

SHIFTING GEOGRAPHIES OF SUBVERSIVE POLITICS IN ISTANBUL

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SHIFTING GEOGRAPHIES OF SUBVERSIVE POLITICS IN ISTANBUL

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Zeynel Gül, certify that

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ABSTRACT

Shifting Geographies of Subversive Politics in Istanbul

This thesis aims to understand the shifts in the spaces of radical left politics and the effects of these shifts on the discourses and modalities of political actions in Istanbul since the mid-1990s. In order to achieve this aim, it draws on an analysis of spatial distribution of political actions in central city sites and urban margins. It also focuses on the temporal mapping of *critical events* that shape political processes. It demonstrates that there exists a mobility of concentration of the political actions from urban margins to central spaces in the city. Based on records of radical left publications and ethnographic research in the left-stronghold Gazi and Okmeydanı neighborhoods, the thesis argues that the radical left employs different idioms and space-making practices, which in turn shape the modalities of their political actions. On the one side, the violent sacrificial practices by radical left subjects vis-à-vis the state contribute to the making of subversive neighborhood spaces – via walls, corners, parks, squares, barricades. On the other side, the human rights discourse based on victimhood converges with the spatial vector oriented to *spaces of visibility* in city centers. In the spaces of visibility, the material, economic, sensual and bodily dimensions of political actions are erased; the violently targeted body of the political subject is reduced to spectacle and voice. The thesis proposes to add action and visibility to the set of defining characteristics of space-complex, which is mostly discussed along the axis of materiality, memory, belonging and narrativity.

ÖZET

İstanbul'da Yıkıcı Siyasetin Değişen Coğrafyaları

Bu tez 1990ların ortalarından bu yana İstanbul'da radikal sol siyaset mekanlarındaki değişimleri ve bu değişimlerin siyasal eylemlerin söylemlerine ve biçimlerine etkilerini anlamayı amaçlıyor. Bu amaç doğrultusunda siyasal eylemlerin kent merkezlerinde ve marjinlerdeki mekansal dağılımının analizini esas alıyor. Aynı zamanda siyasal süreçleri şekillendiren *kritik olayların* mekansal haritalandırmasına da odaklanıyor. Çalışmanın gösterdiği üzere, siyasal eylemlerin yoğunluğu kent marjinlerinden merkezlere doğru kaymıştır. Tez, radikal sol yayınlara ve radikal solun güçlü olduğu Gazi ve Okmeydanı mahallerindeki etnografik araştırmaya dayanarak radikal solun merkezde ve yerelde farklı diller ve mekan-üretim pratiklerini işe koştüğünü ileri sürüyor. Bu farklılık siyasal eylem biçimlerini de şekillendiriyor. Bir yanda radikal sol öznelerin devlet karşısındaki şiddete dayalı feda pratikleri bu siyasete yakın mahalle mekanlarının –duvarlar, köşeler, parklar, meydanlar, barikatlar- üretimine katkı sunuyor. Diğer taraftan mağduriyeti esas alan insan hakları söylemi kent merkezlerindeki *görünürlük mekanlarına* yönelten bir mekansal vektörle yakınsıyor. Görünürlük mekanlarında siyasal eylemin materyal, ekonomik, duysal ve bedensel yönleri ortadan kalkıyor; şiddete hedef olan siyasal öznenin bedeni bir gösteri ve sese indirgeniyor. Tez eylem ve görünürlüğün genelde materyalite, hafıza, aidiyet ve anlatı ekseninde tartışılan mekan-kompleksin tanımlayıcı nitelikleri arasına dahil edilmesini öneriyor.

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To Suphi Nejat and his secrets embedded in “the ordinary”...

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

*space is only noise if you can see
see I want to write a story
about two long lines
two pretty lines that fall in love
two little spaces they're filled with echoes
did the lines ever intersect one another,
at a moment in time?¹*

This thesis explores the shift in the geographies of the politics of Turkey's radical left currents in Istanbul since mid-1990s and the mobility of the concentration of the political actions by the left from urban margins to central spaces in the city. In particular, I focus on how the shifts in the geographies of political actions affect the discourses and modalities of political actions interrelatedly.

Increasing concentrations of political actions in central Istanbul in recent decades captured its most lively moment with the Occupy Gezi Movement² of 2013, when hundreds of thousands of people from diverse groups, including radical left currents, feminists, LGBTQ, anti-capitalist Muslims, ecologists and so on poured into the streets. Yet it was not the first moment for the radical left to become visible in the central spaces of the city. During the months just before Occupy Gezi, police intervened many times in the political events held in Taksim and sites in the surrounding area. These sites have been the spaces of political actions for many years

¹Part of the song "Space Is Only Noise" by Nicolas Jaar (2011).

² At 31st of May 2013, the attempt by the Municipality of Istanbul to demolish Gezi Park near Taksim Square sparked nation-wide protests when police intervened violently to the protests against the demolition. (İnceoglu 2014; Tuğal 2013)

in the recent history of radical left. Although the members of the radical left mostly inhabited the urban margins, where they are relatively strong, they held rallies, press conferences, and sit-in protests to draw publicity to the central spaces of the metropolis, predominantly at Taksim and Kadıköy.

While the period of the 1990s for the radical left in Istanbul is remembered for its focus on the politics of districts, we can talk about the pre-dominance of central city sites as spaces of political action in recent decades. The spatial shift in question forms a basis for my interest in understanding, first of all, the forces and conditions enabling this shift. Secondly, I am interested in examining how this specific spatial shift transforms radical left politics, its discourses, its modalities of actions, and representations of these actions.

A cluster of questions arises with respect to a centripetal move by the radical left organizations in Istanbul: Which critical moments contributed to the mobility of the geographies of political actions? There is, of course, at the same time, the other side of the coin for the radical left politics: the margins. Can the radical left resume to hold its grip on its counter-hegemony vis-à-vis the state in these sites? In what ways does the radical left represent its existence in these districts? How do they reproduce the physical, discursive and symbolic spaces in the neighborhoods and the central city spaces? In what ways do the modalities of actions by the left differ in central spaces and neighborhoods? What do these differences in modalities of action and representations of these actions tell about the radical left politics? I aim to address these questions, along with many others, with a special emphasis on the coexistence of the time-space-action dimensions of the making of political processes in Istanbul.

Although there is always a multiplicity of spaces in the history of radical left movements of Turkey, there have been different *constitutive spaces* for different periods: The parliament, the mountains, the university, the neighborhoods, the squares and so on. These spaces with diverse scales assumed a decisive role in the constitution of the political agendas and contestation between the left forces and the Turkish state. While my point of departure has a special focus on the mobility of concentration between the subversive neighborhoods and central streets/squares, the extent of the analysis of transition from one constitutive space to another can be applied to other spaces as well: What are the factors contributing to the shifts in the constitutive spaces? How and why do the discourses and modalities of political actions by the radical left change in accordance with the spatial shifts? Hence, this study might be seen as an invitation for the study of the genealogy of spatial formations of subversive politics in Turkey. Since there is not a linear, unitary, teleological or unbrokenly continuous history of the radical left in Turkey, the spatial shifts can be seen as epistemic nodes of the historical analysis.

1.2 Theoretical premises and conceptual architectures of the research

First of all, this study draws on the scholarly literature on critical geography in order to explore the shifts in the geographies of political actions of radical left organizations in Istanbul. In particular, the works of contemporary critical geographers who handle *the space* as a dynamic, open, processual and socially constructed concept inspired the analytical structure of this work (Lefebvre, 1991; Massey, 2005; Gieryn, 2000; Elden, 2009; Gregory 2011). With regards to their material and subjective characteristics, we can see spaces as assemblages that are complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that

come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning (Livesey, 2010, p. 18; see also Delanda, 2005). Space as social assemblage not only contributes to the production of hierarchy (segregation), nation-state (territoriality and sovereignty) and capital (via accumulation, dispossession, enclosure etc.), it also spawns collective action and social control. Here is where the interaction between space and politics emerge as a *constituent force* for the radical left organizations analyzed in this study. Thinking the space-politics relationship as a *constituent force* (Negri, 1999) for radical left politics is not independent of the analysis of a struggle over the hegemony on the concrete and symbolic articulation of the space. Thus in order to denote the form of the spaces predominant in different periods for radical left politics of Istanbul, I use the term *constituent space*.

One of the difficulties I faced during the preparation of the current research was to situate the collective political agency and spatial formations (politics and space) in a dialogic relation. That is one of the reasons for me to recourse to diverse studies from political philosophy and political anthropology. Adding the action to time-space pair as a third dimension, I analyze the space as *the space of action* to understand the shifts in the geographies of radical left politics. In addition to the examination of space in a given territory of socio-political life, we have to consider the ways of integrating the *mobility of political actions* between different spaces to the analysis of political processes.³ It is the human action that endows any built space with social dynamism and that brings it to the agenda of politics. That is because the changes in spatial configurations tell about human actions and human actions at the same time change the spatial configurations. As Judith Butler (2012) suggests,

³ Indeed, in their definitions of the politics some of contemporary scholars of political philosophy resort to geographical terms As Laclau (1990) sees politics as a practice of 'dislocation', for Rancière politics is nothing but re-territorialization of the shares regarding the partition of what is sensible, sayable, visible. (Rancière, 2010)

together with the material conditions of the territorial sites, the bodies in the political actions themselves generate a space of their own. As the material architecture acts on us, human subjects animate and give meaning to space as well. Thus, in the spaces of action, the politics crosscuts the re-productions of bodies and the spaces.

Furthermore, subjects acting on the space at the same time invest their labor both in the representation of the space and representations of their own acts. Put it differently, there is a visibility of a space and also visibility of an action. Thus one of the discussions I want to focus on in this research will be the relationship between space-making practices and representations of political actions. These complex relationships between space, visibility and action will accompany the pursuit of a novel conceptualization of the space along the lines of this study.

One of the observations I should note about the subversive neighborhoods of Gazi and Okmeydanı is the construction of spaces of subversive neighborhoods with respect to memories of sacrificial acts of radical left subjects. The subjects of these sacrificial acts are generally ones who died after self-immolating practices in hunger strikes, those who were killed or tortured by state forces, those who were killed in armed clashes and so on. In order to delineate the roles of *gift* and *sacrifice* as components of moral economy between the radical left subjects and their imagined community in the making of neighborhood spaces, I draw on the works of Marcel Mauss (2002) and Georges Bataille (1985). As Mary Douglas (2002) warns, one has to be careful when taking the theory straight from its context in full-blown gift economies to a modern political issue (p. xix). To name a suicide attack, imprisonment or an atrocity of the state and so on as an exchange in the form of sacrifice can create ambiguities since it is not easy to determine the addressee and the donor of the exchange. That is to say, we do not have always concrete, material

objects to be exchanged. These acts as parts of the moral economies created around the dead embody symbolic and affective powers that shape the formations of spaces and political representations (Özsoy, 2010).

1.3 The margin and the space of visibility

Bestowing a voice on the speechless or a visibility on the invisible at the margins has long attracted a great deal of attention in anthropological and sociological studies. Literary works bringing this kind of socio-political marginality of the subversive politics of Turkey into question is quite widespread (Mavioğlu, 2006; Akbaş, 2011; Erdoğan Çelik, 2005; Halavut, 2009; Değirmencioğlu, 2014; Yılmaz, 2014). There is inevitably an ethical responsibility to take sides in front of a case of injustice and prefer to be a witness, rather than a spectator (Gledhill, 2002). Yet I want to shift the axis of the discussion and ask the following: What happens to the voice and visibility of the margins when they are placed at the center? How do they transform the politics of the margins and politics of ethnography writing — if indeed they do so? As the study will endeavor to show, locating the voice and the visibility of the margins in the center does not necessarily mean to do justice to the voices and sights. It sometimes does nothing other than multiplying the spectators and adding more to the flattening of the lively stories of the margins.

In a research regarding spaces of political action in one of the most populous “global cities”(Sassen, 2002) of the world, Istanbul, one has to be careful using the concepts of center/margin. That is, for the most part, because the globalization at unprecedented levels fosters ongoing precariatization of the labor force, dissolution of traditional places such as *varoşs* (suburbs), thus constantly re-defines borders of center/margin, of inside/outside etc.

Many studies revealed that the margins are necessary entailments of the state, as they constantly contribute to making of the legal, political, imaginary and spatial establishments of the center (Das and Poole, 2004; Asad, 2004; Üstündağ 2005; Kurt, 2008). Since the relationship and the border between the margin and center are always dynamic, the center and the margin themselves are not fixed or homogeneous entities. How should one scrutinize the effect of the dynamism of the relationship between margin and the center politically?

In his inspirational analysis on the relationship of center-periphery, Şerif Mardin (1973) proposes to understand political, cultural and economic spheres in the history of Ottoman Empire and contemporary Turkey through the lenses of center-periphery cleavage. Mardin suggests that, whereas in Western modernization the center-periphery relationships determined by multiple confrontations that usually went hand-in-hand with integrations between the state center and the periphery, in the Ottoman Empire this relationship took the form of an ongoing clash between center and periphery (p. 170). This clash brought an institutional and cultural codes⁴ that are always suspicious of the periphery and thus of “localism, particularism and heterodoxy” (pp. 173-4). Because of its suspicious codes, the central administration has always sought the ways of consolidating its power vis-à-vis the periphery with regards to politics, economy, culture and belief systems. To Mardin, the center forced the local to cultivate the policies and values directed in a top-down fashion, whereas the local resisted replacing its traditional counter-culture values and local

⁴ Among the contours and results of these institutional codes of the Ottoman Empire and Turkey, Mardin counts the following: cultivation of stereotype that the civilization was a contest between urbanization and monadism in the Ottoman Empire, cultural alienation of the masses from rulers and as a consequence of this creation of a counter-culture in the periphery, the persistence of single-party rule until the 1950s in the modern Turkish Republic, the impediments ahead of autonomy of the peripheries, repressive policies against the Islamist and Kurdish rebellions under the paradigms of centralism and secularism, the inability of the Kemalist regime becoming a popular movement, the coup d'états of 1960 and 1971 and so on. (Mardin, 1973, pp. 173-9)

policies with those of the center (Mardin, 1973, pp. 185-6). Accordingly, Mardin invites us to see how the dynamic tension between the local and the center has a much to say in the formation of politics and culture in Ottomans and Turkey.

Likewise, the political processes organized or encountered by radical left fractions at the margins and the centers of Istanbul are open to lively interactions between these two spheres. In other words, we can speak of a dialogical relationality between the margins and the center of Istanbul and politics of/at these spaces. The *disagreement* (Rancière, 2001) upon the production of sense of spaces in the neighborhoods and central spaces among many actors — including the state, radical left, media, culture etc.— contributes to the dynamism regarding the representation of the spaces. Regarding the dynamic character of the mobility between spaces we can ask the following: How do the encroachments from the margins to the center affect radical politics? Which discourses and imaginaries from the central spaces are incorporated to the radical left politics of Istanbul? In what ways, did the radical left subjects transform the center with their actions? How the center challenges the linguistics, ethical practices, forms of political acts carried out by the subjects at the margins?

Ethnographically, this study is based on the analysis of multiple margins (Bargu, 2014) of spatial, political, legal and ethical perspectives. Political organizations, actions of which I covered in that study, are located at the margins legally. They not only employ extra parliamentary forms of struggle (such as armed attacks) against the state, but they also see the very definition of “being revolutionary” on the axis of ‘illegality’ in their official party lines. The movements in question occupied the margins ideologically: they seek the radical liquidation of the state by means of violent struggles. The ethical perspectives of the movements

mentioned also reside on the margins: they see the sacrifice (for the beloved peoples of Turkey) as one of the fundamental ethical principles of being revolutionary. Lastly, the radical left organizations that I analyze are still active in district areas located in urban margins. Although Okmeydanı is an exception to this, Gazi Mahallesi, Gülsuyu, 1 Mayıs Mahallesi, Karayolları, Sarıgazi and many other neighborhoods are places which are difficult to access spatially. These spaces are subjected to violence in manifold forms. Symbolic/discursive violence codes the residents in the neighborhood as “culturally backward”, “violent” or “akin to terrorism”. These representations are emboldened by media representations. Secondly, in these spaces there exists structural violence that runs deep into the livelihoods of neighborhood residents in the form of poverty, unemployment or underemployment. Lastly, these spaces are subjected to constant physical violence by state forces with almost-periodic police operations, investigations, surveillance, arrests and sometimes death. These neighborhoods can easily be transformed into spaces of exception (Gregory, 2006) by state forces.

Since this study is about mobility in radical left political actions from the margins to central spaces, we need a conceptualization of the center. With central spaces, I refer to spaces that are popular for cultural, financial, shopping and entertainment facilities. Yet the center is not defined as a locus of accumulation of state power or capital. Since I endeavor to delineate the relationship between the political and the publicity, the center in this work is mostly coined as *the space of visibility*. This space as a public site of visibility and speech is not only the city-space in its physical location, but also a virtual space constituted with help of alliance between disparate bodies in action.

From the very beginning of the research, I endeavored to understand the shift in the spaces of politics for the radical left in Istanbul. How does this shift affect the relationship between the center and the margins and the definitions of space, subject and political practices? Over time, I noticed that I had to scrutinize the forces behind the changes in the daily practices, modalities of doing politics, dominant discourses, perceptions and sensation regarding the political actions in the margins and the centers. While exploring the transformations regarding the mentioned spheres, I came to realize that certain events had the potential to change predominant forms of practices, discourses, perceptions and so on. At that point, Veena Das's concept of "critical events", which she coined to understand the making of modern India, stood as a crucial and invaluable tool for my own research (Das, 1995). As Das puts it, critical events can bring new modalities of actions to the stage while they also trigger novelties in language, socio-spatial knowledge, political subjectivities and ethical principles expressed with respect to political actions (p. 5).

Accordingly, I had to incorporate the analysis of critical events of the last two decades; the socio-spatial repercussions of the shifts in the concentration of political actions in the central and local spaces; and changes in discourses regarding spatial attributes of the political to the field of the study.

1.4 Notes on the research method and the field

Although it is difficult to assume a clear distinction between an analysis and its method, the method also employs the time-space-action dimensions parallel to the analytical structure of the study.

I draw upon detailed fieldwork combining personal observations, media analysis of left publications and in-depth interviews held in Gazi neighborhood, and

Okmeydanı. While for the most part I conducted my ethnographic research on these two neighborhoods, the current study is not settled to present an ethnography of a neighborhood. It rather endeavors to scrutinize the mobility of the spatial concentration of radical left political actions in its totality.

Still, to give a brief background for the neighborhoods will help us to understand the settlement of radical left political forces in these sites. To start with Gazi neighborhood, being a part of the Sultangazi district, Gazi has a population of 70,000 with most of them being from the Alevi community. First shanties were built in the early 1970s but the neighborhood endured a migration flux in the mid-1970s. Most of the residents had migrated from the eastern parts of Turkey, namely Sivas, Erzurum, Muş, Varto and Dersim. It has been a stronghold of radical left forces since the mid-1970s. After the brief inertia in political activities caused by the 1980 coup d'état, the neighborhood started to be a strong spot for the subversive actions of the 1990s. Additionally, the neighborhood witnessed a second wave of migration when the war between the Turkish state and the Kurdish parts of the country escalated. The neighborhood transformed into a site symbolizing outlawed left forces after the bloody revolts of 1995, when 15 people were killed as militiamen raked a coffee house (Yonucu, 2011).

Okmeydanı was among the first-generation shanty towns in Istanbul. It was much closer to industrial urban centers and was founded in the late 1950s. At the beginning, the residents of the area were Albanians, who later handed their land over to the newcomers. It shared the double migration fluxes with the Gazi neighborhood: of the Alevi community in the 1970s and of Kurdish people in the 1990s. Its residents are originally from Sivas, Tokat, Batman, Dersim. Although Okmeydanı

stands for a wider region, the neighborhood I held my field study is known as Mahmut Şevket Paşa.

In this study, I chose these two sites for two reasons. First, these spaces provided me with the means to understand that the margin is, not solely a spatial concept but constituted as a product of cultural, social and everyday encounters in these spaces. Secondly, the comparison of the two neighborhoods helped me to figure out a centripetal tendency in the determination of geographies of political actions by the radical left in more than one case.

Most of my interviewees were members or old-members of radical left organizations such as the People's Front⁵ and the Socialist Party of the Oppressed.⁶ I also talked to people from organizations such as Partizan,⁷ the Democratic Peoples' Federation⁸ and the United Revolutionary Class Platform (BDSP is the Turkish acronym).⁹ Most of the people I spoke with have been active participants of their organizations since the 1990s. In addition, I also conducted interviews with several people under 25 and these have been politically active for less than 5 to 8 years. I also talked to Saturday Mothers and ex-revolutionaries from the radical left in order to understand more about the historical context of shifts in the geographies of radical left politics. These interviews provided me with great insights for understanding different perspectives regarding radical left politics and its spatial attributes. Through

⁵ People's Front (Halk Cephesi) is a Marxist organization of Turkey. Although it is legal and open to the public, the Turkish police tries to link it to the outlawed Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C). DHKP-C is well known for its suicide attacks on police stations and embassies of the U.S. and other countries. People's Front sees itself as the "genuine follower" of Mahir Çayan, the founder of THKP-C- a guerilla organization of the 1970s.

⁶ Socialist Party of Oppressed (Ezilenlerin Sosyalist Partisi) is another radical left organization. The party is allegedly linked to the outlawed armed organization Marxist Leninist Communist Party (MLKP). Like DHKP-C, MLKP is mostly organized in Istanbul's Alevi-Kurdish populated districts.

⁷ Partizan is claimed to have links to illegal and armed Maoist organization, Communist Party of Turkey/Marxists Leninist (TKP/ML. TKP/ML has a long tradition going back to the 1970s. Its founder is well-known student leader of early 1970s, İbrahim Kaypakkaya.

⁸ Democratic Peoples' Federation is another Maoist organization that is claimed to have links to the Maoist Communist Party (MKP)- a split of TKP/ML due to the rifts in the party during the 1990s.

⁹ BDSP is allegedly operates as the legal front of illegal TKİP (Turkish Communist Workers' Party)

the narratives of my interviewees I was able to see how notions of the center and the local and their mutual relationships are constructed discursively, how objects of meanings and objects emotions attributed to certain spaces are circulated, and how the linkages between individual and collective memories regarding the spaces come into being.

One of the obstacles I encountered during the interviews was the ideological positioning of the subjects along with the official party lines. At times, my interviewees seemed to abstain from explaining their individual views with the reservation that I might judge the lack of conformity of their views with the official party lines. Thus, I had to transform my open-ended questions in a way that triggered their imaginations or personal memories regarding the political activities and space making practices. I also preferred to use pseudonyms at the request of my informants.

I had to spend a great deal of time to understand that the interviews and ethnographic observations were not enough to understand the mobility of spatial concentration of political actions by the radical left. After some interviews I thought that it would be much more helpful to map the spaces of actions from the publications of radical left organizations. One of these publications is the weekly newspaper *Atılım* that covers all political actions of the outlawed radical left organization Marxist Leninist Communist Party (MLKP is the Turkish acronym.) The other one is *Yürüyüş*, which covers the news of Revolutionary People's Liberation Party-Front (DHKP-C is the Turkish acronym).¹⁰

¹⁰ I should underline that because of the Turkish State's frequent bans on radical left publications, before *Yürüyüş*, the main propaganda and agitation publication of the Front was published with the names of *Mücadele* (published between 1994-5), *Kurtuluş* (1996-1999), *Vatan* (1999-2002) and *Ekmek ve Adalet* (2002-5). In order to prevent any confusion, I will refer to all of these magazines "Yürüyüş" in this study.

Randomly choosing the issues of the month of October from these publications, I recorded the number of all political actions held in peripheral and central urban spaces with four-year intervals from 1994 to 2014. Although these organizations did not lead every political action they recorded, the coverage of actions in these publications were meaningful in terms of addressing what kind of actions they sought to publish. This is because these publications are main “agitation and propaganda” channels for these organizations. Mappings of the traces of political actions in the study demonstrate the findings. I also followed the changing discourses, the lines of the political agenda and the political stakes of radical left organizations through these publications. Party programs, propaganda books and documents were also objects of my research.¹¹ Several memoirs and works regarding critical events of the last two decades were helpful for me to understand the political history of the neighborhoods in question.

The media analysis and mapping of the actions through the publications of two radical left currents endowed the study with the opportunity to observe the spatial shifts over time. The analysis of critical events and subsequent shifts in the discourses and modalities of actions helped me to understand temporal and discursive variations. And ethnographic research provided me the tools to delve into the present of the neighborhoods and worlds of my informants through narratives, actions, materiality and everyday life.

¹¹ I omit the Kurdish Liberation Movement although they have contributed to the making of urban spaces of subversive politics in metropolitans. The reason for this omission is not that they did not contribute to the making of the political topography in urban metropolitans but their different history from Turkey’s radical left in metropolitans. Their tactical withdrawal in the years following the coup d’etat of 1980, constitutive form of politics in Kurdish cities, decisive role of guerilla war in Kurdistan can be counted as other factors in a historiography of urban space making. Together with migration, all of these factors should be analyzed as parts of historiography of making of political spaces in Istanbul. Yet these are not covered in the current research. For a detailed discussion on the encounter of two counter-publics, of the radical left and the Kurdish Liberation Movement in Okmeydanı, see (Kurt, 2008).

My previous engagement with left social movements supplied me with the opportunity to understand practical and discursive structures in these organizations. Yet at times, this opportunity was substituted with a tension emanating from being an “insider” and the boundary between the subject and the object of the study got blurred. To present a critique of the spaces including the neighborhoods loaded with memories of the lost ones or the political communities with which I once shared similar utopias was not easy as I had imagined it might be at the beginning of the study.

I have been living in Okmeydanı for four years. This experience endowed me with great insights to observe politics of radical left movements. I had the chance to witness the everyday practices and discourses of the movements. Friendly conversations with the people in the grocery stores, the coffee houses, street corners or neighboring houses shaped my understanding of the mutual representations of the radical left and the residents of the neighborhood.

Additionally, my two years of journalism experience in one of the publications mentioned helped me to delineate the logic and modalities of the coverage of the news regarding political actions.

1.5 Organization of the study

This thesis comingles the spaces, histories, visual media, actions, ethical premises and senses regarding radical left politics in Istanbul in order to explore the transformations in the spatial and political history of radical left social movements.

Chapter 2 outlines the spatial and political history of Turkey’s radical left after the 1960s and maps the *constituent spaces* of radical left politics. It seeks to present a background for subsequent sections of the research in understanding the

dynamic role of the spatial in the making of Turkey's radical politics. What I intended to show in that chapter is, first and foremost, the multiplicity of the spaces that the left had in the making of political processes. Then, I tried to show how these multiple spaces of radical left politics were transformed over time. I focused particularly on the parliament, the universities, the countryside, working class neighborhoods, work places, prisons, and finally, the squares and streets.

With their shifting characteristics, these spaces have become constitutive of the politics, memory, and history of radical left organizations for decades. Within and through these spaces, the radical left organizations sometimes claimed their counter-hegemony and took effective roles in the construction of counter-publics, as in the examples of the mid-1970's shanty towns as liberated sites. The question of space decisively contributed to the formation of political strategies of Turkish radical left. For example, it caused rifts among the fractions of the early 1970s regarding whether the primary space of the revolution was the rural areas or the urban industrial cities. Moreover, as will be seen, the Turkish radical left spent years of struggle in order to challenge the architectural structure of the prisons during the 1990s and early 2000s. While the space of politics was never static, I argue that the analysis of protagonist spaces enables us to understand the shaping of different political processes. In a nutshell, changes in diverse fields of the social, economic and the political are mediated by transformations with/in the spaces of emancipatory politics.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 navigate between the margins and the spaces of visibility in order to understand their mutual production. The former explores the ways in which the spatial foundations of the radical left politics were transformed in the last twenty years of Istanbul. Based on the data collected from the two radical left

publications, Chapter 3 demonstrates the mobility of concentration of political actions from neighborhoods to the spaces of visibility in Istanbul. This data will be supported and enriched by the analysis of the following critical events: the Gazi Revolts of 1995 and the subsequent Saturday Mothers campaign; the May Day 1996 protests; the 19 December 2000 prison operation by the Turkish state forces and the Occupy Gezi Movement of 2013. In my view, each of these events in one way or other redefined the space of the political and contributed to the centripetal move of the radical left currents. The chapter closes with a discussion of the reverberations of this move in the imaginaries of radical left subjects and tries to trace the spatial shifts of political actions with respect to neighborhoods.

In the final chapter, I investigate the reflections of the shifts of geographies of politics to the spheres of the ethical principles and the emancipatory politics of the radical left. That is to say, the chapter will discuss how the political experience expressed in ethical terms, in most part based on victimhood and sacrificial practices, leaves its traces in the ways political actions are configured by the radical left in Istanbul. The first part of the chapter discusses how the sacrificial acts by the radical left mold the everyday re-production of symbolic and material spaces in the districts. Then I resort to concepts of *the gift* and *the sacrifice* to understand the exchange of political violence between the Turkish state and radical left militants.

The chapter continues to the investigation of the data provided in Chapter 3 from a different perspective. This time, I survey the modalities and content of political actions covered in the left publications. I show that the political actions related to violations of human rights comprise a fundamental part of the overall actions. I argue that while the violent and self-immolating acts of radical left subjects represented as sacrifice in the subversive neighborhoods, they are articulated as victimhood in the

spaces of visibility. Thus the spatial shift is accompanied by a shift in the idiom and representation of political action. What is more, the shift of space of political actions to the center embodies simultaneity with the increasing emphasis on the human rights seeking acts by the radical left in Istanbul and the collapse of counter-publics claimed by the radical left in the margins.

CHAPTER 2

CONSTITUENT SPACES OF TURKEY'S RADICAL LEFT AFTER THE 1960s

2.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the spatial history of Turkey's radical left after the 1960s maps the *constituent spaces* of radical left politics. In the post-1960 era, constituent spaces of politics have moved and changed with political fluctuations, different spaces being on the forefront in different political conjunctures. I focus variously on the parliament, the universities, the countryside, the working-class neighborhoods, workplaces, prisons, and finally, the squares and streets to trace these changes.

Politics always requires space and, compatible with that, space is also saturated with political characteristics. Either replacing one another or coexisting with others, these spaces contributed to the politics, memory, and history of radical left organizations. At times, positioning of the revolutionary forces in the countryside — that was thought to be the prime site of revolutionary insurgency — constituted the core strategy for transforming the society at large. At other times, as in the example of Turkey's E-Type prisons of the 1980s and 1990s, communal spaces carved within the spatial and the temporal regimes of the establishment contributed to the making of political identities. Within and through these spaces, the radical left claimed its counter-hegemony and played an effective role in the construction of counter-publics. Serious blows to Turkey's social movements of the 1970s after the coup d'état of 1980 and perpetual police operations not only crushed left-wing

organizations but also dismantled the autonomous or semi-autonomous spaces of non-state, alternative forces.

While the space of politics was never stable and were always multiple and shifting, I argue that there were still some constituent spaces that enable us to understand the dominant character of different political processes. With that in mind, in this chapter, I utilize a periodization based on protagonist spaces of socialist politics in Turkey. These different spaces have come to the front for different time intervals: the parliament (1961-1972), universities (1965-1972), mountains/rural sides to initiate a guerilla warfare (1969-1973), streets and factories (1974-1980), prisons (the 1980-1990s), neighborhoods (1970s and 1990s), and squares (the 1970s and 2000s).

Before moving to a discussion of the spatial contours of radical left history, I will discuss what I understand conceptually by the term “constituent space” and how I understand the constituent spaces’ relationship to alternative forms of sovereignty and autonomy.

2.2 The concept of constituent space

As claimed by the now-classical work of Henri Lefebvre (1991), space is a social product. Lefebvre thereby invites us to consider the living character of space: to see that space is not static, and that it is open to changes and a product of interrelations. However, studies dealing with the relationship between social movements and space in Turkey focus mostly on political transformation by analyzing the content of critical political events and discourses of the movements (Aslan&Şen, 2011; Bozkulak, 2005; Eckard&Wildner, 2008). They analyze the changes that concern political interests, political figures or formation of political subjectivities. The space

for political action is imagined primarily as a fixed container for events. Following the works of Thomas F. Gieryn (2000) and Doreen Massey (2005) I argue instead that we can approach space as a geographic location, material form and meaning-making process that has its own agency in political processes. Thus, with regards to material and subjective characteristics, we can see spaces as assemblages that are complex constellations of objects, bodies, expressions, qualities, and territories that come together for varying periods of time to ideally create new ways of functioning (Livesey, 2010, p. 18; see also Delanda, 2005). Space as social assemblage not only contributes to the production of hierarchy (segregation), nation-state (territoriality and sovereignty) and capital (via accumulation, dispossession, enclosure, etc.), but also spawns collective action and social control.

In order to denote the form of the spaces predominant in different periods for radical left politics of Turkey, I use the term *constituent space*. Considering the co-existence of different constituent spaces provides us with another dimension of space's relationship to politics (Massey, 2005). Indeed, we can speak of different spaces with different communities and temporalities as in the example of spaces of Turkey's political movements. One space does not necessarily predate or subordinate the other. The prison, the street, and the neighborhood can simultaneously be the sites of political processes. This gives us a different interpretation of history. To put it differently, just as there exist many temporalities other than the homogenous, the empty time of the nation-state (Anderson, 2006), there also exist heterogeneous spatialities. Without counter-posing the dimensions of time and space as reducible to each other, this study espouses the view that time and space are co-implicated (Massey, 2005) and co-produced (Gregory et al 2011). Hence social, cultural and political phenomena unfold in both space and time, with the processual enactments

of events co-producing multiple, open space-times or time-spaces (Merriman, 2012).¹²

However, since space is a processual entity, then the politics of space is not devoid of confrontations, negotiations, and losses. These attributes of space help us understand its relationship to sovereignty and emancipatory politics. To describe Turkey's prison wards, where the radical left organized itself as communes that administer everyday life and training of its militants in 1990s, Banu Bargu (2014) coins the concept of *constituent space*. In a similar vein, I want to employ and broaden the concept of "constituent space" with neighborhoods, parliamentary, rural enclaves, factories or squares in which the *constituent* power of Turkey's radical left was assembled. These sites were (and can be) transformed into the breeding grounds of an insurgent politics and at the same time contribute to the production of memories, political identities and histories.

To speak of *constituent* spaces necessitates an analysis of the making of sovereignty along with these marginal sites of Turkey's political sphere. Refusing the unitary conception of power, Antonio Negri (1999) articulates a distinction between constituent power and constitutive power. The constituent power of the multitudes stands with absolute opposition against the constitutional power and sovereignty. "When constituent power sets in motion the constituent process, every determination is free and remains free. On the contrary, sovereignty presents itself as a fixing of constituent power, and therefore its termination, as the exhaustion of the freedom that constituent power carries" (Negri, 1999, p. 21). Thus whereas the constitutive power is associated with juridical systems, institutions, restrictive apparatuses of the

¹²Peter Merriman (2011) calls for incorporation of affect, force, sensation and particularly *movement* to the time-space dimension. He then describes how certain practices such as driving and dancing may be characterized by an apprehension and inhabitation of movement-space rather than space-time.

state and sovereignty, constituent power embodies a will to democracy and revolution; it is the desire to construct a democratic community.

Thus, as will be elaborated in this chapter, constituent spaces stood in opposition to the sovereignty of the Turkish state. “Rescued zones” of neighborhoods or communal wards at the heart of the institutions of sovereignty, prisons, were carved out of territorial boundaries of the nation state (Negri, 1999).

Yet since space embodies unsteadiness, spaces of radical politics can endure oscillations between constituent spaces of insurgent struggle and constituted spaces of the State and sovereignty. In 1980, the headquarters of one of the powerful and militant trade unions, the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK is the Turkish acronym) in Ankara was transformed into the Constitutional Court following the coup d'état of September 12 (“Disk Eski”, 2008). Again, in 2000, a “resistance house”, where the political activists held a solidarity hunger strike to protest the December 19 Prison operation and F type isolation cells in the Armutlu neighborhood of Istanbul was transformed into a police station. And sometimes certain constituted institutions can be transformed into other, more repressive spatial establishments. One can think of schools, sport centers and child protection institutions transformed into prisons after the September 12, 1980 military regime of Turkey (Çengelli, 2013; Mavioglu, 2006). There are multiple causes of transitions from one particular constitutive space to another yet still it is possible to delineate certain threads of forces behind the shifts in these spaces.

2.3 The parliament

The 1960s in Turkey saw a rise of diverse social movements, especially after the military coup d'état in 1960. The military coup d'état and the drafted constitution

afterwards removed relatively favorable conditions for organizations, unions, and political parties (Yurtsever, 2008; Karpat 1967). There were three main currents for the socialist left in that period of Turkey: *Yön* (Direction) Journal, Labor Party of Turkey and supporters of National Democratic Revolution idea.

Unionists and intellectuals founded the Labor Party of Turkey with a leftist tendency attempting to open a political space in 1961. The Party (TİP is the Turkish acronym) won 15 seats in the parliament in the elections launched in 1965 (Kaya, 2006, p. 4). The LPT maintained that with growing class-consciousness among Turkey's workers, conditions were utterly viable for building socialism. They also advocated a socialist revolution model that is "centered on a constructive popular statism" and insisted on parliamentary methods to obtain power (Karpat, 1967, p. 162). Party leader Aybar nominated the parliament as "the most effective platform for socialist parties" (Doğan, 2000, p. 44).

The use of parliamentary space as a platform for the struggle for socialism has always been a source of dispute among the radical leftists of Turkey. It is due to the fact that the parliament, as an institution of constitutive regimes of states, centralizes and monopolizes the power and the sovereignty of a society. It supposes a predominance of single space over the other spaces of the country. The LPT tried to use the parliament as a benchmark of transition to a socialist regime. So, with a clearly left-populist approach, the party representatives in the parliament presented many legislative proposals for the improvement of working conditions of workers and increasing the state support for the peasants of Turkey (Doğan, 2000, p. 46). I think one of the most important realms of discourses of the LPT was its trenchant anti-U.S. discourse, which would later be adopted by successor socialist movements.

Although until 1969 the Labor Party was the only organizational center for the socialists, it was not devoid of disputes and factions in socialist leadership and ideology, which could be seen as early as the party's 1966 congress. The basic line of the disputes was on the nature of the method and strategy of the revolution to be achieved (Zürcher, 2004). There were two other currents in the party. The first group was comprised of the followers of party leader M. Ali Aybar, who favored a parliamentary transition to socialism. The other fraction was an intra-party opposition movement National Democratic Revolution group led by Mihri Belli. Belli held the view that since Turkey was a society with feudal characteristics, the working class of the country was too immature for a socialist revolution. Thus, the revolution should be realized through the leadership of "a Kemalist, officer-civil bureaucratic battalion" (Yurtsever, 2008, p. 81). Yet the NDR movement focused on an armed revolution, not top-down development, against landowners and compradors. The struggle had to have a national and democratic character, not a socialist one as in the industrial countries (Belli, 2013).

Later, the NDR organized itself around the *Türk Solu* magazine and directed severe criticism to party leadership and strategies. There was also a political current around *YÖN* magazine, led by Doğan Avcıoğlu. *YÖN* was a political thought movement formed around a journal by intellectuals, bureaucrats and "patriotic" officers and favored a top-down revolution with the leadership of the army (Doğan, 2000, p. 6). The ideas represented in the strategy of the NDR group were overlapping with the *YÖN* group in many respects. Thus, other than the parliament, the magazines themselves were the spaces of thinking on the strategy of the revolution. On the one hand, these magazines assumed an extra-parliamentary role that broke with the monopoly of the parliament on the question of politics. Yet they were also

consolidating the Kemalist regime with their views on top-down-revolution led by intellectuals and army-officers. Since they had a powerful support from the left-wing intellectuals, they also affected another space of politics: universities.

Soon the struggle between the party factions resulted in a decline in political activity. In the 1969 elections, the party won only two seats in the parliament. Although it had obtained a limited number of MPs and could not manage to sustain its popularity for more than five years, the establishment of the Labor Party and its activities must be seen as a significant milestone in Turkish politics. For the first time in the history of the modern Turkish Republic, socialist ideas were propagated from the parliament (Karpat, 1967, p. 171). In the following years, the NDR was expelled from the party. With the March 12, 1971 coup d'état, the LPT was closed down until its re-organization in 1976 (Ersan, 2014).

2.4 '68: From the universities to the streets

Together with the emphasis on the role of youth in the revolutionary strategy, the existence of intellectuals and professors in the LPT contributed to the making of another protagonist space for radical politics of Turkey's mid-1960s: the university. Young university students coming from the rural areas as well as those stemming from intellectual families organized themselves within the Federation of Thought Clubs, which were affiliated with the Labor Party. Yet with the rifts arising in the party, most of the youth remained within the ranks of NDR (Yurtsever, 2008). This current took over the Federation of Thought Clubs in 1968 and turned it into the organization "Revolutionary Youth", the Dev Genç (Zürcher, 2004, p. 255). Dev-Genç was to be the kernel of the armed radical leftist organizations in the following

years.¹³ Furthermore, student dormitories in the universities were important spaces where political youth organizations lived and organized.

While certain discourses and actions were specific to Turkey, the worldwide political youth mobilization of 1968 also had reverberations in the universities of Turkey, especially in Istanbul and Ankara (Ersan, 2014, pp. 27-8). Boycotts and occupations in Ankara University, Middle East Technical University, Istanbul University, and Erzurum and Ege Universities spread to many colleges and high schools. Students called for university reforms that can be summarized around joint demands of remedies of problems regarding “curriculum, examination and discipline regulations, fees, books, laboratories, libraries, recruitment of full-time university professors, job opportunities for graduate students, participation in university administrations” (Mater, 2009, p. 297). Nonetheless, the struggle for university reform traversed the borders of campuses to streets and lapsed into an anti-U.S. character. A 1968 student assault in Istanbul on soldiers from the U.S. 6th Fleet and students’ burning of the car of U.S. ex-ambassador to Vietnam at METU in 1969 soon turned into symbols of an anti-U.S. campaign (Ersan, 2014, pp. 27-31). During the same period, rightist paramilitary forces were also on the stage. The clashes between the rioting groups and the state escalated, which led to the assassination of leftist students such as Vedat Demircioğlu, Taylan Özgür and Mehmet Cantekin by the forces of the state as well as in the clashes between nationalist Muslims and leftists (Landau, 1974, p. 36; Ersan, 2014, pp. 31-3). Until the coup d’état in 1971 Turkey faced a political atmosphere of violence and restrictions alongside a boom in popular movements. The successes of the Vietnamese anti-imperialist struggle, of popular emancipatory movements, and of

¹³For a broader discussion of trajectories and actions of Federation of Thought Clubs and Revolutionary Youth, see (Yıldırım, 2008).

the Chinese and Cuban revolutions all showed the opposition in Turkey a way: The Turkish state was the puppet of US aggression and the country was not independent (Landau, 1974, p. 33). The struggle against imperialism in the Turkish struggle meant to fight those who were controlling the Turkish state. What is more, the rampant escalation of violence in the streets generated inspiration for much more militant forms of struggle, ideology and strategies against the Turkish state. The authoritarian character of the state was interpreted as a form of fascism or an oligarchy. Thus the strategy for revolution of diverse fractions of the student groups tended to adopt the strategy of guerilla warfare/people's war/vanguard war.

Since the youth was predominantly on the side of the NDR current in the intra-party rifts, they later started to dominate the realm of left politics by radicalizing the stakes of struggle against the state and capitalism. It might be argued that the decline of LPT activities and its loss in the party added to the tendency to radicalize the political. Yet the opposite also makes sense since the youth contributed to the waning of party activities by driving the political line a more radical sphere. What changed the constituent spaces of the radical left politics were both the anti-colonial struggles of the 1950s and 1960s, together with the rising struggles of the student movements, especially those in France.

2.5 Shortcut in the rural: The legacy of 1971

1971 was an eventful year from many perspectives. It marked a rupture in the imaginaries regarding the social transformation. Young student leaders led a decisive rupture from emerging political organizations and their leaders from the tradition and chose armed guerilla struggle as opposed to legal, parliamentary politics. This

rupture would bring the dissemination of radical political activism to the spaces different than the parliamentary and the universities.

Prominent student leaders of the era, namely Deniz Gezmiş, Mahir Çayan, İbrahim Kaypakkaya were in fact members of the LPT. During the rifts in the party, they joined the NDR current. Yet shortly afterwards they demonstrated that they were unsatisfied with the NDR strategy of revolution that sought the coalition of officers and intellectuals. They went after the autonomy of political leadership. Neither parliamentary struggle nor an alliance with the army officers was the proper means of “revolutionary strategy”. With the inspirations from the era’s political developments such as France’s May 1968, the Chinese Maoist Revolution, and the rising anti-colonial struggle, they radicalized the idea and praxis of the revolution. The student leaders of the era commingled the Maoist guerilla warfare strategy based in the rural sites of the countries with the ideas in the NDR current. The students started founding illegal, armed organizations to launch guerilla warfare against the state and the representatives of US-aggression in Turkey. There were three main illegal armed organizations in the beginning of the 1970s: the People’s Liberation Army of Turkey (THKO is the Turkish acronym), the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party-Front (THKP-C) and the Communist Party of Turkey-Marxist-Leninist (TKP-ML).

Calling for the union of political and guerilla lines, Deniz Gezmiş, Hüseyin İnan and Yusuf Aslan founded the THKO at the end of the 1960s. In a rare document of THKO which was written by Hüseyin İnan, the organization put its political strategy as the following:

The political struggle of THKO is grounded on the primacy of rural bases. It will develop itself within a trajectory from the rural to the industrial urban cities. It is an ideological sine qua non for our army to start an armed struggle. (İnan, 2013, pp. 465-9)

After a short period of urban guerilla activities in Ankara, the leaders and militants of the THKO formed a guerilla base in the Nurhak Mountains in the spring of 1971. Yet while they were about to organize an attack on the U.S. military base in Malatya, military forces arrested many leading figures of the movement. Others, including Deniz, Yusuf and Hüseyin, were already arrested on their way to the THKO guerilla compound in Nurhak (Ersan, 2014, p. 40).

For the THKP-C and its leader Mahir Çayan, taking a position in the space of the countryside constituted the very core of the question of revolution. For Çayan (2013), Turkey was among “the semi-colonized and colonized countries” such as Cuba or China and in such countries the “working class is weaker in both number-scale and qualifications as compared to developed capitalist countries, and the supervision of the imperialism is so strong in the cities” (p. 151). Thus taking the peasantry as the fundamental force of guerilla war, the victory was supposed to be achieved “by the way of circling the cities from the rural” (Çayan, 2013, p. 154). A popular war was expected to overthrow and de-territorialize the artificial equilibrium (“suni denge”) of the country. Çayan and his followers believed that a popular war would produce counter-hegemony, starting from the rural sites (Erkiner, 2008).

The THKP-C’s initial sensational armed actions, such as the killing of the Israeli consul general Efraim Elrom and bank robberies were responded to by the state with repressive measures including mass detentions and police raids. Following the capture of the THKO leaders, Deniz and others, the THKP-C planned actions to prevent their execution by hanging. Militants of the organizations abducted three foreign radar installation technicians who were working in Ünye and took them to Kızıldere. On March 30, 1972 ten militants of the party together with the hostages

were shot dead following an army operation. This would interrupt the THKP-C current until future radical organizations following Çayan's ideology and strategy.

Another leading party of the 1970's radical left was the Maoist TKP-ML. The party was founded in February of 1972 by İbrahim Kaypakkaya (Ersan, 2014, p. 56). In Kaypakkaya's formulation, which was derived mostly from Mao, we see again an emphasis on the role of the rural countryside in the vanguard war against the semi-feudal Turkish state. Yet the distinctive aspect for Kaypakkaya in the positioning of revolutionary forces in the space of the country was the formulation of counter, autonomous/extraterritorial spaces called "red political power (bases)" vis-à-vis the state's presumably homogeneous homeland. Following Mao, Kaypakkaya advocated that the revolution was to be accomplished via the expansion and empowerment of the claimed "red bases" of the armed forces in Turkey (Kaypakkaya, 1979, pp. 17-21).

With an attempt to empower guerilla war in the rural parts of Turkey, Kaypakkaya and others conducted a number of armed attacks against military barracks and officers between 1972 and 1973. The party organized itself in the rural areas and in cities such as Tunceli, Elazığ, Urfa, Diyarbakır, Malatya and metropolises such as Istanbul (Ersan, 2014, p. 57). After a comprehensive army operation in January of 1973 in Tunceli, Kaypakkaya was wounded and arrested while he was trying to escape. He was killed after weeks of torture and police inquiry (Yurtsever, 2008, p. 168). Police operations continued after Kaypakkaya's death. Many leaders were arrested and sent to jail. The movement would give a short break until the reconstruction of the organization in coming years.

The years between 1971 and 1973 marked a turbulent period. It took just months for the leaders of the above-mentioned three organizations to break with their

previous parties. The young leaders founded their own organizations and attacked the state as a way of initiating guerilla war for revolutionary transformation. Not long after their appearance in the political stage, these pioneering organizations faced the coup d'état of 12 March 1971. The military junta repressed the armed movements, killing or arresting their leaders. Turkey's armed radical left lost its leaders from the very beginning of its initiation. Yet the compressed time-space experiences of these movements held sway over radical politics in Turkey up until the contemporary moment, both on theoretical and practical levels.

2.6 The expanding body-space of subversive activism

At this point I want to present a brief discussion on the expanding spaces of radical left politics during the 1970s; that to say, increasing the number and facilities of subversive organizations. In fact, we can even imagine an organization as a fluid space since it makes possible the encounters between the bodies and the unfolding of political events. What is more, the party creates its own spaces in the form of offices, meetings and demonstrations. The architecture of the party, whether vertical or horizontal, mostly constitutes the basis of the discussion on the imagined role of the organization in the emancipatory politics.¹⁴

Put that way, 1974 and 1975-76 were the years of reconstruction and reorganization for the organizational spaces of radical left movements of Turkey (Ersan, 2014; Yurtsever, 2008). This process was accelerated with the general amnesty in 1974 (Ersan, 2014, p. 68).

In the period between 1974 and 1980, there were around thirty armed organizations, which were the followers of three currents of 1971. (Exceptions to this

¹⁴It is possible to draw differences between the concrete spaces such as party offices and imagined body-space of organization. Yet, thinking the space as an assemblage or as a space of action makes it possible to see interactions between the imaginary and concrete attributes of space.

were the TKP that followed the Soviets, the reestablished LPT, and TSİP) Basic powerful fractions that lined up with the strategy and ideology of Mahir Çayan's THKP-C were the Revolutionary Path (Dev-Yol is the Turkish acronym), Liberation (Kurtuluş), the Revolutionary Left (Dev-Sol) and the Marxist-Leninist Armed Propaganda Units (MLSPB is the Turkish acronym).

The THKO's basic successors were the Communist Labor Party of Turkey (TKEP), the Union of the People (Halkın Birliği), the Union of Communist Revolutionaries of Turkey (TİKB). The Union of the People would later change its organization into a party under the name of the Revolutionary Communist Party of Turkey (TDKP). The TKP-ML was relatively continuous in ideology and politics with its small number of cadres who were released after the general amnesty in 1974.¹⁵ Although many of the parties and organizations followed their predecessors in ideology, the common characteristics of lines of revolutionary praxis for these organizations took place in urban spheres.¹⁶ Except for the TKP/ML, an organization that is more or less continuous in its activity in the rural guerilla facilities, most of the fractions used the city centers or urban locales as their bases. Until the late 1980s, the state of revolutionary activism was almost on the edge of inertia.

The early 1990s witnessed attempts to re-organize the socialist organizations crushed by the coup of 1980. Previous splits of the THKP-C, the Dev-Yol and Kurtuluş fractions united and organized themselves around the legal and libertarian Freedom and Solidarity Party (ÖDP) in 1994. R

The Revolutionary Left led by Dursun Karataş transformed itself into the Revolutionary People's Liberation Party/Front DHKP-C in the same year. Also, in 1994, splits from the TKP/ML and the THKP-C, namely the TKP/ML Hareketi and

¹⁵For more on the history of organizations of the 1970s see: (Ersan, 2013; Yurtsever, 2008; Aydınoğlu, 2007; Ayaşlı,1988; Müftüoğlu, 2000; Karataş, 1988).

the TKİH, founded the Marxist-Leninist Communist Party (MLKP) (Boran, 1994). While the TİKB and the TKP/ML pursued their existence with narrowing scales in number and efficacy, the TDKP transformed itself to the legal Labor Party (Emek Partisi) (Ersan, 2014).

Since the potency of subversive politics, its hegemony and the number of organizations and their activists reached unprecedented levels during the 1970s (Ünüvar, 2013), the spaces of activism also multiplied.¹⁷ The radical left organized itself in the spaces of industrial production, in urban neighborhoods and the rural cities as well.

2.7 Spaces of labor: Getting organized in factories

The rise of factories and industrial sites as another constituent space of radical left during the 1970s cannot be analyzed without resorting to nation-wide transformations in Turkey. During the 1950s and 1960s, the strategies of the Turkish state to enhance import-substitution industrialization brought an immense and quick liquidation of agricultural production relationships in the rural areas of the country. The number of industry branches increased, together with the number of workers, in the urban cities (Keyder, 1996; Kurtuluş, 2005).

In the post-1960s political sphere of Turkey, organic relationships between the socialist left and labor movement started to get stronger after the establishment of the Labor Party of Turkey by unionists and intellectuals in 1961.

Later in 1967 the foundation of Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK is the Turkish acronym) marked a moment of left-unionism in the

¹⁷Still, there are other external factors determining the emergence of new spaces of actions. For example, liquidation of agricultural production vis-a-vis the dominance of import-substitution industrialization in the 1960s in urban spaces can shift the space of action from rural margins to urban sites. It could be asserted that as stakes of antagonisms between the radical left, and the state and capital multiply, the spaces of actions can also diversify.

working class struggle of Turkey. Most of the leading figures in the Confederation were LPT members until the expulsion of LPT figures from the Confederation in favor of the union's support for the Republican Party in 1975 (Ersan, 2014, p. 100; Ümitli, 1988, p. 2302). The Confederation management replaced most of the LPT positions with newly growing Turkish Communist Party members (Ersan, 2014, p. 130). Distancing itself from the right wing, the Turk-Iş trade union DISK adopted a more militant strategy in the struggle for the rights of the workers and for socialism (Pekin, 1988). As mentioned previously, the rifts among the LPT, NDR currents and the newly emerging armed organizations produced different prospects about the role of the working class in revolutionary processes. Disputes with the LPT leadership distanced most of the radical left activists from leading positions of the unions. The radical left could organize itself among local branches of the unions, join worker protests/strikes and mobilize within working-class neighborhoods. The basic confrontation between two different strategies of revolution in Turkey, namely socialist revolution and national democratic revolution, lingered upon the relationship between leftist forces and the working class of the country.

All of the initial leaders of the TKP/ML, the THKP-C and the THKO held the view that since Turkey had 'a weak working class', principal antagonism should have been between "oppressed nations" and "imperialism" (Akkaya, 2008). The fundamental force of the revolution was the peasantry, and the proletariat should have led the national democratic revolution. The strategy of the revolution was also meant to choose a space for the radical left activism. After the early 1970s, some of the currents in the left emphasized the primacy of the role of proletariat in the revolutionary struggle. Kurtuluş, the TDKP, the TİKB and the TKEP/L were among the parties that put forward the activities in factories.

What is more, massive strikes and worker mobilizations of the 1970s were commensurate with growing radicalization of radical left organizations. The first example that comes to mind is the impressive worker march of 15-16 June 1970 to the heart of Istanbul. When the government and employers of the era came up with a draft law that proposed serious obstacles to getting organized in trade unions, and specifically targeted progressive unions such as DİSK, more than 100,000 workers poured to the streets for two days in Istanbul. Kocaeli-Gebze, Kartal, Levent, Şişli, Topkapı and Eyüp were sites of protests against the government draft and clashes with the state forces. Also the LPT and the Revolutionary Youth members actively joined the events. After massive demonstrations, the government accused DİSK of promoting a “communist surge” and announced a state of exception decree in Istanbul and Kocaeli. In following days, more than 5,000 workers were fired due to their roles in participation and organization of the event (Koç, 2003, p. 187).

Among hundreds of many others, crucial large-scale labor mobilizations of the 1970s were the 1974 worker strike of the iron and steel industry (Iskenderun), the Ülker food company (Istanbul), the 1976 Profilo factory strike (Istanbul), the 1975 Yeni Çeltek mine strike (Amasya), the 1977 Askale miners strike (Erzurum), the Bilger miners strike (Malatya) and the 1980 workers’ strike of Izmir’s Tariş mills (Bora, Kayılı, Kürkçü, Savaşır & Uğur, 1988, pp. 2282-2300).

As many other social and political mobilizations, the labor movement in the history of the Turkish Republic witnessed its heyday during the years between 1968 and 1980 (Ünüvar, 2013). During the period from 1973 to 1980, the number of strikes increased about 100% compared to the number of strikes from 1963 to 1971 (Bora et al., 1988). As Korkut Boratav states, the real wages of the workers increased 75% between the years 1963 and 1977 (as cited in Turan, 2013, p. 7).

May Day 1977 at Taksim Square was a show of strength for both the working class and the socialist movements of Turkey. Yet it was turned into a day of atrocity in the memories of radical left activists when unidentified men, firing on the crowd of about 500,000, killed 34 demonstrators. Many interpreted the attack as a sign of an anticipated coup by the military (Atay, 2013, p. 39).

After the coup d'état of 1980, the main trade union confederations were closed down, hundreds of union leaders and members were sent to prison, the right to strike was detrimentally restricted, and durations of holiday leave were shortened (Bora et al., 1988). The notorious 24th January decisions were employed to crush working movement down and to open the way for neo-liberal implementations in the economy. The working class was in a state of inertia until 1989, when the workers initiated a wave of collective actions and strikes against the collapse of negotiations regarding the collective contracts of public employees (Çelik, 2015). Known as “Spring Actions”, these events mobilized many thousands in different cities, including the long march of miners from Zonguldak to Ankara.¹⁸

Except for the struggle of public employees around KESK, the 1990s did not witness powerful labor mobilizations as in the 1980s. In the 2000s, glassworkers' strike at Şişecam Company of 2004, a nationwide Telekom strike (2007), the Tuzla worker strikes for job security (2008), the ATV-Sabah worker strike (2008-9) are well-known worker resistance examples. Yet one of the most striking worker mobilizations with regard to its popularity and politics of space was the 2010 occupation of Ankara's streets by TEKEL tobacco workers. As part of the neo-liberal privatization currents, the Turkish state handed the TEKEL Tobacco Company over to the British American Tobacco Company, which would later fire 80

¹⁸The march could not be completed because of police oppression and negotiations between the worker leaders and state officials (Nevsuhan, 2014).

percent of the total of 10,000 employees. Against that policy, the workers set up their tents in December of 2009 for 78 days in Ankara. The occupation of central spaces of the city by the workers for weeks prompted sympathy and immense solidarity actions in Ankara and nation-wide political circles.

The factories, as constituent spaces of radical left politics in the 1970s, changed into sites of unorganized labor following the dissolution of unions and left organizations with the violence of the 1980 coup d'état. While the number of workers with membership in trade unions was around six million in 1980, it was less than 1.5 million in 1984 (Yılmaz, 2013). In 2015, although there were about 12 million registered workers, the number of workers with membership in trade unions was about 1.2 million. And most of the workers with union membership were members of right-wing trade unions (Çelik, 2015).

The following constituent space of the radical left, prisons, are sites that were organized by Turkish state's repressive state policies. So the political history of radical left politics cannot be considered without the struggle against prisons.

2.8 Prisons

The ongoing criminalization of the left by the Turkish state went hand in hand with the imprisonment of high numbers of leftist political leaders and activists since the 1950s. Yet punitive regimes that imprisoned dissidents in a systematic and massive form emerged after the 1971 coup d'état and reached unprecedented levels with the 1980 coup d'état. Under the martial law put in place by the 1971 coup regime, the military began a campaign to hunt down political activists with leftist or even progressive liberal tendencies being suspected of terrorism. The leaders of three radical guerilla organizations, the TKP/ML, the THKP-C and the THKO were killed

or executed after their arrest. About 5,000 people were arrested, among them many leading intellectuals (writers, journalists and professors), all the leading members of the LPT and many prominent trade unionists (Zürcher, 2004, p. 259). The leftists were tortured and humiliated in the prisons and interrogation rooms of the patrols. The LPT leaders, including party president Sadun Aren and executive Behice Boran, were sent to prisons in Ankara, specifically to the Yıldırım Bölge Prison. Additionally, notorious executions by hanging of THKO leaders Deniz Gezmiş, Yusuf Arslan and Hüseyin İnan took place in the Mamak prison (Öztürk, 2004, p. 390). The THKP-C founders and militants were also imprisoned in the Mamak Prison in Ankara, whereas its leader Mahir Çayan was imprisoned in the Maltepe Prison of Istanbul, from where he would later escape (p. 347).

From the 1960s to the mid-2000s, the state authorities mostly used E-Type ward-based prisons with an average of 18 wards and 80 observation cells and a total capacity of 600 prisoners (İbikoğlu, 2012, pp. 44-5). The predominant architecture of the prisons for political prisoners was replaced by F-type isolation prison form in 2000. The prison as a platform of struggle between political forces and the state haunted emancipatory politics starting with the 1970s. The architecture of the prisons, administrations of wards, food, duration and form of visits by family members of the inmates, letters written by prisoners, and specific dresses were among the stakes of wrestle between political inmates and the state authorities (Öztürk, 2004, p. 317).

With the 1980 coup d'état, the number of inmates with political charges reached unprecedented numbers in the history of the Republic. In three years 650,000 people were arrested, 230,000 were prosecuted, and some 65,000 were convicted. The number of arrests reached 2.6 percent of the population. Five hundred

seventeen people were sentenced to death and 50 were executed (Bargu, 2014, p. 102; Yılmaz, 2013, p. 38). The military regime dismantled the leftist organizations of the country and crushed the neighborhoods where the radical left was active. The state banned the main trade unions, including DISK, which was still the largest workers' organization at the time. It deemed many books as "illegal" and shut down plenty of publishing houses. According to statistics compiled by human rights organizations, 23,677 organizations were banned by the military regime.

The military had already transformed military barracks into prisons months before the announcement of state of emergency in September 1980. Yet since the number of prison spaces available was dramatically less than the number of the arrested, the regime quickly transformed many schools, military barracks and sport centers into prisons in many cities of Turkey. Military prisons in particular were closed down following the construction of dozens of special prisons (Mavioğlu, 2006, pp.19-20). Diyarbakır, Mamak (Ankara), Metris, Sultanahmet, Davutpaşa prisons and the Gayrettepe and Ziverbey interrogation centers were notorious for their torture chambers. Elazığ, Gaziantep, Erzurum, Erzincan, Samsun, Amasya, Ordu, Buca, Adana, Çanakkale, Kocaeli and Bursa prisons were other prisons where the political activists were imprisoned (Yılmaz, 2013, p. 35). A strict spatial partitioning was used in these newly-built prisons, where the number of prisoners was reduced and isolation cells were added to the architecture of ward complexes (Mavioğlu, 2006, p. 20).

In the spatial history of the Turkish radical left, prisons have a two-fold character: first, as the space of exception and second, as communal spaces of everyday life and political training. As spaces of exception, inmates inside the prisons are physically constrained, humiliated, tortured and sometimes killed. The

basic line of confrontation between the state and political forces on the nature of prison conditions was about the treatment of prisoners as “arrested military personnel” (Mavioğlu, 2006). When prisoners were classified as “arrested military personnel”, then “[t]he task of the prison commander was to make the “arrested personnel” accept and respect the military chain of command and discipline, through a variety of measures, including making prisoners salute all military personnel (including privates) as “commander”, coercing them to walk and talk like soldiers, sing military marches, recite the national anthem and Atatürk’s famous “Speech to Youth” by heart, recite prayers at meals, and wear uniforms” (Bargu, 2014, p. 106). This kind of interpretation of the body of the political prisoner constituted justification of the production of “docile bodies” and the articulation of the body as an object of the state (Foucault, 1977). Torture was more systematic than ever in the prison regime of the junta period following September 12th. Among the torture techniques were bastinado, electric shocks (especially to sexual organs), severe and systematic beatings, burning with cigarettes, squeezing or crushing limbs or genitals, Palestinian hanging from the arms, sexual humiliation or assault, rape or rape threat, piling of naked prisoners on top of each other, etc. (Yılmaz, 2013, pp. 26-7). According to official accounts, more than 299 political prisoners were killed in the coup d’état prisons under suspicious conditions of maltreatment (Mavioğlu, 2006, p. 21).

Until the complete partition of the prison space in the 2000s, however, the wards in E-Type prisons were at the same time communal spaces for political prisoners. The prisoners organized their daily lives in prison in accordance with their organizations’ political needs. Basic needs that were provided from outside of the prison such as cash, food, clothes, and books were collected in a communal pool and

distributed equally to the members of the ward community. The daily flow of activities and the ward's internal order and discipline were regulated by the political organizations themselves. Collective training sessions, commemoration ceremonies, debate sessions and collective entertainment comprised the time-management of political forces. To some, the prisons were transformed into "schools of revolution" (İbikoğlu, 2012, pp. 70-76; Öztürk, 2004, pp. 323-4). Indeed, especially during the 1990s, the legal ambiguities and inconsistent executive decrees by different governments to govern prisons led to the emergence of a level of autonomy of the political wards from administration procedures and practices that regulated the rest of the prison population (Bargu, 2014, p. 107).

To the state's attempts to build prisons with isolation cells, political prisoners reacted with hunger strikes in 1996, which eventually claimed 12 lives and forced the state to rescind its plans about isolation-based prisons (Maviöğlü, 2006, p. 381). Yet the state's retreat lasted only four years: in 2000, the government announced once again that they would open F-type isolation cells for political prisoners. Radical left organizations reacted to the announcement with another hunger strike with the participation of dozens of prisoners.¹⁹ As Bargu (2014) argues, Turkish state authorities defined the situation in the prisons as a 'crisis of sovereignty' since the political prisoners' resistance was perceived as an outrageous challenge to the state from within those sites allegedly under its most intimate control (p. 113). These wards became enclaves in which a constituent power was assembled and the wards transformed into breeding grounds of an insurgent politics. As marginal sites in which a revolutionary collective was brought into life through

¹⁹Among these organizations were the DHKP-C, MLKP, TKP, TKP/ML, Revolutionary Communist Union of Turkey (TİKB), Turkey's Revolution Party (TDP), Revolutionary Movement (DH), Turkey's People's Liberation Party-Front/Armed Marxist Leninist Propaganda Units (THKP-C/MLSPB) and Communist Party of Turkey/Kıvılcım (TKP/K).

everyday practices, they were constituent spaces of experiencing the communism-in-practice at the margins of political sphere (p. 113).

Between December 19 and 22 of the year 2000, most of the political prisoners in E-Type prisons were forcefully transferred to high-security F Type prisons after a bloody, violent operation. Although the operation titled “Operation Back to Life” was hailed as a safety measure taken to protect the lives of prisoners, it caused the death of 30 prisoners and two security personnel. Many others were tortured, burned, wounded or raped. The popular mobilizations, petitions, rallies, and sit-in demonstrations outside could not prevent the death of 122 political prisoners and activists between the years 2000 and 2006. The struggle over prisons became the protagonist pillar of the struggle against the state and for years replaced the struggle for communism. Also, the high-security F-Type prisons with cells for three prisoners became the predominant form of prisons for political inmates. Together with its deterrence and elimination objectives, the December 2000 operation was the most explicit and violent moment of the struggle over the spatial organization of the prisons. The increasing partition of the prison space since the 1970s reached its peak with isolation cells and dismantled the “constituent” spaces of the radical left inside the prisons.

Before the 1980 coup, the prison was of the constituent spaces among others, so we cannot speak of a powerful struggle over the prisons outside the prison walls. Yet after the coup, as will be seen in Chapter 3, the struggle over the conditions and architecture of prisons during the 1990s contributed immensely to concentration of political actions in central spaces. I will now skip to another constituent space that is in a dialogical relationship with prisons, especially after the 1980s.

2.9 Squares and streets: Spaces of visibility

For the radical left in Turkey, squares and streets are first and foremost sites of publicity. People gather, move, speak, and lay claim to certain spaces as public space. In the political realm, streets and squares are used as spaces of political propaganda and activism: they hold rallies with political demands, circulate and distribute publications or leaflets and open stands. The streets and squares can become the instruments of conveying the message of the unseen, the unsaid, the inaudible and so on. They can at the same time become the conduits of calling on “others” for joining political processes.

Together with the visibility provided by the bodies in alliance, the squares and streets are also mnemonic spaces specifically designed and constructed to evoke memories, trigger identities, and embody histories (Gieryn, 2010, p. 481). Since I discuss the street and its relationship to radical left politics in detail in Chapter 4, I will now focus on the place of squares in the making of radical left history in Turkey.

I believe that the stories and histories of four of the well-known squares in Istanbul — Taksim Square, Beyazıt Square, Dolmabahçe district and Galatasaray Square — provide us with the outlook of the Turkish radical left’s political and historical trajectories regarding the politics of squares after the 1960s. These were in fact spaces of atrocities and sites of collective actions and still continue to spawn immense political actions.

The Beyazıt Square, located in front of Istanbul University, has been a popular spot for political actions of youth since the 1960s. As mentioned earlier, the student movements of the late 1960s in Turkey acquired an anti-U.S. character in parallel with the LPT’s growing anti-imperialist political activism, as exemplified by protests against the US Sixth Fleet in Dolmabahçe. Demonstrators were not only

attacked violently by the police but were often targeted by racist mobs. On 16 February 1969, a marchers from Beyazıt Square to Taksim in a protest against the Sixth Fleet were attacked in Taksim Square by a mob shouting “Muslim Turkey”. As a consequence of the assault, two leftist students were killed by the mobs whereas more than 200 others were wounded. The incident came to be known as “Bloody Sunday” (Ahmad, 1977). Interestingly, there are mnemonic crosscuts in the assignments of spaces of political actions. Since the 1990s, every 6th of May, youth organizations walk from Taksim Square to Dolmabahçe in order to commemorate Deniz Gezmiş and the THKO leaders who were executed on 6 May 1972. Although “Bloody Sunday” and massive student protest against the US Sixth Fleet was on February 1969, leftist student movements amalgamate these two histories. Especially during the 1990s, Beyazıt witnessed a rise in the concentration of student protests. In these protests, reaction against fees, the demands of the improvement of student rights, the quest for broader representation of students in faculty administration and the abolition of YÖK were all made visible to the wider public. Thus, Beyazıt Square can be seen as a mnemonic site of the history of student struggles in the post-1960 years.

Another monadic space for the spatial history of Turkey’s left is Taksim Square. The massacre of 1977, the ban on demonstrations at Taksim square in 1979 and the presence of the soldiers at Taksim square in the morning when the coup d’état of September 12 was declared are important violent incidents which shaped the memory of the left in Turkey (DİSK, p. 38) In the following decades, celebrating May Day in Taksim Square has always been on the agenda of leftist organizations. The coup d’état in 1980 and the following years witnessed the government’s escalating attempts to gain total control of political actions in Turkey. In this

environment, May 1 and its celebration in Taksim gained a symbolic value besides other values attributed to the appropriation of the square. I argue that the link between this particular space and May Day is shaped by the memory of the 1977 massacre that can be regarded as the breaking point in the history of the left in Turkey. It is referred to as the “breaking point” due to the greatness of the defeat of the leftist movement and the inability to consolidate after this violent incident (Yetkin, 2005). Many in the left see May Day 1977 as a milestone on the road to the military coup of 1980 and irrevocable defeat of the left.

The 1980s and the 1990s were years of silence regarding Taksim Square. Yet during the May Day demonstrations in 2007, the first attempt to celebrate the anniversary of 1977 in Taksim after the coup d'état of 1980, the main leftist union DİSK called the masses to convene in Taksim Square as an act of bringing perpetrators of the massacre to account.²⁰ The unions and leftist organizations insisted on Taksim for May Day demonstrations for the following years. Although the government let the organizations celebrate the 2011 and 2012 May Days in Taksim Square, it has once again banned Taksim from being a massive demonstration site. Taksim is also the site for the annual meetings for the March 8 World Women's Day, Pride Marches of LGBTQ and for many other demonstrations. As will be seen in the next chapter, there has been a concentration of collective actions around Taksim Square since the 2000s. The occupation of Gezi Park and the adjacent Taksim Square by hundreds of thousands of people more than two weeks in 2013 highlighted the most massive collective action after the 1977 May Day. Especially after the 2000s, we have the squares as the basic constituent space of politics for radical left forces in Istanbul.

²⁰At the May Day Demonstrations of 1977, 34 demonstrators were killed at Taksim Square when unidentified men fired on the crowd of about 500,000 people (Atay, 2013). That also contributes to ghostly nature of Taksim Square.

Finally, we have Galatasaray Square as a site of resistance against the violent practices of the state in the 1990s. As will be discussed in detail in the next chapter, Galatasaray became a space to give voice to the disappearance of political activists belonging to radical left organizations and the Kurdish Liberation Movement. Since 1996, mothers of the disappeared, known as “Saturday Mothers”, sit in Galatasaray Square for half an hour every Saturday at noon and ask the whereabouts of their sons. The site is also a platform to react against prison politics of the Turkish State. However, in the course of the last decade, Galatasaray Square became a site of various kinds of protest by leftists in general.

Hence, in the spatial history of the left in Turkey, Beyazıt Square is associated with student movements, whereas Dolmabahçe is linked to anti-imperialist struggle. And Taksim Square takes its role in the politics of memory as a site of attack against the heyday of the working-class movement and radical left organizations. Galatasaray, as one of the primary sites of politics for the last two decades, is symbolically related to the struggle against the disappearances in the left’s contemporary history. The last constituent space I will elaborate on will be neighborhoods, which have contributed to the making of the political for radical left since the 1960s.

2.10 Shanty towns

As mentioned, the strategies of the Turkish state to enhance import-substitution industrialization after the 1950s brought an immense and quick liquidation of agricultural production relationships in the rural areas of the country (Erman, 2001; Keyder, 1996). Similar to the waves in many other “third world” countries, Turkey underwent a vast flux of emigration from rural areas to metropolitan cities. This

spontaneous wave has given birth to housing needs for hundreds of thousands of people seeking shelter in the metropolises where they arrived to make a living. These decades marked the kick for urban sprawl and constructions of many shanty-town regions in the metropolises such as Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir. With the quests of “low-cost urbanization” and re-production of labor, the Turkish state permitted unlicensed housing sites in these cities. The construction of these sites continued for more than two decades. During these decades, capitalist circles and the state welcomed the low-cost urbanization. Sooner shanty towns started to receive infrastructures, electricity and sometimes title deeds especially after the mid-1960s (Eckardt & Wildner, 2008; Kurtuluş, 2005; Şenyapılı, 1998). Many neighborhoods around industrial zones were constructed with simple shanty houses called “gecekondu” (built overnight) (Erman, 2001).

For the other side of the coin, the increasing density of working class populations at the peripheries of Istanbul made these margins attractive for radical left politics (Erman, 2000). Due to the insufficiency of governmental welfare schemes, revolutionary organizations had the chance to enhance the well-being of the residents/populations living in these sites. The empowerment of the working-class movement and the growing youth movement contributed to a growing consolidation of the radical left’s semi-autonomous power bases in these districts. Political activism in neighborhoods of Istanbul reached its peak in the period between 1974 and 1980. Thousands of people got organized in the ranks of radical left movements and those shanty-town regions were transformed into enclaves for subversive politics. Within these spaces, they could organize public meetings, recruit militants,

expel police or fascists from the neighborhood with the help of residents, and also they were able to hide their weapons or fugitive comrades in people's houses, etc.²¹

Supplementary to planned armed struggle, radical left organizations took part in the construction of many shanty-town sites and the repulsion of land mafia from the neighborhood lands. They allocated land and houses, organized public assemblies, maintained the security of regions in Istanbul (Aslan, 2004; Aslan & Şen, 2011; Erder, 1996). Many neighborhoods such as Örnektepe, Nurtepe Çayan, 1 Mayıs Mahallesi, Okmeydanı, Güzeltepe, Gülsuyu-Gülensu and Gazi Mahallesi were planned and constructed with the leadership of radical left organizations during the 1970s.²² There were other neighborhoods where radical left activists had participated in the construction of houses or later transformed these sites into bases for political activities. Among these were districts in Ümraniye, Rumelihisar Üstü, Alibeyköy, Sarıgazi Yayla Mahallesi, Çağlayan, Gültepe ("Mahalli Bölgeler", 1980; Aslan 2004). The population, the concentration of political activities, the marginality of the residents of those sites (mostly urban poor and Alevi people) increased the divergence of those "liberated zones" with relative exempt from state control and police surveillance. With the concentration of politics in these neighborhoods, radical left forces secured partly autonomous sites at the peripheries of Istanbul.

As in other spaces of political activism, the coup d'état of 12 September 1980 marked a significant rupture in urban regimes. Urban spaces were transformed into spaces of state terror, spectacle, and repression as well as the commodification of

²¹The overlapping of the political and the socio-economic spheres of the 1960s and 1970s should not be understood in a causal/teleological relationship. The rise of social movements around the anti-imperialist ideologies and student struggles in the 1960s encountered the rampant industrialization and dissolution of agricultural rural areas during the same period. Understanding the production of political processes with *contingency* of their components (the social i.e. housing necessities of newly arrived workers and the political i.e. the rising revolutionary movement) can provide us a different historiography.

²² For detailed information on the history of these neighborhoods see (Erder, 1996; Aslan, 2004; Aslan and Şen, 2011; Erdem, 2014 and Etöz, 2004)

city land. During the 1980s and 1990s many “forgiveness laws” were declared by the state for Istanbul’s rural areas.²³ Construction of apartments bloomed during the 1990s. Yesterday’s shanty-town neighborhoods turned into blocks and even gated communities in their old-sites (Kurtuluş, 2005).

After the Junta of 1980, the first elected government of the country led by Turgut Özal introduced neo-liberal policies that depended on police regimes for security and privatization. Increasing legalization regarding housing needs, effective municipal practices, and ascending commodification of gecekondü lands with the construction of multi-story apartments were among the transformations in the urban regime (Erman, 2001). During that process, the revolutionary movement lost the control of the distribution and security of spaces to the state forces and the capital. People living as poor districts swiftly adapted to the surrounding commodification of gecekondü areas. The relative revival of socialist organizations during the 1990s revitalized the importance of neighborhoods for subversive politics and its strategy. The DHKP-C, the MLKP, the TKP/ML, the TİKB and other small fractions empowered their existence in Alevi-Kurdish populated neighborhoods and their older bases from the pre-1980 period.

The DHKP-C, which sees itself as the successor to Mahir Çayan’s party, declared the gecekondü regions as an Achilles’ heel for organizing revolts in the cities. For the movements “Districts are the sites of the civil war; they are the sites to expand the fronts of civil war. These neighborhoods are the most mobile, dynamic areas of the cities” (“Mahalleler kentlerin”, 1995, p. 12). In its first party platform, the MLKP also emphasized the significance of districts for its revolutionary aims:

It is obvious that [our] political activities among the urban poor will

²³ See declarations March 1983/2805, March 1984/2981, December 1984/3086, May 1986/3290 and May 1987. (Bozkulak, 2005, p. 242; Erman, 2001, p. 987)

first and foremost concentrate in district districts of the huge cities, which are home to these poor people... What is more, these districts at the same time embody the potentials of cultivating the revolutionary impulse and authority in a short period. (Boran, 1994, p. 80)²⁴

Yet the critical events of the mid-1990s signified a turning point regarding the imagined and material mapping of the district spaces of Istanbul. On 12 March 1995 a group of unidentified men raked four café-houses and a patisserie, killing one resident and wounding more than 20 people. The attack was retaliated with massive revolts led by radical left organizations in Kurdish-Alevi populated neighborhoods, especially in Alibeyköy, Okmeydanı and the 1 Mayıs neighborhood. At May Day demonstrations of following year, militants from radical left organizations poured to the streets of the central district of Kadıköy in Istanbul. Violent clashes between the police and demonstrators claimed the lives of three protestors.

Both events endured an intense media campaign that blamed the “improper” and “violent” behavior of people who broke the codes of publicity and called on authorities to take action against these neighborhoods. As Erman (2001) puts it, after these events, *gecekondu* neighborhoods were labeled as “*varoş*” spaces. Parallel to this, the representation of urban migrants in the 1970s as “urban poor others” shifted to “threatening/*varoşlu* others” of the 1990s. The term *varoş*, is Hungarian in origin and was first used to imply the neighbourhood outside the city walls. It was later employed to refer to any outer neighbourhood in a city or town. In its Turkish use, the term carries in itself strong negative connotations (Erman, 2001, p. 996).

Discourses around “*varoş*” attached particular meanings to spaces and bodies of

²⁴ “Kent yoksulları arasındaki çalışmanın, daha çok ve öncelikle bu yoksulların barındığı büyük kentlerin gecekondu semtlerinde yoğunlaşacağı açıktır. ... Öte yandan bu semtler devrimci etkinin ve otoritenin kısa sürede geliştirilebilmesinin olanaklarının da bağrında taşımaktadır.”

people living there. Varoş became a “sticky sign”²⁵ upon which certain fantasies and imaginaries are inscribed: it has become a source of fear, of disgust, of humiliation, of poverty, discomfort, street clashes, illegality, cultural or developmental backwardness etc. Unleashing of cultural and symbolic violence targeting the varoş people, the mainstream media invited the state forces to re-establish security and pointed to assigned roles, spaces and functions of the lower classes.²⁶

As Üstündağ (2005) puts it “While gecekondu were primarily about “places” that need legalization, rehabilitation and re-planning, varoş refer to a particular population — its culture and its social relationships — which necessitates a governance whose object is the population rather than their urban space” (p. 47).²⁷

The Turkish state not only started the plans to rebuild a solution to “failed modernization in the bodies and behaviors of people” (p. 48) living in these sites, it also attacked the radical left with extensive police operations. During those operations, hundreds of militants of radical left organizations were detained and sent to prison.

The critical turn from gecekondu to varoş revealed the limits of vanishing autonomy for the revolutionary movement. Thus, varoş neighborhoods are at the same time spaces of nostalgia for the gecekondu spaces of the past from the perspective of revolutionaries. This nostalgia for the gecekondu past suggests that a

²⁵ With the concept of “stickiness”, Sara Ahmed (2004) implies to “an effect of the histories of contact between bodies, objects, and signs... to materialise the surfaces and boundaries that are lived as worlds” (p. 191).

²⁶ Attacking to financial and cultural ‘deprivation’ of the demonstrators, The Daily Yeni Yüzyıl (“Varoşlar şehre”, 1996) covered the riots with the news such as “Varoş hit the city”: “Stone, Plunder, Joy: Youngsters, workers, officers coming out of suburbs hurled stones to the police as they destroyed the showcases of shops full of items which they could never effort to buy” (“Varoşlar şehre”, 1996). Daily Milliyet (“Meydan terörün”, 1996) announced the public scene’s occupation by the rioters as “Square belongs to the Terror”.

²⁷ This transformation has a lot to do with transition from Foucault’s “disciplinary societies” to what Deleuze terms “societies of control”. Whereas disciplinary societies base themselves on molds -i.e. spatial enclosures-, societies of control are founded upon modulations of time, space, bodies, assemblages etc. (Deleuze, 1992).

broader transformation took place in the marginal neighborhoods. This is not just a loss of physical spaces but a shift “from communal “places” suffused with shared emotions, joint meanings and practices and institutions of mutuality, to indifferent “spaces” of mere survival and contest” (Wacquant, 1996).

2.11 Conclusion

As once more emphasized by the Arab Spring and the occupy movements of the contemporary decade, politics always embodies spatial characteristics. Memory knots and the political history of Turkey’s radical left after the 1960s form no exception to this.

In this chapter, I have tried to demonstrate that what was lost within the potency of the radical politics was not only strategy or motivated militant subjects, but also multiple spaces. These spaces sometimes contributed to the making of communalist political identities (as in the examples of prison wards or neighborhoods), determined the fundamental configuration of forces of the revolution (as in the example of rural versus urban discussion of the 1970s) or became the sites of confrontation over the politics of memory (as in the examples of transformation of DİSK heart quarters to constitutional court building). These dimensions of space imply its constituent character as opposed to constitutive spaces of juridical establishments or governments. Whereas the constituted spaces are territorialized spaces of the regimes, constituent spaces de-territorialize or re-territorialize constituted spaces.

Yet it is difficult to argue that constituent space by nature embodies an emancipatory character. It is in constant negotiation with the surrounding environment of bodies, objects, emotions etc. Instead of thinking of spaces as given

vessels of practices of freedom, we should rather see cities, neighborhoods, streets, squares, prisons and even organizations as flexible assemblages of material and bodily compositions. Attaching themselves to certain spaces, subjects define themselves and stabilize their memories. For this reason, space is closely linked to the formation of political identities, memories and histories.

If we are to listen Lefebvre's premise that "new social relationships call for a new space, and vice versa", then, I assert that changes in social, economic and political realms are mediated by transformations with/in the spaces of emancipatory politics.

CHAPTER 3

TRACING THE SPACE OF ACTION: BETWEEN MARGIN AND CENTER

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the shift in the political geography of Turkey's radical left since the mid-1990s in Istanbul. In particular, I will analyze the move by Turkey's radical political movements from the neighborhoods at the margins to central urban spaces and the effects of this move to politics.

Starting from the 1970s, many districts in Istanbul became constituent spaces for radical left actions and movements. District districts were inhabited by populations that were at the economic and political margins of society and were themselves located at the spatial margins of the city. This spatial marginalization on the one hand allowed the radical left to have their own independent spaces over which they could make sovereignty claims while on the other hand rendering their politics invisible to the wider public. Today, there are still a few district areas that are regarded as "rescued zones" where even "police cannot enter" (Erman, 2001; Kurt, 2008). There has always been mobility between two constituent spaces of the radical left, namely between the squares in central urban spaces — spaces of visibility — and working-class districts in Istanbul since the 1960s. Yet in the last two decades, we have an increasing concentration of political acts by radical left at the central spaces.

How can we understand the centripetal move of revolutionary organizations, i.e. the increasing concentration of political activities of these organizations in centers instead of peripheries of the city? Why and how did peripheries lose their attraction for political protests? How did the radical leftist political agenda change because of this geographical shift?

I approach the question of the centripetal move of the radical left in Istanbul at the levels of space and time and discuss the spatial and temporal mapping of events and political actions that contribute to transformations in the radical left's discourses and praxis. By "temporal mapping" of political actions I refer to the analysis of critical events that form landmarks in the political history and memory of Turkey's radical left since mid-1990s. After a theoretical discussion on the concept of "event", I will focus on following the critical events: the Gazi revolts in 1995 and subsequent sit-in protests by the Saturday Mothers started in 1995, the Istanbul May Day Demonstrations in Kadıköy in 1996, the nation-wide death-fast struggle of political prisoners in Turkey in 2000 and the Occupy Gezi Movement of 2013. I argue that all of these critical events contributed decisively to the geographical mobility of left political actions.

By "spatial mapping," on the other hand, I refer to the mapping of spaces preferred by radical left organizations for demonstrations since the mid-1990s. I suggest that the transformation in the spatial mapping of radical politics has a two-fold character. First, it involves a material shift from peripheries to centers, a process, as I will elaborate by reference to the publications of radical leftist groups, which record almost all actions and events conducted by them. Secondly, I also delve into the uneven effects of this shift at a discursive level. To put another way, I

examine how the changes in the geographies of political actions contributed to the formation of mental maps specific to radical leftist activists.

At the end of the chapter, I argue that shifts in the political geographies of the radical left has a simultaneity with the loss of potency of building a counter-public that is linked to counter-hegemony in districts.

3.2. A note on the event and the political

There are different uses and conceptualizations of *event* in social sciences — namely those in history²⁸, anthropology and political philosophy.²⁹ Among the scholars of *event* in studies in anthropology³⁰ stands Veena Das (1995), who used the concept of “critical event”. According to Das, a critical event is an event that institutes “a new modality of historical action which was not inscribed in the inventory of that situation” (Das, 1995, p. 5). Analyzing the crucial moments of the making of modern India, Das argues that while creating new forms of actions, critical events redefine

²⁸ Fernand Braudel of Annales School proposes a historiography based on a triadic understanding: *longue duree*, conjuncture and the event. Bringing forward the plurality of temporalities, Braudel defined “the structure of the long run,” or *longue duree*, in contrast to two other spans: the conjuncture, which covers a decade or up to a century, and the event, which entails only a short span of time when “surface oscillations” are most conspicuous (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1990, p.7).

²⁹Political philosopher Alain Badiou’s definition of the ‘event’ shares a lot with Das’s (1995) conceptualization of the term. To Badiou (2010) an event “is a rupture in the normal order of bodies and languages as it exists for any particular situation”(p. 242) Yet for him the *event* also constitutes the very core of political processes that open up new possibilities for the formation of subjectivities and truth processes (of art, science, love and politics). An event is not “the realization of a possibility that resides within the situation or that is dependent on the transcendental laws of the world”(Badiou, 2010, p. 242). It is rather the creation of new possibilities within the situation that is defined as structured presentation. Situation as result of any structuring or counting operation can be seen as ‘assumed unity/wholeness’ and consistency. It is what prescribes, for a presented multiple, the regime of its count-as-one (Badiou, 2005, p. 24). Although definitions of Badiou (2010) and Das (1995) on the concept of event seem similar since both implies a rupture in the previous order of things, there are differences along post-evental consequences of events. The comparison of two approaches require a much more deeper analysis which exceeds the limits of current work. While Badiou (1998) focuses on political subjectivities with respect to the event, he even defines the formation of a subject with great extent respect to the event. For Badiou (1998), it can be argued that events are sine-qua-non of formation of political subjectivities.

³⁰ For Foucault eventalisation means “discovering the connections, encounters, supports, blockages, plays of forces, strategies and so on which at a given moment establish what counts as being self-evident, universal and necessary. In this sense, one is indeed effecting a sort of multiplication or pluralisation of causes “(Mills, 2003, p. 115). In other words, eventalization for Foucault treats all objects of knowledge as historical events. It operates for uncovering the procedure of causal multiplication: analyzing an event according to multiple processes that constitute it.

previous categories of the social, political and everyday life. Among the critical events Das discusses are the Bhopal industrial disaster of 1984³¹, the Partition of India in 1947³² and The Shah Bano case.³³ These events generated new forms of actions that were acquired by a variety of political actors such as caste groups, religious communities, women's groups, and the nation as a whole. The terrains on which these critical events located crisscrosses several institutions, moving across family, community, bureaucracy, courts of law, the medical profession, the state, and multinational corporations. We have a new configuration of the relationship between institutions of a society after critical events. As Das (1995) explains, after the partition of India, for instance, "the honour of the women" was seen as the honour of the nation. The rationality of the state and the rationality of the family crisscrossed each other (pp. 6-7).

The conceptualization of event points to many repercussions in the political domain, including the formation of political subjectivities, the relationship of ethics to politics and the post-eventual production of knowledge. Indeed, other than the atrocities of the Turkish state, the critical events of Turkey contributed to the emergence of novelties and transformations in a) the language peculiar to politics, b) subjects' relationships with truths about the state, other subjects, communities or

³¹ In December 1984, more than 30 tones of extremely poisonous and caustic methyl isocyanate (MIC), stored in a huge tank, leaked from the Union Carbide factory located in Bhopal. The disaster killed 20,000 people leaving well over 120,000 people for in desperate need of attention(Sarangi, 2002).

³² India and Pakistan won independence in 1947 after severe a severe war between Muslim majority (Pakistan) and Hindu majority (India) communities. About 10 million people had to leave their lands, whereas 250, 000 civilian were killed as a consequence of the clashes. Tens of thousands of Hindu or Sikh women were abducted by Muslims (Das,1995, p.59).

³³In 1975, a 62-year-old Muslim woman from Indore, Shah Bano, went to court when her husband divorced her after 43 years of marriage and refuse her maintenance. In the first time in the history of India, Supreme Court ruled that her husband must assist his wife financially. Previously, such maintenance was not compulsory since it was suffice for the Islam to give a verbal account of divorce in front of witnesses. Thus, the decision court sparked immense reactions from Muslim community who saw the decision as a threat to their religion. The event turned out from an individual case to community based and constitutive moment. (Das,1995, pp. 94-7; Rajan, 2005)

politics, c) socio-spatial knowledge and uses of spaces d) political experiences expressed in ethical terms and so on.

What is more, each critical event constitutes an example of what Jacques Rancière (1992) calls “a politics of disagreement”. Rancière defines the political as the encounter between two heterogeneous processes: police and politics (Rancière, 1992, p.58). *Police* refers to “the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the systems for legitimizing this distribution” (Rancière, 1999, p.28). A police regime constantly re-configures, distributes and legitimizes the ways of doing, ways of seeing, ways of saying and ways of being. While doing so, it seeks to create an identifying mode, namely consensus, over the allocation of the society’s appropriate parts and shares (p. 102). Politics is the name of the process that disrupts such a consensus and constitutes a disagreement over the distribution of the sensible. It opens a space for what was previously not visible, not sayable or not doable. That is why, for Rancière, political subjectivization is at the same time a process of disidentification – a disidentification of parts of society from themselves and removal from the naturalness of the places they occupy (p. 36). Following Rancière’s interpretation of political processes, I argue that each of the critical events mentioned above reveals a disidentification with the assigned roles and spaces in the police order.

I use the term *eventful action* to describe authorized or unauthorized political actions in central urban spaces. Massive rallies, demonstrations, and clashes with the police can be considered examples of eventful actions. These eventful actions also have the effect of disrupting the established and structured configurations of roles, of places and of bodies. As in the examples of Occupy Gezi or the 1996 May Day

protests, an occupation of a central place with ordinary uses other than political actions might create examples of a dis-identification process. Yet post-evental consequences of this dis-identification might not follow the affirmative implications of an event. The critical events I will elaborate on are an important concern of the current study, for each of them contributes to the re-territorialization of spaces of political actions. Whereas the Gazi Revolts brought the expansion of the radical left in the localities of Istanbul, the 1996 May Day at Kadıköy demonstrated the tension between the margins and the centers along discursive and practical lines. And the Saturday Mother campaign implied a post-evental negotiation on the meaning of the spaces in central Istanbul. The 19 December 2000 prison operation and those in the following years, on the other hand, give clues to the increasing instrumentalization of human rights discourse and transformation of Galatasaray Square into a space of political actions. Although it is too early to understand the post-evental effects of the Gezi uprising, it shattered the previous forms of politics and linguistics. It created “dis-identifications” along many axes of the representational democracy, urban planning, ecology and so on.

3.3 The temporal mapping of critical events: To spaces of visibility

The first of the critical events I want to discuss here is the Gazi Revolts in 1995 and subsequent campaign for the disappeared. In 1995 Turkey witnessed a violent event in Gazi neighborhood that hosts predominantly Alevi-Kurdish residents. On 12 March 1995 a group of unidentified men raked four café-houses and a patisserie killing one resident and wounding more than 20 people, including a spiritual leader of the Alevi Community called “dede”(Yonucu, 2011). neighborhood residents and radical left organizations were convinced that nationalist-Muslim paramilitary forces had

organized the attack. They intervened and organized protests against the local police in order to protest the assault. The news of the shooting sparked outrage and brought many thousands to the streets in other Alevi-Kurdish quarters such as Alibeyköy, Nurtepe, and the 1 Mayıs neighborhood and culminated in nation-wide protests. Police again intervened violently and fired to the protesting crowds killing many others in 1 Mayıs neighborhood. Five residents of 1 Mayıs were killed with many others wounded.

During the revolts, radical left organizations had tried to provide security for the protesting crowds. They called for formation of people's committees that have organized the demonstrations and conducted negotiations with state officials(Aslan &Şen, 2011). That process known as "*Gazi Mahallesi Olayları*" was not only one of the atrocities by Turkish State, but became a driving force for radical left organizations to recruit supporters from these neighborhoods into their ranks. Especially for the organizations MLKP, DHKP-C, TKP/ML TİKKO, TİKB, these riots signified a benchmark for their rampant political activities following the revolts as can be seen from the statements and publications of mentioned leftist organizations ("Gazi'den bugüne", 1995; "Bu Kavga", 1995). Publications close to DHKP-C, covered the event as "maturation on the path of revolution": "Gazi is a threshold in the maturation of Turkish Left... The Revolution and everybody will grow with the experiences similar to Gazi - which are to multiply or be multiplied"("Gazi: gecekondulardan", 1995, p. 159).For *Atılım*, the revolt was a spectacular anti-fascist warwaged in the barricades of Gazi ("Bu kavga", 1995). Gazi Revolts also witnessed an incident that would open the way for the campaign against the disappeared, which later became a stroke for holding the political actions at the central spaces.On 21st of March 1995 state forces forcefully kidnapped Hasan

Ocak, a leading member of MLKP and an organizer of demonstrations in Gazi Revolts. Despite state's constant denial of his kidnapping for weeks, his body was found 58 days later in a potter's field in Beykoz district of Istanbul. Hasan's forceful kidnapping initiated a political process for all of the kidnapped ones in Turkey, overwhelmingly for those who were the disappeared during the state terror targeting Kurdish communities in eastern parts of the country. At 27th of March 1995, Saturday Mothers, inspired by Plaza de Mayo Mothers of Argentina, started to gather in Galatasaray Square, a crowded intersection and a popular spot that is centered in Istanbul's İstiklal Street. At the beginning, the families of the kidnapped were attacked brutally and detained many times by the police. Later, the insistence of the families to hold sit-in actions and newly emerging public awareness opened the way for the continuity of the collective actions. Those sit-in protests might be referred as the beginning of what I want to term as "politics of visibility": occupying the central urban spaces for a temporary time-period with different modalities of visibility. Based on her observations on mothers of the disappeared in Argentina Diana Taylor claims that by holding up the photographs of the haunting disappeared as a second skin, the mothers transform their bodies into archives, preserving and displaying the images that had been targeted for erasure (Taylor, 2001, p. 160).

The existence of mothers with the photographs of the haunting in İstiklal Street generates a dis-identification with the ordinary meanings and uses of the space. First, transforming the space of normality, the interruption of the "normal flow" of the time in a public space opens a space for the voice of the disappeared and politics. It is a rupture in the configuration of places (Rancière, 2001). In fact, the state wants a non-place for the disappeared, but thanks to Saturday mothers a disagreement exists on the roles of assigned spaces and times. There, the mothers de-

territorialize and re-territorialize the Galatasaray Square with their struggle; they open a space for visibility. With mediation of the space opened by the mothers, the invisible and the inaudible in the stories of the disappeared find a place in the daily ordering of the things. This might be one of the starkest examples of relegating the meaning of a space into a political dis-identification.

Through weekly repetitions of the sit-in protests, they crafted and produced autonomy in a public space. Until 2014, they managed to gather at the square more than 500 Saturdays³⁴ and the struggle of mothers had a decisive role in the transformation of İstiklal Street into a space of collective action. Maside Ocak, sister of Hasan Ocak and one of the pioneers of Saturday Mother protests, tells the story of their initiation of sit-in protests as such:

We held our first sit-in protest on 27 May 1995, in front of Galatasaray Lycee. At first week, we did not think that we would hold the sit-ins continually: people gathered at Galatasaray square as a reaction [to the disappearances]. Yet at the second week the body of Rıdvan Karakoç was found. Thereafter, upon the insistence from the families of the disappeared and the human rights defenders, the decision to gather there [Galatasaray] regularly was settled on. When we started to hold sit-in protests right there, Galatasaray Square was not a space of action. Neither sitting and holding up the photographs was a modality of action. The relative of the disappeared, Saturday Mothers and Saturday People were the pioneers of these forms of action [at this spot]³⁵ (M. Ocak, personal communication, April 15, 2014).

Political activist L., who was among the pioneers of the campaign against disappearances in Istanbul recalls the centralization of demonstrations as follows:

³⁴ Yet, in 1999, following excessive police violence they had to give a break to their protests. Mothers re-started their sit-in protests on 31th of 2009. From that day on, they still continue to ask for disappeared ones.

³⁵ “27 Mayıs 1995’de ilk kez Galatasaray Lisesi önünde oturmaya başladık. İlk hafta bunu süreklileştirmek gibi bir fikir yoktu. Tepki olsun diye insanlar biraraya gelmişlerdi Galatasaray’da. Ama ikinci haftasında Rıdvan Karakoç’un cansız bedenine ulaşıldı. Ve Rıdvan Karakoç’un cenazesinden sonra oranın süreklileşmesi ailelerin ve hak savunucularının ısrarı ile başlıyor. Biz Galatasaray’da oturmaya başladığımızda orası bir eylem alanı değildi, oturmak bir eylem şekli değildi, yine fotoğraf taşımak bir eylem şekli değildi. Bunun öncüsü kayıp yakınları, Cumartesi Anneleri ve Cumartesi insanları oldu.”

The state confined everybody to specific places and it was not intended to allow anybody get out of these places. Revolutionaries rejected this confinement and sought the ways for being visible. Why to hold, for example, May Day demonstrations at Taksim Square? Because we have to be visible. Accordingly, the activists were asked to hold their actions in sight and to speak their words in front of others. [In the campaign against disappearances] there were actions such as lighting candles in Kadıköy, chaining of the demonstrators themselves to the office building of the governorate [of Istanbul]. There were actions in Sultanahmet and Taksim. The acquisition of these actions became receiving coverage in the newspapers. At these times, it was important to receive coverage in the newspapers. That was the most important aspect of Hasan Ocak campaign: to be visible or to try to be visible. (Personal communication, August 10, 2014)³⁶

My interviewee emphasizes the quest for visibility in order to contest “the enclosure” of subversive politics to certain neighborhoods. Yet the use of the central spaces was not restricted to the struggle for the disappeared in “visible sites”. These actions pointed a momentum for the concentration of political actions in spaces of visibility. Following Saturday Mothers, many political organizations attempted to transform Galatasaray Square and İstiklal Caddesi into spaces for political actions. Hundreds of press statements, rallies, sit-in protests held in Galatasaray and İstiklal Street. May Day celebrations in 1996, which were held in Kadıköy, signify another critical event that in part accounts for the shift of geographies of politics from peripheries to the central sites. With the effects of the Gazi Revolts, revolutionary movement has captured a relative momentum especially among the youth of Alevi-Kurdish populated urban margins. In months, thousands of people have joined radical left organizations. That increase in the number and political activities of radical left

³⁶“Devlet herkesi bir yere sıkıştırmış durumdaydı ve ordan çıkmasını istemiyordu. (Devrimciler) devletin dayattığı sıkıştırmayı kabul etmeyip görünür olmayı düşündüler. 1 Mayıs neden Taksim’de olmalı?Çünkü görünür olmamız lazım.Dolayısıyla herkesin gözü önünde yapılacak, herkesin gözü önünde söylenecek denmeye başlandı.İşte Kadıköy’de mum yakma, valilik önünde kendini zincileme vardı.Sultanahmette, Taksim’de eylemler olmuştu.Bunun karşılığı bir anda gazatelere çıkma oldu.Gazetelere çıkmak da o zaman için çok önemli birşeydi. Hasan Ocak kampanyasının en büyük yönü o oldu, yeniden görünür olmak ya da görünür olmaya çalışmak.”

members and supporters demonstrated itself especially in the May Day demonstrations of 1996. In that day, many thousands of demonstrators poured into the streets of Kadıköy, a central district in Istanbul's Anatolian Part. Particularly, Radical left organizations MLKP, DHKP-C and TKP/ML succeeded to attract massive numbers of people on that day ("Meydan terörün", 1996).

Police violently suppressed the demonstrations killing three protestors-Hasan Albayrak, Levent Yalçın and Dursun Odabaşı. The protestors responded the excessive police violence by smashing the banks, luxurious shopping malls etc. MLKP and DHKP-C placed 1996 May Day as a "victory" in the sense that they managed to carry mass-violence to the squares of the city ("1 Mayıs'ta", 1996).

As discussed in previous chapter, what followed was the unleashing of cultural and symbolic violence targeting the *varoş* people. The event created novel discursive and material fields around the working class neighborhoods, in some of which, radical left organizations are still active³⁷. Mainstream media presented May Day protest of 1996 as an example of vandalism or blatant rage and invited the state forces to re-establish the security regime. The headline, "Varoş Hit the City", by the daily Yeni Yüzyıl ("Varoşlar şehre", 1996) to attack to May Day demonstrations at Kadıköy can be seen as the symbol of emerging discourses on *varoş* people. In that incidence, on the other hand, a "dis-identification" on the proper roles and acts in *the police* regime made itself visible (Rancièrè, 1999). The media pointed to breaching of the limits of assigned spaces and actions of the organizations and working-class people coming from the peripheries. For radical left, May Day 1996 was an example of addressing state violence. To them, the clashes were to "make the state violence visible" by a counter-violence:

³⁷See Chapter 2 for the discussion regarding the transformation of shanty towns to *varoş* spaces.

At May Day demonstrations, the state has met the violence and outrage of the working class people and revolutionaries, notably of the youth from the *varoşes*... All [in the bourgeois media] advised on their lords regarding the “hungry, poor people of the *varoşes*” and called on them to save the district poor from the trap of “provocateurs”... To them, the demonstrators had the motive to smash display cases since “these hungry people attack to the wealth they yearn for”... Why not the outrage of the *varoşes*, to where you advise providing education, highway or water pipeline, be directed against the state terror? (“1 Mayıs’ta devrimci”, 1996)

As the above quotation from one of publications of the radical left points to the visibility which was maintained by the collective violence of the May Day protesters against the police forces. The revolutionary movement became visible momentarily at least, but staying at the center would be nourished by other critical events, too.

Another critical event that contributed to centripetal move by radical left in Istanbul is 19 December 2000 state massacre in prisons. At 20 October 2000 prisoners linked to outlawed organizations DHKP-C and TKP/ML started a hunger strike in protest of their planned transformation to isolation cells from crowded communal wards. In November 2000, they transformed the hunger strike to fast unto death. In order to suppress the death-fast struggle and accelerate the transformation of prisoners to F Type isolation cells, Turkish state forces stormed 20 prisons across the country killing 30 prisoners and 2 soldiers (Bargu, 2014). Ironically, state called the operation “Return to Life”. After the massacre, other radical left organizations joined the death fast struggle.

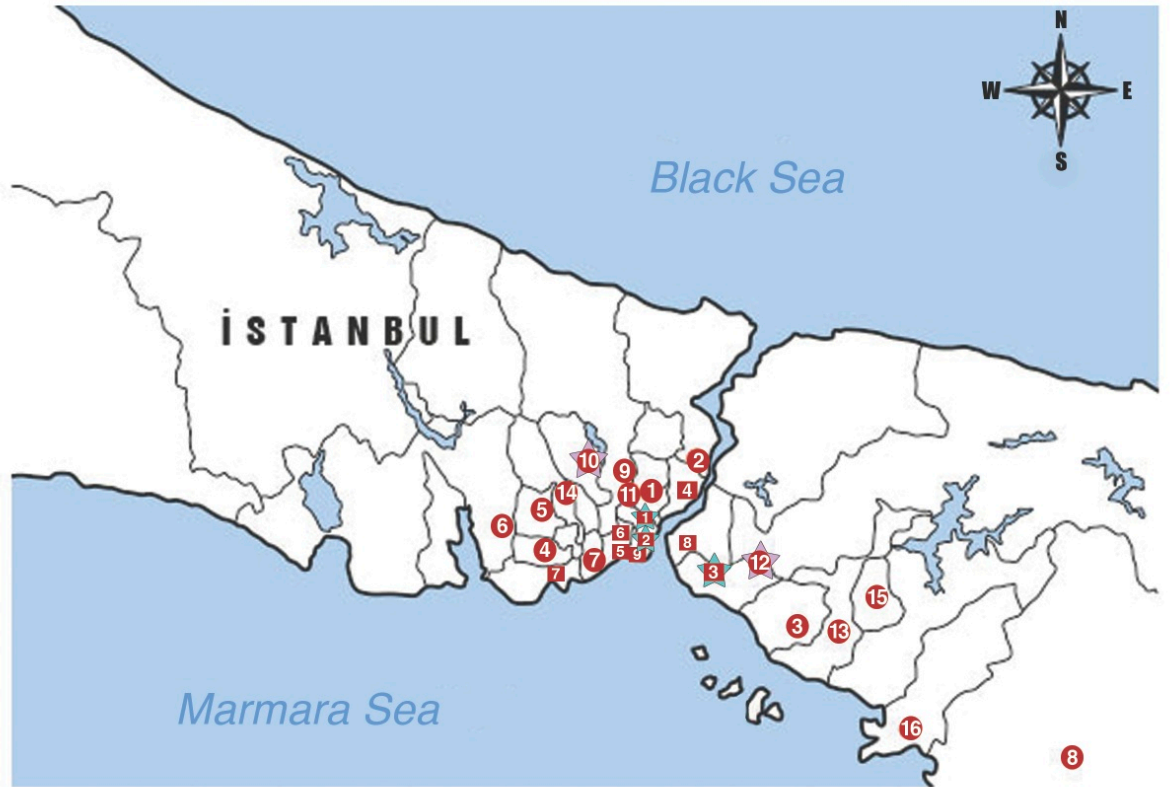
In fact, mobilization in support of the hunger strikers had already begun in the summer of 2000. Following the mode of political action of Saturday Mothers, every Saturday at noon, a crowded group met at Galatasaray Square. Thinking the unsatisfactory public support for hunger-strikers, the central urban spaces were used

to embolden support for the demands of the hunger-strikers (Bargu, 2014).³⁸ Like the struggle of Saturday Mothers, struggle against F type prisons have contributed increasing concentration of political actions in central spaces by the radical left.

Until now, I tried to cover some of the critical events that contributed to the shifts in the geographies of radical left politics. Figure 1 demonstrates the spatial distribution of these critical events at the central and peripheral sites. What is more, Gazi Revolts and following campaigns for the disappeared, Kadıköy 1996 May Day demonstration and 2000 prison operation against the radical left prisoners brought uneven effects on the practices and discourses of the subversive politics. Critical events in question, pointed a mode of political action in central spaces. That point might be epitomized by countless rallies held in central spaces of Istanbul such as Taksim, Kadıköy, Beşiktaş, Mecidiyeköy etc. During 2007's May Day demonstrations the main leftist union DİSK called the masses to the Taksim Square as an act of bringing perpetrators of the massacre of 1977 May Day to account. The unions and leftist organizations insisted on Taksim for May Day demonstrations for the following years. Although the government let the organizations to celebrate 2011 and 2012 May Days in Taksim Square, it has again banned Taksim from being a massive demonstration site. Similarly 2003 anti-war movement, 2004 anti-NATO demos, May Day protests of the years between 2007-2010 also witnessed similar surges towards central spaces by leftist movements. Taksim and İstiklal are also sites for the annual meetings for 8th of March World Women Day, Pride Marches of LGBTQ and for many other protests.³⁹

³⁸ Facing unsatisfactory public support and continuous losses, all of the organizations except DHKP-C quitted the hunger strike in 2003. ("Tecrit terörünü", 2002.) DHKP-C continued the death-fast until 2007 when Ministry of Justice announced a ten hours of social time per week in F type prisons. (Akgüneş, 2007).

³⁹It should be noted that Women's Day and Pride Marches are different from radical left actions both in forms and composition.



- Local Neighborhoods where Radical Left has activities
- Central Urban Spaces
- ★ Local Neighborhoods associated with critical events
- ★ Central urban spaces which host political actions by Radical Left Organizations

Neighborhoods where Radical Left is organized

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Okmeydanı (Şişli) | 7 Zeytinburnu | 13 Uğur Mumcu Mahallesi (Kartal) |
| 2 Küçükarmutlu (Sarıyer) | 8 Gebze | 14 Esenler |
| 3 Gülsuyu Mahallesi (Maltepe) | 9 Alibeyköy (Eyüp) | 15 Sultanbeyli |
| 4 Yenibosna (Bahçelievler) | 10 Gazi Mahallesi (Sultangazi) | 16 Tuzla |
| 5 Demirkapı Mahallesi (Bağcılar) | 11 Alibeyköy (Eyüp) | |
| 6 İkitelli (Küçükçekmece) | 12 1 Mayıs Mahallesi (Ümraniye) | |

Central urban spaces of Istanbul where radical left conducts political actions frequently

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------|------------|
| 1 Taksim | 4 Beşiktaş | 7 Bakırköy |
| 2 Galatasaray | 5 Sultanahmet | 8 Üsküdar |
| 3 Kadıköy | 6 Fatih | 9 Eminönü |

Fig. 1: Central and marginal spaces of subversive political actions in Istanbul

The last critical event I want to analyze is Occupy Gezi Movement. The Movement started at 31st of May 2013 when Istanbul Municipality, which is led by governing Justice and Democracy Party (AKP) of Turkey, tried to demolish one of the last green areas in the central urban space (Gezi Parkı) of Istanbul with the help of riot police. Excessive police violence targeting the protesters in the park sparked colossal demonstrations and clashes with the police all over Turkey. After hours of clashes with the police in the central spaces of Istanbul, the protesters managed to push off police from park and surrounding areas and occupied these spaces for seventeen days. An estimated 16 per cent of Istanbul's population joined the protests, some 1.5 million people (Yoruk & Yuksel, 2014, pp. 104-5). Police reclaimed the square on 11 June and the park on 16 June. Following the police attacks on the park and the square, the movement in the form of people's assemblies and neighborhood forums spread itself to the parks and squares in many districts of Istanbul. The revolt managed to save the park. Yet eight people were killed with many hundreds wounded during the waves of demonstrations (Tuğal, 2013). Three of the losses of lives were from the subversive neighborhoods of Istanbul: Berkin Elvan shot by a gas canister thrown by police in Okmeydanı, Mehmet Ayvalıtış was killed in a car crash during a mass demonstration in 1 Mayıs neighborhood. What is more, Hasan Ferit Gedik's story was like a mnemonic tour of history of subversive enclaves. Gedik was born in Armutlu, a new generation shanty town organized by People's Front militants in the 1990s. He was killed during the Gazi revolts by mafia that attacked a leftist mass protest in Gülsuyu, a neighborhood where the radical left is relatively powerful. And his body was laid to rest in the Gazi neighborhood following a massive rally with the participation of masked gunmen from the DHKP-C. In fact, these losses from subversive neighborhoods show how violent the clashes

between the state forces and the radical left communities in these neighborhoods are. As these sites witnessed the harshest clashes of Gezi, the subversive neighborhoods once more occupied the agenda of politics of Turkey.

If we go back to the analysis of Gezi as one of the critical events, it is not possible to fully cover the details and implications of the Gezi Movement owing to the limits of the study, yet I want to touch on certain aspects of the movement as an event. In fact, the Gezi protests embody many of the traces of the conceptualization of *the event* by Veena Das. During the occupation of the park, a commune-like solidarity network was created in and around the park. For post-evental consequences, there have been created many novelties in diverse spheres of life and politics: modalities of political action,⁴⁰ the language of protest (Güven, 2014), media (İnceoğlu, 2014; Aymaz, 2013), ecologic and urban awareness⁴¹, the understanding of the relationship between the state and the citizen, interactions between previously non-communicating groups, of course, new spaces and so on. Some also argued the emergence of new subjects (Diken 2014) and new classes (Keyder 2014) after the movement.

Another post-evental implication of Gezi was that Kadıköy and Beşiktaş as preferred sites for political actions replaced Taksim due to constant police presence and police violence against actions in the latter. One can observe the spatial transformations in Kadıköy and Beşiktaş in the form of murals, slogans on the walls, or the nomination of some areas with the names of the lost in Gezi resistance.

Additionally, there is at least one clash per month with the police in Kadıköy, which

⁴⁰ In Gezi, there were creative civil obedience actions such as “Duran Adam” (Standing Man) who stood still in the middle of the square as a reaction to excessive police violence, or airing “vine videos” shot mock policemen standing (Güncel Video, 2014).

⁴¹ We can speak of a urban sensibility emerged after the Gezi Revolts. Examples to this sensibility: reactions against the municipality’s intervention to one of the citizen’s coloring of the Stairs at Fındıklı, Istanbul, also movement in Amasya against the demolition of a park by municipality, again, an elderly women’s symbol struggle against the demolition of a park in Edirne.

was not previously common. Yet at least until now, thanks to local organizations in the form of neighborhood assemblies and forums at parks in Istanbul, the concentration of political action seem to be dispersed to local districts.

At this part of the chapter, I endeavored to show that the critical events covered here — the Gazi Revolts, the Kadıköy 1996 May Day protests, the 2000 army operation to the prisons and the Occupy Gezi Movement of 2013 — add much to the making of the temporal and spatial axis of the radical left politics. After the historical analysis of events, we will now see how the geographies of radical left politics changed over time.

3.4 Spatial mapping of political actions by the radical left

Physical and economic transformations in the neighborhoods, where the radical left is active, produced uneven effects in the political sphere. I will now show how the political actions recorded in two publications, which cover news about banned communist organizations, the MLKP and the DHKP-C. The spatial mapping of political actions by the radical left in city spaces since the mid-1990s illustrates the topographic shift in the spaces of politics.

Figure 2 shows the number of political actions recorded in the *Atılım* newspaper in October with four years intervals from 1994 to 2014. Figure 3 presents the same distribution based on the recordings of the *Yürüyüş* magazine. It shows that after 2002, the number of political actions held in central spaces has increased.⁴²

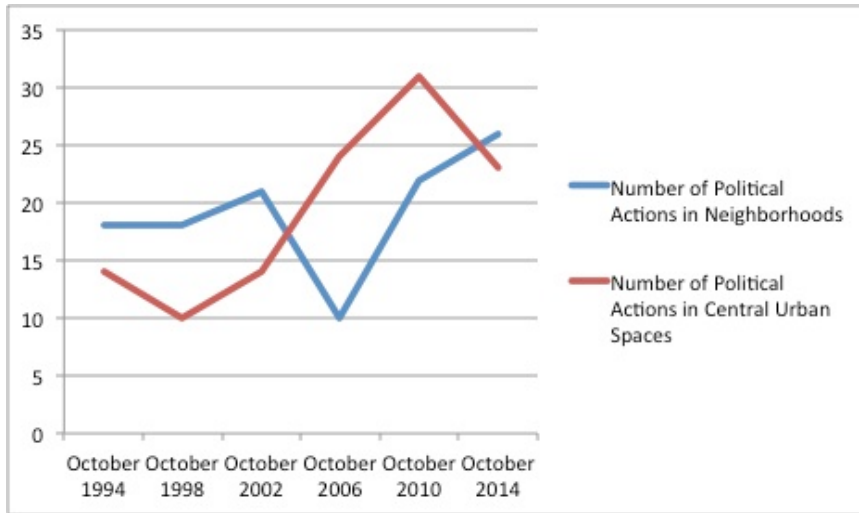


Fig. 2: Spatial distribution of political actions recorded in *Atılım* between 1994 and 2014

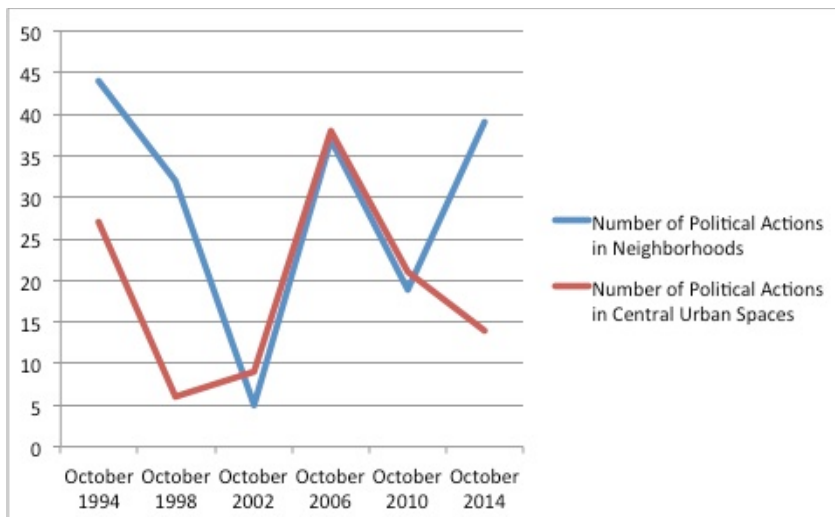


Fig. 3: Spatial distribution of political actions recorded in *Yürüyüş* between 1994 and 2014

⁴² Occupy Gezi Movement of 2013 and nation-wide revolt against the governing AKP's indifference to ISIS assault in north-Syrian Kurdish town of Kobane in 2014 might account for the concentration of local actions in 2014.

In October 1994, nearly half of the news published was about workers' strikes, protests at factories or meetings in trade union confederations. As media analysis shows, especially for the DHKP-C, prison conditions have been a perpetual political agenda, which contributed to publicity in central spaces. Also the central spaces of the 1990 political actions were much more dispersed. That is to say, the spaces of the actions were not primarily Taksim and Kadıköy; Aksaray, Çağlayan, Şişli, Saraçhane, Sultanahmet Square and Sirkeci were also preferred sites. However, in 1998 the struggle against disappearances and human rights violations in prisons started to draw political movements to Taksim and İstiklal Street in search of wider publicity. In 2002, there were effects of the 19 December 2000 prison massacre and ongoing death fast struggle against isolation cells. Organizations continue to protest state officials at central spaces such as Şişli, Galatasaray and Sultan Ahmet Square.

Again in 2006, although other organizations quit the protest, the DHKP-C continued to death fast and it announced the campaign against isolation cells as its basic political agenda. As the main agenda for *Atılım*, there was a massive police operation targeting the MLKP. İstiklal Street and the location of the State Security Court in Beşiktaş were primary sites of protests recorded in *Atılım*. In 2010 both *Yürüyüş* and *Atılım* focused on the release of sick prisoners and Saturday Mothers' ongoing actions to find the disappeared.

3.5 Waning locals of hegemony in neighborhoods

The social and political imaginaries of radical left subjects and shifts in the geographies of politics feed each other. The concentration of political actions at spaces of visibility is legitimized by radical left activists on the grounds of

demonstrating the violence of political hegemony at the central spaces. In part, appearing at central spaces can be interpreted as a practice of appropriation of common spaces by the margins and social movements inhabiting there. As a tactic for the reclaiming of economical freedoms together with legal, political and constitutional rights, Peter Linebaugh (2008) proposes to use “commoning”, instead of “the commons as given”. Thus, encroachments from the radical left towards central urban spaces can be seen as an attempt of “commoning” the public spaces. Thus, there exists a certain assumption of possessing the central spaces as well as the locals. My interviewees explain that assumption as below:

The actions at central spaces are different. You gather the working class people from various districts and bring them here [Kadıköy]. It is important for being visible and for seizing onto the city center. You make your presence at the city centers noticed and give the message “here is also a place of us”. (Personal communication, September 12, 2014)⁴³

You come here (city centers) as a means of building political hegemony. It is a message of you to the power that confronts you: “We are not solely there [neighborhoods]. We are also here. We sometimes go to the streets, burn or demolish. We intervene to the very things that you assign as tools of power. Let’s call this as an examination, as an objection. (Personal communication, March 5, 2014)⁴⁴

The assumption “to be at the centers at the same time” is also compatible with the premise that “Politics makes visible that which had no reason to be seen, it lodges one world into another” (Rancière, 2001). However, Rancière annotates, politics “has no “proper” place nor does it possess any “natural” subjects. A demonstration is political not because it takes place in a specific locale and bears upon a particular

⁴³ “Merkezi eylem farklı. sen birçok yerden emekçileri toplayıp buraya getiriyorsun. Görünür olmak açısından ve kent merkezini tutmak açısından önemli yani. Kent merkezinden de varlığını hissettiriyorsun, burası da bizim diyorsun.”

⁴⁴“Politik hegemonyanın bir aracı olarak buralara (merkezlere) geliyorsun. Karşıdaki iktidara da bir mesaj yani.Biz sadece oralarda değiliz, buralardayız da yani.Bazen de çıkarız, yakarız da yıkarız senin iktidar aracını gösterdiğin şeylere de müdehala ederiz. Bir yoklama diyelim, karşı çıkış.”

object but rather because its form is that of a clash between two partitions of the sensible. As Onur says, the space of politics can shift to different spaces than their usual sites. Yet such a view assumes a powerful existence in the local enclaves of the radical left.

If central spaces are not always “proper places” of politics, then what can we say about the politics in local neighborhoods? Can the radical left still assume the counter-hegemony over these spaces against state domination, as they had in the 1970s? Before moving to analysis of answers to these questions, I want to discuss briefly the contours of shifts in the making of neighborhoods in metropolises such as Istanbul. For as much as the shifts described in the geographies of politics are not only dependent on the political strategies and discourses of Turkey’s social movements, they are at the same time connected to transformations of characteristics of contemporary urban regimes, economics and administration of broader scales. One of the factors significantly contributing to the changes in spatial mapping of the collective actions is the transformation in the labor regimes, which brought the precariatization i.e. insecure, temporary and flexible forms of labor. That resulted in the weakening and the dissolution of unions and right-based activities in traditional work places. Furthermore, these overall trends produced security regimes that make it for social movements even harder to get organized and escalate struggle against social and economic inequalities. It is also important to note that these factors are not all encompassing, homogenizing processes for all kinds of political actions and localities.

What is more, for the spatial sense, one of the basic transnational shifts, among others, is the commodification of city spaces and urban renewal projects. By contributing to the rise of advanced urban marginality, that shift led to spatial

alienation, the loss of locales that marginalized urban populations identify with and feel secure in and the loss of viable hinterlands (Wacquant, 1996). So what happened to local neighborhoods in Istanbul where the radical left have been active, as the mobility of the concentration of political actions slips from neighborhoods to central spaces.

Loic Wacquant counts the “the dissolution of place” among other distinctive features of advanced marginality in modern metropolises. He observes that it is no longer possible to encounter places that urban margins identify with or feel secure in.⁴⁵ Ghettos and *banlieues* are no longer communal “places” suffused with shared emotions, joint meanings and practices and institutions of mutuality. I think that, although there are distinctive aspects of each neighborhood, Istanbul’s poor working class neighborhoods constitute no powerful exception to this tendency of “dissolution of the place”.

According to my interviewees who are engaged in political activities in Okmeydanı and Gazi, there are many factors that produce the dissolution of the place. These factors can be noted as the construction of multistory buildings instead of shanty houses with little gardens in front of them, decreasing the number and size of communal spaces where people can encounter and exchange stories, the loss of work-places around these neighborhoods where residents from the district can work together. For radical political activists, the dissolution of place also points to a shared nostalgia for the past:

[After the coup d’etat of 1980] failing to have them educated, people, together with the encouragement from the state, have learned a type of devilry. What was that devilry? Seizing a vacant land and building three or four shanty houses, and then again selling these houses to

⁴⁵Yet, as Wacquant (1996) warns, “One must be careful not to romanticize conditions in the proletarian neighborhoods and segregated enclaves of yesteryear“ (p. 126) Rather in the 1970s and 1990s we have structural violence, police operations together with the treats from land mafia etc. What I want to underline is the loss of previous “sense of the place” people live in.

somebody and doing something else. The people were even doing these kinds of things to their own cousins. While one cousin is in prison [because of her/his involvement in political activities], the other does such things. We have experienced such a thing in our own family. That was the moment when corruption and inequality started. (Personal communication, February 17, 2014)⁴⁶

According to Ayşe, the promotion of private property by the state brought about the “demonization” of the residents in the shanty towns. This demonization might be explained in terms of the elimination of the radical left from the realm of hegemony and simultaneous change in the architecture of the sites in these spaces.

Apartmentalization and the promotion of private property also produced uneven effects on subversive politics. Many of my interviewees remember *gecekondu* areas as more revolutionary, sincere and having trust in radical left activists. F., who has been a resident of Okmeydanı since 1977, says that:

[Okmeydanı] was a beautiful and lovely neighborhood. In my childhood, it had a revolutionary tradition and was a neighborhood of people with political involvement. It had a revolutionary vein. We finished primary school here. The shanty-town period is a period that we always long for. (Personal communication, February 23, 2014)⁴⁷

Another activist, L. unites a similar nostalgia with political activism:

[During the 1990s] the shanty houses were much more untroubled and intimate. There was solidarity. Every shanty had a yard in front of it. These were the places with further possibility of movement [for us]. There were the apartments, on the other hand. When you [as a political activist] stay in the apartments, the owners of these spaces would get suspicious of you. They would say “be quiet! be careful! While coming here”. The atmosphere of distrust intensified in the period of apartments. This atmosphere of distrust was affecting all of the political facility. (Personal communication, August 10, 2014)⁴⁸

⁴⁶“80 darbesinden sonra halk kendini daha yetiştiremeden devletin de verdiği gazla bir şeytanlığı öğrendi. Ve mesela bu şeytanlık neydi? Bir yeri kapıp üstüne üç dört tane gecekondu yapıp daha sonra satıp başka bir şeyler yapmak. Bunu yapan da mesela amca çocukları. Bir amca çocuğu içerde, diğer dışarda bu işleri yapıyor. Biz bunu kendi sülalemizde yaşadık. Yozlaşma burada başladı, eşitsizlik”

⁴⁷“Güzel şirin bir mahalleydi. Benim çocukluğumda, devrimci geleneği olan siyasetle uğraşanların mahallesiydi. Devrimci bir damarı vardı. Biz ilk okulu da burada okuduk. Gecekondu dönemleri bizim hep özlemle baktığımız dönemlerdi.”

⁴⁸“Gecekondular daha rahattı, daha samimiydi. Dayanışma vardı. Her gecekondunun önünde bir bahçe olurdu. Hareket imkanı daha fazla olan yerlerdi. Apartmanlarda ise, gidip kaldığımız apartmanlarda oranın sahipleri sizden şüphelenirdi ‘Buraya gelirken dikkat edin, sessiz olun’ derlerdi. Apartmanlar döneminde güvensizlik havası artmıştı. Bu bütün siyasal faaliyete yansyordu.”

As the radical left subjects point to nostalgia for the *gecekondu* past, it is difficult to define the characteristics of the nostalgia since — I think — the object of nostalgia is ambiguous. The narrators quickly shift from the physical attributes of the neighborhoods to the once-more robust influence of the revolutionaries. Thus, this nostalgia cannot be divorced from the waning of counter-hegemony of the radical left. How did the dissolution of the place affect the hegemony of radical left organizations in these neighborhoods? Based on my interviews and observations during the fieldwork, I argue that revolutionary organizations no longer resume their hegemony over these neighborhoods. During my fieldwork in the Okmeydanı and Gazi neighborhoods, I had a chance to participate in many local political actions organized in those districts. Generally, these political actions are in the form of press statements or rallies. Before the political action is held, some activists of the organization(s) tour the streets of the neighborhoods and call the inhabitants to the action via hailers. Yet despite their claim of hegemony in many neighborhoods, they rarely succeed in drawing more than a few hundred participants to their political actions. Although tens of thousands of people live in the Gazi and Okmeydanı neighborhoods, radical left organizations barely draw more than 500 to 1,000 supporters to their demonstrations if the political agenda is not an anniversary of some crucial event. For example, in Okmeydanı, a crucial protest rally on the 1st of June 2014 against the urban transformation projects targeting the neighborhood hosted around 300 people (“AKP rantı”, 2014). Similarly, 50 to 100 demonstrators take part in the outlawed demonstrations in which militants clash with the police. Many of radical political activists themselves question the extent to which left organizations construct a counter-hegemony in subversive neighborhoods:

I can define Okmeydanı as one of the neighborhoods of revolutionaries and as one of the neighborhoods sympathetic towards the revolutionary struggle. And that is because of its past. In the past, the mainstream political parties did not have a voice in these places while the revolutionaries had decisive influence. Yeah, today the neighborhood is sympathetic towards the revolutionaries yet it is not organized. (Personal communication, March 5, 2014)⁴⁹

“Gazi is a neighborhood of revolutionaries”; “Gazi is a liberated neighborhood”. These words were uttered many times. Yet nowadays, when you knock the doors of the people in case of an incidence, the people can kick you out or may not receive you to her house. Why that is so? This means although you own the [control of] neighborhood or the street, you cannot make people organized. Why? That is because you failed to achieve a revolution in the minds of the people. That means the neighborhood is not yours. (Personal communication, November 12, 2014)⁵⁰

The [Gazi] neighborhood is not dominated by the revolutionaries if we fail to stick to concrete realities we will arrive nowhere (Personal communication, August 14, 2014).⁵¹

Before 1980, city centers, too, were used [for political actions] densely yet the neighborhoods were transformed into bases. After 1980 we do not have such things. The neighborhoods are still bases [for radical left activity] yet they are not safe bases. Bases, control of which is not much in the hands of revolutionaries. During mid-1990s we have a situation of re-claiming the base-character of the neighborhoods yet the state ended this period defeating [the radical left]. Revolutionaries assume the neighborhood being their own yet most of the people living there are CHP supporters. What is more, the ones other than CHP supporters are not under the control of revolutionaries. (Personal communication, August 10, 2014)⁵²

⁴⁹“Okmeydanı, devrimcilerin, devrimci mücadeleye yakın olarak tanımlayabileceğim mahallelerden biri. Geçmişinden kaynaklı. Geçmişte burada düzen partilerinin çok lafı geçmez devrimcilerin ciddi derecede etkisi vardı. ha bugün hala devrimlere yakın ama örgütlü değiller. “

⁵⁰“Gazi devrimcilerin mahalesidir, Gazi mahallesi kurtarılmış mahalledir çok söylendi ama bugün bir olay olduğunda bir halkın kapısını çaldığında seni dışarı kovabiliyor veya evine alamayabiliyor. niye, demek ki halk -mahalle sokak senin olabilir ama- halk senin değil yani halkı sen örgütleyemiyorsun. niye, zihniyet devrimi yapamamışsın demek ki mahalle senin olmamış.”

⁵¹“Mahalleye devrimciler hakim değil somut gerçeklere dayanmazsak hiç bir yere varamayız.”

⁵²“80 öncesi şehir merkezleri de yoğun bir biçimde kullanılıyordu ama mahalleler üslere dönüştürülmüştü. 80 sonrası böyle bir durum yok yani. Mahalleler hala bir üs ama korunaklı bir üs değil. Devrimcilerin pek denetiminde olmayan bir üs.90ların ortalarında yeniden bir üsse dönüşme durumu var ama onu da devlet yenerek çıktı. Devrimciler kendilerinin zannediyor ama oradaki insanların çoğu CHP'li. CHP'li olmayanlar da devrimcilerin denetiminde değil..”

Thereby, we can posit the erosion of counter-hegemony by radical left organizations in a dialogical relationship with the concentration of political actions in central spaces; especially for the last 15 years. Objecting the idea that “society as a whole” cannot be packed into the limits of a single public, Michael Warner (2002) presents us with the idea of counter-publics. According to Warner, counter-publics are, by definition, formed by their conflict with the norms and contexts of their cultural environment, and this context of domination inevitably entails distortion. Having a counter-public also means to “inhabit a culture with a different linguistic ideology, a different social imaginary”(Warner, 2002, p. 63). Practices of radical left organizations in subversive neighborhoods receive active participation from a restricted part of the population living in these sites. In a nutshell, I argue that overwhelmingly political actions of the radical left in central places are examples of the collapse of their counter-publics into the public that is regulated by state and mainstream media discourses.

As Gramsci shows, counter-hegemony is predicted not only on the confrontation between two forces over the stage of the political. It is also to be waged against the hegemony of the bourgeois state in non-coercive ways and ideologically (Forgacs, 1988). That is to say, it is predicated upon the empowerment of counter-culture and counter-public as opposed to those of the state. The political institution of the social in districts of Istanbul is related to construction of that counter-public and is compatible with that, creating of a shared world regarding the everyday aspects of life (the spaces, meanings, senses and so on). The task of counter-hegemony is the cultivation of forms of commonality, of habits, customs and a whole ethos of what Gramsci calls “common sense”(Critchley, 2014,pp. 102-3).

As stated in previous chapter, the radical left had power in the past to build local and situated forms of commonality as in the example of prison-wards, which were organized as commons during the 1980s. Certain neighborhoods of the 1970s were transformed into “liberated sites” where the radical left hegemony was constructed during the 1970s. Yet today there are restricted attempts to construct hegemony in these sites and mostly they fail to do so. Simultaneously, the form of dissident politics claims a share from centralizing, macro-politics that seeks publicity.

3.6 Conclusion

In September 2013, Hasan Ferit Gedik, a People’s Front (that is allegedly linked to the DHKP-C) supporter, was killed by a drug-mafia supposedly supported by police in the Gülsuyu neighborhood. During his funeral with classic red flags and revenge oaths in the same district, one of my friends who was at the funeral with me, turned to me and said: “There is an interesting melancholic atmosphere here. I feel as if we are in the 1990s”. He was not just pointing to the form of state-linked violence, which resembles that decade, but also to a lost extraterritoriality, a space of counter-hegemony or much widely, a decisively weakened cause for revolutionaries.

During the 1990s, radical left forces had once more tried to extract an extraterritoriality for the counter-hegemony they had before the 1980 coup d’état. Yet after the loss of potency for creating counter-hegemony in the period between the 1980s and 1990s, the struggle over existence in the political sphere carried the radical left to the sphere of what I call “politics of visibility”. As discussed in this chapter, this centripetal move is not a consequence of a pre-determined strategy by radical left organizations; rather it is a product of uneven effects of multiple critical events mentioned. This move has a lot to do with “dissolution of place” which

previously contributed to construction of commonalities at local levels. Loss of places with which neighborhood communities feel secure also means the collapse of counter-publics and thus, counter-hegemony.

CHAPTER 4

SPACES OF DISPLAY: FROM SACRIFICE TO VICTIMHOOD

4.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the use of local and central public spaces in Istanbul by radical left forces and illustrates how these forces endow their actions with ethical meanings. Traveling from everyday spaces to the central spaces of the city, the chapter opens with an “ethnography of resistance” in the subversive neighborhoods of Istanbul, particularly focusing on spatial, sensual and bodily attributes of tactics of political actions. I will show how the subversive neighborhoods are constructed through spatial practices such as the naming of certain spaces, placards, writings on the walls, waiting at the certain spots and so on. I also try to discuss the components of everyday spaces such as the streets, street corners, walls, the barricades and garbage bins in order to show how the material and non-material components of the neighborhood assemblages are animated during radical left actions.

Secondly, I will discuss the socio-political imaginaries of radical left subjects on “the ethics of sacrifice”. As “sacrificial practices” are viewed and legitimized as a sine-qua-non of struggle against state and capitalism for many left dissident subjects, these practices are woven into the tissues of everyday spaces by diverse spatial tactics. I will present a discussion of the notion of “sacrifice” and sacrificial acts as parts of exchange between the state and the radical left subjects. Then I will demonstrate how the sacrificial acts (such as self-immolation practices, being

tortured or imprisoned) as objects of display claim a representational value in the production of neighborhood spaces.

Lastly, with a spatial shift, the chapter focuses on the transition of the political actions from neighborhoods to the central spaces. Drawing on statistical data collected from publications of the radical left organizations between the years 1994 and 2014, I will first show in what ways the orientation of political mobilization channeled itself to right-claiming politics. I discuss how the subjects of the radical left employ ethical discourses on sacrifice and victimhood at different spatial levels. And I argue that during this transition, the discourses of victimhood that are based on the human rights-based politics replace those of sacrifice. What accompanies this, I contend, is the split between spectacle and voice from the material production of living bodies at the level of sensation.

4.2 The spatial making of sacrifice: The here and now of subversive neighborhoods

I will discuss how the practices and discourses of sacrifice are woven onto the surfaces of neighborhood through various spatial tactics – such as drawing murals and writing slogans on the walls, giving names of political figures who lost their lives to certain spots such as parks or bus stations. In these neighborhoods, what Feldman (2003) calls “sacrificial construction of memory” is employed “in surrogate forms as iconographic, hagiographic images, memorials, murals, and dedications ornamenting many houses”(p.66).

Drawing a difference between space and place, de Certeau (1998) suggests that “a place (*lieu*) is the order (of whatever kind) in accord with which elements are distributed in relationships of coexistence” (p.117). Space, on the other hand, is “actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it” (p. 117); it is a

practiced place. For instance, walkers turn the street into a space by the action of walking. I see the spatial practices of revolutionary locals as tools of claiming counter-hegemony over the memory, history, everyday life and sensual regimes of the neighborhood. Henceforth, I discuss below, the neighborhoods as assemblages of humans, bodily performances, corners, walls, barricades, streets, names, senses i.e. all dimensions of life in a space that contribute to world-making practices.

In what ways are the imaginations on sacrificial acts and spatial practices intertwined? How, then, do representations of these spaces emerge as “liberated spaces” by revolutionary organizations? What kinds of apparatuses are operated for the extraction of such a claim of symbolic possession? I will now focus on certain practices and dimensions of everyday space-formation tactics.

4.2.1 The act of naming in neighborhoods

The names of places have encoded meanings in subversive neighborhoods. There has always been a severe struggle over the names of spaces, memories, and histories of spaces. The act of naming might be considered both as an example of a spatial practice and a representation of space. One of the most interesting examples of a struggle over names in neighborhoods is the story of the 1 Mayıs neighborhood. Being one of the neighborhoods founded by revolutionaries in the 1970s, following the coup d'état of 1980 the Turkish state changed its name to Mustafa Kemal Paşa neighborhood, after the founding president of the Turkish Republic (Aslan, 2004). However, everybody in the neighborhood and other revolutionary neighborhoods knew it by its old name.

There are many spaces in these neighborhoods which are named after martyrs of the revolution by the radical left: Sibel Yalçın Parkı in Okmeydanı (official name:

Fatma Girik Parkı),⁵³ Hasan Ocak Bus Station in the Gazi mahallesi,⁵⁴ Mahir Hüseyin Ulaş Parkı in Gülsuyu Mahallesi⁵⁵ and so on. The names and memories of the ones fallen for “the people” (*halk*) are bought back to life by inscribing their stories to the memory of the community living in that area. These names not only re-assert the local sense of place but also contribute to the definition of reality, the creation of history and the shaping of memory (Aretxaga, 1997).

Naming a space also performs a territorializing role in the sense that many different organizations may announce a park associated with the names of martyrs’ of revolution. For example, the Socialist Party of the Oppressed (ESP) named a park in the Gazi neighborhood after Serkan Tosun, who was killed by jihadist Al Nusra militants in Northern Syria, the Kurdish-populated city of Serekaniye. Or again, the People’s Front (HC) changed the name of a square in the Gülsuyu neighborhood to “Hasan Ferit Gedik Square”.⁵⁶

4.2.2 The barricade

Barricades interrupt the flow of traffic, the flow of ordinary temporality. It creates a shelter for demonstrators inside the protest area. In their post-evental book of *Declaration on the Occupy Movements*, Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt (2012) state that a different kind of temporality, an autonomous temporality, is generated in these occupations: “time is withdrawn from the schedule imposed by external

⁵³A DHKP-C militant killed in a clash with the police in 1995.

⁵⁴Hasan Ocak was a MLKP militant. After his participation to the Gazi revolts in 1995, Ocak was disappeared as he was under custody on 21 March 1995. His family is among the leading organizers of the Saturday Mothers campaign.

⁵⁵Mahir Çayan, Hüseyin Cevahir and Ulaş Bardakçı were among the founders of the outlawed THKP-C armed guerilla organization.

⁵⁶Hasan Ferit Gedik was the name of People’s Front activist who was killed by drug-mafia in Gülsuyu, in 2013.

pressures and electoral seasons, establishing its own calendar and rhythms of development” (Hardt & Negri, 2012,p. 50).

Together with such an autonomous time, street clashes are important tools of making meaning regarding space. As a matter of fact, the street is a site where a temporary state of exception by subversive organizations is announced by the barricades and clashes. The routine routes of goods and bodies, the daily schedule of the street are interrupted. In each of these neighborhoods, there is a specific street where the police encounter protesters. That is one of the rare ways by which the leftist organizations find a place, become visible in the mainstream media. Petrol bombs, slingshots, guns, faces with scarves become the spotlights in media networks; their carriers perform violent spectacles. The invisibility produced by structural violence regarding poverty, race or gender is torn by violence of protestors. Mostly the seats, construction materials, dumped household goods, and of course garbage become the part of the barricade.

4.2.3 The garbage bin

Garbage bins are rarely found in these sites since the police and the municipality does not allow these potential barricades of clashes. Thus, a previous clash between the police and the protesters can be understood from the garbage scattered in the streets. In these spaces, waste becomes a medium of space-making practice. As I encountered in Okmeydanı, for a few times in the times of street clashes, bolstering the already announced transgression in the street, people might throw the garbage to the street from their windows during or shortly after the clash.

4.2.4 The corner

In these neighborhoods, waiting at street corners is another node in the space-making practice. Some young people affiliated with the radical left organizations wait at some pre-defined corners, and sometimes they join the clashes with the police as well as the protest in the neighborhood. For example, you can see in Okmeydanı “the PKK corner”, “the Devrimci-Gençlik (Revolutionary Youth) corner” as well as other corners that belong to local football fan groups such as the FEMKA youth. In the Gazi neighborhood, there is a different kind of practice to make a space. The names of youth groups that are known by the name of the sub-districts of the neighborhood wait at some certain points similar to Okmeydanı.

Through repetitive actions, rhythms or waiting at these corners, these young people make a space of their own. As Allen states, “the regular comings and goings of people about the city to the vast range of repetitive activities, sounds and even smells that punctuate life in the city and which give many of those who live there a sense of time and location” (Amin and Thrift, 2002, p.17). Yet the corner, as well as the street and the walls cannot be produced without their human counterparts: bodily performances.

4.2.5 Bodily performances

As a part of that spatial assemblage, bodily movements and lively stories regarding bodies connect different parts of the ensemble of movements deployed within a space. Although the collective actions depend on the pre-existence of material spaces such as pavement, street or square, they also collect and produce the space itself via speech and action. More than that, Judith Butler (2012) argues, we also need to understand the “bodily dimension of action, what the body requires, and what the body can do, especially when we must think about bodies together, what holds them

there, their conditions of existence and of power”.

As in the example of dancing, in the time of a protest or a clash with the police, a movement-space⁵⁷ emerges, “as a plastic, enfolded, sensual prehension of feeling-moving bodies” (Merriman, 2012, p.22):

I am incredibly comfortable while I am involved in a political action held here [Okmeydanı]. Yet at other places, for example at Taksim, I do not feel safe. Ever after, Taksim has become a very restricted place since side streets are full of police officers; they control every spot. My friends always say: “F., your body assumes a very different dimension while you are in Okmeydanı”. I can clash more comfortably and at these moments you absolutely do not think about death. It is similar [while I am in] in the Gazi neighborhood. (Personal communication, March 7, 2014)⁵⁸

Similarly, one can think about the images produced by demonstrators sitting calmly on a chair during a short break of harsh clashes with the Turkish police on the 30th of October 2012⁵⁹ and the 26th of July 2015 in Okmeydanı and the Gazi Mahallesi, in the middle of the street.⁶⁰ The body in these examples expands. In the space of exception declared by the political subjects, the stillness of the body acquires a form that is not usually encountered in the ordinary order of things. Kinesthesia and stillness both contribute to “aesthetics of resistance”.

As Rancière puts it, the aesthetics refers to “a specific regime for identifying and reflecting on arts: a mode of articulation between ways of doing and making, their corresponding forms of visibility, and possible ways of thinking about their

⁵⁷Peter Merriman calls for incorporation of affect, force, sensation and particularly *movement* to the time-space dimension (Merriman, 2011).

⁵⁸ “Burada (Okmeydanı) eylem yaparken inanılmaz rahat oluyorum. Ama başka bir yerde, mesela Taksimde, kendimi güvende hissetmiyorum. Artık Taksim kesinlikle çok kısıtlı oldu, çünkü bütün ara sokaklarda hep polisler oluyor, tutuyorlar her yeri. Arkadaşlarım hep şunu söylüyorlar: ‘K. sen Okmeydanı’ndayken çok farklı bir boyut alıyorsun’. Daha rahat çatışabiliyorum ve kesinlikle o anda ölümü falan düşünmüyorsun. Gazide de aynı şekilde.”

⁵⁹The date when Kurdish and leftist forces poured to Street of metropolitans and cities in Turkey as a protest of ongoing-hunger strike in dozens of prisons against the isolation of PKK leader Abdullah Öcalan.

⁶⁰On 26th July of 2015, hundreds of people living in Gazi neighborhood went to streets of the area as a reaction to murder of Günay Özarlan, a People’s Front activist, by the police in an extra-judicial killing (“Violent protests”, 2015).

relationships” (Rancière, 2010, p.10). The state of things in the street, the bodies and material surroundings, imply an interruption to the *partition of the sensible*. The body itself speaks and announces momentarily refusal of its subordination and representation in the abstraction of “citizenship”. It gains a transgressive appearance that makes unauthorized speakers visible on the public stage and speaks “politically”. As Butler reminds us, “When the body “speaks” politically, it is not only in vocal or written language. The persistence of the body calls that legitimacy into question, and does so precisely through a performativity of the body that crosses language without ever quite reducing to language”(Butler, 2012).

The movements, scarves on the faces, banners, flags and of course the sound of slogans, including the ones commemorating the lost ones, add another dimension to temporal appropriation of the street in the name of lost and existing political activists.

4.2.6 The street

Streets in these spaces are inextricably linked to the political action. The street as public space is the prime place of protest, a place of the police terror, open-air trade, meeting etc. Most of the time, at the entrance of these neighborhoods, there are armored vehicles to intervene in potential demonstrations. The state seeks to control the street administratively; it wants to create a “policed space” (Lefebvre, 2009).⁶¹

The first thing one notices is the overabundance of slogans on the walls of these neighborhoods. Propaganda of political organizations, specific slogans to certain political developments and events are transmitted through walls. With graffiti and images on the walls, the revolutionary organizations imply a representation of

⁶¹Lefebvre (2009) uses the phrase “policed space” to refer administration and governance over space. It might be interesting to unite Rancière’s (2010) *police* regime and Lefebvre’s conception of space together.

space belonging to them. Graffiti, such as names, helps revolutionaries mark the boundaries of their spaces of counter-hegemony. They act as lively signals of frontiers making the “invisible yet tangible geographical distinctions” (Aretxaga, 1997, p. 32) between the subversive neighborhoods and the surrounding ones. This implicit knowledge reproduces as much as expresses political and ideological positions of people living in these neighborhoods. By crossing from Okmeydanı to neighboring Kulaksız, or from the Gazi Mahallesi to the Cebeci Mahallesi, one can witness the sudden disappearance of the political graffiti and posters. The names of “the martyrs of revolution” written on the walls are replaced with advertisements, graffiti of football fan groups, local gangs or ordinary writings of youngsters in the neighborhood.

The street is also the alley through which the representation of bodies of the political subjects killed by the state forces penetrates into the spatial organization of daily life in subversive neighborhoods. In 2011 and 2012 Gazi and Okmeydanı neighborhoods, the activists of People’s Front put up the posters about the prison massacre of 2000. In the poster, there were photos of Seyhan Doğan, who was burnt to death together with her five other comrades in Bayrampaşa prison by state forces. In one of the posters, the smiling portrait of Seyhan was juxtaposed with a photograph of her burnt body, and a note on the poster read “Before December 19th – After December 19th”. It was as if the organization sought to show what the state had done and what was sacrificed. The disturbing and affective force of the poster was incorporated to the spatial arrangement of the street. To my view, this is how sacrificial acts are rendered a part of everyday spaces. We can also speak of a similar effect in case of murals on the walls of the subversive neighborhoods. The murals of martyrs from different periods such as the one in which THKP-C leader Mahir

Çayan who was killed in 1971, Dursun Karataş (leader of DHKP-C who died after cancer) and Berkin Elvan depicted. Through the images of different periods, “historical time is depicted flowing mythically” (Aretxaga, 1997, p. 44). Mythical time uniting Mahir Çayan, Dursun Karataş and Berkin Elvan assumedly connected to actual time over the walls of neighborhoods.

Street is also a place of the senses; it requires all senses in order to be produced and understood (Pallasmaa, 2005). As Connerton (2009) puts it, topography is multi-sensory... [and] a sense of place depends upon a complex interplay of visual, auditory and olfactory memories”(p. 33).A specific spot in the neighborhood might trigger memories and emotions regarding a past experience: while walking by that spot one might be affected by the space which can be seen as an object of fear, joy or sorrow. In the subversive neighborhoods of Istanbul we have objects of the senses similar to other poor neighborhoods: the smell of household bleach, the voice of carpet washing service etc. Yet at the disposal of the demonstrations in these neighborhoods we have also the sound of a blast bomb, staggering smell of a gas canister expands the space beyond the physical boundaries of an action. Sounds made during the collective actions such as the sounds of slogans, whistles and other kinds of making noise as a form of protest are frequent sensory experiences in these spaces.

The struggle in these neighborhoods can also be seen as a struggle over “the partition of the sensible”. With the concept “partition of the sensible” Rancière refers to perceptual forms of knowledge that designate what is and is not sensible, what counts as making (i.e., fabricating) sense and what is available to be sensed (Panagia, 2009, p. 6). That is to say, since the counter-hegemony is tied to the production of a new common sense regarding the events, spaces, things, meanings and so on, there is

a constant contestation over sensation of these notions. Seremetakis (1996) names the medium of sensory memories and emotions, and of substances and objects incarnating remembrance and feeling as “commensality”. To her, in this commensality “history, knowledge, feeling and the senses become embedded in the material culture and its components: specific artifacts, places and performances” (p. 37).

At this point, I want to shift the focus of the discussion to the representations of the spaces in the neighborhood. As we have seen, the walls, the streets, the parks and other spatial components of the neighborhoods incorporate the traces of symbolic and memorial traces of radical left politics. In a way, the names of the lost on the walls, their murals and slogans attempt to assume a certain representation that is nourished by sacrificial practices of the left.

4.3 Sacrificial acts on display

As I demonstrated, the representational practices in the neighborhood are multiplied in ways such as sticking placards, naming parks after lost revolutionaries, writing slogans on walls, drawing murals depicting “the martyrs of revolution” and so on. In this part I discuss how sacrificial acts become objects of display within the spaces of subversive neighborhoods. Before doing that, I will first present a brief discussion on the concepts of sacrifice and its realization as a form of reciprocal gift exchange between the radical left militants and imagined community of the people.

As discussed in Chapter 2, there is a long history of state violence targeting radical left movements in Turkey. Yet state violence exerted on the bodies of leftist militants has been interpreted as a *sacrificial act* for the sake of the people (*halk* in Turkish). To interpret similar sacrificial acts of members of the Irish national

liberation movement, the IRA, Allen Feldman (2003) views the sacrifice “[a]n organized act of violence by which collective meanings and historical change are mobilized, visualized, and dramatized in the visible selection and violent elimination of the sacrificial object by a sacrificing agency... The victim in sacrificial actions bears messages and alters social reality in the very mutilation of the victim’s embodiment” (p. 68). Experiences of the 1996/2000 death fast struggles, imprisonment for years, mutilation, being shot by the police or suicide attacks (especially by the DHKP-C) can be seen as examples of these sacrificial acts. Many of my interviewees interpret the sacrifice as a component of their ethico-political principles of Turkey’s militant left: “What is important for us is rank and file. And if we are sacrificing our bodies for the people, one day they will understand us” (Personal communication, August 14, 2014).⁶²

Another activist defines the past experiences of the radical left with respect to their will to “sacrifice”:

Before the 1980 coup d’etat there were people and youngsters who were cultivating the equality by ensuring harmony among residents of the neighborhood. The 1980 coup primarily targeted them. What were these wise people telling? Everybody should be provided with proper job and subsistence. They sacrificed. They went into prisons (Personal communication, August 14, 2014).⁶³

Nizam, from the Gazi neighborhood, compares the sacrificial ethics of radical left activists in last two decades with that of the ethics of the 1970s, arguing that the latter is based on the multiplication of life, where is the former predicated upon death:

⁶² “Bizim için önemli olan halk katmanlarıdır. Ve biz halk için canımızı bedenimizi feda ediyorsak halk bizi anlayacak mutlaka”

⁶³ “80 darbesinden önceki mahallede insanları birbiriyle bağdaştırarak eşitliği sağlayan insanlarımız, gençlerimiz vardı. 80 darbesi ilk hedefte onları vurdu. O akil insanlar ne diyordu herkesin işi aşı olması gerek. Onlar bedel ödediler. İçeriye girdiler.”

Revolutionism of the 1970s and 1980s was not predicated upon sacrificing but upon living. As the perception of the struggle for them was consecrating life, the generation of the 1990s came out to be deviating from that perspective based on life or consecrating life. They somehow ended up being a generation that was consecrating death or conducting sacrificial acts culminating in death. In fact the revolutionary movement should base itself upon life. (Personal communication, November 12, 2014)⁶⁴

Together with the discourses and ethical principles, at the same time, sacrificial acts by radical left subjects shape the spatial practices in question. How can we trace this relationship between the sacrifice by the radical left and its effect on the configuration of the spaces of the neighborhoods?

In every street of the Okmeydanı and Gazi neighborhoods, it is possible to see dozens of slogans commemorating the lost ones. During my field study in Okmeydanı, I encountered a slogan reading, “Sacrifice is justice, Comrade Mehmet is immortal”.⁶⁵ It was written on a wall close to the main road where political rallies and clashes are held. Mehmet was a radical left militant who waged a suicide attack outside the U.S. Embassy in Istanbul. Again, in the photographic assemblage, there was also a mural of Berkin Elvan. Berkin was a 15-year-old boy who was shot in the head by police during the Gezi Revolts in Okmeydanı and passed away after nine months of medical treatment following the attack. In one slogan, “Sacrifice is Justice”, the leftist activists united the sorrows of different periods and also call the passers-by to remember. The stories and histories of the lost ones are ennobled to an act of sacrifice. What is more, the equation of sacrifice and justice in the slogan de-

⁶⁴“70'lerin, 80'lerin devrimciliği feda değil de yaşamak üstüneydi. Onların yaşam için savaşıyor, yaşamı daha güzel kılmak için mücadele veren bir anlayışı varken doksan kuşağı aslında özünden saptırılmış, yaşamı esas alan; yaşamı kutsayan algıdan biraz daha saptırılmıştı. Ölümü kutsayan [veya] ölüme gitmek için feda eylemi yapan bir kuşak haline geldiler. Aslında hani devrimci hareket yaşamı esas almalı.”

⁶⁵“Feda Adalettir, Mehmet Yoldaş Ölümsüzdür”.

historicizes the stories of the people in the slogans and stories of sacrifices. The discourse of “sacrifice” replaces revolutionary strategy and resistance to the state.

I had the opportunity to discuss the interpretation of the slogan “Sacrifice is justice” with Mustafa, an activist from the People’s Front organization, which is well known for its leading role in hunger strikes in prisons and suicide attacks. He describes the act of sacrifice as a form of exchange:

Sacrifice is sometimes [going into] prison. At other times it is laying your body for self-immolation [in hunger strikes]. At times it is being got shot in head while you are in Cemevi for a funeral ceremony. As in the case of Berkin Elvan, it is sometimes being shot to death on your way to bakery. It is because of the trouble while you are struggling against the poverty. (Personal communication, November 19, 2014)⁶⁶

To him, if a struggle is to accomplish a victory, there has to be a price. The dead, the wounded, the imprisoned, the tortured i.e. the sacrificing subject of the radical left struggle is the agent of the exchange of gifts between the radical left movement and the people. In his study on the role of the political and symbolic meaning of death for the re-production of discourses, politics and ideology for the Kurdish Liberation Movement in Turkey, Hiyşar Özsoy (2010) argues that, “[i]n many cases moral economies created around the dead exchange their symbolic and affective power into useful and meaningful “gifts” within the sphere of the political, often through the institution of martyrdom and ideals of self-sacrificial death (pp. 31-2). Spaces of the neighborhoods mediate the mentioned politico-symbolic exchanges with the dead embedded in the moral economy of gift.

⁶⁶“Bedel ödenmeden hiçbir mücadeleden sonuç alınmıyor. Bedel kimi zaman cezaevi oluyor.Kimi zaman bedenini ölüme yatırmak oluyor.Kimi zaman cemevinde cenaze töreni sırasında kafasına bir kurşun yiyerek oluyor.Berkin Elvan gibi ekmeğe giderken vurulurken oluyor.Yoksullukla mücadele ederken çektiğin sıkıntıdan da oluyor”.

In *The Accursed Share*, Bataille (1985) states that human activity is not entirely reducible to the processes of production and conservation and that consumption must be divided into two distinct parts. The first part is represented by “the use of the minimum necessary for the conservation of life and the continuation of individuals’ productive activity in a given society; it is therefore a question simply of the fundamental condition of productive activity” (p. 118). In the second part, we have the so-called unproductive expenditures: “luxury, mourning, war, cults, the construction of sumptuary monuments, games, spectacles, arts, perverse sexual activity (i.e. deflected from genital finality) – all these represent activities which, at least in primitive circumstances, have no end beyond themselves” (p. 118). The latter form of “unproductive expenditures” was the very core of the study of Marcell Mauss (2002) on the gift economy and specifically on the *potlatch*⁶⁷ as a special form of gifting among the North America societies of Haida, Tlingit and Northwest coast. As Mauss (2002) shows, the potlatch economy can assume different forms of exchange such as rivalry and destruction (p. 11). The potlatch as rivalry exchange of gifts is realized by the constant passing of gifts and counter gifts between the communities. “Everything passes to and fro as if there were a constant exchange of a spiritual matter, including things and men, between clans and individuals, distributed between social ranks, the sexes, and the generations” (p. 18). The reciprocal exchange of gifts nourishes a system of obtaining prestige, honour, authority and credit for the chiefs and the communities themselves in the face of other communities. Yet the rivalry to present gifts reaches a point where there are just not enough valuable things to express the highest degrees of honour, so conspicuous consumption is succeeded by conspicuous destruction (Mauss, 2002, p.

⁶⁷The word potlatch essentially means “to feed”, “to consume”(Mauss, 2002, p. 7)

xii). To explicate the mechanisms of the potlatch, Mauss (2002) implies three strict rules of gift exchange: to give, to receive and to reciprocate. And since a gift is “received with a burden attached” there exists no free gift at all (p. 53).

Thus in the sacrificial practices, by gifting his/her life the radical left militant gets moral superiority over the community and assign the living with the responsibility to pursue her/his political ideals (Velioğlu, 2013; Özsoy, 2010). The subversive spaces of Istanbul transformed into an intermediary form that is expected to remind the political message of the lost revolutionaries: it calls the residents of the neighborhoods — and members of the imagined community of the radical left politics — to reciprocate the gift of the martyr.

It is through this mechanism that the neighborhood space speaks, intervenes to the formation of political symbolism and acquires a representational force. In the official narratives of the radical left movements, sacrificial acts transform individual biographies into socio-spatial texts in the subversive neighborhoods. Yet as will be seen, the sacrificial acts do not assume the same representational force at the central spaces.

4.4 In search of human rights: From sacrifice to victimhood

Now I want to shift the gaze from the neighborhoods to the spaces of visibility and discuss what happens to the sacrificial acts of the radical left subject in these spaces.

I argue that, although the representation of atrocities targeting the radical left political subjects takes the form of “sacrifice” in the neighborhoods, the idiom of reaction against the state violence turns out to be “victimhood” in central spaces.

Before detailing my argument, through the records of radical left publications

regarding political actions I demonstrate how the content of political actions has changed since the 1990s.

The analysis of the content and the demands of collective actions printed in the official publications of *Atılım* Newspaper and *Yürüyüş* magazine between the years 1994 and 2014 demonstrates a concentration of rallies against human rights violations (see Figure 4). Among other topics of political action were government policies, international news, university and high-school student struggles, gender inequalities, problems regarding neighborhoods, workers' rights, armed actions by illegal radical left organizations, commemorations of ones lost as a result of state violence, trials of political prisoners, social and cultural events by left organizations such as concerts, plays or picnics and so on.

Generally, the aim of the political action focused on human rights was to object to the enforced disappearances, the isolation of prisoners in the newly-built F type prison cells, the police operations on leftist organizations and institutions, the violation of political rights, the deterioration of prison conditions, the ongoing war in the Kurdish region and related violations, the extra-judicial killings, the incarceration of ill prisoners, the censorship of dissident publications and so on. The form of the action would generally be the reading of a press release in a public space, sit-ins and rallies. Mostly, one or more political organizations took a decision in an organizational meeting to hold a press release, protest or rally. The survey of the mentioned publications shows that most of the collective actions on human rights were held in the central spaces of Istanbul. Among these central spaces were Taksim, İstiklal Street, Kadıköy, Sultanahmet and Aksaray.

In most of these events, the call was to state authorities to take action against the violations of rights regarding prisons, press freedom and the right to get

organized. They also sought the awareness and support of “the public”, which could be reached through the media.

		October 1994	October 1998	October 2002	October 2006	October 2010	October 2014
Overall Number of Collective Actions	Atılım	32	28	35	33	53	49
	Yürüyüş	61	38	14	72	37	53
Percentage of CAVHR*	Atılım	31	33	42	69	62	24
	Yürüyüş	11	63	71	50	72	32
Percentage of CAVHR* in Central Istanbul	Atılım	70	88	73	86	81	83
	Yürüyüş	57	29	80	69	74	29

*CAVHR: Collective Actions Against Violation of Human Rights by Turkish State Authorities

Fig. 4: Distribution of collective actions in Istanbul against violation of human rights⁶⁸

What is more, as Figure 4 shows, the number of collective actions to protest human rights violations increases especially during the years of 1998, 2002 and 2006. The reason for this rise was mainly due to ongoing hunger strikes and death fast struggles in prisons, placing the prison as a protagonist space of politics. In her ambitious study on self-immolation and hunger strikes to protest F type prisons in the period between 1996 and 2007, Banu Bargu (2014) points toward the swift transformation regarding the strategy of resistance by the radical left. Although at the beginning of the death fast struggle radical left subjects declared their radical overall demands to achieve a wider democratization in the Turkish state, the movement later resumed the struggle with “tactical instrumentalization of a human rights discourse” (Bargu, 2014, p. 34). The demands of the death fast struggle were not restricted to the

⁶⁸Records retrieved from *Atılım* newspaper and *Yürüyüş* magazine at months of October between the years 1994 and 2014.

abolition of high-security prisons; they framed a broader array of demands seeking for the democratization of penal and legal apparatuses of the state. Among these demands were the abrogation of the anti-terror law of 1991, the abolition of state security courts, the release of sick prisoners, the investigation of deadly assaults on the prisons in the 1990s and so on. After 122 casualties, the death fast struggle against F type prisons ended in 2006 when lawyer Behiç Aşçı participated in the death fast struggle as an act of solidarity with the militants in their death fast struggle (Bargu, 2014). In the end, the militants achieved a restricted amelioration of their conditions of imprisonment: the state accepted to grant a weekly ten hours of collective meetings of prisoners with the participation of fewer than ten prisoners. Although the organization of the DHKP-C, the main organization leading the death fast struggle, announced a victory against the state, it marked a definite deviation from the radical, albeit failed, political demands” (pp. 33-4).

However, unlike Bargu’s evaluation, my argument is that what is at issue for radical left actions in Istanbul since the 1990s is not an “instrumentalization” but a transformation of the stakes of subversive struggle. It is true that at certain moments of struggle they “instrumentalized” the human rights discourse, yet an overall analysis of the last two decades shows that human rights-based actions have become predominant on the radical left agenda. Such actions between the years 1994 and 2014 comprised approximately 50% of all actions recorded in *Yürüyüş* magazine. Forty-three percent of Atilim news coverage was dedicated to the violation of human rights. We also observe that, to a large extent, the political actions covering human right issues were conducted in the central spaces of Istanbul.

As I summarized in Chapter 2, the history of the radical left in Turkey has always been shaped by atrocities by the Turkish state and paramilitary forces. Thus,

the atrocities of the murder of the leaders in the 1971 armed organizations, the killing of 33 protestors on May Day 1977, the 1995 Gazi revolts, the murder of three protestors on the 1996 May Day, the 19th of December 2000 prison massacre, the killing of eight people in the 2013 Gezi Revolts molded the politics of memory for the radical left.

At the local level of neighborhoods, the radical left interpreted many of these atrocities as “sacrifices for the beloved people and struggle for socialism”. In the central spaces, in contrast, representation of sufferings and stories of targets of state violence takes the form of victimization. Earlier, I tried to discuss the sacrificial act as an exchange of gifts and argued that the sacrificial acts have a crucial role in the organization of spaces of neighborhoods. At that time, sacrifice-on-display was superseded by the victimhood-on-display. The collective actions tried to disclose state terror and injustices targeting the radical left communities. The agency of militants was articulated as the victimhood of human subjects with rights. This is not just a replacement of what is displayed; rather this shift implies a change in the idiom and the politics appropriating the human right as its base.

I will now try to elaborate the different resonations of human rights discourse and then try to locate its employment in the space of visibility. The change in the spaces of political actions and the idiom of political actions by the radical left also produce oscillations for the ethical principals expressed in political terms. Whereas the local idiom of the ethical principles finds its expression within the discourses and acts of “sacrifice”, the idiom at the spaces of visibility turns out to be expressed by “victimhood”. So “sacrifice” becomes an intermediary form for the representation of violent actions by the radical left and the state terror targeting the radical left subjects. The sacrifice is translated into victimhood in the space of visibility. As

things follow different paths and divergences in the gift exchange systems of the archaic epochs (Appadurai, 1988), in the transition from the neighborhood to the central spaces, the meaning of sacrificial acts changed to victimhood. Victimhood as the constitutive of the human right politics places itself is once more the representational value of violence exerted on the radical left subjects.

The quest for publicity against state atrocities has a lot to do with what Alain Badiou (2001) calls “ethical ideology”, which bases itself on victimhood and human rights. In his work, *Ethics*, Badiou presents a trenchant criticism of “Turn to Ethics” in recent decades in the form of human rights discourse and calls for the abandonment of the ethical predication based on the recognition of the other’s victimhood. In Badiou’s terminology, this brings about the encapsulation of human existence into a binary subject position: on the one hand, passive, pathetic or reflexive victim subject — she who suffers — and, on the other hand, the active, determining subject of judgment — she who, in identifying suffering, knows that it must be stopped by all available means (Badiou, 2001, p. 9). For Badiou, ethical ideology, i.e. constitution as “victimized bodies” as the subjects of human rights neglect the human’s capacity to produce truths.⁶⁹ What is more, since the ethical consensus is founded on the recognition of victimhood, it follows that every effort to unite people around an affirmative, constitutive and autonomous politics becomes the real source of evil itself (p. 13).

⁶⁹ Yet, Badiou does not only present a polemic against ‘ethical ideology’ based on victimization of subjects with human rights discourse but also builds an affirmative understanding of an ethics formulated as “fidelity to post-eventual processes or truth”. (For the definition and discussion of the concept of event, see Chapter 3). The only ethics is of processes of truth, of the labour that brings some truths in the world. And the truth process stem from “the decision to relate henceforth to the situation from the perspective of its eventual supplement. To be faithful to an event (the fidelity) is to move within the situation that this event has supplemented, by thinking the situation ‘according to’ the event. And this, of course – since the event was excluded by regular laws of the situation – compels the subject to invent a new way of being and acting in the situation” (Badiou, 2001, pp. 41-2).

The juridical production of the subject of rights as “victims” has its roots in historical split of material and political-legal aspects of constitutions. In *The Magna Carta Manifesto: Liberties and Commons for All*, Peter Linebaugh (2008) presents us with a brilliant discussion by showing how the communal — and in particular the economic — aspect of the constitution eroded over time. In its original emergence, Linebaugh (2008) states that the Magna Carta had been developed in two basic chapters: the Charter of the Forests, which is to manage use of the commons such as forests, rivers, public spaces, pasture and other resources, and the Charter of Liberties, to protect legal, political and constitutional freedoms (p. 192). He illuminatingly shows that, after its regression through many centuries of war and management, the material commons guaranteed in Magna Carta were surrendered to the Capital-management, the part on the liberties “ceased to be an active constitutional force and became a symbol characterized by ambiguity, mystery, and nonsense” (Linebaugh, 2008, p. 192).

Similarly, in *The Last Utopia*, Samuel Moyn (2010) links the development and expansion of the realm human rights discourse to the loss of emancipatory utopias. He comes up with the idea that human rights as we take them today do not have their origins in the Magna Carta, the French Revolution or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that was announced following massacres and vast fluxes of migrations. In contrast, Moyn shows, it is after the defeat of social movements and the integration of anti-colonization movements to the capitalist world order in the 1960s and 1970s that human rights discourse became a homogenizing, all-encompassing force. To Moyn, human rights emerged historically as the last utopia — one that became powerful and prominent because other visions imploded (Moyn, 2010, p. 4). It is worthy to remind the reader that emergence of

human rights discourse in Turkey coincides with the post-1980 coup d'état. The post-coup period witnessed martial law, death penalties, torture, isolation cells, extra-judicial executions, life imprisonment, continuous police operations and intimidation of left activists and so on. As the heavy defeat of the left foreclosed, gathering of people around a utopia — be it communism or socialism — the victims of state terror founded the Human Rights Association in 1986. Yet the escalation of the war between the Kurdish Liberation Movement and the Turkish State since the mid-1980s, together with the relative escalation of the radical left struggle, re-produced the implementation of the repressive tools in the hands of the state. During the 1990s, torture, extra-judicial killings and cases of disappearance under custody re-occupied the agenda of Turkey's political circles.

For the radical left politics, the discourses and practices regarding the victimization of the sufferings and agency of political subjects not only nourish the human rights discourse. They also operate at the level of relationship between the body and politics. And during the shift from “sacrifice” to “victimhood” in the space of visibility we witness another split: the reification of the voice and the visibility. Although the sacrifice by the radical left militants was mostly realized bodily, the space of visibility asks for a voice or visibility from the general public.⁷⁰ This problem is not independent of the very operation of the public spaces as the sites of doing politics.

In an illuminating reflection on the forms of actions in the world-wide insurgencies of the 2011 Arab Spring and Occupy Movements, Judith Butler (2012) calls for taking in account the material production of bodies in these protests. While

⁷⁰In fact, as I tried to discuss briefly in the introductory part of the study, this same problem applies to the academic studies on these acts. The anthropological studies sometimes contribute to the erosion of sensations and “inutterability” of the pain into written text.

affirming the premise that the alliance of the bodies involved in the political action creates a space of their own, she foregrounds the agency of the materiality of the surrounding space, in the space of political action. According to Butler, while human subjects animate, give meaning to the spaces, “the established architecture and topographies of power act upon us, and enter into our very action sometimes foreclosing our entry into political sphere, or making us differentially apparent within that sphere... We have to think about space as acting on us, even as we act within it” (Butler, 2012).

Objecting to distinctions of private and public within the sphere of the political, Butler states that:

The body is itself divided into the one that appears publically to speak and act, and another, sexual and laboring, feminine, foreign and mute, that generally relegated to the private and pre-political sphere... The private body never appears as such, since it is preoccupied with the repetitive labor of reproducing the material conditions of life. The private body thus conditions the public body, and even though they are the same body, the bifurcation is crucial to maintaining the public and private distinction. Perhaps this is a kind of fantasy that one dimension of bodily life can and must remain out of sight, and yet another, fully distinct, appears in public (Butler, 2012)

Thus, Butler calls for supplementation of material conditions of reproduction of “corporeal realm”, with needs, desires and requirements such as sleeping, eating, staying in a safe shelter to the purview of the political. As Butler recognizes, we have to not only bring the material urgencies of the body into the square, but also make those needs central to the demands of politics. Reification of voice and visibility in the space of visibility should be challenged by way of placing “the life of the body – its hunger, need for shelter and protection from violence” in the space of action; by making the body a component of the political processes.⁷¹

⁷¹This kind of formulation of the relationship between the body and the politics is surely at odds with politics based on exclusion/inclusion from the public scene. In “*Who is the subject of the rights of Man?*” Rancière (2004) develops a criticism against Hannah Arendt and Giorgio Agamben for their

As can be seen from the records of political actions, the predominant form of contestation between radical left forces and the Turkish state is constituted by the demand for political rights. The discourses that demand rights from the state relegate political rights to an abstract sphere, segregating them from the material conditions of the re-production of bodily needs. The story of the body takes the form of a spectacle and voice in Taksim Square, Kadiköy or other popular spots.

Earlier I mentioned that, whereas the stories of radical left subjects targeted by the state violence are represented as sacrifice in the subversive neighborhoods, the same violations take the form of victimhood in the spaces of visibility. Thus I argue that the reification of voice and the spectacle in the space of visibility can be seen as bodily attributes of transformation of sacrifice to the victimhood. To understand this transition, we can think about the relationship between a body in a hunger strike and its representation in the space of visibility – let’s say Taksim Square. As in the material production of the body explained by Butler, all of the sensations of the body are included in the hunger strike, although in the latter, de-matterization of the body happens in a reverse direction than the making of a body. As bodies matter, they at the same time de-matter and the very dematerialization of the bodies can be core base of the political contestation. If we are to analyze the processual de-materialization of the body in a hunger strike: in the first month of the hunger strike, the body gradually and respectively loses water, salt, tissues, muscles and body fat.

theoretical approach to human rights on the grounds of exclusion and inclusion from the sphere of law and politics. To Rancière (2004), Agamben’s view that assumes “[t]he radical suspension of politics in the exception of bare life is the ultimate consequence of ... [Arendt’s] attempt to preserve the political from the contamination of private, social, apolitical life. This attempt depopulates the political stage by sweeping aside its always-ambiguous actors. As a result, the political exception is ultimately incorporated in state power, standing in front of bare life—an opposition that the next step forward turns into a complementarity” (Rancière, 2004, pp. 301-2) Thus, in politics in the theories of Agamben and Arendt seem to be equated with the power, a power “a power that is increasingly taken as an overwhelming historico-ontological destiny from which only a God is likely to save us” (Rancière, 2004, pp. 302).

After six weeks, the organs of the body start to crumple and the body suffers irrevocable dysfunctions. And usually the seventh week becomes a threshold for black-out and death. After five weeks the fragile sensibilities of the body also start to wane. As many medical reports and witnesses of hunger strikes point, the body in hunger strike becomes extremely sensitive to all kinds of taste, smell, light, voice, touch, temperature, balance, pain, kinesthetic sense and so on. Together with this sensitiveness, in most cases, there exists also loss of senses (Firat 2012; Gökmen,1999). Nevertheless, whereas in the hunger strike all of the bodily sensations are at work, in the space of visibility the modality of action focuses on the voice and visibility to “give voice to the voiceless in the prisons”.

It is as if the voice and visibility are transformed into reified categories representing the radical political subject at the stage of visibility. That is to say voice and spectacle speak for “the living body”, with Butler’s words, “its hunger, needs for shelter and protection from violence”. Similarly, public life comes to the stage as the nexus of the political space in which images and speeches are exchanged. Yet politics does not belong to any proper space and it does not possess any natural or given subjects. What is more, if the politics is an activity of “reconfiguration of that which is given to the sensible” (Rancière, 1999) then the sensible cannot be represented by the particularities of spectacle and voice.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I discussed the ethical discourses and practices of the radical left in Istanbul since the mid-1990s. Drawing on the content and spaces of political actions recorded in two radical left publications and ethnographic observations; I analyzed how the political experience expressed in ethical terms for the left, oscillating

between victimhood and sacrifice, contributed to the production of spaces and spatial knowledge in subversive neighborhoods of Istanbul, namely Okmeydanı and Gazi. Sacrificial acts represented on the everyday spaces of neighborhoods operate as objects of display and give meaning to these sites. This shows how the ethical principles of the left and the space can speak to each other in diverse ways. As the sacrificial practices leave their marks to the construction of spaces of neighborhoods — via walls, corners, parks, squares, barricades and so on — the human rights discourse based on victimhood has something in common with the spatial vector oriented to spaces of visibility. Although the radical left in subversive neighborhoods contested the processes of the *partition of the sensible* — spaces, images, sounds, bodies, they nonetheless proved inadequate to expand and lead the commensality experienced by the inhabitants of these spaces.

As we saw, in the spaces of visibility we have the predominance of two of the senses: spectacle and voice. Yet the history of material conditions of the body and bodily performances are omitted in the discussions of public sphere idea. Surely, the concept of human rights is an abstraction — an abstraction that has material consequences — and it is mostly discussed as being claimed in the public spheres. Instead of a repetition of human right criticism of the Marxist tradition and other schools, I wanted to manifest the ways in which radical politics and spaces of claiming “rights” spoke to each other. Alongside the economic and material conditions of the humans, bodily and sensual aspects are stripped from the definition and practice of the term.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

In this study, I analyzed spatial moves by the radical left politics since the mid-1990s. It was not just an analysis of geographical shift but also of the mobility of radical left actions from the margins of Istanbul to the central spaces of the city. These moves, I argue, have certain repercussions on the left's forms of political action, ethical principles and discourses regarding the political stakes. After a brief summary of the chapters of the thesis, I will endeavor to discuss some of the implications of the study and possible clues for further thinking on the spatial politics of radical left in Turkey.

In the first part of the thesis, I tried to present the genealogy of spaces of political actions by the radical left of Turkey since the 1960s. I demonstrated that before the coup d'état of 1980, there was a definite multiplicity of spaces where the radical left had been able to build its counter-hegemony against the state forces. Seeing these spaces as “constituent spaces” of the left in Turkey, I tried to discuss how the practices and discourses of the left have shaped compatible the constituent spaces they produced. Among these spaces were parliamentary of the mid-1960s, the universities of late 1960s, the rural regions of the early 1970s, the streets and squares of the 1970s, districts of the mid-1970s, and the communal ward prisons of the 1980s. These spaces sometimes contributed to the making of communalist political identities, determined the fundamental configuration of forces of the revolution, or became the sites of confrontation over the politics of memory. These dimensions of space imply its *constituent* character as opposed to constitutive spaces of juridical

establishments or governments. Whereas the constituted spaces are territorialized spaces of the regimes, constituent spaces de-territorialize or re-territorialize constituted spaces. I endeavored to delineate the transformations in these sites and their contributions to the making of the political in Turkey.

In Chapter 3, through an analysis of some critical events and records of political actions in two radical left organizations of the last 20 years, I showed how the centripetal mobility of political actions by the radical left of Turkey came into being. Via the analysis of critical events of the recent history of Turkey, including the Gazi Revolts of 1995, the 1996 May Day Protests, the 19 December 2000 prison operation by the Turkish state and the Occupy Gezi Movement of 2013, I discussed the novelties produced from the effects of these events. These events changed pre-existing modalities of actions, the linguistics peculiar to politics; subjects' relationalities with truths about the state, other subjects, communities or politics; socio-spatial knowledge and uses of spaces; and lastly political experiences expressed in ethical terms and so on. I also presented a discussion on the "dissolution of neighborhoods", which contributes to an understanding of the background of a centripetal move by subversive political organizations. I tried to show that, overwhelmingly, the eventful actions of radical left in central places are examples of collapse of their counter-publics into the public that is regulated by state and mainstream media discourses.

In Chapter 4, I analyzed how the political experience expressed in moral economies of gift for the left, oscillating between victimhood and sacrifice, contributed to the production of spaces and spatial knowledge in subversive neighborhoods of Istanbul, namely Okmeydanı and Gazi. Drawing upon the works on sacrifice and gift economy (those of Bataille (1985) and Mauss (2002) in

particular), I tried to show how the exchange of political violence between the Turkish state and the radical left forces takes the form of sacrifice. Then, the sacrifice as gift-through destruction by the radical left is discussed with its representational force in the everyday spaces of subversive neighborhoods. And also, sacrifice becomes an intermediary form to function as a conduit for local practices and discourses to the stage of victimhood discourses. In addition, in Chapter 4, I addressed the content analysis of political actions recorded in two radical left publications and demonstrated the increasing coverage of human-rights related practices by radical politics. As the sacrificial practices leave their marks to the construction of spaces of neighborhoods — via walls, corners, parks, squares, barricades and so on, the human rights discourse based on victimhood has something in common with the spatial vector oriented to what I call “spaces of visibility”.

After this brief summary of chapters, I want to present some implications and possibilities for further thinking on the issues discussed in the work. Particularly, I want to discuss the interrelational positioning of action, visibility and politics. As I have already underlined in the introductory part of this study, there exist limitations of the space literature for bridging the gap between spatial formations and analysis of political processes. In fact, many studies in critical geography, anthropology and sociology have endeavored to conceptualize *the space* within different frameworks and have sought to present a spatial genesis of the political, the everyday life, social inequalities, demography control, production of gendered spaces and so on. Among many others, four dimensions in particular of the spatial formations have determined the ethnographic approaches in these works: materiality, memory, belonging and narrativity.⁷² In the light of the arguments presented in this work, I contend that the

⁷² Scholars stressing the connection between materiality and space have shown how the spaces with

incorporation of action and visibility to these dimensions highlights the dynamic character of space, which enables us to figure out its relationship to political activism.

My endeavors to understand the modalities of visibilities in the subversive neighborhoods and central spaces forced me to examine the concept of space with its diverse functions. Although they are included substantially in this study, materiality, memory, sense of belonging and narrativity no more secure the conditions for the conceptualization of space and for the building of relationships between the spatial and the political. As the political subjects invest labor in the organization of political actions, they spend substantial amounts of time and energy in structuring the representations of these actions. To put it another way, today we have an increasing integration of visibility and political actions, i.e. multiple interconnections between visual representation and the purview of the political. Reports, books, videos, tweets, vines, maps, broadsheets, posters, banners, photographs, spaces and bodies constitutes an assemblage or space-complex that structures how we know what we know and what we do with that knowledge (McLagan&McKee, 2012). Thinking of

their material origins are used to create and govern social hierarchies (Soja, 2009; Hayden, 1984), to territorialize social control (Herbert, 1997) or to bring people together in bodily co-presence (Sennett, 1996) or to create legal structures (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2015). Likewise, studies (Kraus, 2006) focusing on the relationship between belonging and identity highlighted the processes through which people “attach meaning to a particular place and make sense of themselves in relation to what that place represents in the social world” (Üstündağ, 2005, p. 80) Basically the topics examined within the contours of this vein of research included the following: production of gendered spatial arrangements (Nelson&Seagar, 2005), spatial exclusion and inclusion as manifestations of class inequalities (Zukin, 1987), space’s role in the construction of identity among migrants (Lamont&Molnar, 2002; Fortier,2000), the contribution of spatial architects in the construction of sense of belonging to religious identities (Sheldrake, 2001) and so on. Many others pointed to function of the space in the constitution of the memory and argued that the space attachment stabilizes memories and define community boundaries (Halbwachs, 1992; Connerton, 2009). The meaning and sensation of a space is linked to its memorial attributes. As we have seen, memories regarding some particular sites such as Taksim Square, Fatsa, Mamak Prison, Diyarbakır Prison, Kızıldere Village and so on have a lot to do with present articulation of meaning and sense of these spaces. As the constitution of sense of belonging is not the sole function of space; the memory does not secure the boundaries of belonging to certain spaces or communities, neither. Narrativity becomes another force in the construction of sense of belonging to a space. (Üstündağ, 2005; Kraus 2006) How we narrate and what we narrate about a space endows this space with histories, senses or meanings.

space as an assemblage not only enables us a flexible classification of functions and dimensions of the space, but also points to the floating pre-dominance of each dimension with respect to different contexts. That is to say, while the control via material configurations (architecture) becomes predominant in prisons, attachment to a certain place may define the fundamental role of belonging in a study on refugees. Yet this pre-dominance never achieves a complete representation of the space itself. Movement between two spaces (neighborhood and space of visibility in the case of this study) creates both a space of its own and a visibility. Accordingly, action and visibility come forward as dimensions of the spatial formations similar to materiality, belonging, memory or narrativity. The body does not only change with what she is subsisted with, what she remembers, feels attached or narrates. It is at the same time shaped by the things s/he sees into or makes visible. The modalities and regimes of visibility differentiate the boundaries and articulation of the spaces of action. The political subject organizes and endeavors to structure the representation of her act. Yet in turn, the representation itself becomes a force upon the acting subjects and constitutes the spheres of what is visible, legible and sayable. The mothers of the disappeared sitting with photographs of their loved ones in a popular spot, the slogans written on the walls of subversive districts, the sound and evolution of the tear gas from the capsule, bodies in motion or at a standstill and so on create spaces of their own. The action itself endows the space and the visibility with dynamism. As occupy movements and divergent forms of political action fed by visual techniques show, the current epoch witnesses the increasing introduction of new mechanisms and tools of visibility into the political activism. At that point, it is instructive to remember Walter Benjamin's anxiety about the revolutionary potential of works of art in the struggle against capitalism and the then-ruling Nazi fascism. In

The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, Benjamin points to the withering away of the traditional “aura” of works of arts due to the developments triggered by mechanical reproduction (Benjamin, 1969, p. 221). He calls for the recruiting the revolutionary potential of “dialectic images” created by montage, cut ups, photography, films or other technologies to fight against fascism.⁷³ This prevents not only self-alienation of the oppressed but also fascism’s attempts to render aesthetics and art means of masking war and preserving capitalist property structure.

Today we have an unprecedented conjunction of visual culture and oppositional politics (Mclagan & Mckee, 2012, p. 9). The regime of visibility (van Winkel, 2006) permeates all levels of culture, society and politics. Increasingly political subjects can simultaneously produce, circulate, and consume imagery, and as such the positionality of these subjects in the binarism of audience and activist becomes more and more ambivalent and blurred (Mannik & McGarry, 2015, p. viii). Increasingly, then, mediated bodies are recognized as polysemic entities and the agency and positionalities of the imagined community of the political actions is recognized by political activists as an important component in understanding the impact of the circulation of particular representations (p. viii).

How do different modalities of visibility shape the spaces? How can we situate today’s increasing integration of visibility and space in the analysis of social and political processes? In other words, what can be the potentials and risks of this integration for subversive politics? How does increasing the amount of labor invested for representation of action erode or develop the traditional understanding

⁷³For a discussion of the term dialectic image see (Buck-Morss, 1991, pp.311-3). A dialectic image is defined as a “historical object; it justifies blasting the latter out of the continuum of history’s course” (p. 313). And that is why Benjamin is referred with his “dialectics of seeing” as a way of critique and his adoption of interruption as a mode of thought. (Benjamin, 1969, p. 236).

of political action and its geographical arrangements? What does this integration challenge in our understanding of representation? What do blurring boundaries between actions and the representations of actions tell about the characteristics and stakes of politics in the contemporary era?

The questions along this axis can be multiplied. Yet my discussion around these questions should be seen as a call to find new ways of conceptualizing the *space* and also examining the increasing extension of the field of the visible and the representable in the articulation of the political processes.

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