001 and then as a film critic beginning in 2006. By 2010, I was an activist participating in various small social movements including the Emek movement. In 2011, I have received a press card, which facilitated access within creative communities. Juris (2008, p. 64) defines the ethnographer's body as a tool of research but my research diverts from Juris' militant ethnography. Juris (2007, 2008) puts strong emphasis on the ethnographer's position as the organiser of events and demonstrations, the facilitator of meetings and panels, and risking his/her life, whereas I was a regular audience member/activist in the events. For example, I never organised an event or demonstration myself but was an ordinary protester among millions around Turkey.

While my early ethnographic observations in the field date back to 2010, in the early phases of the Emek movement, my pilot research commenced in March, 2013 at the IIFF as well as on Yeşilçam street, two months before the uprising. My fieldwork continued in Gezi Park at the end of May, 2013. After Gezi Park was occupied by police forces, the movement extended to other parks such as the Abbasağa and Yoğurtçu parks in June, 2013, as did my research. My ethnography continued in 2014 following the Gezi protests in order to comprehend the post-effects of the culture of an uprising on media spaces. An ethnographic perspective allowed me to benefit from both ethnographic interviews and participant observation in order to record audiences' relationship with films, events and demonstrations centred on various spaces at the film festivals, Gezi Park and other parks.

The main methodological discussion is that 'spatial practices encompass the daily comings and goings of people, their perceived social relationships and their affinity with the objects in these spaces' (Degen, 2008, p. 18). The central methodological approach thus revolves around an observation of and participation in the audiences' engagement with the movie theatres at the film festivals, multiplexes, open-air film screenings and media workshops. I was particularly involved in various waves of protests during the uprising, film screenings at the IIFF, Documentarist and Gezi Park, demonstrations in front of the EMT during the IIFF, film and media workshops at the Abbasağa Park where people mostly discussed making videos and documentaries. For example, along with some of my informants, I attended a workshop on building your own media content in which people helped each other create and distribute news stories and videos. The aim was to achieve a detailed understanding of the activists' own narratives and actions in these diverse settings. I conducted overt research throughout my fieldwork, which means 'openly explaining

the research to the informants, its purpose, who it is for and what will happen to the findings' (O'Reilly, 2009, p. 9). While my position was overt during the film festivals, it was less straightforward during the uprising. The near impossibility of disclosing my identity as a researcher to all people means that my position was clandestine to other activists except for my informants.

Many of my informants were professionally involved in creative sectors such as scriptwriting, film criticism, photography and curatorship. Some of my research participants also worked in other professional sectors including higher education, law, and information technology industries, and a few of them were either students, unemployed or retired. I had access to a combination of Turkish, Kurdish and Armenian audience members, who represented a secular group, by using the snowballing method, through personal recommendation of my colleagues and various acquaintances from film and media sectors. The common characteristic of my research participants was that they all attended the film festivals and alternative film screenings regularly as well as participated in the Emek movement and uprising. With a selection of my informants, I attended films or met up with them during the course of events. After I collected and transcribed my field notes and interviews, I started to translate the data to English in the summer of 2014. During the writing process, due to the increasing authoritarian setting in Turkey, I opted to use pseudonyms instead of the real names of research participants, although their ages and affiliations were preserved.

**Reclaiming the right to the Emek Movie Theatre**

From 2010 onwards, an audience community in Istanbul attempted to claim their right to the EMT[xi] in their protests against its demolition. The Emek movement began during the IIFF in April 2010 and lasted until January 2015[xii]. I argue that this movement politicised the movie-going in Istanbul in the 2010s whilst marking the culture of Beyoğlu. My research participants often defined their independent spaces of cinema-going such as the EMT in particular reference to the occupation of the government and corporations, which articulates the place-making characteristic of their counter-movement and politicised cinema-going activities. The activism, both in the Emek movement and the Gezi uprising, concentrated on the protection and occupation of the previous public and semi-public spaces that have been occupied by corporate powers similar to the global Occupy movements.

During the Occupy movements, people's use of 'spatial strategies of disruption (marching and camping in unpermitted places) articulates the symbolic significance of particular spaces and challenges the privatisation of cities, which is a reinvigoration of the 'right to the city' debates' (Pickerill & Krinsky, 2012, p. 280). Despite the fact that Henri Lefebvre coined the term 'Right to the City' in 1968, it has only become popular among academics and activists from the 1990s onwards (Schmid, 2012; Friendly, 2013). Lefebvre (1996, p. 154) assigns the Marxist groups the task of finding solutions for urban problems. In order to challenge neo-liberalism's impact on the urban space, Lefebvre (1996, p. 155) suggests a political programme of urban reform. The right to the city, according to McCann (2002, p. 78), 'entails the right not to be marginalised in decision-making, nor to be channelled into certain political discussions or decision-making processes and not into others on the basis of one's similarity to or difference from other individuals or groups'. The marginalised groups claim right to the city with their own struggles and become active citizens in order to decide the future of their own cities. Therefore, as Purcell (2002) points out, right to the city lies at the base of the concepts of urban citizenship

and politics.

According to Castells (2012), occupied spaces have played a major role in the history of social change and in contemporary social movements, because they create communities based on togetherness. Castells (2012, p. 10-11) also demonstrates how ‘occupied spaces are charged with the symbolic power of invading sites of state power or financial institutions. Often buildings are occupied for their symbolism and to affirm the right of public use of property. Activists construct a free community in a symbolic place, which ultimately becomes a political space for sovereign assemblies to meet and recover their rights of representation.’ The use of occupation as an alternative method transforms private or state property into independent public property where people can engage in their own decision-making processes. When a community claims its right to its own spaces, this consolidates their feeling of togetherness and their understanding of the power of their agency.

For my research participants, the right to the city meant the right to a more democratic and just livelihood, a more socially just and active citizenship, and an increased access to the public spaces in Istanbul. Right to the city entails the marginalised groups’ decision-making in urban spaces (McCann, 2002; Purcell, 2002; Friendly, 2013), ‘in a continuously shifting and contested vision of a future city that is actively imagined, struggled and strived for’ (Coggin & Pieterse, 2012). In Istanbul, claiming the right to the city implied saving the city from police blockades and tear gas, and cultivating solidarity networks in the face of government oppression. The activism that was constitutive of the Emek movement and the Gezi uprising sprang from the motivations to keep their public spaces, which symbolised the right to a dignified livelihood and solidarity. It also meant keeping other options than multiplexes in shopping malls in order to watch films in public.

The beginning of the protests in front of the EMT was on the same day as the opening of the 29th IIFF in 2010. During the opening ceremony of the IIFF, Ertuğrul Günay[xiii] explained the reason why the EMT needed to be demolished. He said ‘this year we are not able to open the festival in Beyoğlu. However, rather than the filthy and greasy seats, I would sit on the new seats and celebrate the festival in the clean room of the new Emek. Let’s pray that the judiciary will not intervene and that we finish the movie theatre soon.’ The religious discourses such as ‘praying’ hand in hand with the discourses that aimed to humiliate the ‘historical’ look of the EMT encapsulate the underlying logic of Islamist neo-liberal ideology of the AKP government. On the same day as the opening of the IIFF, the ‘Emek is ours, Istanbul is ours’ collective[xiv] showed the *Man with a Movie Camera* (Dziga Vertov, 1929) on Yeşilçam Street (see Figure 3). The audience community prepared its own screen and sound system and played film soundtracks before and after the screening. The screening took place after the protestors’ march from the beginning of the Istiklal Street to the closed down EMT on the Yeşilçam Street. The most common slogans were ‘Emek is ours, Istanbul is ours’ and ‘do not watch, reclaim the Emek’ in 2010. Furthermore, on the same day as the closing of the IIFF (the 18$^{th}$ of April, 2010), the Plastic Golden Tulip Awards[xv] were distributed.

Figure 3. The street screening on the Yeşilçam Street in 2010 when there was an ongoing construction of the Demirören Shopping Mall on the right of the photo (Photo by Ilgın Erarslan Yanmaz, in courtesy of emeksinemasi.blogspot.com).

The vocabulary used in the Emek movement's slogans connected cinema-related activities such as watching to those activities related to urban spaces such as reclaiming. Furthermore, one of the most remarkable slogans of the Emek movement in 2011 was 'this is just a beginning, we will keep fighting'. This slogan, which later became the main slogan of the Gezi uprising, shows the organic relationship and continuity between the two social movements. Furthermore, the political actions that constituted the Emek movement had creative vision. The Emek movement comprised of traditional demonstrations, film screenings, street band performances, and the occupation of the EMT as well as the adjacent shopping mall. The activists did not solely use the conventional avenues of protesting, like marching, writing press releases and demonstrating; they supplemented these traditional techniques with street bands, public dances, public screenings, the occupation of spaces, and the creation of park culture—the use of public parks as spaces of participatory democracy.

*The Emek Movie Theatre*

Figure 4. A street view of the 'dead' Yeşilçam Street and the EMT in January 2012, taken by the author.

Figure 5. The closed down EMT in January 2012.

Street culture was significant for this community's engagement with the Emek movement, and the Gezi uprising was part of this culture. Hikmet (a social media specialist for a magazine, 30) narrated the first protests in April 2010:

> The Emek protests started at the opening of the film festival in 2010. These demonstrations were quite attached to the IIFF, almost within it. We used and deactivated the 'dead' Yeşilçam Street[xvi] (see Figure 4 & 5) in order to reclaim our films and the EMT. We screened movies on the street so the cinema culture expanded to the streets and became part of the street culture.

Throughout their social movement, my informants repurposed the spaces that were previously used for cinema-going and felt a sense of belonging. The resocialisation through demonstrations, film screenings and public concerts meant claiming right to their own space and lives. The use of the streets for cinema-going implied a merge of the cinema spaces such as movie theatres with the public spaces on the streets. Also, the intertwinement of protest sites with festival spaces expanded the understanding of festival activism, which was previously contained within the boundaries of film festivals' own spaces (see Archibald & Miller, 2011; Torchin, 2012). Festival activism incorporated itself into the street culture, where audiences coalesced with other organisations such as the TMMOB[xvii] and other urban activists.

These creative protests became a part of the culture of the IIFF and Beyoğlu for the following five years. In 2011, activists occupied the new shopping mall that was constructed immediately opposite the EMT, the Demirören, showing the merging of film and occupation culture. During this half-hour occupation, the most common slogan was 'Open Emek, Demolish Demirören'. The discourses used in the slogans and banners showed the anti-neoliberal tendencies of the activists while pointing to their willingness to claim right to other neo-liberalized spaces in Istanbul, especially those that replaced the alternative media spaces in Beyoğlu. The protests were peaceful, but the police attacked and ended the protest forcibly right before the Gezi uprising.

Although the demolition project of the EMT had been announced in 2010, the same year that also marked the beginning of the Emek movement, the company entitled the Kamer Construction Company, along with the Beyoğlu Municipality and the government, started demolishing the EMT at the beginning of the IIFF in 2013.

This accelerated the protests and increased the participation of the public in 2013. Sanem (film critic, 37) described the beginning of the protests in 2013:

> We were around 50 people on the 31st of March, 2013. We decided that we were going to occupy the EMT. We smashed the door of the movie theatre and went in. They strengthened the outside gate with wooden stuff but it was not difficult to get in; one of us broke the gate and we all went in. We went inside and documented the condition of the EMT. There was a rhythm band with us, they kept playing music in the meantime. However, the police were going to take us into custody or do something violent and there were not many people left outside so we could not have stayed there for a long time. What we desired then happened two months later at the Gezi uprising.

The fact that this audience community forcibly entered and documented the condition of the movie theatre meant that they were actively involved in the process of the decision-making of the movie theatre and claimed their own right to its fate, although the collective protests could not have prevented its ultimate demolition. My informants perceived this occupation as a forerunner to the occupation of Gezi Park in May 2013. The idea of 'occupation' was becoming more widespread among this community and it was acknowledged as a remedy to top-down urban renewal programmes.

When I arrived in Istanbul in April 2013, the widespread arrests, the excessive use of tear gas and water cannons, the obtrusiveness of police forces, and the increasing numbers and impact of the TOMA vehicles, typified the urban culture in Istanbul, especially in Beyoğlu. In April 2013, during the protests around the EMT, many of the activists, including my informants, were hurt by the violent attacks of the police. Due to the heavy police intervention during the protests, Janset broke her L3 muscles. She was knocked over by a TOMA water cannon and was later hospitalised. On the same day, three other activists were taken into custody because of demonstrating on the street around Yeşilçam Street. Later in the uprising, these kinds of state violence became a norm in Turkey. Balca (decision support manager, 31) described the 7th of April, 2013, which was the first protest after the occupation of the EMT on the 31st of March:

> Yesterday the police took people into custody for no reason; I was scared. And some cafes nearby did not even give water to us who were affected by tear gas; it is very intimidating for the cinephiles and activists here.

This audience community differentiated two distinct periods, as they stressed that the direct state violence created 'another IIFF' and 'another Emek movement' which marked the increasing repression and violence of the Turkish state on the cultural as well as political communities in Turkey. Shopkeepers behaved in an unsympathetic manner towards the protestors partly due to their worries on the increasing density of protests blocking tourism, which was also a common discourse during the Gezi uprising.

Not all of my informants were there for the protests on the day when the Emek movement experienced the police force's violent attack on the 7th of April, 2013. They went out to protest the violence during the demonstration on the following day, the 8th of April, 2013 while the IIFF was still continuing. Zöhre (unemployed, 35) said:

> On the 8th of April, we organised another demonstration to protest the excessive violence during the first protest. We not only marched on the street but also prepared a sticker, like a graffiti version of the EMT, printed it and stuck it everywhere to attract the attention of the wider public and to create more awareness.

In order to claim their right to the city, this audience community used many different creative methods such as changing the look of the city; i.e. attaching stickers of the movie theatre everywhere. During the Emek movement, especially during the festival period, activist communities occupied and claimed ownership of the previously active Yeşilçam Street. The activists' occupation of streets, squares, and movie theatres intertwined with the protest's offline media outlets/film exhibition avenues. I argue that the 'creative protests' such as making songs, organising screenings and performing in concerts became the locus of the Gezi protests following the Emek movement. The 'creativity' of these protests was partly interrupted by the severe police violence which began on the 7th of April, 2013. Increasing levels of violence and repression, did not silence this community's willingness to use their democratic rights to claim their right to their spaces and their futures.

*The Alkazar Movie Theatre*

Nil (researcher, 28) described the expansion of the movement for the protection of other movie theatres:

> After our political action against the EMT's demolition, there has been an awakening about other movie theatres and cultural spaces. For instance, our awareness of the Beyoğlu movie theatre started then. The Başka Cinema[xviii] also stemmed from an intention to look for alternative films and screenings. We were late to respond to these top-down changes anyway. I still could not process that the Alkazar[xix] was gone before our struggles to keep the EMT and Gezi Park. If we did something to protect it at that time, we would not have lost the Emek. But now I believe that we will not lose any other spaces.

Nil remarked on the urgency of taking political action against the values that we were about to lose. Before the uprising, the EMT became a symbol for the loss of not only the independent movie theatres but also other cultural venues, a symbol which represented a defense against homogeneity through shopping-mallisation, and from a broader perspective, the failure of democracy in Turkey. It also reminded this community about their past losses like the Alkazar movie theatre (see Figure 6) and their awareness to take political action. It not only triggered further social movements but also increased the desire to create 'our own communities' for the future against the imposition of 'their' culture. After the uprising, the Başka Cinema commenced, which was established in order to go beyond the monopoly of the major distribution outlets and screen alternative films across Turkey.

Figure 6. The closed down Alkazar movie theatre on Istiklal Street in January, 2012.

## Reclaiming the right to the Gezi Park

In addition to the Başka Cinema's alternative screenings as a private company, grassroots initiatives started to screen films in public spaces around the period of the uprising. The most important example was the gala screening of *Ekümenopolis* (İmre Azem, 2013) at Gezi Park, a month before the uprising, on the 24th of April, 2013. The film's screening was facilitated through paying a penalty fee[xx] to the municipality. *Ekümenopolis* is a documentary that not only portrays photographic images and footage from the ongoing construction projects of the Third Bridge[xxi] and the Marmaray[xxii] in Istanbul, but it also focuses on experts' opinions and people's resistance against the top-down urban renewal projects. It shows how residents of central neighbourhoods were relocated to the lifeless suburbs outside of Istanbul and the ways in which they resisted. The screening of *Ekümenopolis* right before the uprising marked the park as a location of cinema, hence it further amalgamated the spaces of cinema and social movements. When I went back from England to Turkey in May 2013, the protests in Istanbul were gaining strength. My informants transformed the EMT and Yeşilçam Street into sites of protest and transformed Gezi Park into a site of cinema-going immediately before the uprising.

While the park was occupied, political films on urban regeneration and anti-capitalist movements were screened in the park. The DIY activity, such as taking initiative of their own public screenings on the streets, has long been associated with youth subcultures (McKay, 1998). However, the political shifts following the 'Facebook and Twitter revolutions' that helped to end the rules of dictators in Tunisia and Egypt in 2011, constituted new modalities of political participation. Large numbers of activists, hackers, or artists repurposed corporately produced content or created novel properties of their own, often outside the standard systems of production and consumption (Ratto & Boler, 2014, p. 3). Ratto and Boler (2014) define this as 'DIY citizens', which means a self-creation that goes against the regulation of identity by an authoritarian government. These diverse and participatory features of citizenship extended the domain of people's relationship with media and spaces. The DIY citizenship was practiced through producing their own videos about the Gezi protests, in order to make their voices heard. Following the uprising, the DIY footage produced by the activists was used in new documentaries on the Gezi uprising such as *Gezi'nin Ritmi* (Rhythm of Gezi, Güvenç Özgür & Michelangelo Severgnini, 2014) or *Yeryüzü Aşkın Yüzü Oluncaya Dek* (Love Will Change the Earth, Reyan Tuvi, 2014).

Mehmet (26, a student and freelance photographer) underlined the significance of the park culture that was created during the Gezi Park uprising, which challenged the increasing commodification of urban space in Istanbul:

> Gezi taught us to lay claim to our spaces, cities, and neighbourhoods. We need to keep on having our participatory democracy through our meetings and forums in our neighbourhoods and parks. This way we can keep our spaces in the future because we can take direct action quickly.

The park culture brought with it a new understanding of activism which relied on active participation in the decision-making through direct interaction with other activists and organising forums in the parks. Similar to the ways in which the Emek movement's main infrastructure rested on claiming right to the movie theatre, which implied regaining subjectivity and agency, the park itself symbolized the centre of

activism for the protesters in the summer of 2013. Karakayalı and Yaka (2014: 124) argue that 'the material setup that facilitated the Gezi uprising's constitutive modes of action and interaction was the park itself. The fabric of the park facilitated a kind of federalist mode of assembly, enabling encounters between different groups and identities who could thereby relate positively to each other, in the first step towards recomposition'. Listening to what other people had to say during the forums and transforming regular public spaces into self-reclaimed community spaces were the most important features of the park culture at Gezi Park. The park culture that originated from Gezi Park, which then spread to other neighbourhood assemblies and forum arenas in the parks all around Turkey, functioned as open-mic platforms in order to bring people together, share their ideas and experiences, and resolve problems in local neighbourhoods. This led to the increasing use of citizen rights and desire to overcome the political crisis through the power of the people. Mehmet's political action and emphasis on the importance of the park forums also demonstrated that 'right to the city' is not only about the present, but also aims for the future (Coggin & Pieterse, 2012), in its potential to politicise people and create future social change.

The park culture replaced this community's everyday life habits as well as their cinema-going activities. During the Gezi uprising, many other films, such as *Neşeli Günler* (Orhan Aksoy, 1978), were screened by activists, including some of my research participants (see Figure 7). Not only the choice of the park as the space of cinema-going but also the choice of the films showcased in the park represented deliberate preferences and DIY media activities of the activists, which merged the cinematic spaces with the sites of protest. The screening of *Neşeli Günler* at the park exemplified this tendency, as the film shows siblings trying to prevent the divorce of their parents on the stairs of Gezi Park years ago. Additionally, new documentaries were commonly screened at Gezi Park in June, 2013, such as *Nefes Olmayınca* (BirGün Yayıncılık, 2012). A film portraying the local people's resistance against the construction of a power plant in Gerze in Turkey, *Nefes Olmayınca* was screened not only in Gezi Park, but also in the forum at the Eyüp Akşemsettin Park following the police's raid of Gezi Park. These screenings boosted the solidarity atmosphere in the parks, as the audiences applauded, laughed and protested together, at times along with slogans.

Figure 7. The screening of the *Neşeli Günler* at the Gezi Park on the 6th of June, 2013 (taken from the Aksam Newspaper).

Other than participating in the screenings, Gezi Park itself became cinematic for my informants. Janset (film critic, 33) remarked:

> Coming to the parks, where you can experience participative democracy, and socialise with revolutionary people and swap clothes, is more cinematic than the real cinema.

In Janset's experience, the park culture represented an exchange culture that replaced consumer culture. It was an experience of solidarity and shared life as 'food was left for the protesters, which was then distributed by volunteers. Yoga classes were set up in Gezi Park at noon every day. There was an almost carnival-esque atmosphere, bringing people together in a way rarely seen in Turkish society' (Abbas & Yigit, 2015, p. 4). People started to sleep, eat, socialise and politicise in the park. The culture of sharing and solidarity also informed the alternative circulation of tickets and films amongst my informants. In that sense, the heavy urban regeneration programmes in Istanbul and the hegemony of multiplexes in Turkey not only changed the attendance to movie theatres, but they also transformed their everyday practices of watching films.

Hikmet underlined how the audience community in question used their media during the uprising:

> All the people here, including the juries and everybody else, diverted their attention to activism. All the cultural events during Gezi were at a standstill; none of them took place. For instance, Documentarist film festival coincided with Gezi's time span and it moved its screenings to the parks. I could not post anything other than Gezi on the social media accounts of our film magazine. When our delayed magazine was out, which was mostly about Gezi or the films on urban struggles, we put it on the Library of Gezi and I announced that. This was our only announcement in the magazine for a long time then. It was quite trivial to talk about cinema, when Gezi happened. The central groups, which organised the Emek and the Gezi movements, were the same people that worked for the creative sectors. For example, the workers of our magazine stopped what they did, started a blog called 'What is happening in Istanbul?' and its social media pages. The idea was to create news stories from the uprising, in order to inform people in Turkey and across the world.

The cinema-going activities of this audience community were politicised during the Emek movement but their activism became a lifestyle during the uprising. As it was in the case of Hikmet's film magazine, my informants' activism resulted in the transformation of their jobs and everyday life chores. Other than their physical participation in the uprising, their occupation culture and the creation of their own media content like 'What is happening in Istanbul?' altered their engagement with media and their identities. For Castells (2012, p. 11), 'the autonomy of communication is the essence of social movements today, because it allows the movement to be formed and enables the movement to relate to society at large beyond the control of power holders'. In order to form their social movement and communicate it to society at large, this activist community created their own media content and boycotted the dysfunctional mainstream media outlets. Particularly during the Gezi uprising, the penguin media[xxiii] in Turkey did not broadcast or publish any stories from the resistance for days, which also prevented the international public from hearing about it, except via social media. This magazine's employees did not prioritise publishing their film magazine but instead embraced activist chores such as producing content about the uprising for their own DIY activist media platforms, similar to many other activist groups. Furthermore, other events or activities were suspended, such as the documentary film festival Documentarist, which used the spaces of the uprising more than the allocated spaces for the festival (see Figure 8). In

this regard, occupying the park space with projectors and films showed that cinema-going activities also became part of the ‘right to the city’ context.

Figure 8. The closing ceremony of the Documentarist film festival at the Gezi Park on the 9th of June, 2016 (photo taken from the archive of the Documentarist).

Görkem (art director, 30), who I had met at a shopping mall before, told me that her consumption habits had changed. She said after the uprising:

> Now my park culture has advanced, which makes me use the city more. We have protected Gezi Park as a park and I believe we can do other things for the movie theatres in the future. In that period, my daily activities and practices changed. I was not going to shopping malls that often, but I was still going to them. Now I will not shop from them. I started to go to independent movie theatres more often these days, at least once every week.

One of the important developments, compared to my findings during the festival time in 2013, was that my informants said that they were not going to use multiplexes (as they still used them before, when there was a need). Informants such as Görkem referenced an opposition between their past use of the movie theatres after the uprising. My research participants were perturbed because shopping malls were quickly replacing all other spaces in Istanbul and as individuals and communities with anti-neoliberal perspectives, they regarded these commercial strategies as a symbol of global capitalism.

*The Beyoğlu Pera Movie Theatre*

Figure 9. The entrance of the active movie theatre Beyoğlu Pera on the Istiklal Street.

Tuncay (unemployed poet, 32) also talked about the extension of the culture created at Gezi Park to other realms in life. He remarked that the forums in different parks were kind of a pilot process for future struggles:

> I watched *V For Vendetta* (James McTeigue, 2006) at Gezi Park. It was a very amateur screen and the sound was not the best. However, it was one of the best screenings in my life. It reminded me of the old open-air cinemas. The movie screenings in many different parks showed us other opportunities for exhibition. After Gezi Park, if they attempt to demolish the Beyoğlu Pera movie theatre[xxiv] (see Figure 9) or anything like that, it would be a lot more crowded than the protests for keeping the EMT.

This was a sentiment that was shared across many of my informants, who were hopeful for the possibility of overcoming future oppressive changes implemented by the government. The amateur film screenings in the parks were not technically 'perfect', but they were metaphorically perfect for my informants, as these screenings represented the DIY efforts of activists rather than the interventions of companies or governments. The important achievement for film audiences was that they claimed the right to the park and turned it into an open-air cinema with their own decision. While Gezi Park was used as an open-air exhibition outlet when *Ekümenopolis* was screened a month before the uprising, it became an alternative exhibition venue for a wider audience of activists during the uprising, which consolidated the atmosphere of solidarity and togetherness as it was exemplified through the screenings of *Neşeli Günler* and *V for Vendetta* or the moving of the Documentarist film festival to Gezi Park. The intertwinement of the cinematic spaces with the sites of protest implied the formation of collaborative and participatory media practices and community-making for film audiences, which is a global trend not only because of migration trends and the Internet (Deuze, 2006), but also due to the global network of new social movements.

## Concluding Remarks

This paper examines the culture of an audience community and their engagement with the spaces of cinema-going preceding and throughout the Gezi uprising. It shows how new social movements such as the Occupy movements, Arab Spring and the Gezi uprising revolve around the concept of space (Sassen, 2011; Lopes de Souza & Lipietz, 2011; Pickerill & Krinsky, 2012; Monterescu and Shaindlinger, 2013; Kuymulu, 2013; Karakayalı & Yaka, 2014). I argue that people's engagement with the neoliberalized spaces across Istanbul via smaller social movements in Istanbul such as the Emek movement resulted in a larger uprising in 2013. This paper points to the ways in which an audience community claimed their right to the EMT and Yeşilçam Street through their traditional protests like marching and slogans as well as alternative spatial methods such as screening films and occupying the new shopping mall. My research participants used similar strategies in both the Emek movement and the Gezi uprising, relying mainly on 'creative' protests like organising DIY open-air screenings of alternative films, creating stickers, occupying public spaces, boycotting shopping malls and creating their own media, in order to challenge the clientelistic (Marschall, Aydoğan & Bulut, 2016), Islamist and neo-liberal agendas of the AKP government (Öktem, 2011; Moudouros, 2014).

The core of the discussion revolves around the transformation of the inactive Yeşilçam street into an active street that is repurposed for cinema-going and the transformation of Gezi Park into a new film exhibition avenue, such as the screening

of *Ekümenopolis* at the park prior to the uprising or the screenings during the occupation, which also account for the merging of the spaces of cinema and social movements. This paper demonstrates that activists used these alternative spaces and media platforms in order to escape the confines of authoritarian urbanism implemented from above, inform people about their events and protests, create networks of togetherness and change the future of the repressive spaces. The uprising also changed my participants' understanding of what to do for the future, how to keep movie theatres and how to extend the boycotts. As an example of this, some of my informants started to create their own media while others learnt how to make videos. In this regard, the central argument of this paper was that the 'right to the city' expanded to (online and offline) media ownership in a bid to create awareness and participation for the future struggles, as well as going beyond the confines of shopping malls and the mainstream media, a.k.a. the penguin media in Turkey.

Moreover, the experiences of my research participants indicate that becoming part of the decision-making processes in the parks resulted in the development of their 'park culture'. This paper argues that the intertwinement of the spaces of cinema and protests during the Gezi uprising changed cinema-going for a while, brought back the open air cinema culture, led to the formation of collaborative media practices, enabled DIY citizenship and created new bonds of solidarity. I hoped to shed light on some of the ways in which uprisings create a long sequence of culture and spaces are at the forefront in the contemporary uprisings from Gezi Park to the Arab Spring, while media platforms such as those related to cinema-going have become their leitmotif in Turkey. Thus this paper contributes to the scholarly discussions on the spatio-political features of cinema-going, especially around the time of social movements, while pointing to media's potential to feed social movements and open room for future action.

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[i] AKP (the Justice and Development Party) is the governing party in Turkey from 2002 to the present day.

[ii] In 1994, the first movie theatre in a shopping centre was opened at Akmerkez shopping mall in Etiler, Istanbul.

[iii] The first military coup in Turkey happened in 1960, followed by the second one in 1971. The most severe coup d'etat was the 1980 military intervention, which lasted for more than two years.

[iv] The AKP is not the first Islamic party in power. It started with the 1994 municipal elections when the Welfare Party (RP) took power and later formed a coalition government. In the existing literature, the emergence of the RP as a powerful actor is commonly discussed as an example of the integration of political Islam into the relatively democratic political system (Yavuz, 1997, p. 63) or as a constitutional challenge to the secular foundations of the Turkish Republic (Öniş, 1997, p. 743). AKP is seen as a continuation of the RP, but also different because of its extended business network and newly defined conservative base (Gümüşçü & Sert, 2009, p. 954).

[v] Turkey's Mass Housing Administration, which was established in 1984, is the government agency that originally aimed to solve the housing shortage, now partners with global investors and private developers.

[vi] See for instance Kuyucu & Ünsal (2010) for a comparative perspective on the Tarlabaşı Project, which implied a wholesale transformation of Tarlabaşı neighborhood in Beyoğlu, symbolizing 'a radical state-led intervention into urban space and housing markets act as tools for 'marketing' certain potential rent-zones to stronger actors that changes the whole fabric of the area (p. 17).

[vii] The EMT was constructed in 1884 as a school and was reopened as a movie theatre in 1924. In addition to being a symbolic venue for the cinema in Turkey, it was a centre of film festivals and

political activism. For example, it hosted many political events, such as the meeting for the 1st of May celebrations in 1987, which were the first such celebrations following the 1980 military coup.

[viii] As an illustration of this, Duboc (2013) conducted research in Egypt before a popular uprising among a group of secular intellectuals in 2007, where she argued that oppositional intellectuals emphasised the need for contentious action autonomous from political parties. These oppositional intellectuals constructed alternative channels of political expression such as the formation of literary groups and the creation of symbolic spaces for protests through literary or journalistic writing.

[ix] The original name of the movement is 'Emek is ours, Istanbul is ours' Platform, but for the purposes of this paper, I refer to it as the Emek movement.

[x] When Erdoğan announced the project for the Gezi Park in 2013, he also declared two side projects for Beyoğlu; the demolishing of the AKM opera house and the construction of a mosque in the Taksim Square, which in his words, is 'much needed'.

[xi] Since 2016, a new shopping mall namely Grand Pera, instead of the Cercle D'orient complex, has hosted the EMT.

[xii] Around one thousand people gathered in front of the EMT on January 17th, 2015, in order to put an end to the ongoing construction of the 'fake' EMT. Following the two general elections in June and November 2015 and the bombings immediately preceding and following the elections, the pace of social movements in Turkey has slowed, reaching the lowest pace after the attempted coup in July, 2016.

[xiii] Ertuğrul Günay was the AKP Government's Minister of Culture and Tourism from 2007 to 2013.

[xiv] This collective, which is mainly constituted of cinephiles and urban activists in Istanbul, organised the protests against the demolition. They used a non-hierarchical organisation similar to the Taksim Dayanışması (Taksim Solidarity Group) that was actively involved in the consolidation of the Gezi uprising.

[xv] These awards were pseudo awards that were distributed to the owners and collaborators of the demolishing project, such as the municipality of Beyoğlu or the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of Turkey.

[xvi] Yeşilçam Street was the home of the production and distribution companies in the Yeşilçam era [see Arslan (2011, p. 232-233) for an account of the street's previous importance]. The Yeşilçam film industry is commonly referred to as the Turkish Hollywood and was active from the early 1950s until the late 1980s. Following the decline of the industry, the production companies closed down but the large format movie theatres on and around the street remained active. In the 2000s, these movie theatres also started to be demolished or closed down.

[xvii] Established in 1954, The Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB) was an active participant of not only the Emek movement but also the Gezi uprising.

[xviii] In November 2013, the *Başka* Cinema was initiated with the motto of 'festival all year long'. Using nine movie theatres in Istanbul and four movie theatres in other cities such as Izmir and Bursa, the *Başka* Cinema showcases alternative films from around the world throughout the year.

[xix] The Alkazar was a small independent movie theatre on Istiklal Street, Beyoğlu close to Yeşilçam Street, screening world and independent cinema. It was active from 1923 until 2010. In 2010, the managers announced its closing down due to financial issues.

[xx] They paid it to the Parks, Gardens and Green Areas Department, which is one of the bodies of the Istanbul Municipality, because the use of public spaces in such ways (like showing films) is prohibited.

[xxi] The construction of the Third Bridge has created a negative response from wide-ranging activists not only because it has led to the destruction of a huge forest area that was the last remaining forest in Istanbul, but also because it will cross through several archaeological sites.

[xxii] The Marmaray is now an active rail transportation project in Istanbul that mainly constitutes of a rail tunnel under the Bosphorus. Similarly, it also accelerated the loss of green spaces in the city.

[xxiii] The mainstream media in Turkey was referred to as 'the penguin media' during and after the Gezi uprising. There were millions of people protesting the government on the streets, while the TV channels such as CNN Turk showed documentaries about penguins.

[xxiv] Constructed in 1924, the Beyoğlu Pera movie theatre has faced financial issues in the 2010s, but it is still active.