Citizenship and Protest

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Kaya, Ayhan (2020). "Citizenship and Protest Behavior in Turkey," *The Oxford Handbook of Turkish Politics* Edited by Güneş Murat Tezcür Subject: Political Science, Comparative Politics Online Publication Date: Jul 2020 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190064891.013.35

Abstract

Political protest has a long and contested history in contemporary Turkish politics. While street demonstrations have been central to the repertoire of Kurdish movements especially since the early 2000s as a by-product of Turkey's Europeanization process, electoral forms of participation have been the prevalent mode among broader segments of the Turkish society in the post-1980 period. However, the consolidation of the AKP hegemony in electoral politics and increasing authoritarianism and Islamisation accompanying the personification of political rule after 2011 have carried non-electoral forms of participation, what one could call as "active citizenship," to the forefront of political struggles. The Gezi movement of 2013, the largest mass mobilization in the Turkish history, epitomizes this dynamic. This chapter demonstrates how the Gezi protests cultivated more democratic forms of citizenship in defiance of the national education curricula designed to raise particular forms of citizenry in the service of the Turkish state elite. Based on the current state of the art, it argues how the Gezi generation has broken the binary opposition between being political and apolitical through different acts of citizenship.

Keywords: Gezi, Turkey, active citizenship, citizen journalism, AKP

Introduction

Political protest has a long and contested history in contemporary Turkish politics. While street demonstrations have been central to the repertoire of Kurdish movements especially since the early 2000s as a by-product of Turkey's Europeanization process, electoral forms of participation have been the prevalent mode among broader segments of the Turkish society in the post-1980 period with important exceptions such as secularism rallies in 2007. However, the consolidation of the AKP hegemony in electoral politics and increasing authoritarianism and Islamisation accompanying the personification of political rule in Turkey have carried non-electoral forms of participation, what one could call as "active citizenship," to the forefront of political struggles. The Gezi movement, the largest street protests in the Turkish history, epitomizes this dynamic. Given this context, this chapter will address a series of analytical questions by engaging the broader literature. How do acts of protests define and form more democratic forms of citizenship in Turkey? What factors undermine the capacity of collective protest and civil society activism to achieve significant political change in the light of the legacy of Gezi? From a comparative perspective, how does the Turkish experience inform, revise, or challenge scholarly theories about politically engaged citizenship and democratization?

This chapter will start to elaborate on the typology of active citizenship (active citizenship as a practice vs. active citizenship as a demand) developed by Bee and Kaya (2016). The first section will argue that the former emerged as a top-down experience during the European integration process in the first decade of the 21st century, while the latter was accomplished as a bottom-up experience in the following decade. After delineating this typology of active citizenship, the chapter summarizes the formation of Turkish citizenship in accordance with the national education curricula designed to raise particular forms of citizenry in the service of the ruling state elite. Following is a discussion on how the Gezi generation has broken the binary opposition between being political and apolitical. The chapter concludes with a discussion on the role of social media in the age of populism as far as youth mobilization is concerned with a focus on the legacy of the Gezi protests on the citizen journalism.

Typology of Active Citizenship

In accordance with the typology that Bee and Kaya (2016) developed, it was argued that active citizenship can be untangled on the basis of two distinct dimensions that provide the basis for diverging definitions: *active citizenship as a practice,* and *active citizenship as a demand*. The former is a top-down experience, in which state institutions promotes public policies to mobilize political engagement among citizens in order to make the political order look more legitimate. This experience includes conventional political behaviors such as voting as well as non-conventional forms of participation such as joining a political movement or civil society organization with the scope of interacting with policy makers through lobbying activities or advocacy work (Bouza Garcia, 2000). Active citizenship as a practice is formed by means of top-down dynamics where both external actors, (e.g. the EU), and internal actors (e.g. the national and local governments), were interacting in the initial years of the 21st century. However, this experience has not resulted with an improvement in the meaningful participation of the civil society actors including youth groups in public policy processes despite the fact that the number of organizations and projects having a social dimension has significantly increased (Bee and Kaya, 2016). [1]

The latter experience, active citizenship as a demand is a bottom-up one, which appears when civil society groups in general and youth in particular challenge the current status quo by posing discrete claims to policy makers who pursue policies with limited input from the public

[1] It is important to note that the concept of "youth" has been difficult to define and position. For an overview of the development of "youth" as an age group and a stage in life, see Buckingham, 2008; Kehily, 2007; Roche et al., 2004; Purhonen 2015).

(Çakmakli, 2015; Bee and Kaya, 2017). Active citizenship as a demand is expressed outside formal channels of political participation such as electoral politics, and involves of various forms of deliberation (Delli Carpini et al., 2004). Examples include protesting an undemocratic government; developing public initiatives in the absence of active service provision by the government ; or occupying and using abandoned public spaces for the organization of social, cultural and political activities to provide help for immigrants, refugees or disadvantaged social groups.

Bee and Kaya (2016) extensively discuss *active citizenship as a demand* in Turkey in reference to various key events such as the 1999 Marmara earthquake, the 2013 Gezi Park protests, and *Oy ve Ötesi* initiative in the 2015 parliamentary elections. These experiences have been key in bringing forward the spontaneous bottom-up processes of mobilization of the civil society. Other examples of active citizenship as a demand include protests against the Soma mine disaster in 2014, the destruction of olive trees in the Aegean Region in 2014, the construction of hydro-electric plants in the Eastern Black sea coasts (Oğuz, 2016), the construction of the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge in the Black sea shores of Istanbul and the new Istanbul airport (Bee and Kaya, 2017; Baysal, 2017).

Civil society mobilization in Turkey reached a peak following the 1999 Marmara earthquake, which caused the death of 17,000 people. The earthquake prompted a vibrant humanitarian response from civil society organizations operating under a highly repressive political system (Kırık, 2018; Kubicek, 2002). During this period, for the first time in Turkish politics, civil society started to articulate the interests of various social groups and transmitted these demands to political actors and state elites. The response of Turkish civil society to the tragedy caused by the earthquake would have a long-lasting implication on the ways in which some segments of the Turkish civil society have responded the challenges of the AKP rule especially in the post-2011 period (Jalali, 2002). Hence, the past experience of youth mobilization following the Marmara earthquake and the more recent events generated as a consequence of *Occupygezi,* clearly signify the presence of a social, cultural and political capital that is inherent to the Turkish civil society. However, these processes of bottom-up mobilization lack continuity and seem to gain importance only at critical moments.

Ayşen Uysal (2017) gives a detailed analysis of the repertoire of political protests, the identity of participants, and the police view of protest movements in the 1990s and 2000s. She argues that there is a continuity between the 1990s and 2000s. However, there is also a shift toward international issues, human rights problems, as well as justice and representation problems in

the subject of the protests along with the globalization and Europeanization of Turkey. Youth mobilization during the 1999 Marmara earthquake and 2013 Gezi protests differed from that of 1970s when public protests were also highly salient. The most remarkable difference is probably that the ones in 1999 and 2013 were mainly initiated by the post-1980 coup young generations who were raised with a synthesis of Turkish nationalist and Islamist ideologies, and stigmatized by the elder generations as "apolitical youth". The insertion of Islamist rhetoric and symbols to the Turkish national identity and everyday politics partly became possible in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup, which originally served to weaken working-class movement and left-wing youth movements of the 1960s and 1970s. The political system established in the aftermath of the 1980 military coup secured the weakening of the working-class movements and left-wing political rhetoric in Turkey in a way that led to the rise of identity-based politics among pious Muslims, Islamists, Kurds, Alevis, Circassians, non-Muslim minorities, and other ethno-cultural communities (Erdoğan and Üstüner, 2004). Hence, the latest youth movements in Turkey are more in line with the new social movements as they are not necessarily driven from class-based conflicts, but rather from ecological, environmental, cultural, urban, and identity-related conflicts (Melucci, 1994).

Mass mobilizations of the 1970s were also assertive in the sense that they were the manifestations of the quest for liberty, equality, and justice expressed by working-class groups and university students with a Leftist background. One could also assess these social movements as the manifestation of political and societal claims raised by a civil society characterized with active citizenship as a demand. Turkey suffered from political polarization and violence in the 1960s and the 1970s among university students, workers, police, teachers and bureaucrats, which led to a military intervention in 1980. The military council and the ensuing governments tried to exercise strict control over all kinds of voluntary organizations, associations, foundations, especially the Leftist ones, which were highly active in the political sphere before the coup. Turkey tried to maintain its strict control over all kinds of social movements and organizations until the end of the 1980s. It was only by the late 1980s that Turkey began to tolerate the existence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with different cultural and ideological orientations, and their activities (Şimşek, 2004).

Constructing Citizenship in Turkey Before and After 1980 Military Coup

The Kemalist revolution in the 1920s, which repealed the Ottoman notion of *ummah* has made a radical change in the mind-set of Turkish citizens,. However, the Kemalist agenda has also reinstrumentalized Islam in the service of secularist nationalism to foster a holistic citizenship

rather than liberating individual autonomy (Davison, 1998; Türkmen, 2009). In this regard, there is not a real rupture between the Ottoman state and modern Turkey in the sense that the temporal authority superseded the religious authority (Inalcık, 1958). A core aim of the Turkish modernism has been to maintain religious authority under the state authority (Türkmen, 2009; Bayar, 2009; Gürbey, 2009). Developing an understanding of religion compatible with this version of secularism has been the main goal of the curriculum by the nation-builders in raising young generations. However, the objectives of citizenship education display significant differences even during the early history of the Republic (Çayır and Gürkaynak, 2008: 51). While in 1926 the new primary school program stated its objective as 'raising good citizens', the 1929 program underlined 'raising people, physically and psychologically fit to be Turkish citizens', and the 1936 program highlighted 'raising republican, statist, secular, revolutionary citizens'. One of the most significant changes in citizenship education took place in the late 1930s with the primary school program introduced by the ruling single party, Republican People's Party (CHP). Accordingly, primary schools became the production sites for *'milli yurttaş'* (national citizens) leading to the production of a homogenous nation (Üstel, 2004: 138). In this regard, the Turkish national oath, which was required to be recited at public schools between 1933 and 2013, is a striking example of this constant process of indoctrination. The oath has been ingrained in the minds of the Turkish youngsters with the last sentence, "How happy is the one who calls himself/herself a Turk!" (*Ne mutlu Türküm diyene!*). The Turkish government has official lifted the daily reciting national oath in elementary schools and headscarf ban in the state offices in October 2013, following the Gezi protests in June 2013. While the former reform was made as a concession to Kurdish demands during the so-called "peace process"[2], the latter was made as a response to the long-lasting claims of the AKP electorate.

The Turkish national education curriculum has mostly promoted a civic education based on the celebration of the Sunni-Islam-Turkish-male culture. It has been very difficult for the non-Sunni-Muslim-Turkish-(male) youth to publicly express their identities in school, or to get their practical claims about their ethno-cultural and religious difference accommodated by the state

[2] The Kurdish peace process was first launched by the AKP government in 2009 in an effort to grant more rights to the Kurds. It aimed to resolve the conflict between the Kurds and the Turkish state, which has been ongoing since 1984 and has resulted in more than 40,000 mortalities and great economic loss for Turkey. The PKK (Kurdistan Workers Party) observed a unilateral ceasefire in 1999–2004. A mutual ceasefire was declared in 2013 and lasted until September 2014, when it began breaking down due to the spillover effect of the Syrian Civil War and the AKP's reluctance to help the Kurds in Kobanî, which was besieged by Islamic State (ISIS) forces (Özbudun 2014).

(Yıldız, 2001). However, the transition to the multiparty system in the 1950s brought about the redefinition of Turkish citizenship in the framework of industriousness, studiousness, working hard and having a sense of responsibility (Üstel, 2004). The National curriculum was revised in 1968 to accommodate the growing emphasis on democracy, while it also kept the nationalistic undertones. In response to the global wave of protests in the late 1960s, the Curriculum was revised again in 1973, and it reemphasized the "upholding of Turkish nationalism", "respect for Turkish moral values", and the like (Çayır and Gürkaynak, 2008: 52-53). Üstel (2004) observes that in the 1980s the emphasis of citizenship education became "ethno-cultural" and the founding principles of Turkish citizenship were divided into two categories: the *material* (language and religion) and the *moral* (common history and culture), embracing a synthesis of Turkish and Islamic elements.

Following the 1980 military coup, the 1982 Constitution strongly limited the spaces for political participation. The new constitution favoured a Turkish and Islamic alliance using a flavour of popular religious nationalism with a neoliberal economic agenda. Kurds, Alevis, radical Islam, and Christianity turned out to be the new significant others. This was a crucial turning point in Turkish history that signified a specific impact especially on the younger generations (Bozkurt *et al.,* 2015; Göksel, 2009; Lüküslü, 2005, 2013). In the aftermath of the coup, young people went through a process of social construction where public discourses presented them as 'apolitical consumers' (Neyzi, 2001: 412).

In the 1990s, the appearance of new social and political challenges such as the Kurdish question, the Alevi question, European integration, political Islam as well as neoliberal form of governance that plunged the Turkish state into a crisis of legitimacy led to a reconfiguration of the traditional notion of citizenship (Keyman and İçduygu, 2003; Kaya, 2013). In this context, civil society organizations appealing to young people and dealing with issues of human rights, democratization, gender policy, equality, minority rights have consistently grown in numbers and started to become active players in Turkish politics thanks to the Europeanization process (Kubicek 2012; Kaya, 2013, 2018; Zihnioğlu, 2013). An increasing number of Turkish organizations formed partnerships with organizations of other European countries in order to develop common projects such as the European Volunteering Service, Youth in Action, or Erasmus+. These developments eventually paved the way for the rise of a new activist generation who would play a crucial role in the bottom-up protests during the AKP era despite the conformist and apolitical education system initiated in the post-1980 era.

The *occupygezi* movement of summer 2013 epitomized newly emerging forms of non-conventional participation among this generation. Thousands of young people s actively protested at first against a redevelopment plan implying the destruction of one of the last remaining green spaces in central Istanbul. The protests displayed a unique momentum where different claims were expressed in order to affirm the right to public space and democracy in Turkey (Abbas and Ismail, 2015; Farro and Demirhisar, 2014; Karasulu, 2014; Marchetti and Kaya 2014; Ozkaynak *et al.* 2015; Özel, 2014; Yörük and Yüksel, 2014).

Breaking the dichotomy between being political and apolitical

The Gezi movement was a game-changer in the sense that the boundaries between old and young disappeared temporarily. Pierre Bourdieu sociologically describes being young as a power relation based on age (1993: 94). Since this kind of relationship changes from one to another context, what remains as a common experience in the modern world is that society sees power in older generations while trying to limit the acts of younger ones. According to this age based hierarchical norm, what is political realm is exclusively reserved for the older generations while young generations are excluded. However, Gezi protests made such exclusion obsolete, at least for that very moment.

Since the 1980s, the Turkish youth has been accused of being 'apolitical'. The widespread perception of the Gezi generation being apolitical was meant to be that young individuals did not have any ethics of solidarity and political responsibility (Yalçıntaş, 2015). However, it was mainly these individuals, accused of being 'apolitical' by the elder generations, who resisted the brutal acts of the police during the Gezi protests. Demet Lüküslü (2014) explains this so-called apolitical attitude of some segments of the Turkish youth involving humor and avoiding political topics, as a way of coming to terms with the difficulties of the present. These everyday tactics make them to cope with the political order with its demands of conformism. Similarly, Leyla Neyzi (2001) earlier argued that the youngsters of modern Turkey differed from the previous generations in the sense that they prefer to perform cultural practices in public space in order to come to terms with the destabilizing effects of what is political. Therefore, the popular discourse judging young people for being apolitical fails to see how people are active and motivated in terms of making decisions of their everyday lives and shaping the society they are living in, even if someone does not call this truly 'politics' or 'participation' (Gümüş, 2017).

Young people mostly distanced themselves from the apolitical youth discourse without either ignoring or denying it (Tanyaş, 2015). Young people active in new social movements such as feminists, LGBT groups, and ecological activists saw themselves very successful in politically

being participative through the acts of protests and making demands (Gümüş and Yılmaz 2015). Moreover, age is not an important factor shaping either conventional or unconventional forms of political participation that exhibit significant differences due to gender, economic status, and geographic residency (Erdoğan and Uyan-Semerci, 2017). Overall, unconventional political participationof youth in Turkey is being driven by a variety of factors such as levels of civic engagement, values and sophistication, whereas conventional participation is driven by demographic characteristics such as high income and value of tradition–religiosity (Chrona and Capelos 2017).

Chevalier (2016) identifies four different types of youth welfare citizenship: a) denied youth citizenship; b) second-class youth citizenship; c) enabling youth citizenship; and d) monitored youth citizenship. Denied youth citizenship is characterized by the provision of familialized social benefits and the selective strategy of economic citizenship (e.g. Spain, Portugal, France, Italy, Belgium and Greece); second-class youth citizenship is characterized with individualized social benefits coupled with a selective strategy of economic citizenship (e.g. UK and Ireland); enabling youth citizenship with individualized social benefits that are equally provided to the adults (e.g. Sweden, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands); monitored youth citizenship type with familialized social benefits implementing an encompassing strategy (e.g. Germany, Austria and Luxembourg). Yılmaz (2017) argues that the Turkish model corresponds to the *denied youth citizenship* type where young people have to still rely on family structures for support. Even young people pursuing university degrees with partial financial support from the state, are not immune to this familialization trend. The selective strategy of Turkey in distributing skills among young people leaves mostly young men without higher education vulnerable in the labour market and young women at home. Yılmaz suggests that the participation of different segments of the Turkish youth in the Gezi movement was a reaction to the denied youth citizenship pursued by the Turkish government.

Gezi protests: unconventional forms of political participation

The Gezi movement, transcending up the binary opposition between apolitical and political, is the most important form of unconventional youth political participation in recent Turkish politics. It started as a spontaneous reaction to the government's plan to replace a park with a shopping mall in the image of an old Ottoman barracks, it expanded to include and oppose the top-downand authoritarian governance. From a comparative perspective, *Occupygezi* is a new global social movement, which has similar characteristics to its predecessors such as Tahrir Square, Occupy Wall street, and European Indignados movement. Following the Gezi

Movement, Turkish civil society has become more pro-European, and the European Union circles also changed their perceptions of the Turkish society (Marchetti and Kaya, 2014). Alain Badiou (2012) argued that Tahrir Square and all the activities which took place there such as fighting, barricading, camping, debating, cooking, bartering, caring for the wounded, constituted the 'communism of movement' in a way that posited an alternative to the neoliberal democratic and authoritarian state. Similarly, Slavoj Zizek (2013) claimed that only these totally new political and social movements without hegemonic organizations and charismatic leaderships could create what he called the 'magic of Tahrir'. And, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2012) also joined them in arguing that the Arab Spring, Europe's *indignado* protests and Occupy Wall Street expressed the longing of the multitude for a 'real democracy' against corporate capitalism. *Occupygezi* movement also provided us with a *prefigurative form of politics* as it brought about a range of social experiments that both critiqued the status quo and offered alternatives by implementing radically democratic practices in pursuit of social justice.[3] Gezi protests symbolized the rejection of intolerant acts of the PM Erdoğan who pursued an increasingly populist political style based on Islamic references and a social-engineering project aiming to raise "religious and conservative youth." He also requested mothers to give at least three births, offered criticisms of the content of the Turkish soap operas ordered banning alcohol on university campus, and pursued of the building of mosques in Taksim Square and Camlica Hill.

As Marina Sitrin (2012: 74) put it in the Occupy Wall street protests context, the purpose of the Gezi movement was "not to determine the path the country should take, but to create the space for a conversation in which all can participate and determine together what the future should look like." Rejecting all kinds of hierarchies and embracing prefigurative politics, citizens of all kinds, such as socialists, Muslims, nationalists, Kemalists, Kurds, Alevis, gays/lesbians, ecologists, hackers, football fans, academics, artists, anarchists, women, and anti-war activists, gathered in Gezi Park located in Taksim, which is loaded with left-wing working-class demonstrations on May days in the 1970s. They created social centres, libraries, collective kitchens, music venues, conference venues, graffiti walls, day care corners, utopic streets and squares,[4] book fairs, barter tables, and democratic forums, which offered room for experimentation, creativity, innovation, satire, humour, dissent and solidarity (Yalçıntaş, 2015).

[3] For a detailed explanation of the concept of "prefigurative politics" see Cornishet al. (2016).

[4] Hrant Dink Street, Pınar Selek Square, Ceylan Özkol Street, Mustafa Sarı Street are some of the names used by the protestors. Naming the fictional streets or squares after those persons, the activists aimed to restore the justice, which was not secured by the state.

These civil utopias brought about a form of solidarity, which is cross-culture, cross-religion, cross-ethnicity, cross-class, and cross-gender. In the spaces of communication created by the protestors, individuals coming from different ideological backgrounds had the chance to experience a form of deliberative democracy. Donatella Della Porta (2012) draws our attention to the critical interpersonal trust generated by the protestors in such deliberative moments. Gezi also provided its participants with an experience of direct democracy by which different points of view reciprocally transformed each other views.[5]

These networks of solidarity went beyond the national borders and received support from international civil society. During the Gezi protests, then-Prime Minister Erdoğan named the protesters as 'a bunch of scum', (*çapulcular)*, which was immediately turned into a popular symbol of societal and political resistance by the youngsters (Aksoy, 2018; Çiftçi, 2018; Kaya, 2018). The word *çapulcu* was later popularized through the social media, and vernacularized by several international youth groups in different languages. Another group showing a sense of solidarity with their peers in Turkey was the Turkish diaspora networks. Based on Lefebvre's understanding of space, which is not presumably tied to a territory, the German-Turkish youngsters involved in the Gezi protests, in a way, instrumentalized the protests as a set of tactics cope with the nationalist and Islamist strategies of the state (Weissenberg 2017).

As in Tahrir Square and Zucotti Park, the demonstrators of Gezi also made a point of cleaning up after collective action to demonstrate the capacity of "the people" to govern themselves (Calhoun, 2013). Gezi movement was also an attempt to reassemble the social, which had been polarized in different spheres of life between the secularist-Islamist conflicts. A survey conducted by KONDA during the protests revealed that most of the demonstrators were not involved in any organized demonstration before (KONDA, 2013). According to the same survey, some groups were better represented than others. Among other things, the survey suggests that Alevis were significantly overrepresented in the protests. The survey also revealed that 51 per cent of activists were women. Buket Türkmen reminds us of the fact that women in Gezi were not only dominant in terms of numbers. On the one hand they were the icons of the movement as they were depicted in pictures and billboard such as "woman in red" and "woman in black". On the other hand, they intervened in, and transformed, the language of protesting and they were the main organisers of the Park commune (Türkmen, 2018).

Some more findings of the Konda Survey could be further explanatory about the profile of protestors. Nearly half of the prtestors decided to go to Gezi Park after seeing the police

[5] For further discussion on Social movements and Europeanization see Della Porta and Caiani (2009).

violence. The overwhelming majority expressed their demands in terms of anti-authoritarianism and civil rights. While 34 per cent asked for more freedom, 18 per cent for more rights, 18 per cent asked for more democracy against dictatorship and oppression. A fifth of the protesters had come to the park when the municipality started tearing out the trees. Yörük and Yüksel (2014) also revealed that the dominating issues covered by the mainstream media prior to the Gezi protests were about human rights (40 per cent), along with freedom of expression (23 per cent) and workers' rights (20 per cent). Even though there were a significant number of workers among the Gezi protesters, labour-based claims were not predominant. Some 61 per cent of protesters said they took part 'as citizens', while just 5 per cent did so 'as workers', and 5 percent as the professionals (the 'new middle class') (Yörük and Yüksel, 2014).

Gezi protests also provided those participant youngsters who usually only communicated online with a meeting ground with a face-to-face communication. Against the segregation and isolation of everyday life, Gezi offered inclusive, egalitarian and participatory structures of communication. It invited apolitical citizens to experience an active sense of 'insurgent citizenship' by which they could see what an inclusive and egalitarian society might look like (Holston, 2008). The movement introduced millions of citizens all around the country to the experience of direct democracy. It mobilized an entire generation of previously apathetic youth, and built spaces for imagining and experiencing a post-capitalist utopia organized outside profit, competition and corporatism.

The term "active citizenship" is central to the forms generated by Turkish youngsters during the Gezi protests as they redefined their symbolic reality beyond the ascribed set of rights and duties through activation of participatory behaviours. Youngsters demonstrate various acts of citizenship to impact on the policies of both local and central states. Engin Isin defines the acts of citizenship as "those acts that transform forms and modes of being political by bringing into being new actors such as activist citizens who are claimants of rights and responsibilities, through creating new sites and scales of struggle" (2008: 39). Acts of citizenship imply the redefinition of the spaces of participation and new modalities to shape what is political and gain a legitimate voice in public sphere (Isin, 2008; 2009).

We witnessed different practices that were originally deemed to be outside the political, and which assembled themselves as relatively routinized, durable and effective strategies and technologies, making, enacting, and instituting political demands and translating them into claims for citizenship rights (Isin 2002: 36). These practices that were initially interpreted as *social movements or cultural politics* are increasingly being perceived as *insurgent citizenship*

practices. Thomas Janoski and Brian Gran (2002) define the active citizens as those citizens who participate in the grassroots political activities and have concern for the people in their group. The active citizens are often engaged in conflict with established élites. They are often social reformers of an established party, grassroots organizers of any political position, or radical revolutionaries with an activist orientation. What is narrated here defines very well the type of citizenry experienced in Gezi movement.

Many Turkish citizens were becoming more concerned with the decisions of the political centre in Ankara, turning their everyday life into a kind of turmoil dominated by societal polarization, Islamization, chaos, traffic jam, pollution, crowdedness, hopelessness, anomy and confusion. Since the late 1990s, Turkish citizens were becoming more and more critical, demanding and outspoken in parallel with the Europeanization of the civil society in Turkey. They were becoming less supportive of the military tutelage in power. Turkish *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (coming to terms with the past), the outspoken claims of ethno-cultural and religious minorities, and the growing power of the civil society organizations were all meant to be the signs of the Europeanization of the ways in which the public space is being constructed without being under the monopoly of the state, at least by the end of the 2000s.

The location of the Gezi Park at the very centre of the city, was symbolically important as it was meant to be the space liberated from neo-liberal Islamization pursued by the state. Henri Lefebvre (1968: 36) finds the use of the city centre by the dwellers of that city to be very important with regard to the materialization of the right to the city. Occupygezi movement has become a civil-political venue in which the youngsters of every kind pursued deliberative forms of active citizenry in a way that has proved the merits of the preceding Europeanization process (Marchetti and Kaya, 2014). One should not also forget about the symbolic importance of the Taksim square, in the centre of the city, next to the Gezi Park, which means a lot to secular segments of the Turkish civil society (Aksoy, 2018). The historical Republican Monument (*Cumhuriyet Aniti*) which symbolizes the independence war and the foundation of the Turkish Republic, the Atatürk Cultural Centre (*Atatürk Kültür Merkezi*) symbolizing the Kemalist modernity, modern arts, and music, and the Taksim Square symbolizing the history of the working-class movements and May Day celebrations are all very important symbols of modernity, westernization, secularization and Europeanization, which are likely to be used interchangeably by Turkish citizens (Kaya 2013).

At first glance, it seems to be ephemeral and has failed to dislodge the authoritarian turn in Turkish politics, the Gezi protests actually became transformative moment for sustainable

change in Turkey. Gezi movement transcended the symbolic power of these aforementioned spaces. One of the most essential problems of contemporary Turkey is that the state has always monopolized the right to define and shape the principal components of public space. In this sense, the *Occupy Gezi* movement is a revolt of the citizens, or the dwellers of Istanbul and of other cities, against the repressive hegemony of the state restricting the right of individuals to shape the public space. Historically speaking, the Occupy Gezi movement was similar to the preceding movements such as headscarf movement, Alevi movement, Kurdish movement, which challenged the repressive hegemony of the state in monopolizing the formation of the public space. However, what made Gezi movement different from the other social movements was its capacity to reassemble the social across ethnic, religious, class, cultural, and gendered identities. Furthermore, the Gezi movement was not televised, but tweeted, unlike the others. Hence, the use of the social media was very decisive in disseminating the messages of the movement across the globe. Since the Gezi movement, no major corruption was heard off; some former acts of corruption were revealed; citizen journalism became more widespread; environmentalist movements became prevalent in different parts of the country; and the oppositional parties such as *CHP*, *Iyi Parti* (Good Party), *Saadet Partisi* (Felicity Party) have appropriated many of the innovations introduced by the Gezi protests. The appropriation of Gezi spirit by the oppositional parties was practiced during the 2019 local elections when they successfully instrumentalized citizen journalism, creativity, humor, satire, parody, arts, street protests, music (especially rap) and different acts of solidarity to assemble a National Alliance (*Millet Ittifakı* in Turkish) against the ruling alliance (Public Alliance, *Cumhur Ittifakı* in Turkish).[6] It also seems that the ruling party, AKP, and the President are still preoccupied with the unresolved accounts of the Gezi protests as in the arrest of some of the leading Gezi protestors for allegedly being part of a broad foreign-backed conspiracy to topple the government during the Gezi protests. Such a sensitivity on the part of the ruling elite demonstrates that the Gezi protests still remain an impediment before their full grasp of power.[7]

[6] For some rap samples used by the CHP activists during the 2019 local elections in Istanbul see the song "*Uyan*" (Wake up!), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AYwJnynRXAc; and "Istanbul bizim!" (Istanbul is ours,) by Umut Çoban & Erdem Kaya, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYePpCcplgU accessed on 26 August 2019. Turkish nationalist and secularits *Iyi Parti* and Muslim conservative *Saadet Partisi* also used similar communication strategies to reach out young voters. For *Iyi Parti's* song see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xjB5b0ZNkX4, and for *Saadet Parti's* see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ANC7StNS_iA.

[7] For a detailed coverage of the judiciary process against the leading Gezi protestors see https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/turkey-arrests-academics-activists-erdogan-crackdown-protest-gezi-park-human-rights-a8647836.html accessed on 26 August 2019.

The latest judiciary process also shows that the AKP's electoral and institutional hegemony still tries to suffocate the Gezi movement and its ongoing legacy.

Digital Activism in Turkey

What happened in Gezi Park was a democratic revolt of the active citizens against the ever-lasting authority of the state in shaping the public space as well as the city. The revolt was spontaneously organized by the youngsters with various social backgrounds, who were mobilized through the new social media such as Twitter and Facebook (Bee and Chrona 2017). Erkan Saka (2017, 2018) argues that the Gezi movement had a strong legacy in the years to come on the formation of the citizen journalism through social media.[8] These initiatives organized via social media are remarkable due to the fact that they were established in order to make the election system more transparent, to bring an alternative model to the system by introducing new organisms rather than an election campaign ran by the state (Stavroula and Bee, 2018; Bee and Kaya, 2016; Güner, 2014).At a broader level, digital activism has recently become phenomenal in the sense that it shapes public opinion to a great extent. For instance, the rise in popularity of right-wing populist political movements in Europe goes hand-in-hand with the intensification of online social media and digital activism in politics (Kaya, 2019). This mix of virtual and real political activity is the way millions of people, especially young people, relate to politics in the 21st century (Bartlett *et al*., 2011). The media's changing role, especially social media, has emancipated citizens in a way that has led to the demystification of the political office, political parties and state actors (Mudde, 2004: 556). All the populist parties and movements exploit the new social media to communicate their statements and messages to large segments of society, who no longer seem reliant on the mainstream media (Lopez Pedersen and Zoppi, 2018). These political groups are known to oppose immigration, heterogeneity, multiculturalism, ethno-cultural and religious diversity. They are also known for their 'anti-establishment' views and their concern for protecting a homogeneous national culture and heritage. At the same time, social media has also contributed to the development of deliberative democracy, or participatory democracy as in the Tahrir Square, Occupy Wall Street, Indignados, Gezi Park, and Maidan Movements. The populism of the New Left, as summarized by Cas Mudde (2004: 557), refers to an active, self-confident, well-educated,

[8] 140journos is a good example of citizenship journalism. It has a YouTube channel, a Twitter account (@140journos), and a website (https://140journos.com). Dokuz8haber is another example of citizenship journalism, which blossomed in the aftermath of Gezi protests. It has a website (https://dokuz8haber.net/), a Twitter account (@dokuz8haber), and a Facebook account (https://www.facebook.com/dokuz8haber). Oy ve Ötesi is a citizens' initiative established in 2014 to prevent fraud in elections. They have been active in all the elections after 2014. They have a website (https://oyveotesi.org/) and a Twitter account (@oyveotesi).

progressive citizen; whereas the right-wing populism supporter is a hard-working, conservative, reactionary, nationalist citizen who sees his/her world being distorted by progressives, elites, institutions, criminals, aliens and refugees. The kind of democracy pursued by the right-wing populists also differs from that pursued by left-wing populist supporters. Contrary to common belief, right-wing populist voters do not strongly favour any form of participatory democracy, be it deliberative. Populists are not interested in expanding participative democratic processes; rather they support referendums as an instrument to overcome the power of the elite. What they want is the problems of the ordinary wo/man to be solved by a remarkable leader in accordance with their own values. In other words, as Taggart (2000: 1) puts it, "populism requires the most extraordinary individuals to lead the most ordinary of people."

Compared to the way social media mobilize right-wing populist crowds, populism of the New Left conveys a message of deliberative democracy through new global movements such as the Gezi in Turkey, Tahrir in Egypt, Occupy Wall Street in the US, Indignados in Europe, Maidan in Ukraine and the Umbrella movement in Hong Kong. Yet it is an open question whether digital activism can survive under the oppressive regimes.

In her work in which she questions the role of social media in the organization of networked protests, Zeynep Tüfekçi (2017:) argues that the lack of institutionalization and the lack of leadership in social media are not just "happenstances", or mere by-products of technology, they are also rooted "political choices that grow out of a culture of horizontalism within these movements… and that are enabled by current information technology (Tüfekçi, 2017: 82). While Tüfekçi (2017) also addresses at the mobilizing potential of digital activism and its fragility at the same time in oppressive political contexts, Şenay Yavuz Görkem (2017) finds that oppressive and prohibitive environments weaken all democratic attempts including digital activism to voice dissident opinions. In this sense, the Turkish media has been mostly co-opted and silenced by the government via neoliberal pressures on media conglomerates (Lopez Pedersen and Zoppi, 2018; Görkem, 2017). The politics of fear has also resonated among the digital activists In a particularly egregious case, President Erdoğan attacked the academics who signed an online petition denouncing the state violence on the Kurds in early 2016.[9] The fear in the social media increased even more in the aftermath of the arrest of Osman Kavala, an activist businessman, who was accused of being the main initiator of the Gezi protests in collaboration

[9] For more detail on "signature incidence" see *The Guardian* (15 January 2016). https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/15/turkey-rounds-up-academics-who-signed-petition-denouncing-attacks-on-kurds accessed on 7 July 2019.

with George Soros.[10] In 2018, a group of Gezi protestors were arrested and put on trial and accused of participating in an effort to overthrow the government.[11] Overall, citizen journalism has lost its pace due to the growing political and judicial fear imposed on critical segments of the society including the social media accounts. [12]

Conclusion

As formulated by the Turkish state, Turkish citizenship has been associated with duties rather than rights, loyalty to the state rather than to individual, and passive citizenry rather than active citizenry, parochialism rather than cosmopolitanism, and paternalism rather than liberalism. The curricula of national education aimed to raise generations in accordance with the priorities of the political elite in power, whether secular or Islamist. Urban youth mostly contested such paternalist statist configurations of citizenship through different forms of political engagements such as socialist, anarchist, ethnic, and sometimes religious identities. Youth movements in the late 1960s was of similar stance as in the other parts of the western world, i.e., working-class based movements. While youth movements gained more ethno-cultural and identity-based character in the 1980s and 1990s, they generated unconventional forms of political participation and active citizenship in the 2000s. During this period, European integration process brought about two different types of active citizenship: active citizenship as a practice and active citizenship as a demand. The former is a top-down experience constrained by the European integration process, which aims to transform the state through institutional reforms. The latter, active citizenship as a demand, is a bottom-up experience generated by the young generations through their acts, deeds, choices, moves and stands, which might seem to be apolitical at first glance. In this sense, Gezi protests provide researchers with a different lens to see the break-up of the conventional dichotomy between political and apolitical. This chapter narrated how Gezi protestors have performed different forms of active citizenship as a demand via various unconventional forms of political participation and generated a monumental albeit ephemeral transformation of state-citizen interaction in Turkey.

[10] For more detail on Osman Kavala's arrest see *The Independent* (23 November 2018), https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/turkey-arrests-academics-activists-erdogan-crackdown-protest-gezi-park-human-rights-a8647836.html accessed on 7 July 2019.
[11] For more information on the indictment see the Reuters (19 March 2019) https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-gezi/turkey-escalates-crackdown-on-dissent-six-years-after-gezi-protests-idUSKCN1R00EN 7 July 2019.
[12] In addition to the political oppression, the growing popularity of alternative social media channels has also contributed to the fall of citizen journalism. Personal communication with Erkan Saka (7 July 2019).

In fact, the Gezi protests is a turning point for the Turkish youth in general as it has brought about a process of emancipation from the statist tradition and conventional institutions of participation such as political parties. Gezi offers a rich repertoire *acts of citizenship* transcending political polarization and a genuine respect for diversity. These *acts of citizenship* are central to shaping a process of re-imagination of the public space and the acquisition of new modalities to relate with politics in unconventional ways. These acts of citizenship performed during and after the Gezi protests offer us new venues of active citizenship as a demand and show the potential of insurgent young citizens in fostering processes of democratization from below in Turkey. A reincarnation of what one might call Gezi spirit emerged during the 2019 local elections in which young generations, challenged paternalist structures via the appropriation of creativity, humor, satire, parody, arts, street protests, and different acts of solidarity demonstrated during the Gezi protests, and now visible in the local electoral campaigns of the oppositional parties (*CHP, Iyi Parti* and *Saadet Partisi*) through rap songs, citizen journalism, and alternative media outlets.

Calhoun (2013) was right in saying that Occupy Wall Street just happened by great invention and innovation. It was less a movement than a dramatic performance. Similarly, Gezi protests just happened, too. It was not really a movement, but *a local moment of inspiration and innovation* of what Baiocchi and Kennedy (2013) call a "global occupy movement" that represents a new stage in the history of protest. The Gezi protests fizzled out after several months but left a lasting effect. Its most important impact probably lies in its transformative effects on Turkish political culture. It may lie in different acts of citizenship through which participants challenge all kinds of inequalities and condescending discourses of the political elite question the very working of democracy primarily via the electoral box.

Acknowledgements

The research for this Chapter was undertaken as part of a Horizon 2020 research and innovation project called ISLAM-OPHOB-ISM under Grant Agreement ERC AdG 785934.

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