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Edited by Isabel David and Kumru F. Toktamış

'Everywhere Taksim'

Sowing the Seeds for a
New Turkey at Gezi

'Everywhere Taksim'

Protest and Social Movements

Recent years have seen an explosion of protest movements around the world, and academic theories are racing to catch up with them. This series aims to further our understanding of the origins, dealings, decisions, and outcomes of social movements by fostering dialogue among many traditions of thought, across European nations and across continents. All theoretical perspectives are welcome. Books in the series typically combine theory with empirical research, dealing with various types of mobilization, from neighborhood groups to revolutions. We especially welcome work that synthesizes or compares different approaches to social movements, such as cultural and structural traditions, micro- and macro-social, economic and ideal, or qualitative and quantitative. Books in the series will be published in English. One goal is to encourage non-native speakers to introduce their work to Anglophone audiences. Another is to maximize accessibility: all books will be available in open access within a year after printed publication.

'Everywhere Taksim'

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Amsterdam University Press

Cover illustration: Street stencil on walls in Istanbul. The defiant penguin who wears a gas mask symbolizes the resistance against AKP rule and police brutality amidst media corruption.

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14 Gezi Spirit in the Diaspora

Diffusion of Turkish Politics to Europe

Bahar Baser

The Gezi events constituted a ground-breaking moment in Turkish political history. Immediately after the protests sparked in the Gezi Park, they spontaneously disseminated and many people from different walks of life found themselves trying to influence policymaking procedures in Turkey by using civil disobedience and non-violent protest strategies. This momentum also crossed the Turkish borders and diffused to the transnational space. Indeed, there were solidarity protests in many countries from the US to the Netherlands, from Iraq to Russia. Diasporas from Turkey played an important role in disseminating what was happening in Turkey to the world by informing media institutions as well as hostland politicians and civil society organisations about police brutality, censorship and oppression as well as the goals of the uprisings in general. They continue to be an integral part of the 'opposition(s)' that aims to contest AKP rule in Turkey.

Many diaspora groups organised events to commemorate the first anniversary of the Gezi protests at the beginning of June 2014. Workers' associations from Turkey organised a commemoration march in Duisburg to remember the 'martyrs of Gezi.'¹ In Switzerland, various leftist organisations and workers' associations organised an event in front of the parliament in Zurich and made declarations regarding the current situation in Turkey.² In the Netherlands, the Taksim Solidarity Group organised protests to commemorate the young people who lost their lives as a result of police brutality.³ These solidarity events clearly showed that diaspora groups from Turkey also appropriated the so-called 'Gezi Spirit' and their reactions were not a one-off activity; on the contrary, they have a sustained interest in keeping up this spirit abroad. Gezi became an over-arching transnational metaphor of an expression of dissent about AKP's policies in Turkey. However, the main reason for this sustained activism cannot be

1 <http://www.atik-online.net/2014/06/04/taksim-direnisinin-1-yilinda-tekrar-alanlardayiz/#.U5Vs8F9wYdU>.

2 <http://www.atik-online.net/2014/06/08/ismicrede-gezi-direnisi-ruhuyula-tum-sehitler-anildi/#.U5Vtt19wYdU>.

3 <http://avegkon.org/avrupada-gezi-direnisi-sehitleri-anildi/>.

explained by the sudden impact of Gezi events; instead, one should look at the prior existing mechanisms in order to understand what the Gezi spirit is building on.

My aim in this chapter is to analyse how the Gezi events were experienced in the diaspora, especially in Sweden, Germany, France and the Netherlands, and to illustrate how diaspora groups from different ethnic, religious and ideological backgrounds came together in solidarity with the Gezi protestors in Turkey. I show that the alliance-building mechanisms took on a different form in each country depending on the political environment, already existing cooperation mechanisms among diaspora groups, or the lack thereof, and the dominant diaspora groups who led the protests in different contexts. I particularly focus on alliance-building between Turkish and Kurdish diaspora groups in order to contribute to the discussions about the Kurdish stance towards Gezi. I also illustrate that the repertoires of protests in Turkey inspired the diaspora activists and simulations of Gezi were constructed in the diasporic spaces.

The findings of this chapter are based on semi-structured interviews and fieldwork observations derived from my longitudinal study on both Turkish and Kurdish diaspora groups in Europe during my doctoral and post-doctoral studies.⁴ Since the beginning of the Gezi protests in Turkey in May-June 2013, I have also been conducting follow-up interviews (face-to-face or via skype, email or telephone) and following the social media discussion groups founded by various diaspora groups in Europe in order to keep up to date with the discussions.

Diffusion of Gezi Spirit to the Transnational Space

Diasporas mobilise in a similar way to advocacy groups or other types of transnational solidarity networks and they use similar repertoires of action. They lobby hostland policymakers in order to achieve their goals as well as to raise awareness about their cause. Their existence depends on mobilising resources, recruiting new members and disseminating their agenda into the public spheres of their home and host countries (Sökefeld 2006; Shain and Barth 2003; Adamson 2008; Baser and Swain 2008). In a global setting, diasporas play the role of 'cultural brokerage,' which translates

4 I was a post-doctoral researcher in a project called 'Diasporas and Contested Sovereignty,' which has received funding from the European Research Council under the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme FP7/2007-2013ERC, grant agreement number 284198.

the local messages to a global audience when seminal moments occur in the homeland (Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti 2013). Especially due to the new communication technologies, the messages from the homeland can be transmitted to the diasporas and through the diasporas to a wider audience within seconds. For instance, Andén-Papadopoulos and Pantti (2013) argue that the 'Syrian diaspora helped to publicize the protests across national borders and media platforms' by playing the broker between local activists and the mainstream media. During the uprisings in their homelands, Arab diaspora showed a great deal of activism, which some authors called the 'diaspora spring'⁵ due to the rise in diasporic activism throughout the critical junctures in the Middle East. Graziano (2012, 18) also illustrates that in the case of the Tunisian diaspora: its web-activism created an 'information highway' where the censorship of the homeland is eluded during the domestic political turmoil. In the case of the Gezi protests, we detect a similar fashion but one can also see that the protests were performed spatially by using actual protests as well as creative art which is highly visible and solid in the transnational space and which has a more enduring impact. Although online networks constituted an integral part of the Gezi movement at home and abroad, in this article I solely focus on the offline activism in the diaspora, which I believe shows the core mechanisms that explain the diffusion of the Gezi spirit to the transnational space.

Diasporas are political actors generated as a result of political projects, have their own political ambitions and agendas and they try to influence home and hostland political mechanisms to achieve these goals. Diasporas are not homogenous entities and there might be different ideological, religious, ethnic or sectarian divergence within a diaspora group from the same homeland (Lyons and Mandaville 2010, 126; Feron 2013, 65). There is heterogeneity in terms of loyalties to an ethnic, religious or ideological project but there is also variation in terms of the level of activism among members of the same diaspora group. Shain and Barth (2003, 452) divide the members into three categories: core, passive and silent members. There is mobility among different levels of activism and mobilisation and this depends on both developments in the homeland and the hostland. Silent members can become passive, while dormant members can become active because diaspora mobilisations are fluid and complex. Critical events in the homeland might kindle interest in homeland politics and turn passive and silent members into active members as a result of an impetus to become

5 <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/the-arab-diaspora-finds-its-voice/article4243545/>.

mobilised to make their voice heard. The Gezi events in Turkey were a case in point in this regard.

Interestingly enough, the protest mechanisms diffused without delay to the diaspora and there were simultaneous protests all around Europe, which synchronised their discourses with the main actors of the Gezi protests from the TGB to the leftist fractions, from Kurdish diaspora groups to the Alevi federations. It should be underlined that the diasporas from Turkey had already been engaged in Turkish politics for many years and this was not the first time that they have organised protests. Gezi was not a miracle and it did not create a political activism or awareness from scratch. Kurdish diaspora has been politically active and successfully transnationalised its agenda since the first flow of Kurdish migrants to Europe during the last four decades (Baser 2011). Kemalist associations were established since the first migration flows, the Alevi movement has been one of the strongest diasporas from Turkey and leftist movements from Turkey have found refuge in Europe through exiled members since the 1970s (Sökefeld and Schwalgin 2000). Therefore, there was already an organised form of dissent or opposition in the diaspora, which was not just contesting the AKP rule but also the Turkish state, its hegemony and its failure to create a democratic environment for its minorities and groups in opposition in general.

Despite building on the already existing diaspora mobilisation, Gezi can still be considered as a pivotal moment for the mobilisation of diasporas from Turkey for various reasons. Firstly, it created new solidarity networks and managed to gather different generations and groups under an overarching aim with an extraordinary spirit of solidarity, which revealed itself in artistic forms and humour. Secondly, it strengthened the already existing alliances between different diaspora groups by adding a crucial aspect to their agenda. The 'grievances in common,' which brought various actors together, also had an impact on the groups in the diaspora, softened their differences and highlighted their common goals in a new context. Thirdly, many diaspora groups used this moment as an opportunity to recruit new members and a great deal of the passive members became core members and dormant members became passive members throughout this process. It was the first time these groups, who have competing agendas, together or separately, protested in the name of the 'Gezi Spirit.' Therefore, it had an impact on the mobilisation patterns, which can either be momentary or continual, the result of which will only be discovered in time.

While we should acknowledge the path-dependency that they have towards the homeland's political frames, the transnationalisation patterns in each host country take on different forms. Feron argues that diaspora

activism in each host country goes through a process of autonomisation where mobilisation takes on different features and dimensions than it does in the country of origin. In the hostland, diaspora discourses usually add their own agenda to the ones that are imported from the homeland and emphasis is put on different issues, themes, stakes and events, different types of actors are involved, the maintenance of group boundaries and culture changes (Feron 2013, 71). In the following pages, I demonstrate that a great deal of diasporic actions were imported from the homeland such as repertoires of protest, agenda-setting mechanisms, issues at stake, 'grievances in common' as well as the discourses of political movements in Turkey. However, a certain 'autonomisation' process has occurred and in each country different actors were leading the 'Gezi Spirit' and the political environment within which the activism was taking place also affected their agenda-setting.

Sweden is not the first country that comes to mind when we think about Turkish political activism abroad. The majority of Turkish migrants in Sweden are from a small town in Konya called Kulu and the community is rather politically passive compared to Turkish diasporas in the Netherlands or in Germany. There are no established Turkish leftist associations with mass support. Although there are diaspora members with leftist tendencies, they usually cooperate with the Swedish leftist circles rather than forming diasporic alliances. The Alevi federation is mobilised, but it is small in size with almost no leverage. Kemalist associations bourgeoned after the AKP came to power in Turkey and they were visible in a couple of protests against the Kurdish movement in Turkey or against the passing of the Armenian Genocide Bill in the Swedish Parliament (Baser 2014; Akis and Kalaylioglu 2010). In contrast, Kurdish diaspora in Sweden is very active and has an influence on policymakers. They are densely organised and they separated their diasporic spaces from the Turkish community from the 1970s onwards. As I argued elsewhere (Baser 2013), there is almost no cooperation between Turkish and Kurdish diaspora organisations, either on Turkish politics or on Swedish politics. This isolation also revealed itself during the Gezi protests, where no Kurdish associations were present and the Turkish groups protested in solidarity.

The main actors of the protests in Sweden were the TGB, ADD and Mukavemet Group. It is likely that many people who have no attachment to any of these groups also participated in the protests. 'Mukavemet' was founded by predominantly first-generation young immigrants from Turkey right after the Gezi protests. Many of them were individually active or were members of Swedish political organisations and parties but the Gezi

events constituted a diasporic change for them and they joined forces to make the protestors' voice heard. The group has around 200 members on Facebook and it uses social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook to gather members and to organise events. This group brought together diaspora individuals who sporadically engaged in diasporic activities and showed leftist tendencies. After a year, it is still active and is becoming more embedded into the Turkish diasporic community in Sweden.

During the Gezi events, the TGB and ADD in Sweden took advantage of the window of opportunity and made themselves visible in the public sphere. They managed to recruit many second-generation members during the protests and many young people started showing an interest in taking part in events related to Turkish politics. TGB is organised separately from the Mukavemet group but on certain occasions provides support to their events. They have been trying to keep the Gezi spirit alive over the past year by constantly organising panels and seminars in various cities in Sweden. For instance, in March 2014, they showed a documentary related to Gezi events, which gathered considerable attention from the second-generation.⁶

Kurdish diaspora organisations were not present at the Gezi protests in Sweden and there were discussions on social media forums which revolved around the idea that 'This is not the Kurds' problem, this is the Turks' problem.' However, interviewees who participated in the protests of the Mukavemet group mentioned that they saw some Kurdish diaspora members who individually joined the protests and they tried to be as inclusive as possible by playing down ideological discourses. The only protest event that brought TGB, ADD, Mukavemet and the PKK sympathising Kurdish associations together was Prime Minister Erdoğan's official visit to Sweden on 7 November 2013. These groups protested against this visit separately, not in a co-joint manner, but they episodically used the same slogan 'Everywhere Taksim! Everywhere resistance!'⁷

In France, we see a different picture. There are more Turkish and Kurdish immigrants with a heterogeneous background and they formed strong diaspora organisations in the 1970s. Leftist organisations from Turkey (with many different fractions), Alevi associations (although weaker than in Germany and the Netherlands), Kurdish diaspora organisations (mostly

6 See <http://www.isvecpostasi.com/haber/623/gezi-parki-olaylarini-anlatan-baslangic-belgeseli-ilgiyle-izlendi.html>.

7 <http://www.posta.com.tr/siyaset/HaberDetay/Isvec-te-Erdogan-a-PKK-lilardan-protesto.htm?ArticleID=203674>.

sympathising with the PKK) and Kemalist associations (both ADD and TGB) were highly active during the Gezi protests in France. There was collaboration among many groups from divergent backgrounds.⁸ The essence of the Gezi movement in Turkey was the fact that it also brought many people together who were not members of any political party or civil society organisation before. This was also reflected in the transnational space. In France, many individuals who were not politically active prior to Gezi protested the government and police brutality in the main squares of big cities.⁹

The Kurdish associations were very active during protests in solidarity with the Gezi movement back in Turkey. For instance, the Ahmet Kaya Cultural Association played a leading role in opening the branch of *Halkların Demokratik Partisi* (People's Democratic Party) in Paris and they prepared a declaration regarding the importance of the Gezi protests in Turkey. The leftist organisation *Fédération des Associations de Travailleurs et de Jeunes*, the French branch of the Federation of Democratic Workers' Organisations (*Demokratik İşçi Dernekleri Federasyonu*, DİDF), also participated actively and gave their full support to initiatives related to Gezi. The Taksim Solidarity Platform was founded co-jointly by various leftist and workers' associations¹⁰ as well as Alevi associations.¹¹ ADD and TGB in France protested separately and did not join forces with the leftist and Kurdish associations.¹²

Similar to France, in the Netherlands one can observe densely organised diaspora nodes of Turkish, Kurdish and Alevi groups. Networks of leftist and workers' associations, for instance, branches of DİDF, were omnipresent at the protests. Members of FEDKOM, a Kurdish organisation sympathising with the PKK, also showed their full support. Some Kurdish diaspora members were hesitating because of the intense participation of the neo-nationalists, who were clearly using an anti-Kurdish discourse in their party propaganda. Not all the Kurdish organisations supported the Gezi protests and many were sceptical due to the large presence of Kemalist associations such as the ADD and the TGB.

8 http://www.zaman.com.tr/dunya_gezi-parki-insaati-fransada-protesto-edildi_2096182.html.

9 <http://www.turkiyegazetesi.com.tr/gundem/42799.aspx>.

10 <http://www.etha.com.tr/Haber/2014/06/02/guncel/fransada-gezi-sehitleri-anildi/>.

11 <http://www.ozgurgelecek.net/duyuya/5636-fransada-taksim-gezi-direniyye-dayanma.html>.

12 For further details regarding the groups who participated see <http://www.fransaadbirlilik.com/admin/tgb-ve-haute-savoie-addden-gezi-parki-eylemlerine-destek.html>.

Especially in June 2013, there had been a considerable number of protests in Amsterdam, which brought leftist organisations and TGB together at protests as they concurrently chanted 'Everywhere Taksim! Everywhere resistance!' and 'Erdoğan Resign!'¹³ Websites such as 'Dutch Support for Taksim Occupy,' with more than a thousand supporters, were used to announce gatherings, share information related to political developments in Turkey and for members to get to know each other. In the Netherlands, a new group emerged among the first-generation young Turks and Kurds who are professionals or students in various cities. Together with the first- and second-generation migrants from Turkey in the Netherlands, they formed the Amsterdam Gezi Forum. The participants negotiated their solidarity to political parties and movements and agreed not to bring 'party politics' into their forums with the aim of having fruitful discussions on urgent matters related to Gezi. The participants of the forums managed to keep activism incessant and organised regular meetings with solid agendas and discussion points. They prepared professional websites, which were frequently updated.¹⁴ Issues such as urban transformation, LGBTI matters, minority rights, discrimination, ecology and conscientious objection were among the many topics discussed by forum participants.

The heart of Turkish-Kurdish diaspora politics is in Germany due to the size of both groups as well as their very neatly organised diasporic engagement with homeland politics. In German diasporic spaces, one can also observe the importation of predictable alliances from Turkey. Especially among the first-generation, there are dense networks of solidarity between the PKK-affiliated groups and the Turkish left. Kurdish umbrella organisations and DİDF, which have separate agendas in Turkey as well as in Germany, often unite their powers to raise their voice against discrimination in Germany and oppression in Turkey. They organise joint protests and seminars with Alevi associations and other Kurdish and workers' associations. For instance, the Democratic Solidarity Platform (*Demokratik Güç Birliği Platformu*) brings together various organisations from different walks of life and makes a call for individuals to join forces against discrimination and oppression both at home and in the diaspora. They clearly merge homeland-hostland issues in the same melting pot in order to position themselves in a broader framework. During the Gezi protests, they were increasingly active and they mobilised masses in Berlin, Cologne

13 For an example see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c4xKSTkIe8A>. Accessed 15 June 2014.

14 For instance see <http://amsterdamforum.org/forum/>. Accessed 16 June 2014.

and elsewhere to protest the official visit of Prime Minister Erdoğan to Germany, the police brutality and murders during the Gezi protests in Turkey as well as the subsequent seminal political developments in Turkey. An Alevi federation called *Almanya Alevi Birlikleri Federasyonu* was at the core of the Gezi protests in Germany and they were highly active both individually and within the Democratic Solidarity Platform.

TGB has a considerable number of supporters in Germany and they were very visible during the Gezi events. They frequently organised events, seminars and protest marches over the past year in order to gather media attention, to protest against Erdoğan's visit to Germany and to contest AKP's rule in Turkey. It can be said that they used Gezi as a window of opportunity to recruit new members and to make an appearance in the political spheres of the German diasporic space. According to an interviewee from DİDF Berlin, organisations such as ADD, TGB, leftist fractions and workers' associations protested together during the first couple of days of the Gezi events, gathering more than 10,000 people. She also confirmed that among the protestors there were many participants who were not members of any organisation but who randomly showed up at these mass protests to show solidarity with the Gezi resistance. According to another interviewee from Germany, it was the first time these groups had come together to protest against the Turkish government. He compared the Gezi events and the police brutality with the neo-Nazi murders in Germany and stated that the racist attacks in Germany did not even bring this many diaspora members together to protest in the name of democracy and human rights. He said this was the first time leftist symbols and flags had been seen waving concomitantly with Kurdish and Turkish flags and nationalist symbols. Although this momentum did not last after the first wave of protests and each group retired into their own extant solidarity webs, many see it as an important moment, one which showed divisions but simultaneously highlighted potential collaborations among different diaspora groups.

Observations on the main actors of the Gezi protests in the diaspora show that, apart from those in Sweden, Kurdish diaspora organisations were very much present at the Gezi protests and they gave their full support to the transnationalisation of this resistance movement. This clearly shows that even if there were fragmentations between the diaspora groups from Turkey, they were more ideological in character than ethnic. Secondly, we observe that in each country one group was more dominant than the other, depending on the characteristics of the diaspora groups in a given context. However, when we look at the bigger picture we see two camps who forged contingent alliances during the first spark of events and then

retired to their corners: TGB, ADD and other Kemalist organisations, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, leftist-Kurdish-Alevi movements joining forces despite their differences. Thirdly, in these four countries there were many participants who joined these protests without having any prior connection to a diaspora organisation.

Creating 'Gezi Parks' in Europe

The Gezi protests were a great illustration of the transformative power of creative art.¹⁵ Especially during the protests in Istanbul, various kinds of artistic performances accompanied protest events. They complemented the non-violent resistance strategy of the Gezi protestors and a spectrum of dance performances, piano recitals, folk songs and hip-hop music were used as an instrument of expression of dissent.

The 'standing man' was among the protest repertoires that became a symbol of the Gezi movement. As Snyder argues,¹⁶ 'the standing man displaced the violence articulated by the government. The same set of political, religious and cultural background assumptions were in play, but the contemplating figure displaced the force thrown at the resistance.' This iconic protest diffused to the transnational spaces and was adopted by various actors in the diaspora. From Caracas to Toronto, there were 'standing man' imitations by diaspora members from Turkey as well as civil society associations in front of Turkish consulates and in the main squares in metropolises.¹⁷ The protestors carried banners that had the names of 'martyrs' of the Gezi events on them. In France, this protest form was mostly adopted by the ADD and TGB supporters and it gained a significant share of media attention. In Germany, only a few people in Hamburg adopted it but they managed to draw media attention.¹⁸

In the Netherlands and Germany, participants created Gezi park simulations or tents, which brought many diaspora members together without questioning their background or political party loyalties. Each movement opened up its own tent after a while when the first wave of protests was over. These initiatives gathered attention from media outlets as well as

15 <http://roarmag.org/2014/01/nietzsche-gezi-power-art/>.

16 <http://roarmag.org/2014/01/nietzsche-gezi-power-art/>.

17 For details see <http://everywheretaksim.net/tr/bianet-gezi-direnisi-icin-7-ulke-7-duran-insan-7-dakika/>.

18 <http://www.haber7.com/avrupa/haber/1045351-almanya-duran-adama-bile-tahammul-edemedi>.

the locals and helped to disseminate the Gezi messages. The slogans that are used in Turkey, which use humour as a way of expressing dissent, were imported by diaspora members and they were also translated into the hostland's language, which clearly made the diaspora groups a bridge that binds the protestors in the homeland to the outside world with their own words. In Berlin, protestors wore T-shirts that read 'Çapulcu 36,' which combined the postcode of Kreuzberg in Berlin with the discourses of the homeland resistance. In Amsterdam, protesters met at a park and wrote small notes on pieces of paper and hung them from trees in order to make their park resemble the Gezi Park. They also used creative art performances in order to attract the attention of the Dutch public. For instance, a leftist group brought brooms and carried banners that read 'Only Revolution Will Clean This Mess!' Other groups brought empty shoeboxes which became the symbol of the corruption cases in Turkey. In The Hague, a group from Taksim Solidarity organised an interesting protest event where protestors brought popcorn and chairs and placed a projector in front of the Turkish embassy at night, and projected a penguin documentary on its walls. This was a very sharp political statement that was intertwined with Gezi spirit humour. These initiatives clearly demonstrated that the protest mechanisms in Turkey were closely followed by diaspora activists and it was not only dissent but also humour and creativity that diffused to the diaspora and constituted the 'Gezi Spirit' abroad.

In Sweden, diaspora members used music as common ground to gather people in solidarity with the protestors in Turkey. One of the leading members of the Mukavemet group is a Turkish singer called Hakan Vreskala, who took part in the Gezi protests in Turkey and organised several artistic performances in the Taksim and Beyoğlu areas.¹⁹ He coordinated a flash mob in Stockholm using various instruments such as drums and *darbuka* in order to gather attention from migrants from Turkey and elsewhere, as well as the native Swedish public and policymakers.²⁰ These events are highly important as artistic performances and music events are more likely to bring diaspora members from different backgrounds together and encourage them to share a moment of commonality without delving deeper into ethnic, religious and ideological cleavages.

In France, a photo exhibition was organised by Eren Araman called '# On y va "Gezi"!' and it was advertised by the Taksim Solidarity Platform, DİDF, Ahmet Kaya Cultural Association and many others. Also, a diaspora

19 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cjfoXoz69sw>. Accessed 16 June 2014.

20 See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gbl39vu4FD8>. Accessed 16 June 2014.

member and a scriptwriter for theatre plays and cinema called Sedef Ecer prepared a play for the popular radio station France Culture. It was called 'Three Trees in Istanbul' and was divided into ten episodes, which will not only air in France but also in Belgium and Germany. This is a clear example that shows the diaspora members are playing the role of cultural brokers and translating the Gezi movement's codes to a broader audience in Europe.

In the Netherlands, a group called the 'International Gezi Ensemble' was formed immediately after the Gezi protests and it consists of amateur and professional singers, musicians, filmmakers, dancers, theatre actors, painters and other artists. On their Facebook page, they describe their group as comprising participants who 'carry the Gezi spirit and try to support human rights, nature and democracy which we lose day-by-day in almost all countries around the world. It is a fully volunteer-led and independent organisation.'²¹ This amateur group has given numerous concerts in solidarity with the Gezi protestors and it also served a bigger purpose as it brought together various diaspora groups with competing agendas under one roof and in their terms united them 'under the Gezi spirit.' A Turkish interviewee from the Netherlands acknowledged that only protests that included art such as music or exhibitions gather people from different backgrounds together, as they do not contest but instead unite everyone who 'feels for' Gezi.

When I observed the discussion forums online as well as the events organised by the diaspora groups, it was clear that the Alevi, Kurdish and leftist as well as liberal groups focused on various themes that far transcended the limited agenda that the AKP politicians are trying to impose on the Gezi protestors, such as: the protests are provoked by foreign countries, these people are extremists, or the protestors do not have a clear agenda. From day one, protestors in the diaspora started focusing on issues such as the murder of Hrant Dink, the earthquake in Van and what they could do for the victims, the Roboski massacre and the lack of justice in this case, Kurdish rights and LGBTI rights in Turkey. The developments in Turkey after the Gezi Park events were also gradually carried into the discussions on diaspora forums, such as the corruption cases which came to the fore before the local elections and the Soma incident, where hundreds of miners died because of the negligence of the government and the mine owning companies. TGB and ADD supporters instead followed a distinct path in this regard and they were much more cautious about the issues related to the Kurdish Question. They rather used the Gezi resistance as a way to

21 For more information on the International Gezi Ensemble see <https://www.facebook.com/pages/International-GEZ%C4%B0-Ensemble/1383916755176534?sk=info>. Accessed 16 June 2014.

rekindle their own interpretation of Turkish nationalism and focused more on anti-AKP propaganda and secular values.

Gezi protests in the diaspora have an ever-changing agenda that evolves daily according to the influence of political developments in Turkey. It is not static; instead, it is expanding its scope to the future and the past by addressing many problematic issues, the lack of democracy and the violation of human rights in a broader perspective. Diasporic agendas are also selective. For instance, the local elections in Turkey were not covered in diasporic discourses as much as they were in Turkey, but diasporas also had their own local agendas depending on where they reside, which indicated the autonomisation of diaspora activism in the hostland setting.

Germany constitutes the most important country for Turkish and Kurdish diaspora groups. It has significant leverage in Turkish politics, which is why diaspora groups opposing AKP rule want to have an influence on the policymakers in Germany. It can also be said that, especially during the last decade, AKP rule particularly polarised Turkish communities at home and abroad and the tension between them is considered to be a domestic security problem for Germany, although it is not as dominant as the Turkish-Kurdish tensions. Erdoğan's visits to Germany usually create anxiety among German policymakers as well as the diaspora communities. For instance, his latest visit to Germany in May 2014 created dismay among many German politicians as well as Turkish leftist, Kemalist, Alevi and Kurdish groups. More than 100,000 people gathered to protest against him in Cologne (Democratic Solidarity Platform including Alevi and Kurdish organisations, DİDF and its youth organisation and other workers' associations), while thousands of other people lay rose petals in his path in a protest supporting Erdoğan. Ideological cleavages are very sharp and they are becoming much more visible as a result of the political situation in Turkey.

In Sweden, the protestors added elements of Swedish politics to their agenda. Swedish Foreign Minister Carl Bildt tweeted the following message during the Gezi protests: 'Talked with @EgemenBagis about need to cool down rhetoric, maintain dialogue and try to move forward together. Alternative dangerous.' Gezi supporters in Sweden were angry since the Foreign Minister did not say anything about police brutality in Turkey. As a response, they started campaigns on Twitter and Facebook called '#wewantanswersCarlBildt' and sent him messages asking him to react to state violence and the killing of protestors by the police in Turkey. This campaign started in Sweden but thanks to social media gathered support from other people all around the world.

In the Netherlands, there was another important matter of debate, as Rotterdam Islam University Rector Ahmet Akgündüz's declaration on the

Gezi protests caused irritation. He described the protestors as 'Godless, hooligan enemies of Islam' and said that the Gezi events resembled the 31 March events of the Ottoman Empire. He blamed foreign countries such as the US and Israel and the EU for supporting the hooligans and celebrating while Turkey was dealing with them.²² He also made declarations related to Alevism and he was accused by Alevi as well as other communities of hate-speech against Alevis. The Gezi Solidarity Forum published declarations condemning his actions and protested against him. These protests managed to gather media attention and many Dutch politicians commented on this issue. For a long time, the Dutch diasporic space kept busy with a debate on resisting anti-Alevi discourse and Gezi protests were suddenly intertwined with Alevi activism and other groups showing solidarity for their cause.²³

In France, protests were organised jointly with the leftist and Kurdish organisations and always included the issue of the murder of three Kurdish activists in Paris in their slogans and demands. Asking for justice for this case from French authorities was merged with the slogans from Gezi. A Turkish interviewee from a workers' association stated that she regularly joins protests regarding the murders and they also include Gezi events in their discussions. In sum, there was a common goal of the call for justice by the diaspora groups but every diaspora also had its local agenda.

Conclusion

The Gezi Park events and the spirit that they have inspired has diffused to transnational space and affected many diaspora groups from Turkey with diverging interests and agendas. Throughout the protests and thereafter, diasporas played a big role in terms of translating the messages of Gezi protestors and brokering its cultural and political codes to the outside world. The mass reaction to the Gezi events was also a sign for the hostland governments that the diasporas from the same homeland should not be perceived as a monolithic body but that there are considerable fragmentations within them. The response that the diaspora groups have shown to Gezi is not static but took on a sustained form, which constantly nourishes its discourse and agenda from the developments in Turkey as well as in

22 <http://gazeteyenigun.com.tr/gundem/120839/gezi;-dinsizlerin-sarhoslarin-alevilerin-ermenilerin-isi>.

23 For details see <http://everywheretaksim.net/tr/hollanda-gezi-dayanismasi-rotterdam-islam-universitesi-rektoru-prof-ahmet-akgunduzu-protesto-ediyoruz/>.

the host country. In the diaspora, the 'Gezi Spirit' strengthened already mobilised groups, caused an awakening in dormant members and created or strengthened already existing alliances between different diaspora groups. As in Turkey, not all the protestors could unite under collective aims, however different webs of solidarity on 'common grievances' were formed that engendered alternative or sometimes competing discourses. What the ADD and TGB take from the Gezi Spirit is not the same as the Leftist and Kurdish coalition and their expectations from this process. The diffusion of Gezi events created venues of opposition in the transnational space, which caused a merger of debate matters related to Turkish politics under a more comprehensive network. Similar to Gezi events in Turkey, 'it was never about three trees.' These venues became platforms for discussing issues that are related to coming to terms with the past – for instance by discussing the Sivas Massacre, giving support to 'ODTÜ Resistance',²⁴ reacting to corruption in Turkey and discussing a possible resolution to the Kurdish Question. As in Turkey, Gezi resistance in the diaspora is also building on a long-term struggle for democratisation in Turkey.

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