

# After Gezi: Moving Towards Post-Hegemonic Imagination in Turkey

ALİ MURAT YEL\* and ALPARSLAN NAS\*\*

**ABSTRACT** *This paper discusses the conflict between the AK Party government and the Gezi activism with reference to hegemony, power-resistance dichotomy, local/metanarratives and the carnivalesque. The AK Party's 11-year rule revolutionized center-periphery relations in Turkey. The party pioneered the democratization process until the 2011 elections but took an authoritarian turn afterwards –which gave rise to the revolts. However, the protests mobilized a heterogeneous group, some of whom maintained militarist and patriarchal metanarratives while others took a libertarian stance. This paper highlights the fragmentation of discourses under the “Gezi Spirit” as well as among AK Party supporters.*

*“There is no hegemony and never has been. We live in cynical, post-hegemonic times: nobody is very much persuaded by ideologies that once seemed fundamental to securing social order.” (Beasley-Murray, 2002)*

## Introduction

**A**dapting from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's philosophical propositions, Jon Beasley-Murray challenges the concept of hegemony, advanced by Italian Marxist thinker Antonio Gramsci<sup>1</sup> and later developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe<sup>2</sup>. According to Beasley-Murray, ideology is no longer the determining agent in shaping the politics of contemporary society, where individuals maintain complex relations with the state apparatus and the dominant class in a given society. The idea of hegemony advanced by Gramsci emphasizes the efficacy of ideology; which is, the bourgeoisie ideology managing to reproduce consent over individuals belonging to different social classes. The decline of ideology with the rapid development of a consumption-oriented society in the postmodern era gave rise to the visibility of *differentiating* identities, which were included in a process of accumulating different sorts of capital and (cultural, social or practical) power. Politics can no longer produce unified collective identities but at the micropolitical level a wide variety of differentiated identities emerge through new media technologies.

\* School of Communication, Marmara University

\*\* School of Communication, Marmara University

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While the term hegemony refers to the set of social relations, which is regulated by the dominant class who manages to reproduce the consent of the underprivileged members of the society, Beasley-Murray suggests that hegemony is no longer sufficient to explain the contemporary dynamics of social order. With reference to Deleuzian concepts of “habit” and “affect”<sup>3</sup>, he underscores that the social order is maintained through the complex web of relations between the individuals on the basis of multiplicity of differences as well as conflicts in-between, rather than concrete ideologies determining the limits of certain discourses shaping our social realities. Moving beyond the Marxist formula towards Foucauldian conception of power, which draws attention to the horizontal dispersion of power relations that act upon and subjugate individuals in differing social settings, the term post-hegemony refers to “the dispersion of power, the fragmentation of politics and the multiplicity of identities”<sup>4</sup>.

The particular realization, which has been debated within the Marxist and poststructuralist circles within academia regarding the assertion of post-hegemony, as the characterizing force in contemporary society, might explain the course of events that Turkey has recently been experiencing, namely, the Gezi Park activism. This essay aims to point at various dynamics introduced into our universe of discourse with the unfolding of the Gezi events, especially the paradoxes that the “Gezi Spirit” is founded upon. We suggest that the Gezi upheaval was a reactionary response against the particular social class, which is represented by Prime Minister Erdoğan’s personality as the “other” as opposed to those of secular, middle class individuals who associate themselves either with the paradigms of Kemalism or leftism. The argument, which defines the Gezi events merely as a “reactionary” response does not mean to insult or degrade the importance of the demands of a particular social class. It rather suggests that all social oppositional movements in contemporary society are necessarily reactionary since it is not possible to mention a concrete revolutionary body of social classes, which would carry the potential to radically transform the society. Revolution is no longer possible since a revolutionary program with the potential to offer “salvation” to a certain class or the society as a whole cannot be coherently established. With the decline of ideology and the differentiation of individuals within social classes, we suggest that it is no longer possible to maintain particular hegemony, however, post-hegemonic dispositions can be instrumentalized for democratic politics.

## **Beyond the Power-Resistance Dichotomy**

The particular reaction that occurred due to the repression of environmentalist concerns on cutting trees down in Gezi Park turned into a collective activism, which targeted Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. It seems that

Erdoğan had intentionally drawn attention to himself with his speeches on the Gezi unrest, where he insistently said “We made our decisions on Gezi Park and we will go through with them!” However, a possible step back by Erdoğan could have caused disillusionment among his supporters and a loss in faith in their charismatic leader. As such anti-democrat discourse asserted its existence, as the groups targeting Erdoğan became even more aggressive. Reaching its peak at this particular instance, the tension opened the doors to the manifestation of discriminative discourses with cultural references, which were already existent in the subconscious of the activists, who were oriented around the politicization of Kemalist or Islamophobic impulses among the middle and upper-middle classes.

The unrest in Taksim Square extended to Istanbul’s other neighborhoods and several cities around the country. The masses gathered and insulted Erdoğan with slogans; the outrage headed towards the government buildings; the public transportation busses were set on fire; barricades were built on the roads, which reached Taksim Square. Gas masks became a popular product to sell among the street vendors around Taksim. The “state of exception” in Giorgio Agamben’s<sup>5</sup> terms, became the “norm.” Violence provided the visuality of an “other urban setting” and concretized this possibility in our memory. We saw people taking photos with their friends and families, among the ruins that turned Taksim into an “open air museum” by the normalization of destruction, aestheticization of violence, differentiating the urban setting from its daily, ordinary existence.

Foucault’s<sup>6</sup> very popular argument explains, “where there is power, there is resistance,” however, again as pointed out by Foucault, the performativity of power is diffused throughout the society without any certain structures where you can vertically locate power. Power-resistance dichotomy does not point at stable positions. Gezi activists claim that Gezi Park is a model of resistance against power. Yet for those supporting the anti-Kemalist, faith-based politics, Gezi Park became a site of power in itself. Due to the outrage at Gezi uprising which positioned itself against the AK Party, religious-conservative individuals were reminded of the February 28, 1997 coup in Turkey: a military intervention against the Islamist “Welfare Party” and versus the perceived “Islamization” of the country. The “banging of pots and pans” in balconies in protest of Erdoğan daily at nine at night under Gezi activism reminds many in Turkish society of the traumatic experience of February 28, when the religious, Islamist and conservative voters of the Welfare Party led by Necmettin Erbakan



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were targeted by a discriminating discourse of ‘otherness.’ While Gezi Park was the most peaceful, least militarist space of the protests, all other gatherings became the sites of similar demonstrations of “Republic Protests,” which were organized similarly back in 2007 against Abdullah Gül’s candidacy for presidency, calling upon the Turkish army to prevent the “uncivilized Islamists” of taking control of the top state position, symbolic for the Kemalist re-

public. After the Gezi Park events along with all the Islamophobic republic meetings, all places of resistance referenced Gezi Park: everyone was chanting, “Everywhere is Taksim, everywhere is resistance.” We see the reproduction of the so-called uniting ideology, namely nationalism with elements of militarism and elitism, which was indeed the perpetrating discourse of modernity since the 19th century.

As individuals who emphasize their belongings to leftist politics continue “resistance” at Gezi Park, few of them were interested in whether their resistance or revolution was the revolution of the sanitation workers at the metro station, just beneath the park. A provocative question begs to be answered: whether the communal life at Gezi Park was the voice of the ‘subaltern’ or not. Once Gezi Park was emptied by the police, forums for demonstrations spread all over the upper-middle class neighborhoods throughout Istanbul. The same question comes to mind: whether these forums, mostly held in “sterile” environments of the city, reflected the voice of the ‘subaltern’ in an urban setting where the marginalized, lower-class neighborhoods do not even have parks to arrange forums to criticize the government.

What seems to be the paradox is that the majority of these lower-class neighborhoods voted for Erdoğan’s government over the last ten years. Erdoğan, who built his political subjectivity as one of the marginalized, suburban poor for more than 20 years, continues to be the sole representative of the majority of the masses, who are not yet equipped with the necessary forms of capital to express their concerns as a marginalized group. The same appears to be true for the sanitation workers in the Metro Stations or the street vendors who sold gas masks in Taksim during the Gezi Park occupation. As one of the female vendors said to us, when we asked her whether she was afraid of the police or not: “We come here to sell goods and earn our bread. I’m not afraid of the police, I vote for Erdoğan, his police will not do any harm to me.” The lower class social groups, the ‘subalterns’ experiencing the conditions of subordination in the complex dynamics of class, gender or ethnicity, continue to struggle with the actual necessities of daily life, namely “earning their daily bread and butter,” rather than “resisting.” The same is true for a female cleaning lady, who had been walking from a working class neighborhood, “Kağıthane” to Taksim

for more than one hour walk to reach her workplace and clean the floors all day long because public transportation was cancelled due to the occupation of Gezi Park by the resistant activists.

Despite the claims that Gezi is a “resistance,” which would pave the way for a revolutionary act against the “civil dictatorship” led by the AK Party government, namely by Erdoğan, our analysis regarding the events suggests the contrary. We argue that Gezi represents a reaction against the transformation of center-periphery relations in Turkey<sup>7</sup>. As opposed to the Kemalist, secular “center,” which has been the constitutive agent in the reproduction of the Kemalist status quo especially via the bureaucracy, “the periphery” is represented by the marginalized masses of non-secular Muslims and the Kurds, who have been targeted by the official republican discourse as the “uncivilized other.” The AK Party’s rise to power during the 2002 elections signaled the reversal of this basic orientalist dichotomy. Ever since, the periphery has been asserting its presence in the public sphere in terms of economic, political, and cultural relations. The increasing visibility of the Islamic lifestyle among certain segments of Turkey’s rising lower and middle classes triggered a particular anxiety, namely that secular society was being coerced into maintaining conservative lifestyles, which is an argument included in the Gezi discourse.

There are no concrete political or cultural developments that directly indicate that the AK Party is attempting to coerce secular society into transforming their lifestyles into a non-secular one. This particular argument goes far beyond miscomprehension. The religious and conservative lifestyles have been coerced since the foundation of the republican Turkey. The rise of the AK Party paved the way for the normalization of these lifestyles. However, the normalization period is defined as a state of coercion. Such argumentation facilitates a symbolic violence, which aims to conceal the hierarchy of power as a result of the domination of secular lifestyle since the early republican period. Rather, it is an act of symbolic violence to those who have been coerced into a secular lifestyle since the foundation of the republican Turkey. On the other hand, in tandem with the conflict between the center and the periphery there is also a political dichotomy that is present crystalizing political society around voting blocks. Furthermore, Gezi revealed that Turkish civil society and its relations with the political system and its respective parties is equally highly fragmented. For instance, the idea of a “Gezi spirit,” which is claimed to have embraced the utmost manifestations of “democratic” ideals is problematic in the ways in which it maintains particular paradoxes. Extolling the AK Party as the only party truly representing the progress made in Turkey’s democratic evolution is also a misinterpretation. There are various instances where anti-democratic discourses are expressed by both positions. Gezi experience showed us that the society can no longer be divided into two distinct categories who support arguments that are totally opposing each other. The Gramscian “common sense”

is highly fragmented and sustaining hegemony becomes more difficult in a democratic society.

## AK Party and the Carnavalesque

Throughout the 2000s, when the AK Party maintained power and won several consecutive elections, they managed to reproduce the consent of the peripheral/marginalized segments of society, including Kurds, and non-Muslims, as well as members of the LGBT community. Carefully reworking the system inherited by the Kemalist status quo, the AK Party undertook a successful Gramscian “war of position” by representing the periphery as opposed to the economic and political structures of the center. While several steps have been taken towards democratization in the course of the EU process, the status quo has not been completely transformed. As many have pointed out,<sup>8</sup> Turkey is in a state of ‘passive revolution’: a lengthy incomplete transformation to radically transform the tactics and the strategies inherent in the state apparatus of the republican regime. The anti-democratic motives intrinsic to the regime had a negative influence on the AK Party, who assumed that it had the control of the state apparatus especially after the 2011 elections.

The incompleteness of the transformation of the center-periphery relationship underlines the unique dynamics of post-hegemonic politics in Turkey. The center is deprived of the adequate means of political representation, since the Republican People’s Party openly supported the coup-plotters against the AK Party, which creates differentiation between their political position and the democratic civilian process throughout the 2000s in Turkey. However, the center still has the dominance over the hegemonic cultural codes, especially with regards to the image of the secular lifestyle as a desirable signifier of culture. The periphery, on the other hand, does not constitute a homogeneous bloc. While Muslims under the AK Party asserted their presence in the public sphere, there are class-based conflicts occurring within the Muslim habitus due to the rising lower and middle classes with the AK Party. Kurds, on the other hand, attained increased visibility due to the rise of Kurdish political activism and Erdoğan’s introduction of a multi-cultural discourse to the political society. They, however, have been disillusioned with the regime on several occasions, in particular after the Uludere Massacre and the mass incarceration of KCK (The Kurdish Communities Union) members.

As a result, there are shifting dynamics of visibility/invisibility and empowerment/disempowerment, as the AK Party represented the sole political option in this complex situation, mainly because it culturally represented the periphery but mostly because the AK Party facilitated new political discourses addressing these politically emergent audiences. Nevertheless, Erdoğan still talks



Gezi demonstrators discussed the transformation of their movement with forums at various parks of İstanbul.

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about the dignity of the Turkish nation in a militarist and nationalist manner because he is addressing specific audiences in Turkish society. However, to other segments of society, he asserts that there are multiplicities in Turkish society such as different ethnic groups and that a unified Turkish nation does not exist. What the AK Party initiated was not a hegemonic political -platform, it was instead the harbinger of a post-hegemonic emphasis on contemporary society. Unlike a hegemonic politics, which carefully relies on and advantages certain class interests, the AK Party differentiated its discourses, fragmented its politics in a decentralized way on the basis of a multi-cultural perception of society in contrast to politics based on ideology. Moreover, the AK Party managed to facilitate politics on the basis of “service” to improve the welfare of the periphery in order to provide them with the opportunity to move up the social ladder.

Strikingly, following these events, the AK Party initiated a democratization package in September 2013, which includes the improvement of minority rights towards a multicultural society. The AK Party, once again, turned towards post-hegemonic politics by strengthening the boundaries of multiculturalism, pluralism, and cultural fragmentation. This is not surprising since over the past 10-years of the AK Party’s Administration, Turkey has not been transformed into an Islamic state as the Kemalists feared. Rather, Turkey has taken bold steps towards expanding Turkey’s democracy, especially with the initiation of the Kurdish democratization process, which opened the way for peace negotiations with the PKK. Furthermore, civil society has improved

regardless of the AK Party's seemingly conservative identity, including the LGBT parades, which were first organized in 2005. With the emergence of the new conservative middle class and a consumption culture, the visibility of Islamic lifestyles has also been fragmented. The decline of the military as the main agent of politics paved the way for the advancement of a plurality of voices to be represented in civil society, in terms of ethnicity, religion, and gender based differentiations. Turkey's contemporary society can thus be characterized as 'carnavalesque'<sup>9</sup> in terms of the plurality of positions, which threaten the official hierarchies that were once the hallmark of the privileged agents of the Kemalist regime.

Today, the image of Abdullah Ocalan, the PKK leader has been transformed in the minds of those who have been cursing him for "killing Turkish babies," an accusation leveled by the nationalist-Kemalist media against Ocalan for years. The AK Party managed to transform Ocalan's label from "baby-killer" to "İmralı," referring to the prison where he resides. What's more important is that currently individuals, who once fiercely cursed Ocalan, have completely changed their attitudes towards him, aside certain ultra-nationalist groups that remain unwavering in their position against him. Ocalan is now considered as one of the important actors of the peace negotiations, appearing no longer willing to wage war against the Turkish army. Crucially, the AK Party managed to *organically* transform the attitudes of Turkish society in 10 years' time in order to open up peace negotiations. Surely, this was a revolutionary twist in the way in which Turkish society as whole, which was indoctrinated through the totalitarian tendencies of the republican regime against Kurds, experienced transformation. The AK Party paved the way for the decline of the 'republican ideology,' which is a post-hegemonic policy, introducing the multiplicity of discourses into politics to shatter the common held stereotypes, which were not even questioned.

Politics and society in Turkey have been experiencing the 'carnavalesque' change ever since the AK Party came to power. The discourse promoted by Gezi activism, especially the assertion of "libertarianism" "multiplicity" and "plurality" was inherited from this 'carnavalesque' transformation. As AK Party paved the way for the democratization of society, even Gezi uprising was a result of such democratization, yet initiated against the AK Party. The motif behind the activism was really based on the desire of the privileged segments of the society to push the periphery away from the center and re-establish the old republican tutelage hegemony. However, Gezi activism held heterogeneous positions, since various groups previously dedicated to AK Party supported the Gezi activism, especially some members of "Cemaat", followers of the spiritual leader Fethullah Gülen. While Gülen himself did not take an active stance, as opposed to Erdoğan throughout the Gezi events, several columnists of the Cemaat initially openly declared their support for Gezi activists when the events

began. Although at first these columnists expressed a shared democratic discourse promoted by Gezi, certain withdrew their support from Gezi activism when the protestors took brutal measures and vandalized public busses and attempted to attack Erdoğan's office. Still, the daily, *Today's Zaman*, continues to publish anti-government op-eds regularly. It is suggested that Erdoğan refused to fulfill the Cemaat's ambitions in participating to the state apparatus in a more active manner, which resulted in their participation to the Gezi events and opposing the AK Party. While the real cause remains unknown, it nevertheless shows that politics in Turkey is fragmented as there are differentiating conflicts in-between the religious, conservative segments of society, in addition to the famous center-periphery relations.

### The Paradoxes behind the "Spirit"

What was introduced by the Gezi events was nothing different than the 'carnavalesque' characteristics of contemporary society in Turkey. It is argued that "Y-generation" acquires political discourses and that it has eventually challenged elitist structure of political behavior. However, the word Gezi is filled with the differing interests of the agents, which resulted in the active participation of different groups in the expression of a heterogeneous discourse. While several of these groups associated with Gezi have attempted to radicalize the 'masses,' there were many activists who tried to avoid that the demonstrations turned violent and wanted to keep the expression of their cause peaceful. Others incited violence to the degree that it would turn into active conflict with the

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government so that the government could lose the control of the state. The end game was the overthrow of the AK Party. Various other opposition groups carefully distinguished the AK party and the social classes that it represents from Erdoğan's authoritarian speeches, which was their main criticism. While some activist groups insulted Erdoğan with sexist and abusive slogans at Gezi Park and around Taksim Square, feminist activists continuously warned the opposition groups not to use abusive language and carried out campaigns to clean profanities from the walls around Taksim Square. Unfortunately, several groups openly supported the violent acts against veiled women during the demonstrations by Gezi activists. At the same time, there were also individuals associated with Gezi activism who condemned the violence against Muslim women in the name of Gezi resistance. They clearly demarcated themselves from the anger exhibited against Muslim, non-secular groups. The class based distinctions within the Gezi Park also draws attention to the differentiating

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identities within what is suggested as a homogeneous Gezi activism movement. As one of the activists told us in the field, “while people initiate a stand to share cigarettes for the ones who cannot afford it, the same people also purchase a bottle of beer for 8 liras at the park, which is a paradox.” The communal life at Gezi Park transformed itself into a show for the privileged members of the Y-generation. They used this event play out their frustrations and fulfill their “revolutionary” desires.

There were various incidences when Gezi activism itself took on the very authoritarian tendencies of the AK Party that Gezi activists claimed to be resisting. There were cases of authoritarian, elitist, nationalist, patriarchal, and homophobic discourses.

Referring to the people who died during the clashes with the police as “martyrs of the revolution” produced a particular narrative of militarism. Similarly, with the final case of the Ergenekon trial in Silivri on August 5<sup>th</sup>, when the coup organizers were being sentenced for their attempt to overthrow the civilian government, Kemalists rushed in and chanted slogans such as, “let Silivri become the Gezi Park” and “everywhere is Silivri, everywhere is resistance.” The Gezi discourse is heterogeneous in the sense that even the discourses of totalitarianism can be attributed to it within the framework of resistance. which indeed puts forth a huge contrast between the supposedly libertarian tendency inherent in Gezi activism and the fascist outcry borrowing the Gezi discourse. Similarly, the social classes represented by the AK Party do not point to a unified, homogeneous whole. As highlighted by many critics today, democracies do not merely consist of “ballot boxes.” Although 50% of Turkish voters chose the AK Party at the ballot box, many different social classes can still associate their political views with some of the Gezi principles. Indeed, this does not mean that there are two separate homogenous groups in Turkey, but instead a multiplicity of groups and positions. These different groups represent individuals that are differentiated because of their religious, ethnic, class, and gender-based differences. Eventually the “common sense” which Gramsci attributes to the establishment of hegemony is becoming more fragmented and pluralistic.

Despite the crystallization of society broadly either around the center or the periphery, the Gezi events demonstrated the need to go beyond this particular dichotomy in order to politicize the post-hegemonic situation into a political program, which would embrace plurality. Though loose, the distinction between the center and the periphery remains the divide between the two poles of power in conflict. The Kemalists portray their secular lifestyle as the “center” and have been trying to reassert and reproduce their dominance as the model

for “desirable lifestyles” while alternative lifestyles are portrayed as the “periphery.” Going through the process of incomplete transformation, in Deleuzo-Guattarian terms the social sphere in Turkey is in a process of constant “becoming” especially with the advent of the new media, individuals are open to different interactions. It becomes harder for political parties to undertake propaganda since it is difficult to target an audience in order to fully persuade it. The individual’s demands are differentiated, identities unfixed, while the ‘carnavalesque’ transformation of society remains. Containing both the authoritarian meta-narratives and libertarian stances, Gezi paved the way for us to clearly locate the ‘carnavalesque’ that society has been experiencing since for the first time in republican history a truly civil government took charge. This is surely a positive indicator for the democratization process in Turkey since it points out the necessity to live together despite the differences in our cultural dispositions, by facilitating empathy with each other.

Democracy does not require generalizations, but pluralization. The utterances regarding the Gezi discourse aim to establish Gezi as a resistance movement, which is essentially democratic and liberating. However, the Gezi discourse is not a unifying spirit, rather it highlights the differentiation and plurality of ‘subjectivities,’ which are reproduced on the basis of the tensions that arise from the agents’ cultural dispositions. The statements suggesting that there is a Gezi spirit target the AK Party as an oppositional hegemonic bloc. The *iftar* gatherings organized by the Gezi activists aimed to reproduce the consent of non-secular, religious groups associated mostly to the AK Party. Therefore it is not possible to state that there was one type of Gezi “spirit” or to claim that it was the manifestation of a particular point of view, suggesting that societies are mobilized on the sole basis of hegemonic clear-cut dichotomies. This kind of approach or discourse reflects an intention to create conflict on the basis of cultural differences, rather than embracing plurality. However, this conflict and dichotomy-based approach, characterizing a past hegemonic era is no longer adapted and cannot truly comprehend the dynamics inherent in the post-hegemonic social order. Pointing to a concrete distinction between the Gezi Spirit and the political party that it “resists” undermines the plural and intersecting mechanisms of cultural differences. Furthermore, the way Gezi discourse claims that it is libertarian and pluralistic in “essence” constitutes another meta-narrative, which enables this discourse to become immune to critique by legitimizing its arguments on this sole basis.

## Local-Narratives Should be Defended

Political discourses instrumentalized for the struggle for hegemony eventually put forth generalized arguments, which fail to represent the differentiating identities of individuals. In a social setting where ideologies have lost their

influence to determine political behavior, groups are skeptical in giving their consent to the institution of the 'state,' which is in hierarchically positioned higher than the 'masses' and becomes a coercive force. Furthermore, as the Foucauldian conception of power shows us, civil society is indeed the terrain where the nexuses of power operate through ambiguous boundaries, rather than the state apparatus, which points at the vertically positioned power. Civil society or the sphere of "the cultural" with all ethnic, religious, class, and gender-based differences are the setting where the meta-narratives or the local-narratives are reproduced in Lyotard's<sup>10</sup> terms. The meta-narratives were constitutive of modern society and crucial in subject formation in accordance to the norms of nationalism, positivism, patriarchy, and capitalism. Lyotard defines the postmodern era with the dissolution of meta-narratives and the visibility of the local-narratives, which underline the fragmentation of cultural experiences.

Since the 1980s in Turkey, the concept of periphery has become increasingly important through the high visibility of the peripheral movements of the Kurdish and Islamic segments of societies. The dissolution of the meta-narratives inscribed in the foundational motives of the republican regime with the critique of Kemalism, has refocused our attention towards alternative forms of politics. In contemporary society, there is no single political party, which does not reproduce the metanarratives of modernity. Even Gezi activism, which was touted as a civil uprising, reproduced particular meta-narratives, which can be exemplified as follows: The patriarchal abusive language leveled against Erdogan; the militarist discourse used to "capture" Taksim square; the tactic of a totalitarian-revolutionary practice that promoted the importance of death and martyrdom for "higher" ideals; the typical upper-middle class attitude which suggested that they are the "enlightened" individuals in society as opposed to the ignorant "masses" voting for the AK Party; and "white-Turk" feminism which does not pay attention to the oppression of Muslim women just because they vote for the AK Party. and their habitual differences in the sense of Bourdieu, all point to the metanarratives associated with the Gezi discourse. However, the Gezi discourse was not all negative, as many different groups took great pain to distinguish themselves from those meta-narratives.

Rejecting the positives in Gezi activism, refusing the AK Party's contribution to democracy for the last ten years and likening Erdoğan to a dictator constitutes the hostile dichotomy that individuals are pushed into in this struggle towards achieving hegemony. We are currently pushed into a universe of discourse where one is expected to establish a position on one side or another of this dichotomy. Whenever one declares that Erdoğan is not a dictator, he/she can find themselves accused of being an ignorant person in the defense of a totalitarian regime; or whenever an individual establishes his/her subjec-

tivity with regards to Gezi, he/she can immediately be labeled as “a traitor who is manipulated” by the forces hostile to Turkey. The clear-cut dichotomies at work point out the hegemonic axis, which aim to divide the social sphere into two separate groups. As a maneuver from previous hegemonic times, this is a strategy that the old regime in Turkey is very fond of. Gezi activism, however, once again reminded us that society is characterized by differences rather than commonalities in the post-hegemonic era. Individual positions and demands are too complex to be generalized under “the Gezi spirit” or the “official government discourse.” What should be done at this point is to attempt an escape from the meta-narratives that constitute the subjectivities of individuals as enemies belonging to different groups. Rather than searching for an “emancipating spirit” like Gezi, which eventually ends up with reproducing the meta-narratives, one should facilitate the mechanisms of critique in order to find a third-way outside of these hostile differences.



## **Gezi activism showed us the underlying dynamics of the post-hegemonic experience that Turkish society is going through**

The fragmentation of politics, the decline of ideology, and the differentiation of identities show us the complex dynamics of the social order, which makes political representation under one single party or a discourse like Gezi impossible. With the paradoxes and the challenges it poses, Gezi activism showed us the underlying dynamics of the post-hegemonic experience that our contemporary society is going through. As academics, we should turn this chance into a sharp critique of the meta-narratives shaping our society, going beyond the superficially established power-resistance dichotomy for truly revolutionary politics, which will radically transform the ways in which we perceive ourselves and our surroundings, by attempting to beware of the metanarratives of subject formation reproduced by the hegemonic axis. The third way stands with all its potential in our post-hegemonic times: one should only aim to politicize it and to move beyond clear-cut dichotomies so that the incomplete revolution can be fulfilled, for the ‘carnavalesque’ to turn into a revolution. ■

### **Endnotes**

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6. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1990).
7. Ali Murat Yel and Alparslan Nas, "Taksim Square is not Tahrir Square," *Al Jazeera* (06.12.2013), Retrieved on 08.24.2013 from <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2013/06/201361272526958584.html>
8. Members of the AK Party have made various claims regarding the passive revolution that Turkey has been experiencing since the AK Party took power. In a TV interview at January 20, 2012, the vice-President of the AK Party, sociologist Prof. Beşir Atalay said at a press conference, "the AK Party should not be considered as a political movement reproducing the status-quo. Rather, the AK Party is a revolutionary party." (Retrieved on 08.20.2013 from [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnv08g\\_atalay-ak-parti-devrimci-bir-partidir\\_news?start=20](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xnv08g_atalay-ak-parti-devrimci-bir-partidir_news?start=20)) In another occasion in Libya on April 7, 2013, Atalay once again claimed that the AK Party undertook a "silent revolution" within the last 11 years of government (Retrieved on 08.20.2013 from [http://haber.rotahaber.com/turkiyede-sessiz-devrim-yaptik-\\_358374.html](http://haber.rotahaber.com/turkiyede-sessiz-devrim-yaptik-_358374.html)). Similar insights have been shared with the media by Ömer Çelik, AK Party deputy, as he said what the AK Party was able to achieve to transform the society by a silent revolution, in an interview at April 28, 2013. Çelik previously delivered a speech at King's College on December 4, 2012, where he claimed that the AK Party undertook the Gramscian conception of 'passive revolution' by reworking the superstructure of society (Retrieved on 08.20.2013 from <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/planet/22067534.asp>) Beşir Atalay also wrote the introductory essay of the book published by the AK Party on July 2013, entitled "Silent Revolution" (Sessiz Devrim) (Retrieved on 08.20.2013 from <http://www.aa.com.tr/en/news/204321--a-book-on-turkeys-silent-revolution-published>). It is significant that the book, which narrates the revolutionary policies of the AK Party, was published right after the Gezi events took place. As opposed to Gezi activism, which claims revolutionary paradigms, the AK Party has once again asserted its existence as the facilitator of the 'passive revolution' in Turkey by revolutionizing the center-periphery relationship.
9. Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world*, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984)
10. Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984).