

APPROPRIATION AS AN URBAN PRACTICE: A CRITICAL READING OF  
DON QUIXOTE SOCIAL CENTER OF ISTANBUL, IN 2013 AND SINCE  
THEN

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## ABSTRACT

### APPROPRIATION AS AN URBAN PRACTICE: A CRITICAL READING OF DON QUIXOTE SOCIAL CENTER OF ISTANBUL, IN 2013 AND SINCE THEN

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Today's capitalist urban reality, in its disguised forms, always finds particular ways of integrating its oppressive powers to our lives, no matter how our life patterns differentiate. As well as all these mechanisms of diverse ideologies, the form of resistance could also take multi shapes, making social groups come together and share their common values, beliefs, and needs. In this context, this study with a sole purpose of searching for the possibilities of just and fair alternative life patterns, questions a specific urban realm as a contested *locus* of resistance in/through/for space. Therefore, it seeks to investigate the notion of "resistance through space" which is to generate alternative ways of dwelling with non-standard practices. Based on the said theoretical approach, in other words, the main motivation of this research is to search for possible potentials of resistance in an urban context by appropriation and squatting as a grass-root movement. In this regard, the *Don Quixote Social Center*, which was the first example in its own terms in Turkey, commonly used and utilized during and after the Gezi Parkı uprisings, will be investigated through those of tripartite structures of appropriation and squatting. Its contribution to Turkey's

social and political contexts as well as its generative capacities of social networks for possible urban social movements will also be studied. In pursuit of the above objectives, first, the dynamics of Gezi Parkı movement and its successive urban initiatives will be examined in respect to its socio-spatial history. Secondly, the *Don Quixote* Social Center will be in question to further understand the said experiences of possible potentials of social solidarity in an urban context.

Keywords: Appropriation, Squatting, Resistance Through Space, Don Quixote Social Center, Spatiality

## ÖZ

### **KENTSEL BİR PRATİK OLARAK UYGUNLAŞTIRMA: 2013'TEN GÜNÜMÜZE İSTANBUL DON KIŞOT SOSYAL MERKEZİNİN ELEŞTİREL BİR OKUMASI**

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Günümüzün kapitalist kentsel gerçekliği, kılık değiştirmiş biçimleriyle, yaşam kalıplarımız ne kadar farklı olursa olsun, her zaman baskıcı güçlerini yaşamlarımızla bütünleştirmenin belirli yollarını buluyor. Farklı ideolojilerin tüm bu mekanizmalarının yanı sıra, direniş biçimi de çok yönlü olabilir, toplumsal grupları bir araya getirebilir ve ortak değerleri, inançları ve ihtiyaçları paylaşabilir. Bu bağlamda, tek amacı adil ve hakkaniyete uygun alternatif yaşam biçimlerinin olanaklarını araştırmak olan bu çalışma, belirli bir kentsel alanı, mekân ile/içinde/mekan için çekişmeli bir direniş alanı olarak sorgulamaktadır. Bu nedenle, standart dışı pratiklerle alternatif barınma biçimleri üretmek olan 'mekan yoluyla direniş' kavramını irdelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Söz konusu kuramsal yaklaşımdan hareketle, başka bir deyişle, bu araştırmanın ana motivasyonu, bir taban hareketi olarak sahiplenme ve işgal yoluyla kentsel bağlamda olası direniş potansiyellerini araştırmaktır. Bu bağlamda, Gezi Parkı direnişi sırasında ve sonrasında yaygın olarak kullanılan ve Türkiye'de kendi açısından ilk örnek olan Don Kişot Sosyal

Merkezi, uygunlařtırmanın anlam, fonksiyon ve sahiplenme üçlü yapılanması üzerinden incelenecektir. Türkiye'nin sosyal ve politik bağlamlarına katkısı ve sosyal ağların olası kentsel sosyal hareketler için üretici kapasitesi de incelenecektir. İkinci olarak, Don Kiřot Sosyal Merkezi üzerinden, kentsel bağlamda olası toplumsal dayanışma potansiyellerinin söz konusu deneyimlerini daha iyi anlamak söz konusu olacaktır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Uygunlařtırma, İşgal, Mekan Yoluyla Direniş, Don Kiřot Sosyal Merkezi, Mekansallık



To My Beloved Family

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

In recent decades, the aggressive neoliberal practices of advanced capitalism have entered a new phase in which their boundaries have expanded beyond the workplace to the city and urban life as the sphere of limitless production and accumulation. It institutionalizes urban space not just as a commodity in simply economic terms but also in order to develop diverse strategies for exploiting all types of labor that generate and maintain urban life. Capitalism and its repressive weapons, according to this perspective, demonstrate their superiority over human rights not only via universal standardizations but also by exposing themselves to the particularities of specific geographies and contexts. (Harvey, 2012) In the contemporary social, political, and economic settings of Turkey, the neo liberalization of cities via a real estate-based development strategy, while emphasizing the rapid commodification of urban spaces, also implies a variety of significant intrusions into human life.

Growing authoritarianism in the context of urban politics and social discourses is both a consequence and a driver of the privatization and top-down appropriation of urban space and its associated rights. This mechanism, which is strongly connected to economic transactions, is unique in that it targets the social sphere. In Turkey, varieties of authoritarianism and liberal democracy increasingly influenced by neoliberal logics coexist, according to Butler (2014). With the sort of state capitalism prevalent in Turkey, urban space serves as the focal point of coercive control mechanisms and economic transactions. (Şengül, 2016) Consequently, in the Turkish context, capitalism and its exploitative methods manifest in specific forms of top-down appropriation of rights, such as interference with free will through

conservative repression discourses, ethical discrimination, the elimination of press freedom, hatred discourses (of environment, gender, difference, etc.), privatizations, preventing the autonomy of universities, restrictions on free speech, etc. In state politics, prescribed daily routines are equivalent to the pace of privatization that has been embraced. (Butler, 2014) Under the pretense of several types of life interactions, the rhythm, mechanics, and dynamics of everyday life patterns are determined by neoliberal rationale. Regardless of the differences in their daily patterns, these diverse facets of capitalist urban reality produce varied types of victimhood for individuals from different segments of society. Nonetheless, precisely because of this reason, these diverse sufferings can serve as motivations for resistance by focusing on “shared vulnerabilities” and contrasts. (Tan, 2020, p. 137) Different sorts of oppression are also the origins of various resistance practices.

The various points at which governmental capitalism imposes its oppressions to our labor (material or immaterial), varying daily life routines, life preferences, class condition, and gender, etc., are also the points at which numerous types of resistance and struggle domains are produced and reproduced in response. Even if we reside in the same country and are subjected to the same form of Turkish state capitalism, our daily challenges vary according to our diverse living experiences. As a result of these living patterns, several forms of capitalist tyranny have emerged. Parallel to the reproduction of everyday life, these oppressions confront inventive levels of resistance. This reproduction constitutes the mediums that we manifest our right to city in unique ways. As Harvey states, “the definition of the right is itself an object of struggle, and that struggle has to proceed concomitantly with the struggle to materialize it.” (Harvey, 2012, p. xv) In the Turkish context, right to city struggles are materialized against the aforementioned violations of rights in daily life and also become more visible in larger-scale urban social movements, such as TEKEL Workers Resistance in 2009 against the privatization of many tobacco factories and the loss of employee rights, and Saturday Mothers from 1995 to the present, a human rights movement seeking justice for the disappeared. 2019 METU Kavaklık



Resistance to defend ecological balance and, more significantly, to oppose an assault on the school's political and democratic structure. In 2021, Boğaziçi University Protests struggle to protect the right to democratically elect the university's rector; in 2013, Gezi Park Resistance served as a collection of civil reactions to defend a variety of human rights in Turkey. All of these expressions of the right to the city, regardless of their size, are challenges and questions to the typical capitalist living patterns and are practices of seeking alternatives.

### **1.1 Aim and Scope of the Thesis**

Parallel to these, this research seeks to investigate resisting through space practices' possibility of generating alternative kinds of urban dwellings and alternative spatialities within a critical interpretation of existing urban practice. In this sense, it aims to question the meaning, function, and occupation aspects of "appropriation," which can be regarded as inherently contingent in contested space. This appropriation which is achieved by the collective effort and motivation of many different willpowers, comprises unfolding the potentials of resistance through space, by questioning and rereading of the mentioned aspects, in the light of emergent occasions and current situations of uncontrollable flow of life. It indicates the alternative reproduction processes of the space from its own existing fragments but in unique manners every time. In this respect, the main motivation of the study is searching for the embedded resistance potentials in alternative bottom-up reproduction processes of urban space in which the predefined fragments of space are challenged by unpredictable life events and a motivation on the individuals' side to act and transform. In order to unfold the resistance potentials embedded in the processes of reproducing space by appropriating it, this study, initially aims to focus on understanding the notion of appropriation of space within the perspective of resistance, through its practice via "squatting." In this regard, the Don Quixote Social Center, which was the first example of its own terms in Turkey and was commonly used and utilized during the Gezi Parkı uprisings, will be profoundly investigated.

Accordingly, the appropriation of space notion and its dynamics of resistance will be problematized, with a special emphasis on the particularities of the Turkish context and the case of the Don Quixote Social Center. Its generative potentialities in terms of being a vanguard force of the further horizontal organizations, will be researched mainly through in-depth analysis of shared experiences of the actors of squatting process. In the light of the above objectives, this study prioritizes framing the capitalist mode of space production and the specific manifestations of it in the social and political contexts of Turkey. In response to this, as an ensemble of public reaction Gezi Parkı Resistance is analyzed through the basis of “right to city” and “right to appropriation”.

Specific resistance dynamics of Gezi Parkı Resistance is discussed as the first and foremost urban social movement against all sizes and sorts of authoritarian capitalistic oppressions. In the search of alternative urban dwellings and spatialities in the bottom-up reproduction processes of urban space by appropriating it, occupations in Gezi Parkı Resistance have also constituted a strong dimension of the discussion. On the other hand, the scope of the research includes a critical reading of Don Quixote Social Center in order to witness performed ways of space appropriation via squatting practice. Alternative spatialities, questioning the aspects of space and in the sphere of conflict, have been approached as potentialities of resistance. Therefore, within the scope of this thesis, generative capacities of Gezi Parkı Resistance and Don Quixote Social Center as the resistance potentials to be uncovered, have been discussed to gain insight about the evolution of resistance culture in the social and political contexts of Turkey. As a result, in the hope of more just and equal urban living, further solidarity initiatives and their activities, solidarity networks, and connections have been contributed to the research.

## 1.2 Metodology and Structure of the Thesis

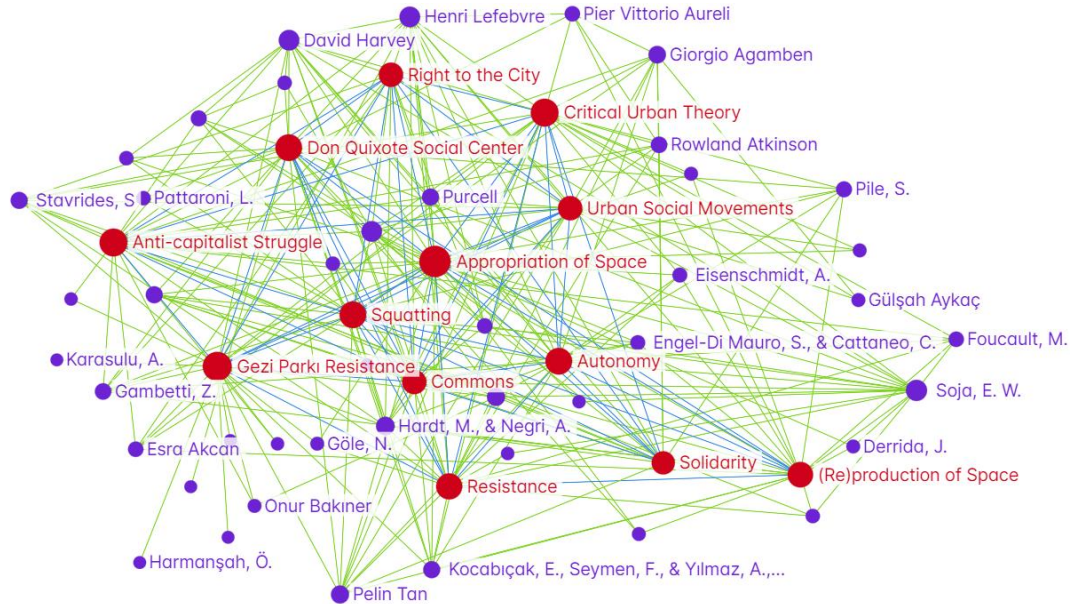


Figure 1.1. Literature Conceptual Map Diagram (Source: developed by the author)

This study is an endeavor of questioning the generative capacities and potentials of *Don Quixote* Social Centre squatting experiences, which was the first example in its own terms in Turkey, commonly used and utilized during and after the Gezi Parkı uprisings. Within the scope of this research, concerning the possibilities of resistance through space, these experiences will be investigated through those of the tripartite structures of appropriation and squatting, which are function, meaning, and occupation. Its contribution to Turkey's social and political contexts as well as its generative capacities of social networks for possible urban social movements will be the main focus of the study. In pursuit of the above objectives, the major argument of this study, which is an attempt to search for the possibilities of resistance through a space-political reading of urban reality, establishes itself on four main standpoints. The first standpoint is understanding the triggering situations that constitute the breaking points of the struggle. Therefore, to fully comprehend the correlation between the capitalist mode of space production and the daily life struggle, inequality, displacements, and all kinds of anguish, the thesis introduces a wide range

of literature review, including critical urban theory and space production theories from both western and local sources, urban social movements, appropriation, and squatting literature. In this regard, within the scope of the thesis, which problematizes searching for the alternatives in “resistance through space” experiences, to frame and analyze profoundly the condition of urban space under the Turkish version of state capitalism and motives of resistance, some vanguard figures shaped this part of the discussion, such as *Henri Lefebvre*, *David Harvey*, and *Stavros Stavrides*. Also, a context bound literature review that includes the Gezi Parkı and Don Quixote Social Center literatures became essential in terms of understanding the unique urban conditions of the Turkish context in light of the mentioned motives of resistance. Therefore, the methodology of this research consists of two main parts. First, a broad literature review has been completed. Second, in-depth interviews as a part of qualitative research have been conducted.

### **1.2.1 Literature Review**

To start with, Lefebvre (1996), who addresses the city from a Marxist standpoint and within the framework of the reproduction of space, daily life, and capitalist social relations, identifies capitalist power relations as the primary determinants of urbanism and urban space in the capitalist urban reality. The institutionalization of urban space through rent politics might be viewed as the primary obstacle to the possibility of a more just urban living. In a similar manner, in 2011, İstanbul with the announcement of the pedestrianization project of Taksim Square<sup>1</sup> by the

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<sup>1</sup> Taksim Pedestrianization Project, funded by İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality and built by Kalyon İnşaat, aims to expand Taksim Square by diverting vehicle traffic to tunnels and providing access to Gezi Park next to the square for shopping malls, hotels, residences, and artillery barracks. It is a project prepared to rebuild. The 1/5000 and 1/1000 scale plans, which are the basis of the project whose first part of the square arrangement was completed, were canceled by the İstanbul 1st Administrative Court. Information gathered from : <https://sehirplanlama.ibb.istanbul/taksim-meydani-cevresi-yayalastirma-projesi/#:~:text=2011%20Haziran%20ay%C4%B1nda%20kamuoyuna%20a%C3%A7%C4%B1kla>

municipality was not only a commodification of space problem, but also another authoritarian attack on the lives of individuals. Therefore, Lefebvrian (2014) lenses, which frame the connection between capitalist exploitation mechanisms of urban space and the quality of urban life, provide insight about framing the capitalist mode of space production and the specific manifestations of it in the social and political contexts of Turkey. As also Pekünlü clearly states (2019, p. 56), “destroying the park, and building a shopping mall in its place, was part of a bigger urban plan” It might be viewed as a forceful top-down appropriation of urban space and an attack on urban life by producing historical and religious discourses on behalf of rent. Also, the destruction of public space and the putting of another symbolic “historical” place in lieu of it, was a way of imposing another kind of life pattern and intervening in social relations among individuals by expecting the production of discourse from space and giving it attributed meanings. (Stavrides, 2019)

Also, within the approach of the study, Harvey (2012), with a critical perspective on today’s urban spatiality and capitalistic life patterns, approaches the capitalist structure of modern cities as the mere centers of oppression in the face of capital accumulation. He claims changes and advancements in the city’s production and reproduction processes have based the organization, occupation, and administration of space on exchange value rather than use value. He states that, all the determinant mechanisms of the spatial values of the parts of the city, serve for the elimination of every single obstacle on all the way through the expansion of profitable capitalist activity and constitution of the minimum turnover time of capital. (Harvey, 2012) Urban space, with the capitalist mode of urbanization, becomes the primary source for devising new, advanced ways to solve capitalism’s inner contradictions, tensions, and crises through its created markets and economies. (Housing, infrastructure,

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[nan,98%20bin%20metrekare%20alan%20yayala%C5%9Ft%C4%B1r%C4%B1m%C4%B1%C5%9Ft%C4%B1r.](#), retrieved on October 20,2022

delirious projects<sup>2</sup> etc.) (Harvey, 2014) In this approach, urban space becomes both an impetus in the creation processes of the fluctuations and imbalances required by capitalism and a counterbalance that strengthens the sustainability of capitalism by balancing the same disparities at the most convenient time for its own benefits. (Harvey, 2014) Therefore, capitalism, while defining the living spaces of the city's inhabitants in the direction of its own pragmatist attitude, preserves its existence as a top-down, unitary form of power that organizes the mode of living. (Harvey, 2012) Therefore, within the perspective of the underlying conditions of the thesis' problematic, it can be asserted that Turkey's neoliberal reality, which produced social order, demanded "obedient bodies," life patterns under authoritarianism, and various prohibitions by the state, are tied to the capitalist mode of space production very strongly, in terms of both construction processes and design approaches. In pursuit of the above objectives, for this study, first and foremost understanding the mechanics of capitalist urban reality and its various attacks on our lives is crucial. Because the main discussion of unfolding the resistance possibilities, emerge against the various forms of capitalist oppressions.

This approach provides the second perspective, which focuses on the intrinsic "resistance" capabilities of architectural and urban environments. Despite its connections to capitalist market relations, urban space is not only a product generated by capitalist ideals of standardization. In contrast, within its contingent existence, which allows for resistance potentialities, its fragments are deconstructed, reread, and regenerated in the unplanned flow of life by a variety of willpowers, which are its inhabitant subjects. Due to the exact same oppressive constraints, Lefebvre identifies resistance alternatives as the primary driving factor behind the reproduction of urban space. Considering space through the notions articulated by

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<sup>2</sup> "Çılgın Projeler" term borrowed from the terminology of the public speeches of administrative party, translation of the term has been borrowed from Akcan, E. (2015)

Lefebvre (1991) in *The Production of Space* permits analysis of the mechanism of intervention of space, which is a product and producer and the base of economic and social relations, into production through the organization of productive labor. He (ibid.) also emphasizes the awareness that urban space is a social product in which complex social, political, and economic relationships are embedded. Therefore, he hypothesizes the notion of “lived space” as the space that is produced and reproduced by the mentioned social, political, and economic life relationships against the predefined capitalistic patterns. Because of these reasons, the reproduction of urban space in urban social movements, is composed of the actualizations of the challenges created by the resistance potentials to these predefined capitalist modes of space production. (Lefebvre, 1991)

In the light of these ideas the Gezi Parkı resistance, with its widespread impact on the public realm, constituted the backbone of this study. In the understanding of the thesis, it is described as a broad anti-capitalist struggle with the distinct feature of being “beyond all the classes.” (Sargin, 2021) People from every segment of society manifested their “right to the city” in their own unique ways against the diverse capitalist struggles they confront in everyday life. Because of the different challenges in daily life, unique forms of resistance emerge. “Creativity of micro-practices reflects the relevance of the politics of everyday life,” according to Göle. (Göle, 2013, p. 7) As a result, while the initial objective of the demonstrations was to prevent the destruction of Taksim Gezi Park, they gradually expanded to include opposition to many policies undertaken by the dominant political party in Turkey. In addition, for the same reason, the conflict rapidly spread to a large number of Turkish cities, leading to the continued formation of several inventive forms of manifestation. It has been conceived as a multi faced struggle and discussed through the motto of

“Matter Was Never About the Trees Alone”<sup>3</sup> From this point of view, “right to city,” “right to appropriation,” and “commons” perspectives have created insights for the argument. In the light of these perspectives, Gezi Parkı events, spatial transformations, spatialities, and alternative life patterns and communing practices within the resistance horizon have formed the backbones of the discussion. In this regard, urban social movements, Gezi Parkı and commons literature have been enlightening. Consolidating the second standpoint, Stavrides’ (2019) approach to urban space, with its solidarity-based reproduction process and common decision-making methods, is an effective tool of resisting and communing, has been influential. Also, with the contribution of Hardt and Negri’s (2012) understanding of common as a way of embracing otherness, the appropriation of space notion is located as a practice of creating alternatives with a similar understanding with Tan’s (2020, p.137) perspective of “gathering around shared vulnerabilities.” These concepts have enabled the identification of Gezi Parkı resistance as a collective public response. As a result of our participation in the Gezi Park struggle, we have experienced and embodied these moments of communal creativity. Therefore, the study approaches Gezi Parkı resistance as an overall urban struggle which went far beyond being a mere defense attempt to protect the park as a public space and turned into an ensemble of public reactions of all sizes against the authoritarian type of capitalism.

This public reaction as diverse forms of protesting, while reflecting the pluralistic collective decision-making demands and processes, contains a wide range of occupations of urban space. In these differentiating manifestations of “right to city” as occupations, populations with their free willpowers and critical minds, while

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<sup>3</sup> “Mesele üç beş ağaç değil” was the common argument developed by the protestors during Gezi Parkı Resistance, stating that the Gezi Park resistance was an overall public reaction against all the brutal interventions .Source: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/eur44/022/2013/en/>



challenging the predefined imposed life patterns, simultaneously challenged the fragments of urban space. Within this perspective, this challenge points out so many unique and contingent re-readings and questionings of fragments of urban space and everyday life. Thus, it indicates the emergence of creative resistance potentials in the bottom-up demand-based reproduction processes of urban space. In challenging the predefined capitalist understanding of urban space, we also challenge social relations and imposed life patterns. Because control over urban space entails control over individuals. Therefore, urban struggle is not merely about the physical possession of the material articulations of the space but also about thinking the alternative ways of organizations and urban dwellings.

At this exact point, according to Rittersberger-Tılıç (2015), by revisiting Lefebvre's concept of "right to city" to address the capacity to declare, request, and wish for a fairer society, one that is open to diversity and direct involvement of people in political decision-making processes, it would be advantageous to emphasize the consequences of these urban struggles on individuals. As in the case of the Gezi Uprising, it is obvious that urban struggle cannot be viewed just in terms of tangible alteration; urban transformation is also a sociopolitical agenda that influences how individuals communicate. This kind of systematized capitalist chain generates unstable structures that make it difficult for individuals to combine their labor, as well as workplaces and residential spaces that render it nearly unthinkable for people to engage with one another. (Stavrides, 2019) This point of view introduces the second main standpoint of the study.

As searching for alternatives, "imagining a way out distinct from the modes of organizing and opposition that we are familiar with and have accustomed to was a necessity." (Stavrides, 2019, p. 58) In this search of alternative urban dwellings and spatialities in the bottom-up reproduction processes of urban space by appropriating it, first, conceptual analysis and Marxist and Hegelian origin of the term "appropriation" comes forward within its strong relation with "production".

(Graumann, 1976) The term's philosophical origins can be traced back to Marxist thinking, which asserts that an individual can only perpetuate himself/herself through production and that man can only actualize himself by generating realities. As a consequence, Marx asserts that generating and realizing "the other" is an exercise of one's own human potential. (ibid.) This reciprocal actualization process is described as "appropriation" by him. Parallel to this understanding, Hegel discusses that "production, which equals mankind's only way of knowing his/her own self in the other, is the tool for overcoming the alienation between mankind and his/her own self. Therefore, by only producing, we take possession of something because it reflects us. Thus, we appropriate it." (Graumann, 1976, p. 116-117)

These practices of creation, modification, occupation,<sup>4</sup> and ownership<sup>5</sup> also contribute to the conception of space appropriation, which is the legitimization of having a claim on the decision-making processes of existing and future organizations and the deliberate uses of urban spaces. Under the dynamism of confrontation, urban space is temporarily reinvented in each and every decision-making process. Consequently, the appropriation of space may be seen as a means of revealing alternate viewpoints on space. While tracing these alternative perspectives as urban

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<sup>4</sup> Occupation: "the fact of living in or using a building, habitation." Within the scope of this study, occupation is a form of action performed by inhabiting the space as a means of resistance. According to this approach, only occupying a space is not sufficient to have it. Deconstructing the space and its data and reproducing it with a critical mind can realize a real and effective appropriation. In this context, occupation is considered as the first phase of appropriation that paves the way for this. Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ownership>, retrieved on February,19,2023

<sup>5</sup> Own/Possess: "the right, state or fact of owning something" This research examines this right as a phenomenon resulting from the bottom-up production of cities and urban life, as opposed to private ownership. Therefore, it gives the citizens the opportunity to decide and take responsibility about this urban space and urban life that they produce as urban dwellers. According to this theory, appropriation is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses the whole reproduction process, including "occupation" and "ownership." In contrast to capitalist "private ownership," therefore, the true owners of urban space are the urban dwellers as subjects who have the right to express themselves through collectively generating urban space and urban life. Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ownership>, retrieved on February,19,2023

dwelling and spatialities in the practice of appropriation, in a similar understanding with Lefebvre, also Stavrides (2010) regards space as both a consequence and a prerequisite of social activity, and he defines it as a relative phenomenon whose definition is found in the “other.” In addition, according to him, “spatiality” as a notion is intended to explain the circumstances, attributes, and features of space in general, and not particular forms of space. Even though distinct types of spatiality might be located in particular locations, spatiality addresses the manner in which space is performed rather than spaces as explicit configurations of material entities. In short, “space happens.” (Stavrides, 2010, p. 131)

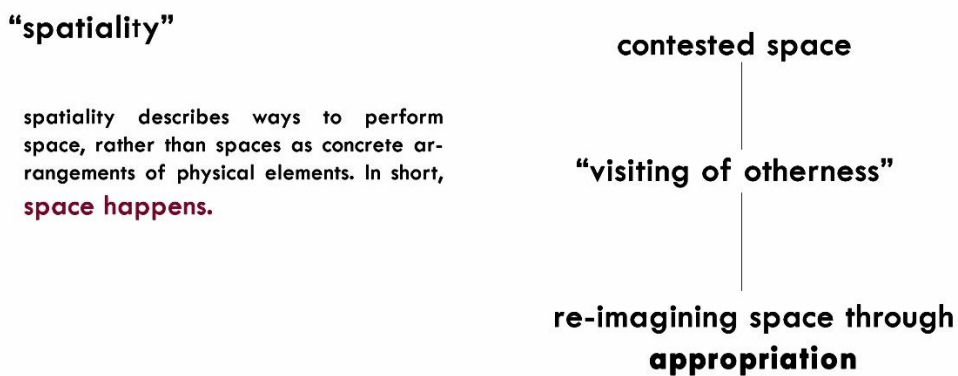


Figure 1.2. “Spatiality” Concept Diagram (Source: developed by the author)

Furthermore, as a constitutive component of social interactions, contested space intrinsically comprises the opportunities of experiencing, conceiving alternate spatialities, urban dwellings, and potential social spheres. Therefore, practicing otherness as the impetus for seeking alternatives in the realm of contention is also the most important aspect of finding common ground for gathering. Thus, it as the foundation of communing practices has organic connections with reinventing space through appropriation. (Tan, 2020) In this context, the study asserts that the appropriation of urban space equals a questioning process in which conflicts, free willpower, and common ideas reshape the aspects of contested space. In every phase of the questioning of space, through the emergent circumstances and struggles of

everyday life, potentials of resistance, which are inherited in the contingent existence of urban space, are revealed.

From this point of view, Gezi Parkı resistance, which is itself a grasp of urban reactions, is also a fertile ground for discussing the opportunities of resisting through space for the search of alternatives and a different understanding of society. As the performed resistance, squatting is an alternative urban practice based on shared decision-making procedures that aims to improve the chances for a more equitable approach to life and urban dwellings. In this sense, squatting as a performed way of space appropriation is a radical way of getting rid of this alienation in favor of the practice of communing. (Tan, 2020) Because, according to Rittersberger- Tılıç (2015), squatting suggests a kind of impermanence, yet she analyzes this social movement as a political gesture, a method of exerting civic rights. It is a method that stresses how shifts in everyday reality and space usage as a result of appropriation lead to unique practices of decision-making, autonomy, and consequently exclusive ways of accomplishing commons. Basically a “space-based solidarity.” (Tan, 2020, p. 136)

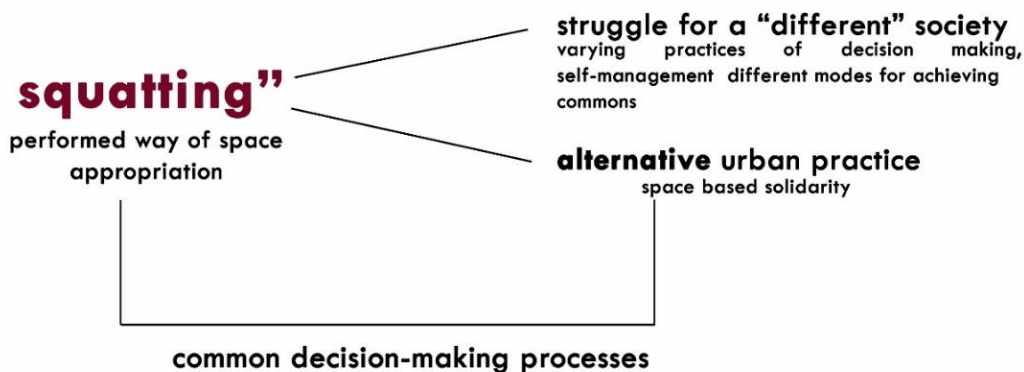


Figure 1.3. Squatting Concept Diagram (Source: developed by the author)

As in the case of this study, in Gezi Parkı resistance, this appropriation, which is achieved by the demands of decision making of many different willpowers,

materialized in the squatting practice of Don Quixote Social Center. In this respect, the mentioned squatted house will be investigated in terms of three main phases. Firstly, the dynamics of the stimuli of initiating such kind of an urban movement will be tried to understand. The second phase will be the unfolding of the inner solidarity networks and the established ones, along the environment that made the social center pursue its existence. The third phase will question the creative resistance potentials that are provided by the spatial transformation of the building. And lastly, with reference to the experiences, further potentials of generating alternative spatialities will be discussed in the light of “*Yeniden İnşa Et*” (2020) book which is a firsthand ensemble of Don Quixote Social Center experiences and in-depth interviews, which will be further explained in the upcoming section. This profound examination of the squatted house provides the third main standpoint of the study, which offers deep analysis of “appropriation of space via squatting” in multiple manners. In the Turkish context, performed appropriation of space practice, via the squatting experience of Don Quixote Social Center, also emerged in a political environment in which people under multiple victim hoods needed to pursue their solidarity practice in physical space. According to Kocabıçak (2020), this is a twofold requirement. To begin with, they required a physical area after the urban struggle, as the weather began to turn colder, in order to continue their resistance practices. On the other hand, according to her, one of the most important aspects that ensures the long-term viability of solidarity is that it has a place. It deepens the solidarity perspective by extending it to local environments and making its act of questioning more evident. (Kocabıçak, Seymen, & Yılmaz, 2020) After the decision to squat, squatter activists started to turn an apartment that had been vacant for years in Yeldeğirmeni Mahallesi into a common public space, a social center.

Therefore, a private space with the endeavor and the collective effort of many different willpowers, regenerated commonly, and turned into a public space open to the usage of everyone. This is, firstly, a topic that attracts neighbors and spreads solidarity, which strengthens the collectivity. A group of squatter activists give a

clear account of the collective approach by stating, “Don Quixote Social Center belongs to all the communes around the globe.” (ÇapulTv,2013) This approach in the first place, is a very strong argument in terms of resisting via breaking the ties with capitalism and a very critical resistance mindset while the exact opposite demanded by capitalism. As Martinez discusses “squatting” practice as an urban social movement that harbors multi folded resistance potentials inherently. One is for the practice itself, as an alternative to the standardized life patterns that are predefined by the capitalist mode of producing and living. The other one is for resisting the existing notion of urbanism and reproducing relationships and urban realities in their own unique ways. (Martinez, 2020)

From this point of view, as Kocabıçak states (2020), space is a key actor of solidarity with its existence in many ways. Because, besides challenging the mentioned ties with capitalism, also with the collectivity it provides, within the appropriation of it, inherent resistance potentials of it emerge. This actualization of the alternative aspects of space also means alternative spatialities and modes of living. Cattaneo & Martinez (2014) emphasize squatting as an alternative to capitalism, providing the chance to live without exploitation with others, and be effective in the maintenance of community needs by utilizing abandoned places as surplus. Thus, squatters provide a political reconceptualization of urban space and urban life. Additionally, there are other forms of squatter movements around the world. People in pursuit of alternatives to capitalism adjust their resistance tactics according to unique requirements or circumstances, such as housing, migration, or special aims, such as political squatting, etc. (Cattaneo & Martinez, 2014)

Taking into account the political climate that surrounded the Gezi Park uprisings, the Don Quixote Social Center took on a collective character, and rather than being directed to the sole need of shelter or only for a specific political purpose, it was established as a common public social center that is capable of being transformed into multi-functions in accordance with the shifting needs of struggle, resistance, and

the spontaneity of daily life. The fact that the squatted house arose to satisfy the demands and aspirations of the Gezi Park Resistance endowed it with unique characteristics in terms of developing varied resistance potentials. In this instance, it is believed that the appropriation of space through squatting presents a two-fold resistance: first, by challenging and questioning the imposed, predefined spatial organization, function, and attributed meaning, and by severing ties with the strict ideals of capitalism; and second, the experience of Don Quixote Social Center squatting produced libertarian discourses on social issues such as ecological, artistic, and gender equality brought about by the communal life dynamics produced in the Gezi Park Resistance. These actions of contesting capitalist standardizations exhibited themselves spatially. These numerous temporary places, such as forum spaces, debate areas, women's room, and children's participation ateliers, are utilized interchangeably and in a continual state of flux. In addition, the ever-changing themes and contents of these places represent another part of resisting through space by defying habitual spatial patterns and the predetermined use of space.

In this context, one of the strong arguments that will be presented during the discussion is the transformed function and flow of the squatted building, which was designed to be an apartment. The current resistive circumstances had deconstructed this function, which had been reread and recreated numerous times by various willpowers. These willpowers of divergent subjects and demands of act and explore new functions of the space, constitute a strong dimension of the discussion of resisting through space by appropriating it by breaking its strict ties with the envisaged and planned function. This transiency of the function and the organization of the space, made the resistance potentials and the possibility of conflict, arose on a wider range of grounds. As a result, the transience of spaces and activities, in contrast to the static conception of the capitalist mode of space creation, has become a powerful justification for limiting opposition options.

The second dimension is the questioning of the attributed meaning of space. Also related to the first dimension, in response to the contingent and unplanned conditions of the resistance processes, multiple groups organized various events and activities in the squatted house. These events and their spatial organizations and changing dynamics of life challenged the attributed meaning of space and, by exploring new and hidden meanings, were reproducing space in multiple ways. As an apartment the space was expected to be a “home” for “families.” This understanding, while attributing to space a defined meaning, also, reproduces the fragments of capitalist life patterns. Therefore, challenging this attributed meaning by replacing it with transient understanding of space, contributes resisting through space discussion. Reading rooms, children’s care rooms, art ateliers, and even a wedding are some of the events that were determinants of the organization of the space. Therefore, also the meaning of the space becomes a key factor of the appropriation act, in terms of being created by the critical minds and collective initiatives of the populations and the tensions between them. And lastly, questioning the occupation aspect of the building and turning upside down its public-private ties by making the decision of squatting the building is another strong dimension of the discussion of resisting through space via appropriation. Because predefined occupation of space is also part of the mode of capitalistic living and producing. The decision of who will occupy the space is one major part of “right to city” discussions. Thus, in the appropriation of space discussion, the occupation aspect within an emphasis on “public-private” also constitutes a base to dwell on.

### **1.2.2 Qualitative Research: In-Depth Interviews**

Within the scope of this thesis, the Don Quixote Social Center as a solidarity-based urban practice is also considered as a potential. Because this research considers the growing and ever-changing potentials of resistance as “ideas” formed in response to capitalism’s various oppressions. The Don Quixote Social Center, with its produced and reproduced spatialities, experiences, and questionings as a generator of



contingent ideas, is seen as a potential in and of itself. As a result, the conflicts, and spatialities that include the intersection of personal experiences and communal life patterns are sought to be examined in order to challenge the generative capabilities of the Don Quixote Social Center in terms of successive alternative solidarity practices. On the other hand, in the endeavor of reorganizing life patterns through contingent reorganizations of urban space, the focus of the study is “appropriation of space,” as performed in the Don Quixote Social Center. This study approaches appropriation as a performed way of resisting via reproduction of space. From this point of view, appropriation of space is taken as alternative re-readings of its fragments through the perspectives, experiences, perceptions and reactions of populations against multiple victim hoods created by capitalism. Therefore, the study asserts that space and daily life patterns simultaneously reproduce each other. Because of this approach to appropriation, developing proper insights about the correlation between non standardized space production processes and the questioning of daily life patterns, experiences, personal feelings, perceptions of space in the Don Quixote Social Center, and squatting experiences, gained importance. In this sense, eliciting in-depth information from people about their experiences, points of view, and resistance perspectives, conducting “qualitative research” became a requirement. Qualitative research, which provides needed intellectual mobility and elasticity, including “in-depth interviews” with activists and residents was chosen as the thesis’ research method. Qualitative research approach mostly supports studies that involve gaining insight from people’s perceptions of their own human experience. (Strauss&Corbin,1994) In this regard, in the light of the above understanding of “appropriation of space” which is based on subjectivity of experiences, perceptions and approaches, analysis of resistance through space practices at the Don Quixote Social Center is enriched by the data that gathered from the interviewers’ answers and body language.

In pursuit of the above objectives, open-ended, discovery-oriented questions are asked that allow deep exploration of the respondent’s feelings, perspectives, and

experiences on solidarities, practicing commons, and reproducing space. Around the general pinpoint questions about experiences, approaches to “resistance through space” and “appropriation”, through the in-depth interview process, more creative questions are shaped according to the answers and body languages of the subjects. This resulted in rich background information that can shape further questions, which were helpful in terms of a detailed understanding about the relation between alternative ways of producing space and alternative life patterns. As the performed appropriation and the first and foremost squatted house experience in Turkey, Don Quixote Social center investigated with the contribution of both literature review about squatting, the examples around the world, grass root movements, commons, and Gezi Parkı, also, shared experiences about space, daily life and challenges.

In addition to these, the major focus of the thesis is the generative resistance capacities of the Don Quixote Social Center. Main discussion is, in what ways the Don Quixote Social Center contributed to the further initiatives in terms of the sustainability of the resistance. First, as Kocabıçak (2020) states, the resistance mindset and energy have been inspirational. Also, in terms of sustainability and the boldness of the resistance, physical space has been a milieu for solidarities. The established solidarity networks are the major contributors to the further initiatives. Another aspect of this discussion is the precedent and simultaneous resistance practices of Don Quixote Squat. Because the inspirations, experiences, networks, challenges, and problems of the precedent solidarities would constitute fertile ground in terms of investigating the generative capacities of Don Quixote Squat. Therefore, in addition to questions about Don Quixote Social Center experiences, questions regarding the correlation between previous and eventual solidarities have been included in the questionnaires.

In the light of these objectives, the questionnaires are prepared regarding two types of respondents; the squatter activists and participants who experienced Don Quixote

Social Center, participators of sequential solidarities.<sup>6</sup> The questionnaires consisted of two main types of questions:

- Questions to comprehend the Don Quixote Social Center experiences and their socio-economic and spatial dimensions.
- Questions to research the generative potentials of resistance.

The data derived from the interviews included motivational aspects behind their practice, daily life experiences, spatial perceptions, their approach to the “appropriation of space,” and their personal ideas about the future of resistance in the social and political contexts of Turkey. Accordingly, the subjective data derived from these interviews was gathered through “*Grounded Theory*” method. In terms of interpreting, analyzing, and criticizing experience-based subjective data, the Grounded theory method has been a useful tool in terms of establishing flexible conclusions in order to make room for further studies. According to Charmaz (2009), one of the pioneers of the grounded theory method, there is an external reality, but it is inseparable from the observer’s perspective. There are several vantage points from which to see a person (a person is a sophisticated system), and these vantage points may vary from those of the study participant or even be in conflict. According to Grounded Theory method, understanding empirical difficulties produces knowledge. We base our knowledge on the social constructs we investigate. We generate the creation process and its results, yet this creation process occurs via the use of preexisting structures. They are modified by the researcher’s viewpoint, location, environment, etc. This is all part of the study process, although it is seldom emphasized. The observations we make and the manner in which we make them, as well as what we perceive, are influenced by and reflective of these factors. (Charmaz,2009)

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B for interview questionnaire.

Hence, there is a strong connection between the appropriation of space, squatting practice, and commoning approach of this thesis and the strategy that combines contingency circumstances, human will, and viewpoint in the data collection and assessment phases of the research process. It can be asserted that the chosen methodology serves the research approach of the study. In this context, interviews performed to acquire subjective and unique data include social and political perspectives on squatted houses. Each of these interviews lasted between one and one-and-a-half hours and were performed using virtual meeting platforms. Even though information was acquired in the interviews using pre-planned questions, the substance of the discussion flowed freely according to the original expressions of the participants as they discussed their experiences and the circumstances that arose in the moment. All participants were informed prior to the interviews, and their participation in accordance with their own consents was indicated on the forms. All participants' identities were concealed, and they were denoted in the text using a numbered system. (See Table 1.1)

Table 1.1 Interviewee Profile<sup>7</sup>

<b>Int. No.</b>	<b>Profession</b>	<b>Relationship with the Don Quixote Social Center</b>

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<sup>7</sup> One of the sociological findings obtained during the research process of this thesis study is that the study could not reach the targeted number of interviewees. One of the reasons for this situation can be identified as the political and social changes Turkey has undergone since 2013. As we are all aware of, the authoritarian environment in Turkey has become tougher and heavier, especially in a way that severely restricts freedom of expression. Therefore, although the activists were reached to participate in the interview, no positive response was received from the majority of them. In addition, in one of the interviews, it was shared that one of the reasons for the reluctance to participate in the study was that the permanence of the Don Quixote squatted house could not be ensured and the fact that the squatted house culture did not become widespread in Turkey caused the activists to be disappointed with the resistance and thought that the resistance was “unsuccessful”.

Interviewee 1	Director	Squatter activist of Don Quixote Social Center
Interviewee 2	Psychologist	Participator of squatted house
Interviewee 3	Graphic Designer	Squatter activist of Caferağa Neighborhood house
Interviewee 4	Architect	Squatter activist of Caferağa Neighborhood house, cofounder of Kadıköy Cooperative
Interviewee 5	Mechanical Engineer	Cofounder of Kadıköy Urban Solidarity

### 1.2.3 Structure of the Thesis

Regarding the mentioned aim, scope, and problematic, this study clusters around four main arguments. The first is Turkish-style state capitalism and the diverse pressures it exerts on our lives; the second is the Gezi Park resistance, which is an explosion of various forms of right to the city manifestations in response to these pressures and the spatialities it produces. Third, the Don Quixote Social Center, an assemblage of lessons and experiences from these spatialities. Last but not least, the fourth one is the generative capacities produced by Gezi Park Resistance and Don Quixote Social Center since 2013. In this context, the “resistance through appropriation of space” argument, which is the core problematic of this thesis, is introduced in three chapters.

In *Chapter 2*, firstly the correlation between the capitalist mode of space production and urban discontent has been introduced. Although Chapter 2 begins with a global

discussion of the structure of state capitalism that territorializes urban life in a top-down manner by instrumentalizing the urban space, the primary objective of this chapter is to comprehend the urban dynamics of the pressure created by capitalism in Turkey's social and political contexts. From this perspective, it is intended to investigate how these processes created the foundation for the inventive ways in which the right to the city was manifested in the Gezi Parkı rebellion. As a result, the peculiarities of capitalism unique to the Turkish context and the urban processes that sustain it, as well as the rules and regulations, were addressed as the sources of resistance of varying dimensions and intensities with the help the theoretical discussion provided by the vanguard figures of urban social movement and Gezi Parkı literature. The varied counterparts of these triggers in our everyday lives emerge as manifestations of the "empty signifier," that is the right to the city. By developing a theoretical background for the right to the city, the primary setup of Chapter 2 was made viable for examining the Gezi Parkı uprising on this basis. Accordingly, in the last section of Chapter 2, temporary spatialities established with events and performances as various manifestations of right to city and performed way of different ways of performing freedom in Gezi Parkı, are explored as resistance through space appropriation.

In *Chapter 3*, the Don Quixote Social Center, which is the continuation of the mentioned spatialities, has established a foundation with several kinds of performed ways of space appropriation to be questioned and alternatives to be explored. In order to investigate the performed forms of space appropriation in the Don Quixote Social Center, the concept of "appropriation of space" was first examined in depth, beginning with its Marxist and Hegelian roots and including its significance within urban social movements. For this purpose, the appropriation of space notion was first analyzed on a theoretical basis with the contributions of the leading figures of the literature. In connection with this, the possibilities of the resistance and questioning power of space were tried to be explored with the first-hand data about the Don Quixote squatting experience. The aspects of the communal life experience in the squatted house by producing space and life on the axis of use value instead of private

property depending on exchange value, and the practice of rejecting all kinds of exploitation instead of exploitation of labor, nature and body were discovered with the help of literature review and interviews. In this context, Don Quixote's occupation practice in the squatted house opened up the appropriation of space to discussion as a means of multi-faceted resistance. Therefore, the main motivation of Chapter 3 is to analyze the appropriation of space notion and its aspects through the experience of Don Quixote as an interrogator of patterns such as ecology, gender equality, private ownership, and division of labor. In this context, he studied the practice of squatting and its aspects specific to Turkey from the framework of performed ways of space appropriation and freedom.

This thesis's fourth foundation focuses on enacted forms of freedom and the ability of alternatives to adapt and transform based on their contingent configurations and to generate new forms of resistance. In this regard, *Chapter 4* examines the generative powers generated by the Don Quixote Social Center and Gezi Parkı Resistance from 2013 to the present. In this part, I reviewed the formations that contributed to the resistance as a squatted house experience and the solidarities that continue to struggle for the right to the city in several forms. Considering that the operations of these formations, which continue to generate social discourse in the spirit of resistance, are ongoing, the chapter's inquiry has mostly been augmented by subjective material collected through interviews rather than a literature review. In this framework, while inactive squatted house experiences have been outlined, the primary emphasis of Chapter 4 has been the establishment of Kadıköy City Solidarity, Kadıköy Cooperative, and Karşı League. Finally, in *Chapter 5*, the conclusion of the investigation is elaborated upon. After the study's overview, prospective future scenarios and research areas within the topic of the study are addressed.

### 1.3 Possible Original Outcomes

In an urban environment where the practices that led to the Gezi resistance continue and the social cleavage has widened and deepened, the energy arising from discontent continues to accumulate in the social sphere. (Şengül, 2016) Accordingly, against these deepening injustices, the search for resistance potentials and alternatives acquires relevance each and every day. In this framework, one of the primary goals of this thesis is to examine the ability of urban social movements to generate additional urban networks and alternative spatialities by researching the Gezi Resistance and Don Quixote Social Center. Even though a significant amount of time has elapsed since the Gezi revolt, the horizontal groups that began to emerge as a result have transformational potential. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020) The possibilities and limitations of the efforts to come together in the Gezi resistance are also instructive for current practices and tracing the possible alternative spatialities of them. In this regard, this research aims to develop an approach that analyzes the prospects of alternative urban dwellings and alternatives available to resistance through space by positioning the inherent possibilities of urban space at the center of the argument. Similar activities that evolved during the Gezi rebellion and Don Quixote Social Center will also be explored in order to assess and comprehend their creative potential. While being a holistic anti-capitalist struggle in the context of Turkey, the Gezi Park rebellion also constitutes a mobilization that generates a productive terrain from which evolutions of activism would arise in due course. (Rittersberger-Tılıç, 2015)

“Squatting”, in the form of squatted house, as an urban social movement and the performed form of appropriation of space, is also one of such forms that emerge in the wake of Gezi. According to Purcell (2003), typically, the appropriation of public spaces is transient. However, their power comes from their ability to demonstrate that alternative living styles and space usage are conceivable. In this regard, in order to comprehend the future political dynamics and urban tensions in order to reveal the



creative resistance potentials, the discussion focuses on the solidarity-based urban practices that occurred in the aftermath of Gezi Parkı resistance.

As a result of this endeavor, the study attempts to reveal possible original outcomes, through the answers to three main questions:

1. Can urban space be the major subject of resistance practices, or is resisting through space by appropriating it possible?
2. Could Don Quixote Social Center's solidarity networks and alternative spatialities serve as models for future urban practices?
3. What forms of creative alternative resistance through space potentialities have been uncovered as a result of Don Quixote's solidarity practices?

In order to find proper answers to these questions, solidarity-based practices that occurred in the aftermath of Gezi Parkı resistance will be framed, and for the ones that are inactive, the reasons for ending up and the inner tensions will be discussed. In this context, as initial possible outcomes of the research, will include the evaluation of performed resistance practices of these solidarities such as,

Caferağa Neighborhood Squat, İstanbul, 2013-2014<sup>8</sup>

Bay Samsa Squat, İstanbul, 2014-2015<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Source: <https://www.e-skop.com/skopbulten/kent-haklari-agi/3402>, retrieved on December 21, 2021

<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

Berkin Elvan Student Squat, İstanbul,2014<sup>10</sup>

Kadıköy Urban Solidarity (Kadıköy Kent Dayanışması), İstanbul, 2014- today<sup>11</sup>

Atopya Squat, Ankara, 2015<sup>12</sup>

Karşı Lig Solidarity, İstanbul ,2014- up today<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Source: <https://kaosgl.org/haber/ankararsquoda-bir-iskal-evi-atopya>, retrieved on December 21,2021

<sup>13</sup>Source: <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/1513249> retrieved on December 21,2021

## CHAPTER 2

### **THE TURKISH VERSION OF STATE CAPITALISM: BRUTAL DENIAL OF “HUMAN CENTERED” PEACEFUL LIVING**

As a political agenda, neoliberalism, which is an expression of capitalism, needs to employ cultural and social norms and narratives. Accordingly, it executes its strategies via sociopolitical interactions using local and cultural information. It can be asserted that, in all societies that focus their economic growth on neoliberal policies, positioning urban space in accordance with capital accumulation processes is the norm. Globally, it is inevitable that this commodification of space leads to massive inequalities, violence, and authoritarian tendencies in terms of the dynamics that organize urban life in the social and political sphere. (Şengül, 2016) To be able to systematize and expand, this neoliberal agenda adapts its authoritarian techniques and means of violence to the circumstances. In the context of Turkey, this condition emerges as an authoritarian neoliberal logic that determines the structure of Turkish cities and their urban realities. Currently, the driving force of the system is unquestionably the urban policies that make the division of land and labor practicable, designate the owners of the means of production and administration of the space, and are enforced by rules and regulations. To be able to perform a thorough and in-depth study on all of them, I would like to begin by briefly evaluating the general logic of capitalist space production processes and the role of urban space in these processes.

As the dominant designer of cities, capital utilizes modern technology and measuring tools to measure the area and divide the city into as many sub-centers as possible to accelerate the production and consumption cycles. The increased number of centers leads to an increased capital center and, thus, an increased profit range. In addition,

the growth of the city's suburbs, which is another approach for increasing the surplus, includes a rise in production and consumption opportunities and hence, a significant pace of capital turnover. In addition, the suburban sprawl of cities entails the sale and distribution of public lands for the construction of urban projects of all sizes and types, including housing complexes. Therefore, the rapid and simple conversion of inexpensive urban land on the outskirts of cities into building plots and their use in construction activities are realized. With the rise of industrialism, the rapid development of production methods, and the consequent emergence of capitalism, new forms of living and working have evolved. Space is institutionalized as a tool that facilitates the seamless flux, circulation, and absorption of capital in today's sophisticated capitalist mode of production and living due to the interconnectedness of political, economic, and social relationships. (Harvey, 2014)

This situation resulted in the displacement and replacement of a way of life based on use value and the understanding of cities by citizens with a new way of life based on commercialization, property speculation, building highways, the automobile, and suburbanization, resulting in increased inequality and social unrest. (Harvey, 2012)

To sum up, if we assume that space is produced by life circumstances, then the diffused capitalist mode of living, as a superior form of power, can and does organize the city according to the needs of capital circulation, regardless of the fact that the vast majority of the city's inhabitants are suffering and being displaced for the benefit of a minority that holds power. In the end, it is undeniable that all of these capitalist urban realities are, in essence, a class problem that entails significant inequities for various segments of society. In pursuit of the aforementioned ideas, in a sphere of enclosures and the exploitation of human participation, we constantly encounter the misery caused by capitalism and suffer from its top-down violations of our rights, in a variety of ways, in our struggle to survive. Capitalism and its oppressive instruments impose their influence on our rights under the pretext of many types of life interactions and at various times of our lives. In this sense, with reference to Harvey, (2012) I first argue that these particular exploitations, which

always find suitable ways to attack our lives by adapting themselves to the ever-changing life dynamics of diverse subjects, are also the causes of the specific forms of life struggles and resistances attained by diverse subjects with varying life trajectories. If advanced capitalist conditions discover multiple creative ways to diffuse our lives by rapidly reproducing themselves in various life circumstances, then original ways of manifesting resistance, which are embedded in the forms of claiming our rights to the city, are also produced and reproduced in unique ways as a counter-creativity to the oppressive situation we must confront. In this light, the primary purpose of this section is to examine the conditions of capitalist urban reality in the unique social and political settings of Turkey. I intended to question the position of city and urban space under these conditions and to discuss the top-down appropriations and interferences of Turkey's authoritarian-type, multi-layered capitalism in order to comprehend the motivations behind the various types of right to city manifestations during the Gezi Park resistance.

## **2.1 Capitalist Mode of Space Production in Turkish Context**

To begin, we might outline the broad logic of the intricate interaction between the capitalist mode of space production and the space-based injustices resulting from capitalist demands. However, as stated before, neoliberalism lacks a unified logic. As noted at the outset, it imposes its tyranny by adapting to the local qualities of social and political settings. According to Butler, "the context seeps into the forms of neoliberal logic, giving them their rhythms, mechanisms, and dynamics." (Butler, 2014, p. VII) This neoliberal logic, which is intertwined with oppressive ideologies, functions in a variety of ways. To grasp these interconnected systems, we must first consider the coercive urban politics and capitalist space creation and/or intervention methods as instruments supporting Turkey's version of state capitalism. The instrumentalization of cities as the fundamental engines of capital accumulation has

evolved tremendously in recent decades, as we can all recognize. This is primarily due to the fact that the construction and management of built environments constitute the main drivers of the economy, fostered by urban rent-based social and political power connections. Based on this multi power of construction industry, ever- ending production of new residences and urban redevelopment projects motivated by mere commercial interests are at the center of the Turkish state capitalism's recent urban strategy, which prioritizes capitalist dominance for the arrangement of Turkish cities. (Akcan, 2015)

Since its inputs include commodities and services provided by a variety of other sectors, and its outputs are components of goods manufactured by other industries, the construction industry is becoming more interdependent with all economic demands. On the basis of these parameters, there is a strong correlation between the construction industry and the overall pace of economic development; thus, it serves as a catalyst for the economic expansion of construction and real estate investments. Construction investments required division-based governing techniques for the general expansion of sectors and the economy, and space, with all of its components, is an integral element of these strategies in several respects. This suggests that the construction industry concurrently and intricately operates many capital wheels in terms of both commodities and labor force. Hence, one might argue that the construction sector is the key component of a rent-based economy. (Balaban,2011)

On the other hand, construction sector operations can also be seen as a tool for imposing class-based authority, since they are fundamentally occupation activities that establish land ownership and land allocation from the top down. Balaban (2011), also discusses how the legal authorities, which are the major components of municipal planning and zoning decision-making systems, are structured and monopolized to permit, legalize, and sustain these development processes and investments in favor of privileged groups within political maneuvers such as zoning amnesties, and privatizations. On this basis, it may be stated that these processes are

the methods for establishing territories on urban terrain using the instruments of capitalism's division. According to Akcan, (2015, p. 371) this sort of state capitalism takes form of “crony capitalism<sup>14</sup>” in Turkey. In this sense, it can be asserted that,

The Turkish state does not act as an arbitrator of different class interests ...It behaves as a class itself, fervently looking after its own interests, treating the rest of the social actors as its tributaries, acting through granting closely guarded material and positional resources to its handpicked allies, hence reproducing itself as an enduring political and economic coalition. It is a strange mix between neoliberalism and statism. (Gülhan, 2014)

In Turkey, mass housing complexes constitute a crucial part of state capitalism. Mass housing constructions have affected the urban fabric in several ways. In addition to being a basic need, housing also impacts the profitability of a number of other businesses, which is one of the many reasons for the emphasis on housing developments as a capitalist strategy for space exploitation. Moreover, it is a potent demand generator in terms of both investment and need. This strong demand serves as an essential absorber of supplies, making room for brand-new manufacturing techniques and all capital investment cycles in the form of new supplies. The initiation of a housing project in a location stimulates the establishment of various other enterprises, including shopping malls, recreational activity venues, cafés, restaurants, infrastructure, and transportation, among others. These conditions have an effect not just on economic difficulties, but also on urban life and the notion of citizenship. The “customer” form of citizenship is suggested by the fact that these housing projects are built around massive commercial networks as opposed to streets, squares, or public spaces. (Akcan, 2015) All of these circumstances result in not just rent rises but also increases in all other expenditures of living. It also provides

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<sup>14</sup> Crony capitalism: an economic system in which individuals and businesses with political connections and influence are favored (as through tax breaks, grants, and other forms of government assistance) in ways seen as suppressing open competition in a free market. Source: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crony%20capitalism>, retrieved on February 15,2023

funding for the cycles involved with the purchasing procedures, such as mortgage processes, tax increases, etc., which set the stage for the processes of losing a home, moving, and experiencing forced lifestyle modifications. In conclusion, it may be said that the never-ending construction processes of housing projects in Turkish cities are motivated by exchange rather than meeting the requirements of the population. Nationwide, the number of speculatively held vacant properties is increasing, while the number of homeless citizens is increasing. Paradoxically, this growth is not the product of a malfunctioning or inefficient system, but rather a system that is functioning as planned, commodifying and financializing the city and housing. (Baysal, 2019)

In addition, it is a problem of the relationship between the right to the city and the right to housing as to why there is so much emphasis on housing projects in defining the dominant part in the question of “whose rights”<sup>15</sup> in appropriating the city and its resources and decision-making processes in the city. (Harvey, 2003, p. 939) Because, according to Baysal (2019), residency in the city is required to obtain the right to the city as the power to develop, reproduce, or modify urban space or for any future desire or imagination about the city. Consequently, communities may only get the right to the city via a housing right that guarantees their right to remain in their current location. Since the right to housing decides who or what class(es) will stay in the city and who will be expelled, residence is also a class issue; thus, we may argue that residence is political. In the terminology of the Occupy Movements, the right to housing thus determines, in a way, whether the right to the city will be the right of 99% or 1%.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> “Between equal rights force decides” Marx uses this phrase to describe the conflict between the working class and their employers in his discussion of working hours. This is a debate on antinomy and right versus right, according to Marx. Source: <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch10.htm> ,retrieved on December 8,2022

<sup>16</sup> Common slogan of Occupy movements, Occupy Wall Street,Zucotti Park. Source: Stavrides, S. (2019). Common spaces of urban emancipation. Manchester: Manchester University Press.



Moreover, gentrification is a significant component of urban space-based injustice in Turkey. In Turkey, gentrification practices are referred as urban revitalization. In politics and “cleaning” rhetoric, undervalued property is purchased in order to acquire the land and begin new development projects on it. Obviously, this circumstance involves tremendous injustices and grievances in various ways. In the Turkish version of state capitalism, sociocultural conditions that legitimize or even deliberately misrepresent gentrification are created. Prior to the transformation processes of certain neighborhoods, the historical context has been a stage of massive social issues, such as the labeling of neighborhoods as “unsafe” and “inappropriate for investment”, as a result of the various types of social segregations resulting from the marginalization of people and districts brought about by otherness discourses. In addition to the division of land, the division of labor serves as a method of categorization, resulting in the marginalization of particular urban areas. (Atkinson, 2015) Again, this marginalization might be viewed as the social foundation that certain privileged elites benefit from to justify displacement and injustice. Similar to other urban capitalist mechanisms, this is a tactic for legitimizing exploitation by devaluing labor.

Because, categorizing human labor, like all other divisions, reduces it to the position of a simple commodity that is only useful for its exchange value and not its use value. As a result, no one is concerned about how it is manufactured or what human capabilities it may possess; rather, the focus is on how much it costs and how much profit it generates. In a system built on divides that commodifies everything, including land, time, the human body and mind, labor as human endeavor, etc., all creative powers, potentialities, and hence productive motives are ironically eliminated for the sake of “efficiency” and “performance.” In addition, labeling labor as “unqualified” is only an attempt to exchange it at an undervalued price by underestimating and disregarding its capacities. (Aykaç, 2020) Therefore, as Aykaç argues (2020), this situation paved the way for the transformation of the particular settlements into the areas of unemployment, informal, self-employment, temporal,

insecure, and precarious work. Finally, criminalizing these individuals is one means to create the “proper” conditions for the “cleaning” of these metropolitan areas and the determination of which segment of society will occupy that portion of the city. Hence, it would not be incorrect to interpret gentrification as a violation mechanism of the right to the city. After these gentrification processes residents are left with no other option except from mass housing projects, TOKİ. Once again, while TOKİ is an active actor in Turkey’s construction sector, it is also one of the most important means of capital accumulation through the built environment. At the same time, these mechanisms are essential for demonstrating the state’s control over the city and citizens. This is because the TOKİ, with its monopoly on the accumulation of capital and the multiplication of profits it can generate, is at the center of many of the rules governing the ownership and division of land. According to Balaban’s research, the state has broader powers over land and, by extension, society when working in tandem with other state agencies such as the privatization administration and following the law’s prescribed procedures for developing master plans. (Balaban, 2011)

In other words, these housing stocks are an essential instrument of governance in terms of supporting the provision of lifestyles with generally comparable designs. Individuals who are compelled to relocate to these mass housing constructions run the danger of losing their neighborhood-specific ways of life and means of livelihood, such as farming. This causes them to have problems paying their mortgages and reduce their other demands, finally resulting in their losing their houses in TOKİ and migrating to nearby places where they may construct squatter residences once again. These conditions indicate a step of the numerous processes of displacement. Alternatively, after these citizens are again relocated against their will, these abandoned TOKİ houses are offered to middle- or upper-class purchasers. (Eren Hatiboğlu, 2014)

Last but not least, the “delirious projects” are another leading factor of neoliberalist urban reality created by the politics of government in Turkey. (Akcan, 2015, p. 365) “The third airport, Third Bridge over the Bosphorus, the Second Bosphorus, which would open a fifty km long water canal that would connect the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea, and which, according to the oceanology experts, would cause irreversible ecological damages.” (Akcan, 2015, p. 370) In particular for this canal project, any scientific assessments of the environmental and socioeconomic ramifications were disclosed. Hotels, shopping malls, an airport, housing complexes, and a conference center were to be built over a presently forested environment as part of this development project. (Harmanşah, 2014)

On the other hand, as indicated in those other urban intervention processes such as mass housing and urban regeneration, the ultimate connection between these programs and state capitalism was clearly not limited to economic considerations. With their design and spatial arrangement, these enterprises have become instruments for establishing spatial discourses. It was one of the urban tactics to transform space into an indication of authority and a device to interfere in life by imposing traditionalist connotations. Especially with “mega projects,” a new language with enormous size, fractal patterns, and ornamentation is unavoidable. While this situation promotes urban disparities by activating successive capital cycles in the construction sector synchronously with its mega sizes, it simultaneously attacks the city’s modern republican foundations and secular values. (Akcan, 2015) Based on these, it can be asserted that,

Perhaps for the first time in the history of the modern Turkish Republic, we are witnessing a comprehensive reversal of this project of modernism, only to be replaced with an ideology shaped by a neo-Ottoman imperialism coupled with authoritarian neoliberalism. (Harmanşah, 2014, p. 125)

It would not be incorrect to claim that this newly imported neoconservative aspiration in Turkey is one of the pillars of the Taksim Gezi Park argument. The

selection of Gezi Park for the artillery barracks and shopping mall complex, another initiative of neo-Ottoman liberalism, was no accident. This project features three contentious locations. In the historical perspective, the first is Gezi Park, a green public space with secular contemporary overtones. Gezi Park was established by converting an Ottoman-era artillery barracks built on an Armenian cemetery, which was used for artillery into an urban green area during the Republican Era. (David & Toktamış, 2015) Gezi Park has a political legacy as a meeting place constructed with a secular and modernist viewpoint and envisioned as a healthy and green environment for citizens to interact. (Karasulu, 2015)

In addition, Taksim Square was planned as a secular public area in the heart of Istanbul, and it has particular political overtones for the left wing. Particularly, Taksim Square, which has a fundamental significance as the self-actualization point of particularly leftist urban struggles, has been the site of May 1 Labor Day marches and several other resistances since the 1960s. As a consequence, there was police and military brutality there. The most remarkable example of this was the *May 1 massacre*, also known as the bloody May 1 incident, on May 1, 1977. (Harmanşah, 2014) In addition to being the symbol of the Republic of Turkey in Istanbul, Taksim Square also serves as a symbol of resistance in the Turkish context. Aside from that, due to its central location and status as a square, it serves as a focal point for a range of everyday activities. Thus, the intervention in Taksim and Gezi Park has the power to govern and discipline both these symbolic meanings and daily routines.

Consequently, while making a conservative intervention in urban life and everyday living structures, the notion suggested a plan that makes history and culture marketable in conjunction with all construction activities. In addition to achieving longstanding objective of eradicating the secular history of Taksim Square and Gezi Park, this strategy seeks to:

...kill two birds with one stone, the barracks would also be turned into a shopping mall and hotel, a money-making urban development project, which

would align well with Erdogan's broader program of capital investment across the Anatolian countryside and its urban landscapes. (Harmanşah, 2014, p. 127)

The Atatürk Cultural Center is another focus of this project. This debate's first major topic is that the Atatürk Cultural Center has a distinctive, modern design and its spatial structure reproduces republican modern ideas in several ways. The second topic of this argument is using the building facade as a carrier and stage that interacts with posters and banners, particularly during the 1 May protests. In urban consciousness, therefore, in addition to its republican modern associations, it has connotations associated with revolution, disobedience, and emancipation. (Akcan, 2015) In the light of these, the destruction of the Atatürk Cultural Center and its transformation into an opera house in the same neo-Ottoman architecture as the artillery barracks was yet another indication of authoritarian and conservative interference.

For all these interventions proper grounds were created and consolidated by laws and regulations in order to legitimize state led intervention on urban development and create appropriate mechanisms for controlling everyday life. The laws that enable multiple victimhoods through the commodification of urban space, such as state-led displacement, gentrification, inequalities, and environmental massacre, have become the defining characteristics of Turkey's urban reality. Additionally, Iğsız (2014) addresses the processes and forces related to the legalization of unfair practices in Turkey. First, she calls for the monopolization of decision-making and the assertion of power over urban space via the strategy of assimilating independent institutions, which disables the decision-making procedures to expedite privatization, gentrification, and state-led displacements. Annulment of the autonomous scientific institutions and commissions means that centralized control is exercised over institutions and thus a single authority is defined as the sole dominant power over urban space, which should belong to the citizens. This results in presenting the environment, ecosystem, health, and cultural heritage at the mercy of urban

developers. (İğsız, 2014) While choices on urban space should be decided via numerous methods in light of reason and science for the advantage of the majority, the administration's monopolized urban policies lead to enormous inequities and even environmental disasters.

This top-down appropriation of cities by capitalism, seen from a different angle, is not restricted to physical and economic spheres; rather, it implies more extensive seizing techniques of the complete lifestyle. These seizing strategies, while constituting "proper" cultural, social, and political backgrounds for the economic inequalities of life standards, anguish caused by any type of displacement, income injustice, etc., also include all forms of control which affect the quality of urban life in various ways, such as discriminatory discourses, oppressions, attacks to the privacy, gender issues, unjust criminalization of individuals, hatred discourses, etc. Neoliberal and ultraconservative exclusionary social policies of the administrative party are principally responsible for the imposition of these oppressions in every aspect of our life. (Özel, 2014)

Every instance of discrimination induced by these discourses serves to bolster the dominance in sociopolitical and, by extension, economic spheres. In the previous decades, the school system has been repeatedly restructured in an effort to produce the "docile bodies" demanded by conservative neoliberal tendencies. (Özel, 2014) In a similar fashion, conservative neoliberalism is also served by "appropriate family" discourses. According to these ideals, the family institution pacifies people by rescuing them from their deficiencies and inadequacies. In addition to being a natural phenomenon believed to exist in society, in conservative ideology it is also viewed as the basis of the hierarchy. The social order necessitates this institution because to the transmission and replication of knowledge, conventions, norms, and hierarchical relationships.. (Foucault, 2017) Furthermore, in the context of discriminatory politics in Turkey, hatred discourses about women and LGBTIQ people are constantly produced, which I believe is another aspect of the discussion

of a proper family. Another massive violation of human rights in Turkey is the infringement of the right to expression. The surveillance and disciplinary environment is pursued by policies and legislation that constitute press oppression and violate freedom of expression. The major media outlets are likewise controlled by a small number of elites and corporations with ties to the government.

In conclusion, I believe that all these capitalist abuses of citizen rights are the result of capitalism's seizure of our lives and urban areas, which plays a major role in the violent capture of our lives. The appropriation of urban environments and cities ultimately entails the appropriation of our bodies, thoughts, and whole lives. It is the deprivation of the right to decide about our own bodies, lives, and ways of thinking. Thus, the top-down appropriation of cities may be seen as the primary source of the appropriation and colonization of all the components that comprise our urban quality of life. In conclusion, it should be noted that all this violence at the level of torture and displacements is one of the most physical manifestations of the marketing of a lifestyle via ostensibly abstract body and mind-controlling tactics. On the other hand, it could be an illusion and self-deception to think that this violence as a transient "precaution" for a particular "crisis situation" and is applied to only one part of society. On the contrary, it represents the general logic of all these governing and disciplining techniques. And also, the transformation of these "exceptional" disproportional authorities into permanent principles and orders, is always possible. (Agamben, 2006)

## **2.2 A Theroretical Inquiry of "Right to City"**

In light of the fact that our lives, minds, and bodies are appropriated by capitalism, the question "what are we left with in our hands?" inspired me to consider the argument that, rather than surrendering ourselves to the brutality of capitalism, we can strive for methods to reclaim what ours is already. In the first stages of this inquiry, I believe it is more important to ask realistic questions than to just scratch

the surface. How can we join on a common foundation of resistance, for instance, if capitalist life circumstances cause us problems in ways specific to our own life conditions, if our voices, under the common and extensive cry of capitalism, change according to the inequities specific to our living conditions? To clarify, I agree with Harvey when he states that the concept of right to city may serve as the backbone of anti-capitalist efforts, since he also supports the notion that right to city is not an inherent, standardized right, but is formed and reproduced in real situations. Hence, as Harvey also argues, (2012) the possibility of conflict is at the core of existing urban reality; the following analysis focuses on what is occurring on the streets of a city. In a similar manner, Lefebvre (2003) characterizes streets as encountering places where mobility, interactions, and hence daily life occur. According to Lefebvre, streets are places where life and people flow freely, interact, exchange, and confront injustices, making urban life possible. The streets may liberate us from rules and institutions despite capitalism's thirst for order, homogeneity, isolation, and amnesia. Due to this particular cause, revolutionary action occurs in the streets. (ibid.) As he states,

The street is a place to play and learn. The street is disorder. All the elements of urban life, which are fixed and redundant elsewhere, are free to fill the streets and through the streets flow to the centers, where they meet and interact, torn from their fixed abode. This disorder is alive. It informs. It surprises. (Lefebvre, 2003, p. 18)

As a result of the fact that alternative realities are likewise generated by life's actual difficulties. If we start from scratch, we all feel the suffering caused by capitalist circumstances, then we should also search for resistance prospects in the revolutionary vibrancy of urban everyday life. (Harvey, 2012) Moreover, Harvey (2012), focuses on the city as the site of production and also Lefebvre, (1996) who defines the city as an *oeuvre* in which social, political, welfare, knowledge, encounters, games, entertainment and art are produced, states that this work of art was created collectively by the inhabitants of the city, including refugees. In this context, according to Lefebvre (1996), belonging to a city is determined by



appropriation and participation, not property or wealth. Thus, Lefebvre's idea of "right to the city" is more concerned with urban life and those who contributed to lived experience than with those who really resided in the city. Strong linkages exist between the formation of urban life, urban space, and lived experience owing to the contemporaneous and collaborative nature of the production of urban space and the accomplishment of lifestyle habits. (Purcell, 2003)

Urban space is, in essence, the key participant in this collaborative process. Lefebvre's conception of space is comprised of three expansions. Perceived space is strongly related to the actual space that persons perceive on a daily basis. Conceived space, on the other hand, refers to the mental representations that people create of their surroundings. Lastly, lived space denotes a spatial phenomenon comprised of a bizarre interplay of these two occurrences, which is recreated in urban experiences and social life in unique ways each time. (Lefebvre, 1991) From this perspective, lived space is both the source of urban existence and its constituent relationships, and it is a formation that is constantly remade by contingent processes. In this context, citizens as urban dwellers<sup>17</sup> with a claim on the city are active participants in all of these processes, using urban systems to create and contribute to the urban reality with their creative and critical thoughts, ideas, and experiences of the city's possibilities, impossibilities, challenges, and opportunities. In light of this, the right to the city is an *empty signifier* that may be filled with all of these contingent processes in Lefebvre's conception and that can be recreated continually based on the particularities of time, space, circumstances, and practices. (Lefebvre, 1991)

Parallel to these, Harvey (2003, p. 939) conceptualizes the notion of right to city "as not merely a right of access to what already exists, but a right to change it after our

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<sup>17</sup> Urban Dweller: They are urban subjects, which include everyone living in the city, such as immigrants, minorities, and precarious etc., who reproduce the city and urban life by questioning it in the challenges of daily life and, therefore, do not require a particular citizenship or private ownership to have the right to the city.

heart's desire". He (2003, p. 939) by associating right to city with human rights, asserts that "the right to remake ourselves by creating a qualitatively different kind of urban sociality is one of the most precious of all human rights." However, the important question here is "whose rights?" and "whose city?" (Harvey, 2003, p. 939) In addition to the liberating and unifying essence of the right to city concept, this situation of being an "empty signifier", carries the danger of turning into a process that works in favor of capital accumulation and the classes that hold the capital, with the compelling effect of advanced capitalist conditions. (Purcell, 2003) In the conditions where the citizen is determined by laws and regulations, not as an urban dweller, the rights and pressures of the classes that have the authority to make laws are valid in the city. As Harvey (2003, p. 939) discusses, "justice is simply whatever the ruling class wants it to be." In this regard, developing different socio-political strategies is the only way possible out of this cycle.

Contrary to current conditions, we should develop strategies which enable rather than capitalist powers, in the design, production and reproduction processes of the urban space, the urban dwellers of the city should be at the center of any decision-making process related to the management of the city, and they should also have the right to use, occupy and appropriate the spaces of the city without being subject to restrictions. Thus, the power relations that determine the production of urban space will be reorganized and the control over the city and urbanization processes will pass from the state and capital to the residents of the city. (Baysal, 2019) In this sense, involvement energizes urban life and simultaneously generates the possibilities for participatory democracy; its absence often indicates the destruction of the city. The right to the city uncovers its exclamation in a democratic and responsive city with citizens who aspire to determine their own paths in life. (Lefebvre, 1996)

In this context, according to Harvey (2012), claiming right to city is one major key for anti-capitalist struggles in which we are searching for the alternative realities and sociopolitical strategies, because he sees city as the main production site of urban

life, and the concept of right to city. The conceptualization of the right to city, when it gains meaning in the light of everyday struggles of people, has the potential of the common base of urban social movements. If the sufferings of neoliberal logic affect our daily lives, then strategies for overcoming them must be embedded not only in our awareness of our daily lives, but also in our ability to modify them.(Lefebvre, 2014) This knowledge I believe lies in the ability of developing lifestyles which enable challenging the bourgeois divisions of labor, produced discriminatory discourses, and sugar-coated urban processes. Furthermore, the fact that right to city is not a personalized but a collective right as a result of our various ways of manifesting it without feeling obligated to manifest it in a standardized and definite way contributes to the overall concept of right to city and anti-capitalist struggles.

However, the question starts here, for example the demand for gender equality and people's way of performing struggles for it, starting from the everyday usage of language, to the active participation to the processes and a family's demand of decent housing and performing a struggle for this demand, by appropriating a part of the city and transforming it according to their lifestyle and needs, are both examples of ways of claiming our rights to the city because, the both actions are transforming the urban life, but the content and the scope of the struggles they bring to fore are different. Therefore, the question of how these different manifestations of our rights can pave the way for urban revolution is still open to discussion. Because, in the aim and demand of getting rid of the pressures and violence capitalist lifestyle imposes on us, we need to search for ways of re-appropriating our rights by fulfilling our demand of creating alternative kinds of urban realities. On the other hand, what we mean by urban revolution is important.

Because, as discussed in the discussion of the right to the city, I believe that the types and operations of organizations can be planned in light of current circumstances and required struggle types. For example, forums, neighborhood initiatives or hybrid organizations meet on the common ground of right to city concept. Because, as I

discussed before, its flexible qualities define it as an embracing phenomenon. Different organizations from different scales, with particular objectives can run their systems according to their own ways of right to city but at some certain points they can meet on the common grounds against capitalism. Also, despite the violations of capitalism causing different kinds of victimhoods, the pain can make different groups of people come together. These gatherings are frequently large-scale disturbances. Nevertheless, what counts here is drive and the opportunities it offers, not scale. The Gezi Parkı revolt was also precipitated by the convergence of these possibilities.

Again, with reference to Baysal (2019), the urban opposition that existed before Gezi fed the process leading to Gezi. The Life Against the 3<sup>rd</sup> Bridge Platform, which was established before the Northern Forests Defense after Gezi, Validebağ Volunteers who have been protecting their groves for many years, Haydarpaşa Solidarity, which organized the struggle against the Haydarpaşa project, are some prominent examples of this. Although the urban struggle could not save Emek, it is an important experience before Gezi with its creative resistance tactics, raids on the project area and short-term street occupations. As a result, we can say that following Gezi, a brand- new citizenship emerged from every corner of the country, one that protected its public spaces and commons. When we consider the right to the city, we can refer to the struggle for the right to the city as this vein that runs through urban public spaces and commons.(Baysal, 2019)

Therefore, urban social movements from different scales are not isolated actions which can only be evaluated in their own terms. They are the lights of other rights to city movements, further solidarities, and initiatives. But, more importantly, they can be viewed as a source of new types of conscious ways of thinking and critical minds, which is a critical step in the process of reclaiming our lives from capitalism and reclaiming our minds and bodies. Because new critical thinking methods, while breaking our ties with capitalism, will give us the ability to deconstruct situations in our lives and reread, reproduce them in light of current mindsets and conditions, as

a result, it will lead to the exploration of new and alternative ways of living as well as resistance. These motivations also include the hope of being able to act in cities and the efforts to reorganize the city and urban life based on use value. Finally, based on all of these, the answer for the question of the “what we got in our hands?” could be our demand for a new city and a new life which got rid of its ties with capitalism as much as possible, our conscious and critical mindsets, our everyday struggles which bear further potentials for resistance and the possibility of action, motivations and creativities as the legacies of the past resistances and our common base of right to city, even we manifest it in our own ways, can be told.

### **2.3 Gezi Parkı Resistance as an Ensemble of Public Reaction: “Matter Was Never About the Trees Alone”:**

City in this sense, for is a “condition of human coexistence full of potentialities.” (Stavrídes, 2019, p. 16) Therefore, the city has intrinsic reclaimable capacity notwithstanding the constraints. These capabilities may be fulfilled via the urban dwellers' solidarity-based rebellion against any accumulated suffering. However, this idea of revolution is not limited to broad scale protests alone. On the contrary, it is repeated every time we develop survival strategies in response to the vast inequities that pervade our daily lives. (Stavrídes, 2019) In light of all these factors, the Gezi resistance is an assemblage of public outburst against conservative capitalism in Turkey, which encompasses rebellions in our everyday lives despite its global visibility. As I've mentioned in earlier parts, it is a peaceful, spontaneous, and politically unaffiliated collective reaction to inequities, displacements, and violations of rights. As we all know, the urban interference in Gezi Park and Taksim Square was the culmination of a larger strategy. Despite these concerns, the real inauguration of the Taksim pedestrianization project, which has been proceeding since 2011, in May 2013 was the breaking point of the collected uncomfortable energy resulting from urban life's disparities and stresses.

The first protests began in May 2013 when a group of environmental activists set up tents in the park with their peaceful site-in occupation. (Özkırmı, 2014) Activists who were opposing the cutting of the trees were met with excessive police brutality in the form of their tents being burned down. This situation was reciprocated as the protests turned into an overall reaction across the country. In this way, the Gezi protests reflected frustration towards the entire violation of rights through exclusionary political institutions. (Bakiner, 2014) As a result of the various urban struggles of urban dwellers who voiced their diverse demands across the country in their own exclusive approaches to resistance, the Gezi Park protests became a plethora of resistance. (Gambetti, 2014) In this way, the protests started to be reproduced in the squares, neighborhoods, streets of the cities, in the performances held on the streets, in the houses, on the city walls and in the social media, in short, on the entire public sphere. Gezi Park was occupied and turned into a campground by protesters after the withdrawal of the police from the park on June 1. (Özkırmı, 2014) According to Gambetti,(2014) the park area became a composition of resistance and turned into a fully accessible real public space where very different groups of people are aware of and disturbed by the unrest in Turkey.



Figure 2.1: Gezi Parkı with Diverse Banners,2013

(Source: <https://ankara.imo.org.tr/TR,47498/gezi-7-yasinda.html>, retrieved on September 17,2022)

Therefore, Gezi Park turned into a cohabitation space that is full which is designed by manifestations of the right to the city considering the unique lifestyles and self-expression preferences of diverse groups of people such as left-wing parties, unions, feminists, LGBTIQ+ people, football fans and many more. (Gambetti, 2014) In other words, Gezi Park has been the scene of a coexistence, where many people who contribute to urban life from many different angles express their demands on the city and urban life in their own unique ways.

### 2.3.1 Spatialities of Resistance

This cohabitation illustrates a process in which varied lifestyles mix by altering both the park's physical landscape and their own lives. Correspondingly, while this communal living practice is a search for an alternative life in which individuals could indeed directly exercise their right to make decisions and have a voice as urban

dwellers due to their contribution to the production and reproduction of urban life, it is also fully accountable for the reproduction of urban space through liberatory practices. According to Harvey (2004), space is not a monolithic, mere physical and stable entity but on the contrary, it is a social product which is understandable and definable in many manners beyond its physical boundaries. “Therefore, there is no such thing as space outside of the processes that define it. Processes do not occur in space but define their own spatial frame. The concept of space is embedded in or internal to process.” (Harvey, 2004, p. 4) An occurrence or object in a specific location in space cannot be comprehended by reference to what happens alone at that spot. It depends on the surrounding circumstances. Therefore, “...space is neither absolute, relative or relational in itself, but it can become one or all simultaneously depending on the circumstances.” (Harvey, 2004, p. 5) Likewise, according to Stavrides (2019), space is both the cause and outcome of social existence and lived experience. Thus, reimagining space encompasses any acts that reveal undiscovered potentials that might liberate us from the strict ties of capitalism. The embedded potentials of the space, which are revealed in line with time, activities and everyday life practices, form its spatial capacity. Once again with a Lefebvrian perspective, urban dwellers’ reclaiming their rights to the city is not merely that they occupy and access the already produced urban space, but that they can reproduce and therefore “appropriate” them in a way that meets their needs in their lifestyles. (Purcell, 2003) From this point of view, “right to appropriation” enables the full and complete usage of urban space possible. The dynamics of life were redefined in the Gezi Park occupation process from a resistance perspective, revealing space’s capacities and potentials through various forms of commoning.

Decisions in this alternative new lifestyle could be put forward with direct participation and the space was produced by the common will of urban dwellers with self-help tactics arising from lived experience. In this way, they were able to practice intellectual and spatial commons in everyday practices that were built on the basis of sharing. Most of the activities in the search for alternative lifestyles in the



occupation process in Gezi Park were carried out in the light of ecological and anti-capitalist sensitivities. The first indication of this alternative way of life is that decisions are taken in forums and meetings with direct democracy. In stark contrast to the discriminations brought on by the capitalist lifestyle, everyone has the right to speak and be heard, regardless of ethnic religious and sexual binaries. (Gambetti, 2014) With the tradition of forums, which became widespread with the Gezi Park resistance, spaces such as parks and neighborhoods were transformed into “parliaments” where people shared their local problems and sought solutions with equal rights. In this respect, forums became resistance events where direct democracy created its own spatiality by challenging capitalist top-down decision-making mechanisms. These were held in Taksim, Kızılay, Kugulu Park, Gundogdu, Abbasağa, Yoğurtçu and several other parks and squares. (Gambetti, 2014) Platforms such as Taksim Solidarity, Caferağa Solidarity and Yeldeğirmeni Solidarity, football fans and NGOs played a major role in the formation of forums, discussions and horizontal organizational forms before, during and after the Gezi Park resistance. In this way, although the location of the resistance has changed, it has continued its existence by creating its own dynamics and spatiality in different spaces according to the conditions, local data and time. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020)

In addition, teams for services such as stray animal feeding, infirmary work, organic agriculture, painting directory signs, food and beverage service, light and sound system for meetings, and construction work were established on a voluntary and collaborative basis, without any leadership or institutional supervision, and solidarity was maintained in daily life. Different amounts and types of labor were required for various tasks, thus they were performed in ad hoc shifts. (Gambetti, 2014) The spatial equivalent of this situation was the creation of “Gezi Neighborhoods” which were constituted by the common library, children's workshops, the market, infirmary and the common kitchen, which were created by common labor and where everyone benefited from the value produced. These teams not only serve the Gezi commune, but also for the common good, meet the wishes of the people in the park and pass by

as much as possible. Contrary to the market economy, reciprocity for the Gezi commune was provided not by money but by desire for solidarity.



Figure 2.2: Devrim Market in Gezi Park providing donated food to visitors,2013. (Source: <https://www.ensonhaber.com/galeri/gezi-parki-duvarlarina-yiyecek-birakildi> ,retrieved on Decemeber 21, 2022)

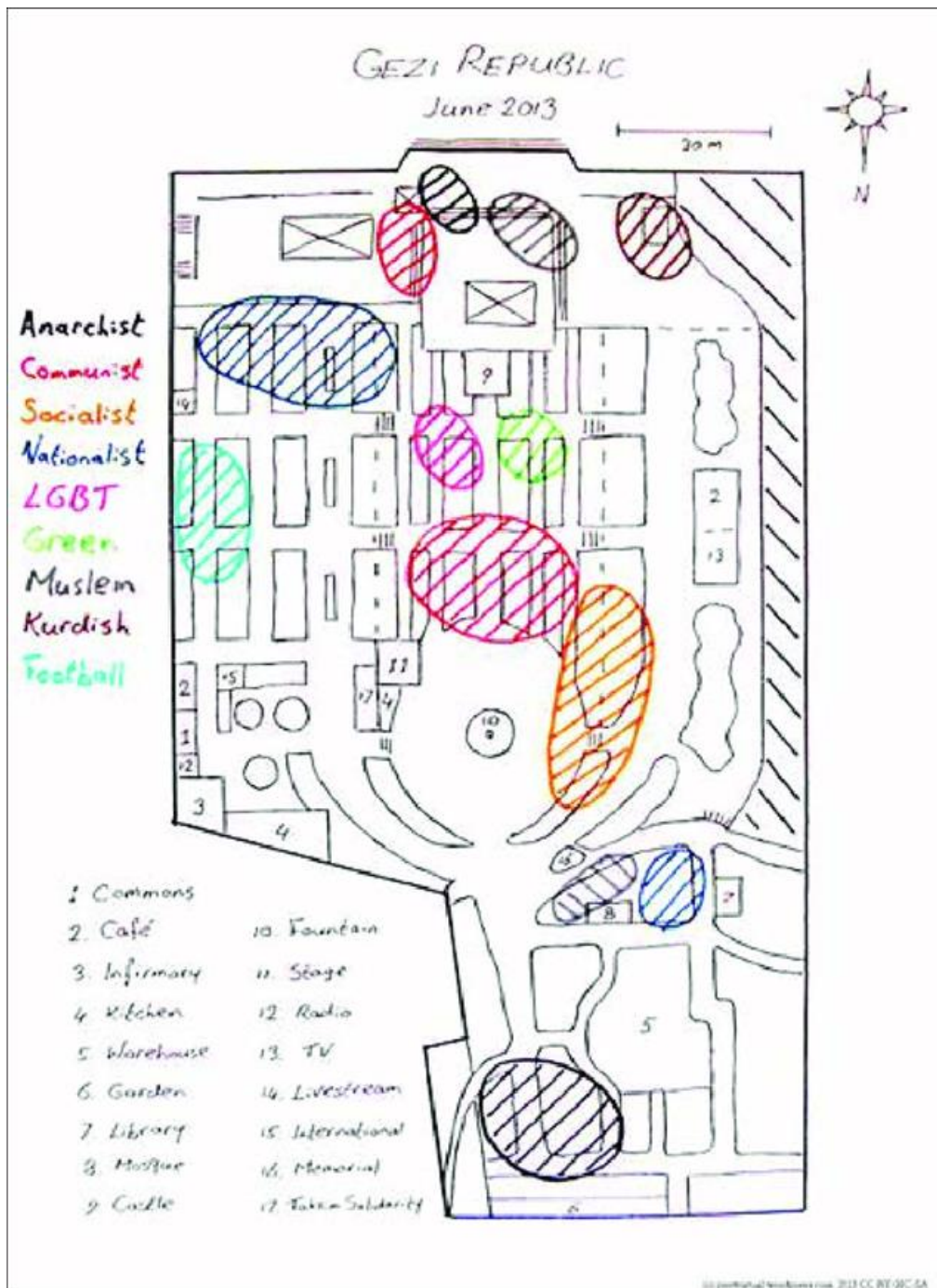


Figure 2.3: Map of Occupied Gezi Park Encampment “Gezi Neighbourhoods”  
Image Courtesy of Oscar Ten Houten #occupygezi, 2013 (Source: [https://www.researchgate.net/figure/map-of-occupied-gezi-park-Demonstrating-group-specific-use-of-space-gezi\\_fig11\\_270560795](https://www.researchgate.net/figure/map-of-occupied-gezi-park-Demonstrating-group-specific-use-of-space-gezi_fig11_270560795), retrieved on December 20, 2022)

Therefore, those who came to the park from outside could contribute to these teams in a way that could serve the common good. Everyone who inhabits the park on a voluntary basis had valuable labor potential without the division of labor. Everyone was free to contribute to this solidarity-based communal life and in return to benefit from the value which is commonly created by the Gezi commune. In short, both the labor and the value produced were common and belonged to everyone. (Gambetti, 2014) In contrast to the neoliberal conservative imposed lifestyle, the dynamics of alternative life experienced in Gezi Park solidarity were based on meeting in commoning practices and diverse manifestations of the right to the city. Because of this reason, Gezi Parkı resistance was an overall uprising.

A further situation that challenges the conventional perception of space production is resisting through space via producing its own spatiality while expressing itself through performances that are held with the purpose of protesting. With the help of these performances, people and artists occupied the space transiently and reproduced it in many tactical and creative ways. Their deconstructing and rereading of the fragments of the space and instant tactics for intervening to it have revealed unexplored potentials. In accordance with their approaches of resisting, they created their own strategies of using space and their actions constituted diverse functions, meanings, and occupations for these spatialities. In this manner these tactical interventions to space with their own bodies, instruments, and the most importantly very creative ideas, challenged the stable idea of space and its imposed meanings and functions. According to Öztürkmen (2014) for around ten days, the park was the location of several rituals' characteristic of a celebratory event, with participants proclaiming their collective identity, sharing food and products, camping, and sloganeering. Some of these performances that enable "performing freedom" are public football games, open-air cinemas, daily yoga classes, various workshops, etc. Moreover, Gezi Park was the venue for the events known as Gezi recital, as the stage for open-air piano performances.



Figure 2.4: Davide Martello playing the piano in Taksim Square, 2013 (Source : <https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/15/arts/music/music-in-istanbul-is-intermission-for-a-protest.html> , retrieved on November 17, 2022)

One of the most influential activisms in the resistance was Erdem Gündüz’s “standing man” protest. Gündüz protested human rights violations, including excessive police violence, solely by standing. He by only standing, turned a piece of the urban space into a silent protesting place in a tactical way, with his standing body. After a while many people participated in protest and “standing” has been added to our resistance repertoire as a protest act.





Figure 2.5: “Standing Man” protest in Taksim Square,2013

(Source: <https://everywheretaksim.net/tr/ogun-haber-ben-barisa-inanan-bir-insanim-duran-adam/> ,retrieved on November 17,2022)

Another resistance that created its spatiality through performance during the Gezi protests was the “mevlevi” dance performed with the gas mask. He was one of the artists who protested the violence against people who have the most natural right to claim their rights to city, with the help of the performance. On the evening of June 15, Gezi Park was evacuated as a result of police intervention. However, the resistance did not end despite this violence and continued with local demonstrations in other cities, neighborhood and street forums, activities based on sharing. As Interviewee 2 who is a participant of Don Quixote Social Center exemplifies,

After police used disproportionate force to clear Gezi Park, the resistance persisted on the streets and in the neighborhoods. As a result, numerous locations were compelled to take on completely different functions. This was exemplified by the bars on Kadife Street. One night, when police aggression had escalated to the point that we couldn't breathe due to the gas, we entered a multi-story pub and offered medical attention. Even though I lacked a health

education, I was assisting by carrying out the instructions. Consider a bar that has been converted into an infirmary where ill patients are sprawled out.<sup>18</sup>

She also talks about the development of pleasant habits from that difficult time on the streets. Again, she tells that on Kadife Street, when it was already a street of bars, people poured into the street to relax and chat in a shabby way, and they turned the whole street into bars where people could sit and chat on the sidewalks. According to her, this tradition continues on Kadife Street. All these spatialities of resistance have led to creativity by challenge, sharing, communal living, and unexpected gatherings. In this context, one of these spatialities is the practice of “squatting”, which is also the subject of this study.

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<sup>18</sup> “Gezi Parkı’nın aşırı polis şiddetiyle dağıtılmasından sonra sokaklarda ve mahalle aralarında direniş devam etti. Öyle ki bir çok mekan ihtiyaçtan kaynaklı bambaşka işlevlere bürünmek zorunda kaldı. Bunlara bir örnek, Kadife Sokaktaki barlar olmuştu. Polis şiddetinin çok arttığı, gazdan nefes alamadığımız bir gece, çok katlı barlardan birine girip sağlık hizmeti vermiştik. Benim sağlık eğitimim olmamasına rağmen kişi eksikliğinden dolayı söylenenleri yaparak yardım ediyordum. Fenalaşan insanların boylu boyunca uzandığı revire dönüşmüş bir bar düşünebilirsiniz.” Translated by the author.





## **CHAPTER 3**

### **APPROPRIATION OF DON QUIXOTE SOCIAL CENTER**

According to the approach of this study, the appropriation of space notion is considered as a method of searching for alternatives via “resisting through space” against the anguish, inequalities, and disparities created by exchange value centered urban reality. In other words, the appropriation of space notion is discussed as an assemblage of a set of non-standardized practices that embody resistance through space against the interventions of interwoven capitalist relationship forms in our lives by exploring the inherent potentials of urban space through free will and critical mind. In this context, the first endeavor of this section is to initially understand the urban space in terms of its intrinsic potentials and scrutinize the notion of appropriation as practices that generate alternative spatialities that reveal and concretize these diverse potentials.

Even though the capitalist mode of relationships has the power to direct the reality of the city by being diffused in every aspect of life, the unpredictable flow of life harbors a lot of possibilities and unforeseen circumstances that can be the source of many potential urban realities. The city, as the place where the life takes place, definitely has very strong ties with all the conditions of life and the mode of production, and the space, as a product of the relationships of production in these systematized conditions of capitalism, has very strong ties with market relations, economic fluctuations, etc. This circumstance facilitates the isolation of humankind from its own surroundings. By acting, determining, showing responsibility, and engaging in “external reality” and building interactions with the milieu, subjects appropriate that environment and simultaneously achieve their potential, their inherent nature, in accordance with this idea. Parallel to these, established interactions between person and his/her surroundings include generating, utilizing,

and being required to make choices about the environment and surroundings, which is the process of obtaining coping mechanisms through appropriating them. (Graumann, 1976)

### **3.1 Introducing Appropriation, Definitions and Approaches**

We might define the “appropriation” concept as the entirety of operations we undertake to claim ownership of our environment, in the sense of modifying and altering them to accomplish a specific purpose. (Noschis, Dosio, Feddersen, & Triantis, 1978) Also, when we consider the appropriation of space in its broadest meaning, it is a concept that refers to people’s and groups’ formation, acquisition, occupancy, alteration, enrichment, concern for, and/or purposeful use of a place to make it their own. (Rioux, Scrima, & Werner, 2017) These acts of generation, adaptation, and proprietorship also pertain to the conception of space appropriation, which refers to the legitimization of bearing a claim on the decision-making processes of existing and prospective organizations and the purposeful uses of urban spaces. In this regard, Graumann (1976) explains some definitions of “appropriation of space,” such as:

- Doing, manipulating, making, categorizing, producing, shaping, forming, destroying things
- taking possession, gaining the power of or jurisdiction of spaces either temporarily or long term by occupation, squatting<sup>19</sup>, sit-ins by lawful, legal, illegal occupation by violating norms, rules
- personalization of spaces reshaping space: making space habitable (Graumann, 1976, p. 124)

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<sup>19</sup> Squatting: in its simplest sense “to live in an empty building or area of land without the permission of the owner” Within the scope of this research, it is an urban social movement that begins with the occupation phase and concurrently encompasses a vast array of space appropriations. It differs from occupation in that its objective is not just to satisfy the demand for housing or space, but also to generate social discourse on issues such as housing, production relations, etc. as global urban crisis. For this reason, it is itself a protest regardless of the cause for its execution. Source: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ownership>, retrieved on February,19,2023

This act of manipulating, rereading the given fragments of space and reproducing them is achieved in order to meet the needs of people. Therefore, subjects of appropriation are not only using the space; on the contrary, by deconstructing, questioning and challenging the aspects of space, they are making the space suitable and “appropriate” to their needs and desired lifestyles. Accordingly, it is obvious that the appropriation of space and alternative life practices have a reciprocal relationship. Space can be reproduced in a conflictual way, by its dwellers through human needs, life requirements, and everyday practices. The appropriation of space is embodied and performed through various unique types of activities and movements in these rethinking and reproductions of urban space. It is a “continuous synergy” between citizens and urban space that reconstructs them simultaneously. (Melis, Antonio, & Thompson, 2020, p. 4) From another point of view, in unpredictable everyday life occurrences, the envisaged flow and the program of the space, are deconstructed by the complex conditions and the relationships of life and reproduced by these conditions by being reread through these circumstances. It is through this contingent process that the undiscovered, hidden layers and usages of space are investigated. According to Wigley (1989, p. 661) this is the endeavor of meaning exploration, but it has evolved from attempting to assemble steady and manageable architectural interpretations to cover a broad attempt to rupture and scatter meaning in order to take advantage of the dissolution of contemporary society and the absence of consensus. This absence of consensus is the exact point where conflict, creativity, originality, and thus (re)appropriation is achieved and, in my opinion, it is the very essence of communing. Due to these distinctions and controversies, we are able to exercise our right to the city in a wide range of ways. This is the actual reason why, regardless of our differences, we still meet commonalities. For this reason, the idea of appropriation denotes to me precisely manipulating the “given” with our distinct characteristics and engaging in a process of reciprocal alteration. In this regard, Pile (1995) approaches the appropriation of

urban space as a way of discovering the unexpected through a mutual process of reproduction.

This process can reintroduce the city to the urban dweller, offering an opportunity to discover something new and, through their own agendas and perspectives, find a new mapping and a new way of thinking about cities. The strange becomes familiar and the familiar becomes strange. (Pile, 1995, p. 265)

This way of thinking, by putting urban space at the center of action, paves the way to perceive it as “a blending realm between human and natural spheres and as the heart of our prompt experiences of the world.” (Melis et al., 2020, p. 4) There are inconsistencies between this “absolute” view of space and the changing nature of people’s actual needs, aspirations, and requirements. Such tensions generate creative dissonances between the intended and envisioned meaning, function, and occupancy of urban space and its actual usage, these dissonances nurture resistance potentials through the capacity for challenge and action. The creation of these potentials raises questions about the aspects of space and life patterns associated with them, both of which are products of the capitalist mode of production and existence. In this manner, communities build their spatialities via the inventiveness of commons, conflict, and diverse patterns of everyday living on a given place by using its provided and mandated physical and perceptual characteristics. For instance, alternative communal living patterns need their own creative spatialities; hence, spaces are developed to satisfy these requirements. This informal formation is done by physical features such as publicly constructed shared areas as opposed to “divided,” “closed,” or “private” places. In addition, the life developed in these places challenges the capitalist normative discourses of “gender roles,” “labor division,” etc. and resists them via the alternate spatiality created through the appropriation of space through performances. Last but not least, the occupation component is problematic since it differs from the intended occupation by blurring public/private understandings and redefining the concept of boundaries. In

conclusion, the appropriation of space with its imaginative methods of performance reveals potential through generating spatialities.

a place that is a center of action and blends the natural and the human, reflecting how we experience the world. This may be interpreted as saying that place exists when space is occupied, whether by a thing or person, and the occupation is what gives it meaning and cultural value. (Melis et al., 2020, p. 15)

Frequently, the unanticipated behaviors of a place's users obfuscate the intended design story, adding a contrasting dimension to urban life. (Melis et al., 2020) In this regard, the appropriation of space while reflecting these conflicts is also a human activity involving the modification of a population's environment in order to optimize its use in accordance with the population's requirements. (Atasoy & Erkman, 1976) In short, it is an embodiment of comprehending urban dweller centered cities. These concepts position urban resilience as a dynamic that contributes to the creation of the city's external interactions and thus, plays a crucial role in urban dynamics. (Melis et al., 2020) In this sense, appropriation can be framed as an inborn need, and its resilience comes from its transience.

Appropriation is a result of the need to adapt to a cityscape that changes in a way that removes reference points familiar to its populace. Appropriation's temporary nature becomes essential to urban flexibility and may be seen as the right of its citizens as social beings living in urban settings. (Melis et al., 2020, p. 64)

On the other hand, some studies about the appropriation of space discuss the notion basically as a way of gaining dominance over space. Prohansky (1976) defines "appropriation of space" as a process in which individuals are consciously introjecting the properties of space in unique ways of expressing themselves. According to him (1976), space is appropriated in order to attain control, authority, and mastery over space. However, according to Gurallar (2015, p. 73), "every control can carry weak points against the unpredictable flow of life. Every control has the

possibility of confrontation to a resistance. Therefore, every control has restrictions on interfering with human life.”<sup>20</sup>

In this context the space is a struggle arena and architectural object is not absolute, it is contingent. This can be explained through two main discussions. The first one is that, as mentioned previously, space does not have an absolute nature but has a contingent existence, which harbors challenging potential inherently. This potential is embodied by the “informal” everyday creativity of groups of people. The social landscape of cities is largely formed by these informal everyday practices and the streetscape. Rather than the formal and static structures, cities are shaped by human practices, change, flux, and the spatialities that are established around the dynamic informalities, or, in other words, “what is happening on the streets.” (Melis et al.,2020) And the second dimension is that an architect or one single professional cannot be the only producer and decision-making mechanism of space. Subjects as “non-architects” who produce and reproduce urban life from the moment they occupy a space they already begin to appropriate it as a way of “(un)doing” architecture. (Rende, 1998, p. 139) From this vantage point, the positions of the different willpowers of the individuals, which have the demand of controlling the urban space, are upgraded to active participator status. In the ever-changing circumstances, urban space gains a contingent character, by being the struggle arena of many willpowers. If there is an envisaged flow and the program of the urban space which developed around the capitalistic urban reality and serve to satisfy the needs of this reality, there are also the control demand and powers of different willpowers and the wisdoms of the individuals which are the inhabitants of the city. Individuals have the opportunity of reading and using the urban space, with the perspective of their own wisdom and reasoning, independent from the meaning attributed to it and

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<sup>20</sup> “Ancak her kontrol mekanizmasının, insan yaşamına müdahalesinin sınırları vardır. Her kontrol, yaşamın tahmin edilemeyecek akışına karşı zayıf bazı noktalar taşıyabilir. Aynı zamanda her kontrolün karşı bir dirençle karşılaşma olasılığı vardır.” Translated by the author.

the fixed ideals defined by the dominant power relations of the city. Therefore, despite the space's producing discourse or itself being a discourse, the perception of this rhetoric by the individuals as different forms of willpower, is subjective. Every hegemony constructs its counter hegemony. (Gurallar, 2015) We should remember that there is always possibility of action, in spite of the fact that, there are some chosen solutions to the repeating situations in the system. (Rainbow, 2012, pp. 12-13) Also, with the effects of the struggle of the control demands of different willpowers, the possibility of action can be searched, again, in the contingent character of the urban space. Here, the different willpowers are not in the counter positions but are the establishers of the political relationships, by always keeping the possibility of conflict alive, and always nourishing by multiplication. As a result of this, they nourish the contingent character of the space, and are nourished by it. (Gurallar, 2015) Therefore, if we revisit the main assertion of the study that defines appropriation of space as the act of resisting through space, we can state that for this study, appropriation of space is a tool for "taking back" urban space from the restrictions of capitalism. In short, it can also be discussed as "reappropriation" of space and urban life which are already "appropriated" by state capitalism and its oppressive tools. Parallel to these, Prohansky (1976) also discusses as a consolidation to above ideas, he discusses appropriation of space as an open process which inherently contains the possibilities of reappropriations. Also, during these processes subjects continuously create their own individuality and identity reciprocally with space. Additionally, "...person does not appropriate space over time, but he reappropriates it in response to changes in himself, in the space itself, and in the broader social context which defines the particular physical setting in question." (Prohansky, 1976, p. 39) In a similar manner, Raymond (1976) approaches appropriation of space "as an assemblage of practices which allows the reciprocal relationship between the space and individual and the occurring of social

relationships can be. “Appropriation of space implies to communicate: the social qualities of the place, the I or the WE”<sup>21</sup> (Raymond, 1976, p. 70)

Correlatively, appropriation of space refers to a vibrancy and vitality of spatial grasp. This process provides the potential to create an objectivized self-awareness in which being is reproduced by breaking away from simple, mundane presence. (Korosec-Serfaty, 1976) According to her, (1976) appropriation of space is when the “static” space understanding is confronted to the actual utilization of spaces. Thus, appropriation of space is an active creative act which takes its creativity from critical minds, free will, demand of claiming right to city and everyday life. Serfaty problematizes the appropriations of urban spaces and exemplifies as, urban public spaces are “appropriated by pedestrians in daily routine.” (Korosec-Serfaty, 1976, p. 48) Also, as discussed by Sansot (1976, p. 65)

... Thus, a city must penetrate my heels, my legs, my back. It must sometimes tighten my throat and overwhelm me. ... through them, I change myself in a glorious suffering body in contact with so many other bodies and the city becomes flesh because I, myself have made flesh of myself.

Appropriation of urban space via subjective engagement offers squares and public spaces dynamism and, thus, a sense of belonging. (Korosec-Serfaty, 1976) This understanding also paves way for the multiple reappropriations of urban space by multiple groups of people. As an active act of participation, appropriation of urban space as the spaces of encounter of heterogenous groups, gives participants the right to claim their demand on city through establishing creative, questioning and challenging web of relationships via space. This web of relationships is among the group of people which commonly produce and reproduce this environment in the common process of appropriation. Therefore, Graumann (1976, pp. 113-125) by transferring the ideas of Marx, states that, “appropriation” is not an individual

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<sup>21</sup> Emphasis has been taken from the original text.



process but rather the real subject of it is society. Therefore, according to Marx, “the optimal realization of man’s potentialities will only be achieved in communism.”

In the shared processes of these common reproduction, marginalization is eradicated through space-based solidarities. In this context, a city is a multifaceted, heterogeneous, and conflictual entity. The metropolis exemplifies the impossibility of uniformity more than anything else. (Eisenschmidt, 2012) The heterogeneity, complexity, and potential for disruption inherent to the city’s nature are the foundation of unanticipated encounters and, thus, the prospect of liberation from rigid ideals, restrictive procedures, and system uniformity. The prosperity of urban life is contingent on the interactions built between people, ideas, and goods that bear the potential for conflict. (Martin, 1990) On the basis of these ideas, it may be stated that emancipation from the fixed ideals of capitalism can be achieved by rejecting the contingent nature of urban space. With the complexity of urban space, the potential of conflict, and the unforeseen interactions, the city’s political stance against the constraints of dense capitalism has a lot to offer. Therefore, it is essential to see the city as an opportunity. (Eisenschmidt, 2012) To explore the hidden meanings and unexplored depths of the space, which is an intentional assessment of existence, the speculative frameworks of the events and movements serve as the instruments for investigating the unusual intersections. (Tschumi & Young, 1994) They are the methods of questioning and analyzing the reality and therefore, the space. These movements and occupations, by transgressing the social definitions and modes of producing space, constitute spatial and temporal strategies of resistance. “They stem from a desire to challenge ideas, within architectural practice and integral to patriarchal and capitalist society, about the ways we occupy and inhabit space” (Rende, 1998, p. 138)

By being sudden, surprising, and contingent, events and movements reveal the unexplored interpretations of space. Disjunctions between function, form, and social values, as well as “non-coincidence between meaning and being, movement and

space, and man and object,” are domains in which we might investigate the hidden, undiscovered deeper perspectives of space that can recreate the space in a contingent sense. In this respect, resistance is composed of ordinary life actions and manifests in different incarnations. Because, in addition to the previously outlined resistance potentials, urban social movements and occupations also provide resistance opportunities. Different social groupings imbue space with “amalgams of different meanings,” functions, and values. Such disparities may lead to societal tensions and disputes over the use of space for private and public purposes. (Routledge, 2009, p. 70) And the contemporary urban space is very convenient to be reproduced from its own fragments, with its constantly and very rapidly changing circumstances and the countless data to be deconstructed as the consequences of these circumstances. In short, by being sudden and unpredictable, these events question, deconstruct, and dismantle the data of the urban space as they are at the exact moment of the taking place of the event, without the effects of the attributed cultural codes and prescribed meanings, to find out the undiscovered way of thinking about the space. The character of the act of deconstruction, which is a way of questioning, is itself also a contingent process.

Deconstruction therefore analyzes and questions conceptual pairs which are currently accepted as self-evident and natural, as if they hadn't been institutionalized at some precise point, as if they had no history. Because of being taken for granted, they restrict thinking. (Derrida, 1997, p. 146)

Deconstruction, as achieved by the urban social movements in this sense, is not simply a technique but a way of thinking that provides the one with the opportunity to shift the data of the system, and thereby, frees oneself from the authority of the system. In short, the temporal dimension of the events reveals the unexplored and contingent perspectives of the reading of urban space. In conclusion, the temporality of the occurrences reveals the situational and contingent views of the urban space's interpretation. The reciprocal, indifferent, or even antagonistic interaction between spaces, happenings, and movements propagates additional

layers of awareness into the reality of the industrial city's tangible territory. (Tschumi, 1996) In search of alternatives, the disjunctions of the events, in the scope of this study occupations, temporary appropriations to search for the undiscovered and unpredictable layers of the reality in which, one can find the potentials and the possibilities of emancipating from the standardization, the strict rules and the fixed ideals of the capitalist city and find opportunities of resisting to them. Ephemeral reorganizations of urban spaces are minor interferences that arise from conflicts, constant needs, and daily life creativity that are open to everyone, instantly developed, and generally located in between the streets, gaps between the buildings, or the backyards of residential areas. In this sense, they are emergent activities that reappropriate the urban space in a bottom-up manner by reproducing and challenging the planned, accustomed, and thus commodified understanding of leisure activities and the spaces of it. This way of appropriating urban space can be achieved through various kinds of activities which vary from walking as a way of discovering and communicating with the city to DIY urbanism approaches. According to Noschis et al. (1978, p. 452) "The appropriation of public space is essentially by activities of everyday life, such as a group of men who get together every Sunday at a corner of a public square to discuss football and politics." Also, as Gehl (2010) discusses life and its diversity and complexity are unfolded within the spontaneous acts we make in our city, such as walking through which we discover the environment in which we inhabit. According to him, "common characteristic of life in urban space is the versatility and complexity of the activities, with much overlapping and frequent shifts between purposeful walking, stopping, resting, staying, and conversing." (Gehl, 2010, p. 19-20) Therefore, as dwellers of the city, inhabitants are constantly producing and reproducing cities by tactical interferences. One of these interferences is "squatting" practice which is an urban social movement that reflects the creativity of everyday life through sharing and conflicts.

### **3.2 “Squatting” Practice Definition, Approaches**

If we start from scratch, squatting, in a general sense, is the refusal to acknowledge legal property ownership and the occupation of unowned property, which entails the unauthorized use of property, without the desire or ability to pay rent. (Rende, 1998) In other words, fundamentally, squatting is the unlawful occupancy of property without the owner’s permission. (Cattaneo & Martinez, 2014) When we think of the world population, the needs of people constitute a great variety and their spatial effects and examples can reach to the numerous levels. However, although there are need-based types, every squatting act is a form of resistance and an urban social movement. Among many oppositional struggles, squatting is distinguished in terms of simultaneously including comprehensive forms of resistance against the broadly diffused diverse forms of oppression of capitalism. Beyond its general definitions, squatting is an assemblage of many commoning practices that include diverse, multiple ways to reclaim the right to the city as an “empty signifier.” Although these commoning networks often include different forms simultaneously, there are specialized squatting practices such as housing need, activism, social diversity, environmental issues due to the way they are established, the main issues they problematize, and the discussion ground they meet. However, all squatting activities are urban social movements that challenge the mode of production, capitalist lifestyles, patriarchy, top-down appropriation of space, and thereby the whole capitalist mentality, and generate alternatives in accordance with these critiques. (Cattaneo & Martinez, 2014) According to them, (2014) squatting expresses a resistance not just to private ownership but also to several components of capitalism. It would be more precise to argue that squatting is a concrete criticism of urban speculation, yet this would disregard the truth that there are numerous different types of contesting economic speculation. Squatting is a diversified existence that attempts the communal fulfillment of human necessities through independent, democratic, and egalitarian modes of citizen participation.

Therefore, while the primary objective of the occupation is not “activism” or protest, squatting is by definition a form of resistance. In other words, squatting seeks alternative ways of resistance against capitalism, which, beyond serving a single purpose, prevents the equitable sharing of resources that belong to all of us in the world, favors certain classes, and creates the infrastructures that feed this situation with socio-cultural discrimination and marginalization. For all these reasons, the aim of this section is primarily to understand the dynamics of squatting practice through the reappropriation practices of space and to discuss the practices of resistance through the space it contains in the context of the diverse alternatives it produces. Within the scope of the approach of this study, squatting is considered a search for overcoming capitalism and a way of creating human-centered urban spaces and alternative spatialities with bottom-up tactics. One of the pillars on which this argument will be built in the quest to overthrow capitalism is the right to the city. I believe that, at the core of the concept of the right to the city and the collective being of human agency, there are fundamental human rights that people possess simply by being born into the world as human beings, which is one of the major things that people have in common, and according to me, appropriating the space they are inhabiting and having the right to determine its characteristics are among them. Since self-growth, “as learning to be human via the continual creative change of the self,” is the primary keystone of being in an ever-expanding communal network, we may also regard the right to full development of intellectual, physical, and spiritual potentials as a common. (Cabannes, Douglass, & Padawangi, 2018, p. 35)

...the health and happiness of oneself, the enhancement of one’s capacities to strive, the validation of one’s personal potential, and the attainment of self-fulfillment serve as a foundation for the development of love and friendship, all of which result from engagement with other people in society. (Cabannes, et al., 2018, p. 35)

Furthermore, human creativity, knowledge, and intellectual accumulation, which are the primary components of self-development are too linked with their prior personal and societal aspects to be separated. In addition, labor is not an individual talent but

a socially organized system that produces and develops communal capacities, such as knowledge and skills. It is hard to determine how much of our creative power, which enables us to generate anything (including space), is an individual trait and how much is the result of historical collaboration. (Köksal, 2020) Therefore, knowledge, skills, all kinds of labor, and human rights (right to the city) are the actualization of human potential and the products of social common activities and efforts and must be shared by all of us. Each of these commons-based ways of thinking exemplifies individuals' cooperating to exhibit their abilities and the driving factors behind human-centered and solidarity-based approaches. The spatial return of these, represents a desire for the construction of alternative public gathering spaces that are formed by immediate needs, impromptu relationships, aspirations, and a sophisticated web of relationships. (Foucault & Miskowiec, 1986) This way, alternative, palimpsest, and intersecting creative realities and spatialities are created by violating and blurring stable, strict, and given rules of the space through the effective collaboration of people who join to forge unity around common values and interests (labor, rights, collective knowledge, etc.). In this sense, the reappropriation of urban spaces as squatting configurations, symbolized by the demand for common, alternative shared housing, requires allowing citizens to engage in direct decision-making processes about these places. In addition, appropriation of space practices have inventive potential in terms of rereading its own data and reproducing the space from its own fragments, but always in a unique manner; this is because establishing ties with a space requires investigating its unexplored functions, meanings, and occupations. In this sense, Stavrides describes space as potential, inasmuch as it is the stage where the sharing of experiences, creativity, and conflict transforms them into locations of comprehension. Actualization of these prospects is intrinsic to the consciousness of a plethora of ideas and forms of involvement. (Stavrides, 2019)

In contrast to this understanding, the use of discrimination, which stems from the paradoxical character of capitalism, as a vehicle for homogeneity is a means of enhancing exploitation and dependence. Therefore, private property, whose

infrastructure is the result of social discourses, is merely an institution that reproduces the logic of closure and introversion in order to make it dependent on the market economy. In this view, eradicating capitalism entails a life without monetary dependency; capitalist market economies and their associated discourses would be destroyed and replaced with a conscious mindset. (Cattaneo & Martinez, 2014) In this regard, reclaiming urban space and urban life would need new living patterns, methods of thinking, and sharing, and hence a new civilization. Thanks to squatting as an assemblage of urban communing populations of people from diverse backgrounds discover new forms of autonomy and safety on economic, social, and communicative terrains, which creates the potential for them to reject systems of political representation and assert their own democratic action powers. (Hardt & Negri, 2012) Squatting, in this sense, is an alternative urban practice based on shared decision-making processes that aims to improve the chances for a more equitable way of life and urban dwellings. In response to capitalist urbanization, housing speculation, and unsustainable, alienating lifestyles, many squatters fought for communal direct action, self-management, and communitarian ways of living. (Martinez, 2020)

### **3.3 Appropriation of Space as A Way of Performing Resistance: Squatting of *Don Quixote Social Center***

Similar to earlier instances in Europe, the Don Quixote Social Center regarded the act of squatting as a means rather than an aim. The primary objective of Don Quixote activists was to seek urban justice and egalitarian lifestyles against all forms of exploitation, including gender issues, unequal distribution of wealth, and ecological problems caused by state capitalism, as well as local issues, which triggered the Gezi Resistance. In this pursuit of social justice, it was intended to oppose all injustice by forming networks of solidarity and to construct a new notion of citizenship and space-based alternatives to capitalism's countless forms of exploitation. (Kocabiçak

et al.,2020,) According to Interviewee 1, who was a squatter activist at the Don Quixote Social Center,

Don Quixote social center, which lasted for 5-6 years; it performed at least as well as its foreign counterparts and was not inferior at all. It created a horizontal public space where everyone participates equally, jointly, and fraternally. It was at the center of many creative scientific, artistic, and social developments.<sup>22</sup>

This new type of citizenship can only be generated by modifying patterns of daily life. Because humans, space, and reality are perpetually recreated by re-establishing their reciprocal and contingent relationships with one another. In this reproduction process, space becomes the sum-total of continuously redefined spatialities characterized by event and motion that transcend the precise geometric constraints ascribed to it. As stated by Interviewee 2, who was a participant in the Don Quixote Social Center, “numerous areas in squatted house have been repurposed often and temporarily from their original use. It varied based on the present need, and this pattern was repeated.”<sup>23</sup> Mindset, human awareness, and methods of thinking are artistically shaped by all this flux. Thus, life and this flow are defined by freedom, liberating practices, and resistance. (Lefebvre, 2014) In this context, Don Quixote Social Center activists primarily gathered around the endeavor of searching for alternative life patterns.

In order to realize the possibility of another world, to transform the space and ourselves together with the space, to open new public spaces where life is shared in the squats, to resist being deprived of memory, to resort to spatial

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<sup>22</sup> “5-6 yıl hayatını sürdürmüş olan Don Kişot işgal evi; yurtdışı benzerlerinden hiç aşağı olmayan ve en az onlar kadar iyi bir performans sergiledi. Herkesin eşit, ortak ve kardeş bir biçimde yer aldığı yatay bir kamusal alan yarattı. Birçok yaratıcı bilimsel, sanatsal ve sosyal gelişmenin merkezinde yer aldı.” (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author

<sup>23</sup> “İşgal evi pek çok mekanın sıklıkla ve geçici şekilde orjinal işlevinden çıkarak çok farklı şekillerde kullanılmasına sahne oldu. O anki ihtiyaç neyse ona göre değişti ve bu durum tekrarlandı.”



tools while doing this, to try to get rid of gender roles, and to organize daily life practices, art, and sports.<sup>24</sup> (Kocabıçak et al.,2020, p. 9)

### 3.3.1 Precedent Conditions of Don Quixote Squat:

In this part, the precedent circumstances, motives, and need for materializing the resistance in “squatting” practice will be examined. To begin with, after strong police involvement dispersed the Gezi Park protests, the quest for methods to sustain the solidarity and resistance began. In this atmosphere, individuals began to congregate in park forums in their neighborhoods, extending the concept of “Everywhere Taksim, Everywhere Resistance.”<sup>25</sup> Despite the forceful limitations and evictions, the urban struggle grew widespread, and other sorts of resistance acts began to emerge in various sections of the country. As a result, individuals with the express intention of continuing the quest for alternatives began to organize in their localities and show their own forms of resistance. Multiple responses to the repressive policies gave rise to the resistance.

In this regard, forums were routine outdoor gatherings where choices on direct democracy and community concerns were made. In this way urban parks turned into actual public spaces where people claim their right to city in their own free ways of expression of their demands and willpowers.<sup>26</sup> Beşiktaş Abbasağa Park, Kadıköy Yoğurtçu Park, Göztepe Park, Fatih Saraçhane Park and Maltepe forums were some of the first examples of open-air gatherings. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020 ) While direct

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<sup>24</sup> “Başka bir dünya olasılığını hayata geçirmek için mekanı ve mekanla birlikte kendimizi dönüştürmek, işgal evlerinde hayatın paylaşıldığı yeni kamusal alanlar açmak, hafızasızlaştırılmaya karşı direnmek bunu yaparken gene mekansal araçlara başvurmak, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinden sıyrılmaya çabalamak ve gündelik hayat pratiklerini,sanatı,sporü örgütlemek için çabalamak” Translated by the author.

<sup>25</sup> “Her yer Taksim her yer direniş” It is the slogan that emerged when the demonstrations took different forms throughout the country during the Gezi resistance and is the symbol of the resistance. Source: author

<sup>26</sup> Harvey argues in his book *Rebel Cities* that true knowledge of public space occurs when individuals reclaim themselves via their own unique expressions.

participation and decision-making processes were taking place in these forums, ways were sought to maintain the commune life experienced during the Gezi Park process, such as workshops with defined purposes. Simultaneously, the protest marches continued. However, as time progressed, the ideas of localization and organization at the level of neighborhoods were put forward in a way that paved the way for the practice of squatting, as the scope of the forums was insufficient to discuss more local problems. In this context, local organizations, initiatives, and neighborhood solidarities have been established, such as Yeldeğirmeni, Caferağa, Osmanağa, Acıbadem, Göztepe, Koşuyolu and Fikirtepe solidarities. (Kocacıçak et al.,2020 ) Among these solidarities, I would like to expand the Yeldeğirmeni solidarity a little, as the Yeldeğirmeni solidarity includes the city actors who occupied the Don Quixote social center.

### **3.3.1.1 Yeldeğirmeni Solidarity**

After the Gezi Park protests, Yeldeğirmeni solidarity was forged via the efforts of a group of individuals who wanted to carry on the struggle. It intended to continue its operations based on an egalitarian concept of common practices while remaining together notwithstanding their differences. Residents of the neighborhood continued to participate in the forums, which are governed by direct democracy, the method of decision-making of solidarity. These forums addressed “base stations in the area, the harm that the change in Haydarpaşa Station would create in the community, solidarity with the child welfare agency in the neighborhood, and the redevelopment of old buildings.”<sup>27</sup> (Kocacıçak et al.,2020, p.16 ) The execution of the decisions taken in the forums was carried out with the assumption that the people who put

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<sup>27</sup> Forumlarda tartışılan konular, “mahallede bulunan baz istasyonları, Haydarpaşa Garındaki değişimin mahallede yaratacağı tahribat, mahalledeki çocuk esirgeme kurumu ile dayanışma yapılması ve mahalledeki eski binaların hayata geçirilmesi gibi konular olmuştur” Translated by the author.

forward the proposal were knowledgeable on the subject, and with the initiative of the commissions that would only be interested in this subject. In addition, for the forums organized for neighborhood problems and suggestions to be inclusive, it was important to consider the residents of the neighborhood who did not participate in the forums, but who made complaints or suggestions directly through social media. (Kocabiçak et al.,2020 )



Figure 3.1: Forum of Yeldeğirmeni Solidarity

(Source:<https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=467129132121487&set=pb.100064732116925.-2207520000>,retrieved on December 8, 2022)

Recurring gatherings based on commons such as open-air cinema, a barter market, and an “earth table”<sup>28</sup> were held outside the forums, in this context, solidarity networks and connections were established with the locals. (Kocabiçak et al.,2020 )

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<sup>28</sup> “Yer yüzü sofrası” Translated by the author.

As the events continued, the necessity for space became a matter of debate in the forums as winter approached. In order to continue sharing ideas, making decisions, and preventing the dissolution, people needed to keep gathering without getting affected by the weather conditions. While mentioning that forums can no longer be conducted outside, it was obvious that this was not the primary reason for the necessity. The actual reason for the need for space was that one of the main factors that ensures the sustainability of solidarity is that it has a “place.” (ibid.) Also, it strengthens the perspective of solidarity by expanding it to neighborhood milieus and making its act of questioning more visible. In addition, the concern to increase the possibilities of making alternative politics, which started in Gezi, necessitated a place of resistance. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020) Last but not least, squatting had the purpose of opposing private property, seeking possibilities of commons-based coexistence. The nature of squatting as a form of resistance and an urban social movement prevents it from serving a single aim. Because for an occupation to be considered as squatting, in addition to the socio-cultural norms and discourses that it challenges in accordance with local conditions and internal dynamics, there must actually be a significant criticism of the system. (Cattaneo & Martinez, 2014) In this direction, the criticism directed by the Don Quixote Social Center at private property with the squatting action is also focused on capital dependency and division-based living conditions. Therefore, the Don Quixote squat would be given as a gift to those whose hearts beat for freedom and equality and to those who struggle for this cause, regardless of where on the globe they reside. (ÇapulTv,2013)

### **3.3.2 Don Quixote Social Center Squatting Experiences**

Following the general decision to squat, a residential building in the Yeldeğirmeni neighborhood, whose construction had been left unfinished and abandoned due to years of land litigation and the contractor selling it to more than one buyer at the same time, was investigated by several volunteers and determined to be suitable for occupation. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020 ) As stated by interviewee 1,

The building was designed as a residence / apartment. The building, which was in court for sale to more people than the number of flats by the contractor, remained abandoned for many years and was brought to the use of the society as a public space after the 2013 Gezi Park Uprising.<sup>29</sup>



Figure 3.2: Vacant Building Before Occupation, 2013 (Source: <https://m.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/150716-don-kisot-yeldegirmeni-ni-iskal-etti>, retrieved on December 8, 2022)

The first component that may be examined here is that the problem of access to housing and shelter, rather than the lack of housing stock, lies at the heart of the unsolvable housing crisis around the globe and in Turkey. The fact that this and many other buildings can be left empty, and derelict leads us to believe that an important aspect of the housing problem can be solved not by constructing more buildings but by decent and fair urban policies that make access to proper and socially adequate housing available to all, rather than just a few privileged classes. After determining

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<sup>29</sup> “Bina bir konut / apartman olarak tasarlanmıřtı. Mteahhitin daire sayısından ok kiřiye satıř yapması ile mahkemelik olan bina uzun yıllar metruk kalmıř ve 2013 Gezi Parkı Ayaklanması’ndan sonra bir kamusal alan olarak toplumun kullanımına kazandırılmıřtı.” (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author.

that this vacant building is suitable for squatting, the door lock got broken and a new lock was fitted, and the occupancy process began. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020) The occupation aspect of squatting movements is a process that expresses the reappropriation of urban space by those who actually produce urban life and, hence, their spatiality rather than the owners of finance. In other words, occupation can be explained as the reappropriation of the space by the real owners of the city by dismantling the exchange value mentality and increasing the use value in the light of collective common practices. (Pattaroni, 2014) At this exact point, I would like to convey that, according to a claim I got from interviews, the illegality of the building adds another dimension to this reappropriation. As asserted by Interviewee 1,

An anecdote cannot be passed along without being told here. Don Quixote activists found the remains of a historical artifact in the basement. It could be an old bath, fountain, or part of an old building. The porticoes and various dome fragments were visible. It is possible that this building was built on a historical monument by crushing it. It is also highly probable that the construction permit was granted or that this situation, which occurred during the construction, was resolved by unlawful methods.<sup>30</sup>

If this claim is correct, the state also does not protect common cultural heritage, revealing an inappropriate and top-down appropriation for the benefit of capital holding agencies. Then, what makes people real owners of cities in a bottom-up manner can be defined as their collective endeavor, active engagement, demand, and free will about modifying and reproducing urban space. In this light, it can be asserted that squatting process of the Don Quixote Social Center within all kinds of active engagements, points out a reappropriation process from the first day of occupation, from cleaning, collaboration, and joint labor to the last day of forceful

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<sup>30</sup> “Burada bir anekdot anlatılmadan geçilemez. Don Kişot aktivistleri bodrum katında tarihi bir eserin kalıntılarına rastladılar. Bu eski bir hamam, çeşme ya da eski bir yapının bir bölümü olabilirdi. Revaklar, çeşitli kubbe parçaları görünür durumda idi. Bu binanın bir tarihi eseri ezerek üzerine yapılmış olması olasıdır. İnşaata ruhsat verilmesi ya da inşaat sırasında ortaya çıkan bu durumun hukuki olmayan yöntemler ile çözülmüş olması da yüksek bir olasılıktır.” (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author.

eviction. First of all, the reappropriation process in the Don Quixote Social Center had been a common production process where everyone shared their professional knowledge and contributed to the extent of their knowledge and skills. In this sense, as a first attempt after the occupation of the building, collaboration was made with professional chambers such as the Chamber of Civil Engineers and the Chamber of Geophysics Engineers in order to complete the operations such as ground survey, etc. to determine whether it is stable or not. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020) Also, male and female common labor hauled and discarded the debris and other waste. The void created in the brick wall to dispose of the rubble was utilized ingeniously as a doorway. Even in this process, it is possible to trace the regeneration of the space as a result of constant needs and momentary requirements. (ibid.) In this sense, every stage of the squatting practice at Don Quixote Social Center contains creative reproductions of given structures of space. From another point of view, the appropriation of space entails a conflict between human needs and desires and the predetermined, fixed, and prescribed spatial attributes. (Atasoy & Erkman, 1976) Because, space cannot be reduced to a mere tangible product. It is also a phenomenon which has a vast accumulation of knowledge and a contingent process, that the data of it can be reproduced by the unpredictable circumstances of life. Therefore, appropriation of space is not only about using the already given habitat or space but also about the actualization of the discovered potentials and reproducing them in accordance with the demands, mindsets, and preferences of the group of people. From this point of view, appropriation of space can be distinguished from the basic act of using, and thus, another definition of the notion of appropriation of space can be “the temporary act in which people use public spaces to carry out individual or collective activities other than the purpose that the space was originally designed for.” (Melis et al.,2020, p. 65),



Figure 3.3: Right: The Initial Condition of the Inside Prior to Debris Clearance, Left: Debris Clearance, 2013

(Source:Right:<https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1400048846899983/?type=3>, Left: <https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1400048960233305/?type=3> , retrieved on December 8, 2022)

Thus, the process of reactivating an idle structure is achieved through the division of labor and solidarity. The ability of people to stand together and produce despite differences and disagreements in the process makes this appropriation successful. Interviewee 2 summarizes this process of gathering despite the differences as follows,

Initially, the squatted building was a derelict structure inhabited by thinner addicted people, which was neither safe nor hygienic. As a result of the squatting, the building was secured, cleaned, and made habitable. It has served as a crossroads for participants from various extreme backgrounds. Consequently, “unthinkable” intersections of several distinct lifestyles have formed.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> “İlk başta işgal edilen bina metruk bir binaydı ve içinde tinerciler kalıyordu güvenli ve temiz değildi. İşgalin gerçekleşmesiyle güvenlik sağlandı, bina temizlendi ve kullanılabilir hale geldi. Eylemlere katılan çok çeşitli ve uç gruplardan insanların kesişim noktası oldu. Buna bağlı olarak da bir çok farklı hayatın “unthinkable” denilebilecek kesişimleri ortaya çıktı.” Translated by the author.



Also, as Interviewee 1 who was a squatter activist of Don Quixote Social Center, summarizes the physical arrangements made collectively during the reappropriation of the building as follows:

As the building was occupied during construction, hazardous portions were repaired: balustrades were installed in perilous stairwells, windows were installed in vacant windows, railings were installed on terraces, etc. Some of the building's restrooms have been renovated and made usable. Gates were built at the building's entrance and exit. Except for a brief period, these doors were never locked and were always left unlocked. Some of the building's chambers have been lit. Using solar energy and batteries, this was accomplished. There was never a reliable electrical connection in the building. Electricity wires were strung to neighbors during major events to provide energy and illumination.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> “Bina yapım aşamasında işgal edildiği için, daha sonraki insan kullanımını tehlikeli kılacak riskli bölümler onarıldı: tehlikeli merdiven boşluklarına korkuluk takılması, boş pencerelemelere pencere takılması, terasa korkuluk yapılması vb. Binanın bazı tuvaletleri onarıldı ve çalışır hale getirildi.

Binanın giriş çıkışına kapılar takıldı. Çok kısa bir dönem hariç bu kapılar hiçbir zaman kitlenmedi ve açık bırakıldı. Binanın bazı odaları aydınlatıldı. Bunun için güneş enerjisi ve akülerden yararlanıldı. Binanın sabit bir elektrik bağlantısı hiçbir zaman olmadı. Büyük etkinlik anlarında komşulara döşenen elektrik hatları ile enerji ve aydınlatma sağlandı.” (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author



Figure: 3.4 Renovation Process, 2013

(Source:<https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1404430453128489/?type=3> retrieved on December 8,2022)

All of these collaborative endeavors brought a significant amount of activity to the area. In this manner, the transformation of an abandoned and derelict building into a structure that was operating, ready to use, cleaned, and reintroduced to the environment drew the neighborhood's compassion and attention. As a result, neighboring residents shared food and beverages with the squatter activists and inquired about the situation. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020) Therefore, the formation of space-based solidarity was the result of this first phase of the reappropriation of space via cooperative work and citizen initiative.



Figure 3.5: Don Quixote Social Center's Condition Following Occupancy,2015

(Source:

<https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1628248484080017/?type=3> , retrieved on December 9,2022)

Consequently, the appropriation of space and participation in the space made the squatting movement visible, intelligible, and sympathetic to those who encountered the term “squatted house” for the first time in Turkey. This enabled the engagement of individuals from various groups, resulting in the emergence of far more ideas, willpower, and creativity in the area. In this scenario, opportunities for self-help solutions are expanding.



### 3.3.2.1 Spatialities of Don Quixote Social Center



Figure 3.6 Common spaces of Don Quixote Social Center, 2015 (Source: <https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1612800165624849/?type=3> , retrieved on December 8, 2022)

Squatted houses are not only occupied tangible spaces but also the spheres of relation and unique forms of expression. This circumstance characterizes squats as the intersections of variety, the spontaneity produced by many parts of everyday life, and the spatiality of events and organizations, each of which has its own distinct atmosphere. Therefore, squats are *third spaces*, the stage of spatial potentials that perpetually renew themselves through various multiplicity possibilities at these intersections. (Soja, 1996) From these spheres of intersection, many different contestations arise. Heterogeneity of these spheres enables diverse forms of resistance to emerge against the various dominations that capitalism imposes as

overwhelming power with its institutions. (Routledge, 2009) The crucial point of this discussion is that these dominations, which constitute legitimate backgrounds for various kinds of exploitation, do not have a distinct unified character. On the contrary, they are structures that reoccur in numerous forms in daily life.

Patriarchy, racism, and homophobia are all faces of dominating power - that which attempts to silence, prohibit, or repress dissent, that which is intolerant of difference, that which engenders inequality, and asserts the interests of a particular class, caste, race, or political configuration at the expense of others. (Routledge, 2009, p. 70)

From this perspective, just as these kinds of dominance and exploitation assume different forms, so do forms of resistance, which reconstruct themselves depending on the relative space-time frame. The techniques of resistance are constituent elements of emerging patterns of subversive action. In other words, all forms of resistance are embedded in a rhizomatic multiplicity and complexity of linkages, interactions, and defiance. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987) In this light, in spite of the fact that the actual reality of the spatialities that arose in the Don Quixote Social Center was the result of inventive space organization and tactical design solutions, each of these places was a discourse generated in response to various dominances. It was a social center in this context that recognized the social responsibility and system criticism demanded by squatting practices in resistance practices through space. In this framework, I will begin by discussing gender as an example of discourses constructed with space.

### **3.3.2.1.1 Appropriation for Gender Justice**

One of the main rhetoric of Don Quixote Social Center was living without any types of dependency and exploitation is possible. By developing discriminating discourses about women (and all diverse genders) around the globe and in Turkey, patriarchy in all its manifestations converts women's labor, body, and independence into an object of exploitation. In other words, all forms of patriarchy based on gender

inequality are a means by which capitalism may devalue human labor and exploit individuals as a supply of cheap labor.

The oppression of women is analyzed and defined: violence against women, control of their ability to give birth, commercialization of the female body in adverts and media, (heterosexist and male-dominated) pornography, gene and reproductive technologies, and exploitation of women's paid and unpaid labour such as unpaid domestic work and lower wages. (Azozomox, 2014)

In this sense, an attempt named "Women's Room"<sup>33</sup> was made to produce emancipatory discourses on gender equality in the Don Quixote Social Center, as in other examples around the globe, to counter capitalism's exploitation of women's bodies, minds, and labor by producing patriarchy discourses. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020, p.105) The women activists in the Don Quixote Social Center gathered, painted, and organized a room on the upper floors of the squat. The "women's room" was a space that sought alternative ways of living and producing by getting rid of assigned gender roles and unjust power relations by reappropriating the space. As mentioned before, this building was planned to be a house for "decent" families, which I believe is another discourse of patriarchy. However, within this appropriation of space, while challenging the prescribed discourse, activists also reproduced the "given" meaning aspect of the space. In addition, there are also functional aspects of the space that are questioned by this attempt. Another dimension of this discussion is the fact that the spatial organization which differs from that determined by the design authorities, which applies not only to the "women's room" but to all the interior and exterior spaces of the squatted house, also reproduces the functional aspect of the building. This situation illustrates the practice of resistance through space, which challenges the static space understanding of capitalism. Last but not least, the occupation of a building designed with the dynamics and patterns of family life in mind as a

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<sup>33</sup> "Kadın Odası"Translated by the author

residence by a commune comprised of various groups of people and the production of alternative life patterns in opposition to those envisioned is a practice of resistance that challenges the occupation aspect of the space.



Figure 3.7: “Women’s Room”

(Source: <https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1400042870233914/?type=3>, retrieved on December 9, 2022)

### 3.3.2.1.2 Appropriation for Ecological Justice

The Don Quixote Social Center has also been concerned about environmental exploitation. As I have highlighted a number of times in the past, capitalism utilizes a variety of methods to distribute our cities’ living and nonliving resources. The reason for this is that a few advanced countries that have systematized capitalism as a mode of production and consumption consume far more resources than their fair share. This leads to an inequitable allocation of resources and massive environmental exploitation. (Engel-Di Mauro & Cattaneo, 2014) Moreover, it is obvious that urbanization, vehicle traffic, and environmental pollution cause problems such as

access to healthy and safe food. As a result of the social, economic, and cultural discriminations of capitalism, disadvantaged populations dwell in places where they have limited access to resources, making it difficult for them to use their own production techniques. Rural/urban segregation exacerbates this problem. (Engel-Di Mauro & Cattaneo, 2014) On the other hand, green capitalism<sup>34</sup> is maintained under the name “urban green” via top-down methods in cities through municipalities and administrations, since these policies are first implemented without giving urban dwellers a voice. Because of this, these strategies are materialized in the form of “urban green space,” which is characterized by top-down space appropriation and standard capitalist space production procedures. (Engel-Di Mauro & Cattaneo, 2014) In this context, the reappropriation of space acts carried out for ecological purposes both inside and around the building by the Don Quixote Social Center activists question capitalist production and consumption habits while creating a reaction against all these ecological exploitations. Space appropriations carried out by sowing, harvesting, and producing, particularly in the outer area of the squatted house, call into question the rent-based meanings ascribed to every urban void that capitalist urbanization deems vacant, introduce a new dimension to the discussion of reproducing space by appropriating it. The first proposal of organizing alternative modes of production and lifestyles in the Don Quixote Social Center is “Bağa Gel Bostana Gel: Berkin Elvan Bostanı”<sup>35</sup>

It has nothing to do with three or five trees! It was a yearning for a world that was liberated, cooperative, environmentally conscious, and at peace with nature. Similar to this, “Bağa Gel Bostana Gel” is not about tomatoes, peppers, or eggplants.<sup>36</sup> (Kocabiçak et al., 2020, p.117)

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<sup>34</sup> Term borrowed from (Engel-Di Mauro, S., & Cattaneo, C,2014)

<sup>35</sup> Name information of ecological activity has been taken from (Kocabiçak et al.,2020, p.117)

<sup>36</sup> “Mesele üç beş ağaç değildi! Başka bir dünya isteğiydi: özgür, paylaşarak, üreterek,daha yeşil ve doğa ile barışık. Bağa gel bostana gel hikayesi de biraz böyle. Mesele domates,biber,patlıcan değil.”



As previously noted, the most essential aspect was not the quantity and kind of food produced, but rather the debate over production alternatives via space appropriation. Contrary to bourgeois green spaces, the reorganization of outdoor space by means of critical mind is realized through this bottom-up urban space appropriation. In this regard, the forum, which is one of the fundamental operational instruments of the squatted house, was initially used to facilitate the decision-making and planning of the activity. The intended tasks included “covering the squatted house with plants, growing vegetables and fruits on the roof, preparing compost fertilizer, announcing the collection of household garbage to the community, and hosting a seed planting festival.”<sup>37</sup> (Kocabıçak et al.,2020, p.117) All the planned activities could be carried out. “As a result, soil was transferred to the roof, plants and flowers were cultivated around the squatted house, compost barrels were created, and household trash was collected here.”<sup>38</sup> (ibid.)

In addition, seedlings were developed by planting a broad range of seeds in soil and pots that had previously been relocated to the terrace roof, in partnership with other solidarities. Also, Interviewee 1 discusses the physical arrangement made in terms of reproducing space, “The terrace section of the building was organized in a way to make permaculture. Physical arrangements were made for the plumbing and small plant beds. Physical arrangements were made for compost production in the basement of the building.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> “... işgal evinin etrafının bitkiler ile kaplanması, çatıda meyve sebze yetiştirilmesi, kompost gübre için hazırlıklar yapılması, mahalleliye evsel atıkların toplanması için duyuruların yapılması ve tohum ekim şenliği yapılmasıydı.” Translated by the author.

<sup>38</sup> “... çatıya topraklar taşınmış, işgal evi çevresine sarmaşıklar, çiçekler dikilmiş, kompost için varil hazırlanmış, evsel atıklar burada toplanmıştı.” Translated by the author.

<sup>39</sup> “Binanın teras bölümü permakültür yapılacak şekilde organize edildi. Su tesisatı ve küçük bitki tarhları için fiziki düzenleme yapıldı. Binanın bodrum katında ise kompost üretimi için fiziksel düzenlemeler yapıldı.” (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author.



Figure 3.8: Compost in Indoor Garden, 2013

(Source:<https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1388645604706974/?type=3> ,retrieved on December 9,2002)

In this light, with this ecological activity, Don Quixote Social Center, as an urban social movement organizes space and life by producing on its own behalf, independently of the existence of a “master” as a teaching authority. (Zibechi, 2012) Subsequently, these seedlings were dispersed across the neighborhood to promote the concept of urban gardening. Finally, the garden of a squatter activist was reorganized with a vegetable plantation and transformed into a common productive area. By eroding the tight boundaries between private and public, this act also undermines the capitalist idea of private property and the prescribed “occupation” aspect of space. Vegetables and fruits planted in this reappropriated garden were collaboratively hydrated, cultivated, harvested, and shared in a common

understanding. In this garden, the “Berkin Elvan Garden Planting Festival”<sup>40</sup> was conducted. (Kocabiçak et al.,2020) By extending this collaborative production process to the community, it was hoped to enlarge the area of reappropriation that environmentally examines production relations and raise local knowledge of green production. For this reason, instructional seminars on the topic of *how to create gardens at home* were arranged, and the participants were taught how to organize vertical gardens. Then, the same action was repeated with the neighborhood's elementary school pupils. Collaboration taught them how to assist the occupants of the garden in the Caferağa Neighborhood with land preparation, weeding, and planting, guaranteeing the continuance of an autonomous understanding without the need for hierarchy, dependency, or authority. The bicycle workshop on the middle floor of the Don Quixote squat was another instance in which ecological concerns were addressed. In this workshop, bicycle repair was performed with knowledge, competence, cooperation, and the sharing of materials. (ibid.) Moreover, the proposal to use bicycles is an alternative that favors experiencing “lived space” and “lived time” perceptions of the social production of space in the natural flow of life as opposed to transportation vehicles, which are the instruments for experiencing time centered on speed with the aid of mechanically divided time. (Lefebvre, 2004)

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<sup>40</sup> Original term “Berkin Elvan Bostanı ekim şenliği” Source: Kocabiçak, E., Seymen, F., & Yılmaz, A. (2020). *Yeniden İnşa Et: Caferağa ve Yeldeğirmeni Dayanışmaları Yatay Örgütlenme Deneyimi*. İstanbul: Nota Bene Yayınları. Translated by the author.



Figure 3.9: Bicycle Workshop (Source: <https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1629974200574112/?type=3>, retrieved on December 9,2022)

### 3.3.2.1.3 Appropriation through Art

At the Don Quixote Social Center, the appropriation of space occurred concurrently and in a variety of manners. One of the reasons for this was that the Don Quixote commune consisted of a diverse mix of individuals, including artists, people with a political background who lived in the Yeldeğirmeni district, and Erasmus student activists from a variety of countries. Additionally, since it is the first squatted house in Turkey, it is the focus of attention and attracts the involvement of many groups of individuals. As also stated by interviewee 1, “Don Quixote has always featured foreign cadres, and a number of active Don Quixote participants were already

political figures residing in the Yeldeğirmeni, so it is not fully accurate to refer to them as locals.”<sup>41</sup>

In this atmosphere, the shared creativity and space generated by multiplicity were continuously reappropriated to encompass numerous potentials. Because “multiplicities are rhizomatic and expose arborescent pseudo multiplicities for what they are.” (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 8) From this point of view, it can be asserted that reappropriations of space in a rhizomatic sense ceaselessly establish more diverse relations which led to the emergence of numerous kinds of spatial relationships. At the Don Quixote Social Center, one of these forms of relationship was art. In this perspective, the transformation of an abandoned edifice into a work of art after squatting should be the first topic of debate, given the building’s transformations. The space at the Don Quixote Social Center was redesigned with the creativity of heterogeneity and plurality, despite the rhetoric of the pureness and uniformity of the capitalist environment. First, the walls of the building were transformed into aspects of self-expression by removing the divisive element role ascribed to them by the structure’s intended design.

After some while, there was not a single centimeter square of unused wall space remaining. The new painters then painted over the previous artists' works and created their own on top of them. From this vantage point, it is clear that not only the apartments but even the walls of the building were changing rapidly owing to daily advancements.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> “Don Kişot hep uluslararası kadrolar içermiştir, buna ek olarak Don Kişot'ta etkinlik gösteren bir grup insan Yeldeğirmeni'nde yaşayan zaten siyasi olan kişiliklerdi ve onlara da mahalleli demek tam olarak doğru olmamaktadır.” (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author.

<sup>42</sup> “Bir süre sonra bina duvarlarının tek bir cm<sup>2</sup> sinde boş alan kalmadı. Bunun üzerine yeni gelen sanatçılar eski sanatçıların işlerinin üzerine boyayarak kendi çalışmalarını onların üzerine yaptılar. Buradan görüyoruz ki, değil binanın odaları, duvarları bile çok dinamik bir şekilde günlük gelişmeler sebebiyle değişiyordu.” (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author.





Figure 3.10: Walls as Stages of Self Expression, 2015 (Source: <https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1584433468461519/?type=3> , retrieved on December 9,2022)



Figure 3.11 : Outdoor Wall of Don Quixote Social Center, 2015 (Source: <https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1633099096928289/?type=3> , retrieved on December 9, 2022)

In this instance, showing the communicational power of appropriation, interviewee 1 equates the building to a living mechanism that is always evolving and connecting with people, and he adds:

The structure resembled an organic organism with artificial intelligence. Occasionally, when you enter a room, a word scrawled on the wall, a string, a signature, or a piece of graffiti may speak to you, alter your mood, or inspire you to solve an issue you've been struggling with for days.<sup>43</sup>

The art activities conducted in and around the center and the art-making workshops that were a part of the process exemplified the appropriation of the space with art in another way. According to information obtained from interviews, one of these locations was the dark room developed for the art of photography in the squatted house, and the other was the ground-floor display space.



Figure 3.12: Stage on Ground Level,2015..Figure 3.13 Right: Dark Room in Squat, 2015

(Source:Left:<https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1539263102978556/?type=3>,

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<sup>43</sup> “Bina yaşayan bir canlı adeta bir yapay zeka gibiydi. Bazen girdiğinizde duvarda yazılı bir söz, bir dize ya da duvara atılmış bir imza ya da bir graffiti sizle konuşur, modunuzu değiştirir ya da günlerdir çözemediğiniz bir sorun için ilham kaynağı olurdu.” (Interviewee 1) Translate by the author.

Right: <https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1610694682502064/?type=3>, retrieved on December 11, 2022

Again, on the ground level, in the shape of the letter “L,” a stage for events such as film screenings and presentations was constructed. Aside from this, each level of the house was partitioned, and one floor was dedicated for workshops engaged in creative endeavors. As stated by interviewee 1,

The room with a high ceiling on the bottom level was L-shaped. One wall of the L-shaped room was painted and transformed into a stage for presentations, movies, etc. There were several armchairs and chairs situated in the portion facing the stage. The artists in cm<sup>2</sup> cm<sup>2</sup> covered all the walls outside the stage with a variety of creative images. The building’s floors have been transformed into workshops. One level was devoted to aesthetic workshops, while the other was devoted to practical tasks such as bicycle manufacture and maintenance. On a different storey, there was accommodation for the visitors who had come to tour the building. The huge room on the ground level was often utilized by artists to conduct exhibits, and every month a new show featured a different artist. There was an unsuccessful effort to convert the building’s basement into a cinema theater owing to impossibilities.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> “Giriş katındaki yüksek tavanlı alan bir L şeklinde idi. L şeklinin bir ucunun duvarı uygun şekilde boyanarak sunum, sinema vb etkinlikler için bir sahne haline getirildi. Sahneye doğru bakan bölüme bol miktarda koltuk ve sandalye konuldu. Sahne dışında kalan duvarların tümü sanatçılar tarafından her türlü sanatsal görsel ile cm<sup>2</sup> cm<sup>2</sup> işlendi. Binanın katları atölyelere dönüştürüldü. Bir kat sanatsal atölyeler ile dolarken bir başka kat bisiklet üretimi tamiri vb pratik işler için ayrılmıştı. Başka bir katta da binayı ziyarete gelen konukların konaklaması için odalar vardı. Giriş katındaki büyük alan sık sık sanatçıların sergi açması için kullanıldı ve her ay başka bir sanatçının sergisi gündeme geldi. Binanın bodrum katı sinemaya çevrilmeye çalışıldı ancak olanaksızlıklar sebebi ile başarısız oldu.” (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author.



### 3.3.2.1.4 Appropriation through Daily Life

In a predetermined, constructed, and physical environment, human actions, social interactions, and encounters establish their own spheres. (Harvey, 1988) In the vague and flexible terrain of everyday life, ever evolving and shifting practices, encounters, ideas, and circumstances by recombining these spatial frames, blur the boundaries of lived, perceived, and conceived space and make them intertwined. (Soja, 1996, p. 10)



Figure 3.14: Daily Life in Squatted House, 2015 (Source: <https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1633098936928305/?type=3>, retrieved on December 11, 2022)

Hence, everyday life is full of potential and reflects these on social conceptualizations of space. Squatted houses, which are the places where this reflection takes place, are places where resistance and protest, as well as daily life, take place. (Pattaroni, 2014) As Zibechi, argues (2012, p. 24) “... the atmosphere of

community fraternity; production as a central aspect to the transformation of our world; and the forms of life that emerge from these daily practices.” In this approach, it will be feasible to claim that the Don Quixote Social Center’s daily activities, which include various forms of alternative production, also embody resistance practices. The first of these is the barrel stove and open common kitchen located on the “L” shaped ground floor, according to the information I got from the interview. In this open kitchen, unlike the private interior spaces of capitalism, cooking, learning, sharing, and teaching have been structured as communal activities. By deconstructing the prescribed function and organization of the space, the kitchen became a reappropriation that reproduced it in accordance with the needs of community life. On the other hand, breaking gender roles and creating in cooperation in an open kitchen eradicated the prescribed meaning of space.



Figure 3.15 Common Kitchen,2014. Right: Food as a Common,2015 (Source: Left: <https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1485765774994956/?type=3>,.Right:<https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.2207520000./1633097483595117/?type=3>, retrieved on December 10,2022)

Another of these appropriations was the barter market, located on the ground floor. According to interviewee 1 the organization of this barter market was as follows:

A large barter market was set up at the other end of the L. Here, people left things they didn't need and bought things they needed. It has become a self-employed area in need of recovery and surplus assessment.<sup>45</sup>

In this perspective, the barter market, where communal life is experienced and where this experience reorganizes the space, was one of the components of an alternative independent existence untethered from the market economy. Interviewee 1 also states that a method similar to barter is used to describe how the common furniture of the Don Quixote Social Center came to be in the squatted house.

The development of the building in terms of furniture, on the other hand, took an interesting path: those who moved renovated the furniture in their homes, and those who couldn't find a place to put their surplus items brought them all to the building, where they experienced the second spring of their lives.<sup>46</sup>

The interviews conducted in the scope of my qualitative research informed me that there was occasional accommodation in the Don Quixote squat, albeit on an irregular basis. Due to the fact that the Don Quixote Social Center was Turkey's first squatted house in its own terms, it could accommodate a large number of foreign scholars and visitors. The function of accommodation was added to the squatted house to fulfill this demand.

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<sup>45</sup> "L nin diđer ucuna büyük bir takas pazarı kuruldu. Buraya insanlar ihtiyaçları olmayan eşyaları bıraktı ve ihtiyaç duydukları eşyaları aldı. Kendi içinde çalışan bir ihtiyaç giderme ve ihtiyaç fazlası değerlendirme alanı haline geldi." (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author

<sup>46</sup> "Binanın mobilya açısından gelişimi ise ilginç bir seyir izledi, taşınanlar, evlerindeki eşyaları yenileyenler, fazlalık eşyalarına koyacak yer bulamayanlar bunların tümünü binaya getirdiler ve bu eşyalar binada hayatlarının ikinci baharını yaşadılar." (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author.



Figure 3.16: Accommodation in Squat,2015 (Source: <https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1633098970261635/?type=3>, retrieved on December 11, 2022)

In addition, the physical structure of forums, which are the places shaped by direct democracy, was changing. In short, autonomous life experience generated alternatives that challenged the market economy, gender roles, and all kinds of exploitation through the generativity of multiplicity. In this sense, Interviewee 1 summarizes a day in squat as follows:

After a period of time, individuals who held regular workshops in the building came there, transforming it into an art / culture / science district. Hip- hop acts releasing their debut albums, theatrical actors performing by rote in one corner, there are modern dancers performing in another area. Individuals that willingly visit the building those who ignite the stove and prepare food for consumption. If we went to the market on the day “Food Not

Bombs”<sup>47</sup> was scheduled to take place, you would have seen a huge multinational group cooking meal. People who came to the building to visit their friends, those who came to have tea and coffee, and those who would attend concerts/movie screenings/conversations, etc. that begin in the evening constituted a significant portion of the evening’s increased pedestrian traffic. The general cleaning of the facility was performed by those with a heightened awareness of this subject; not everyone was responsible for this task. The structure was sometimes infected with bugs and sprayed by specialist teams and workshops.<sup>48</sup>

Consequently, the occupied house was redesigned in a daily manner by the reappropriation of activities including housing, creative activities such as music, dance, and theatre, operational instruments such as forums, discussions, and workshops.

### **3.3.2.1.5 Space Appropriation through Transiency: Events**

Squatting, as an anti-capitalist urban social movement, is not only a response to need but rather a resistance that evolves to generate discourse against capitalism, as I have previously discussed. In this context, it would not be wrong to assert that squatting movements all around the world constitute a socio-political network that develops cumulative forms of resistance. As a result, the Don Quixote Social Center was not

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<sup>47</sup> “Food Not Bombs is an international direct-action organization that provides vegan meals made from rescued/foraged food to those who struggle to feed themselves under capitalism.” This event was also held by Don Quixote Squat anticapitalist common practice (Source : <https://foodnotbombs-istanbul.tumblr.com/>,retrieved on December 11, 2022)

<sup>48</sup> “Belirli bir süre sonra binada düzenli atölyeler yürütenler binaya geliyor ve bina bir sanat / kültür / bilim alanı haline geliyordu. İlk albüm lansmanını yapan hip hop grupları, bir köşede ezber çalışan tiyatrocular Bir başka köşede dans eden modern dansçılar binayı ziyarete gelenleri gönüllü biçimde gezdiren kişiler sobayı yakanlar, yiyecek birşeyler hazırlayanlar. Eğer o gün pazara gidilmiş ise ve “bombalara karşı sofralar” çalışması yapılacak ise kalabalık bir uluslararası grubun yemek hazırladığını görebilirdiniz. Akşama doğru trafik artıyor, binaya arkadaşlarını görmeye gelenler, gelip binada çay kahve bira içenler, akşama doğru başlayacak konser / film gösterimi / söyleşi vb lere katılacak olanlar vb lerin oluşturduğu yoğun bir trafik ile karşılaşabiliyordunuz. Binanın genel temizliği ise bu konuya özel hassasiyet gösteren kişiler tarafından yapılıyor ve genel olarak herkesin elini taşın altına koyduğu bir iş olmuyordu. Binayı bazen haşareler basıyor ve yine bu işte uzmanlaşmış atölye ve ekipler tarafından ilaçlanıyordu.” (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author.

just concerned with local concerns but also staged several domestic and worldwide events as part of this network. (Kocabıçak et al., 2020) These events prompted people to share and expand their solidarity networks. People from various segments who have a plethora of different backgrounds have established communing networks thanks to these events. As stated by interviewee 2, who was a participant from the neighborhood,

I heard about Don Quixote squatted house from a friend who attended many events. We had gone for a memorial night; a fire was lit and gathered in the normally unused open space. People who would not normally come together, who had very different occupations and political views in daily life, were together. The Gezi Resistance had such a unifying atmosphere, the motivation to come together against the excessive police violence and the authoritarian regime. Personally, I met and shared ideas with people I found “too left-leaning” and with whom I did not come together very often. Squatted house had such a unifying effect as an extension of the Gezi Resistance.<sup>49</sup>

One of the primary reasons for organizing international events was to investigate the possibility of fighting against these problems by confronting on a common ground the exploitations of capitalism on all peoples of the world, such as the ecological problem, the housing problem, labor exploitation, and discrimination against communities of diversity. Another objective was to exchange experiences, raise awareness, and develop unity against these challenges. The heterogeneous composition of the Don Quixote Social Center, which included Erasmus students, facilitated the organization of these activities. (Kocabıçak et al., 2020) It was critical

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<sup>49</sup> “Don Kişot işgal evini yapılan pek çok etkinliğe katılan bir arkadaşımın duydum. Bir anma gecesi için gitmiştik, normalde kullanılmayan açık alanda ateş yakılmış ve toplanılmıştı. Normalde bir araya gelmeyecek, günlük hayatta çok farklı uğraşları ve siyasi görüşleri olan insanlar bir aradaydı. Gezi Direnişi'nin böyle birleştirici bir atmosferi vardı, aşırı miktardaki polis şiddetine ve otoriter rejime karşı bir araya gelme motivasyonu oluşmuştu. Ben kişisel olarak da “fazla sol eğilimli” bulduğum ve pek de yan yana gelmediğim insanlarla bir araya gelmiş, fikir paylaşımında bulunmuşum. İşgal evinin de Gezi Direnişi'nin uzantısı olarak böyle bir birleştiriciliği vardı.”(Interviewee 2) Translated by the author.



for the variety of solidarity that students from the Yeldeğirmeni Neighborhood participated in the forums and contributed to the debates. In this context, an international forum was held for the first time in the neighborhood, with Erasmus and English-speaking students in attendance. The participants of these forums voluntarily taught English, German, and French to the children residing in the Child Protection Agency. This was one of the most significant successes of these forums. In another international forum, a New Year's Eve party was planned with the involvement of children living in the Child Protection Agency, with the collaborative efforts and contributions of everyone (such as food, reorganization of space, etc.) (ibid.)

As an example of the endeavor of establishing squatting networks, one of the events of the Don Quixote Social Center hosted squatters from Greece. In the interview made with them, the experiences of the occupation and popular movements after the economic crisis in Greece were shared. They stated that the home occupations in Greece were initially created by autonomists in a few places, and then spread to the whole country with the participation of the homeless and poor and people living in the neighborhood, with the support of different political segments such as socialists and environmentalists. Stating that everyone can perform their art in the houses, they form joint working groups, and with the contribution of volunteers, sharing environments are provided where those in need can meet their needs from food to pharmaceutical warehouses. The squatters said that these houses are gradually starting to offer alternative lifestyles for the Greek people. Participants from Turkey shared their experiences of Gezi and Yeldeğirmeni Neighborhoods with visitor activists. (Araman, 2013)

Another event series that contributed to the diversity of the discussions held in the squatted house were “Stunning Saturdays.”<sup>50</sup> They were informative panels that took place every two weeks at the Don Quixote Social Center, seeking and questioning alternatives on different topics. In this context, events that criticize the exploitive tools of capitalism from diverse perspectives by creating awareness on different issues are held every two weeks with the participation of different guests. (Araman, 2013)

Agendas such as alternative media, alternative economics, alternative education, alternative energy, alternative production, and alternative architecture comprise the event’s alternative-within-alternative-discussion/pursuit agenda.<sup>51</sup> (Araman, 2013)



<sup>50</sup> “Kafa Açan Cumarteler” was an event take place every other week at the Don Quixote Social Center and included panel discussions on a range of themes. Term translated by the author (Source: <https://www.evrensel.net/haber/72408/sekeriniz-bittiyse-don-kisotun-kapisini-calin>, retrieved on December 11, 2022)

<sup>51</sup> “Alternatifin içinde alternatifi tartışmak/kovalamak” diye yola çıkan etkinliğin konuları arasında alternatif medya, alternatif ekonomi, alternatif eğitim, alternatif enerji, alternatif üretim, alternatif mimari gibi gündemler var. Her oturumun konukları o alanda çalışan kişiler.” (Araman, 2013) Translated by the author



Figure 3.17 “Kafa Açan Cumartesiler”,2014 (Source Left: <https://www.facebook.com/donkisotsosyalmerkezi/photos/pb.100047321816497.-2207520000./1415158655389002/?type=3>, Right: <https://yesilgazete.org/gercek-temizligin-kafa-acan-cumartesi-hali-mercan-uluengin/> retrieved on December 11, 2022)

An example of these events was the “real cleaning workshops” organized by the “non-toxic house” organization, which sought alternative and non-toxic cleaning opportunities. Discussions and panels that introduce alternative and harmless cleaning materials and methods were conducted in the squatted house. These alternative materials and methods were inventive about cleaning the environment without the exploitation of natural sources or human health. (Uluengin, 2014) The “Food not Bombs”<sup>52</sup> was another event organized to establish a vision of living without exploitation, which was the most fundamental social concern shared in the squatted house. The “Foods not Bombs” event, hosted in the Don Quixote Squatted House, condemns the exploitation of capitalism over food via diverse discourses and communal tables.

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<sup>52</sup> “Food not Bombs, which was founded in the United States in 1980, attempted to establish a presence in Turkey in 2004, but was unsuccessful. The desired wind began following the Gezi Park protests and has continued since 2013.” Translated by the author (Source : <https://www.e-skop.com/skopbulten/kent-haklari-agi/3402>, retrieved on December 11,2022)



Figure 3.18: “Foods Not Bombs”, 2014 (Source: <https://www.eskop.com/skopbulten/kent-haklari-agi/3402>, retrieved on December 11,2022)

Some of the concerns of this organization are food-based animal exploitation, waste, and special day propaganda due to the dependency on money economies. In this context, these anti-capitalist discourses were supported by sharing and open tables in the Don Quixote Social Center. In this event, a group sings, a group cooks, and the space becomes the realm of collaborative production and involvement. (Atabinen & Tekdemir, 2020) Don Quixote Social Center also hosted philosophy gatherings with the participation of diverse groups of people and had become a stage for contestation and experiences. During his trip to Istanbul to discuss the Gezi Resistance, Jacques Ranciere was also a visitor to the Don Quixote Social Center, the country’s first squatted house. Occupants and Ranciere engaged in discourse during the panel discussion by asking their questions.



Figure 3.19: Right: Jaques Ranciere at the Don Quixote Social Center, Left: Figure 3.20 Michael Hardt at the Don Quixote Social Center (Source: Kocabıçak, E., Seymen, F., & Yılmaz, A. (2020). *Yeniden İnşa Et: Caferağa ve Yeldeğirmeni Dayanışmaları Yatay Örgütlenme Deneyimi*. İstanbul: Nota Bene Yayınları.)

Similarly, Michael Hardt was a visitor at the Don Quixote Social Center in order to gather information from the activists and hear about their experiences with the world-changing Gezi process. After Hardt attempted to comprehend the Gezi process firsthand, the majority of the event transpired via his questioning. The questions were as follows:

- What is Gezi's social composition?
- What is the Gezi's class composition?
- What political organization forms does Gezi have?
- How is the horizontal Gezi movement continuous?
- What does democracy mean?
- What are Gezi's worldwide implications? (Kocabıçak et al.,2020, p.166)

The consensus reached at the end of the event was that there is no single formula that can be valid all over the world due to the diverse disguises of capitalism and that each movement has its own local and subjective dynamics. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020)

### 3.3.2.2 Operational Tools of Don Quixote Social Center

The methods of operation and decision-making at the Don Quixote social center were not predetermined from the outset, but rather developed as a result of challenges that arose through time and the communal lifestyle. The most distinguishing characteristic of communal life in the Don Quixote Commune was the international multiplicity of individuals with extremely different perspectives and backgrounds. Several perspectives on the various forms of resistance existed within this broad framework. This necessitated the production of discourse and activity in a diverse array of areas. In addition, this diversity necessitated both letting everyone do what they wanted to do and not engaging those who did not want to deal with these issues. (Kocabiçak et al.,2020) For all these reasons, organizational mechanisms are divided into some sub-branches, although the main decision-making tool is forums. These sub-branches included particular working groups and various workshops. To begin with, the Don Quixote Social Center's primary decision-making tools were the weekly forums. These gatherings, which were accessible to everybody, consisted of everyone expressing their opinions freely, accompanied by a "facilitator,"<sup>53</sup> within the allotted time. As stated by interviewee 1,

Don Quixote was a collective. The forum was used to make decisions and continue its operations. There were no subordinates, important top-ranking officials, or authoritative new or old faces in the room. Everyone was treated equally. Each forum meeting was facilitated by a different moderator. Local leftist and nationalist party factions attempted to introduce a hierarchical structure to the forum. Over time, however, the functioning of the Don Quixote forum has expelled these ideas. Don Quixote was never a political party or organization and never existed. Participation in the forum was not compulsory, and instant participation in the forum could not be prevented. At

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<sup>53</sup> "Kolaylaştırıcı" is a term used instead of moderator to emphasize that the forum is moderated without hierarchy.

that moment, it was essential for someone who came from abroad to speak up as an equal forum component and participate in the decisions.<sup>54</sup>

In order to make a decision in the forum, a unanimous vote was necessary. In circumstances where unanimity could not be reached, discussions were continued until a vote was taken, and in the absence of such a vote, no decision was made on the topic. Even though a decision had been made, the ability to appeal was always open. (Kocabıçak et al., 2020) For the easy application of these decisions, particular working groups, which are gathered around specific subjects, were established. Working groups were formed in order to implement the decisions determined in the forums and carry out the listed works on a voluntary basis, based on interests and skills. Because the tasks and demands in the squatted house include several stages, some of which require specialized knowledge. In this approach, the duties and activities stated in the forums were carried out by groups comprised of individuals with initiative and a common interest. Since the forum's agendas are often exhaustive and not everyone is interested in every topic, the formation of working groups devoted to certain concerns was vital for the process to run smoothly. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020) Also, around different expertise points and interests, diverse workshops were included in the mechanism of the squatted house. In this sense, the workshops are one of the executive bodies of the Don Quixote Social Center. Generally, workshops were independent organizations where individuals with similar interests were created. Kocabıçak & Seymen assert (2020) that the working techniques of the workshops vary based on their architecture, and illustrate this point as follows:

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<sup>54</sup> “Don Kişot bir kolektifti. Forum ile karar alır ve faaliyetlerini sürdürürdü. Forumda ast / üst etkili / yetkili yeni / eski yoktu. Herkes eşitti. Forum bir her toplantıda değişen bir moderatör tarafından modere edilirdi. Forumu hiyerarşik bir yaklaşıma getirmeye çalışan yerel sol ve ulusalcı parti bileşenleri oldu. Bununla birlikte Don Kişot forum işleyişi zaman içerisinde bu yaklaşımları dışarı kıştırmıştır. Don Kişot bir siyasi parti ya da bir örgüt değildi ve olmadı. Forumu katılım zorunlu olmadığı gibi foruma anlık katılım da engellenemezdi. O an yurtdışından ziyaret için gelmiş birinin de eşit bir forum bileşeni olarak sözünü söylemesi ve kararlara katılımı esastı.” (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author.

For instance, creative writing and darkroom workshops were molded by weekly lectures given by professionals in their respective fields. ... “The Confrontation Workshop”<sup>55</sup> performed month-long research to inform the former residents of Moda, whose original identities were altered, and the work was bolstered by the contributions of all workshop participants.<sup>56</sup> (Kocabıçak et al.,2020, p.103)

### **3.4 Dissolution: Challenges and Problems**

In this last section, I will extend my discussion by concentrating on the internal and external processes of solidarity that prepare the path for the Don Quixote Social Center’s collapse and forceful eviction. In this perspective, unfortunately, the Don Quixote experience has shown that horizontality and direct democracy have both liberating and restrictive features during the implementation phase. In addition to the circumstances caused by horizontal structure, there were additional issues resulting from internal dynamics. Consequently, although some of the difficulties were attributable to the organizational tools and style used, others were because of multiplicity-related conflicts. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020)

In addition to all of these, I believe that the problems associated with external dynamics stem from the difficulty of adequately embracing the experiences that concretize the principles of commune life and seeking alternatives in a capitalist-minded society in a country like Turkey, where state-led capitalism has taken on a relatively shallow form. In other words, significant networks of solidarity exist between the Don Quixote Social Center and its surroundings and neighborhood. However, it must be acknowledged that the significant viewpoint disparities that

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<sup>55</sup> “Yüzleşme Atölyesi” was a workshop intended to preserve the memory of city in Yeldeğirmeni neighborhood.

<sup>56</sup> “Örneğin yaratıcı yazarlık ve karanlık oda atölyeleri, üyelerine konusunda uzman kişilerin bu alanlarda haftalık dersler sunmasıyla şekillenmişti. ... Yüzleşme atölyesi, Modanın eski sakinlerini, orjinal isimi değiştirilmiş sokak adlarını hatırlatmak için bir ay kapsamlı bir çalışma yapmış, çalışma tüm atölye katılımcılarının emeğiyle yükselmişti.” Translated by the author.

exist at strategic spots hamper the neighborhood's solidarity. Interviewee 1 summarizes this situation as follows:

Locals could hardly be expected to comprehend a worldwide anarchist strategy in depth. Due to this, many of Don Quixote's actions were attempted to be thwarted by residents and police complaints were lodged. The majority of neighborhood inhabitants were uneasy about the occupancy of this location. Because the concept of living without property or shared ownership is unacceptable to capitalist society on the street. The bullies, who could be found in every community, assaulted Don Quixote, and attempted to extort money from him. In this regard, several locals hurt Don Quixote.<sup>57</sup>

According to the information acquired from interviews, this lack of communication was not unilateral. Given the circumstances in which the solidarity was founded, there were no lengthy negotiations to clarify the operation's objectives and guiding principles since it was presumed that the solidarity's constituents already comprehended them. Hence, there were differences of opinion on the scope, definition, and principles of solidarity among the various components. Which is also why the internal inconsistencies were mirrored in the locals' support. The components of solidarity saw the contradiction between the local viewpoint and the political perspective they advocated as the inhabitants' fault, not their own. This circumstance undermined the neighborhood's ties. Such a condition is one of the organizational defects that threaten the viability of solidarity.

On the other hand, the Don Quixote Social Center explored options for retaining and coordinating a diverse range of components. So, one of the issues caused by this multiplicity was the disconnection between personalization and the key themes of

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<sup>57</sup> "Mahallelinin uluslararası anarşist bir etkinlik tarzını, derinliklerine kadar anlaması beklenemezdi. Bu yüzden Don Kişot'un birçok faaliyeti mahalleli tarafından engellenmeye çalışıldı, polise şikâyet edildi. Mahalleli genel olarak buranın işgal edilmesinden rahatsızlık duydu. Zira mülkiyetsizlik ya da ortak mülkiyet fikri sokaktaki kapitalist toplum insanı için kabul edilebilir değildir. Her mahallede yer alabilecek kabadayılar Don Kişot'a saldırdı ve haraç kesmek istedi. Don Kişot bu yönüyle birçok mahalleliden zarar gördü." (Interviewee 1) Translated by the author.

conversation. This circumstance prompted the opinions to diverge on a personal level. Likewise, according to the information provided by the respondents, a balance between individual methods and communal action could not be achieved. Due to a lack of organization, a mechanism to regulate individual laws and representations could not be formed. Tangible issues started to emerge, and arguments became increasingly personal. Under these circumstances, the issues and tensions escalated, paving the path for the creation of chaotic crises. On the other side, according to Kocabiçak & Seymen (2020), the fact that everyday tasks and responsibilities are performed voluntarily might result in certain interruptions. In this instance, the disruption of the work was caused by the failure to verify whether the tasks had been completed or to reassign them. As stated before, one of the fundamental elements of the occupied house was its horizontal, non-hierarchical structure. The squatting action was founded on an egalitarian view of life, one of the advantages of anti-capitalist communal living. Because it is inherent to resistance to oppose any discrimination imposed by capitalist living standards. However, as stated by Kocabiçak & Seymen (2020) the formation of hierarchical relationships based on seniority among the components of solidarity undermined this egalitarian perspective. This issue altered the priority ranking of the ideas.

For instance, the concerns of animal rights and women's struggle were deemed inconsequential in comparison to the political challenges of the moment and were rendered irrelevant by defining them as the activities of the appropriate workshops, as opposed to the whole of solidarity.<sup>58</sup> (Kocabiçak et al.,2020, p.199)

This situation led to a decrease in the number of participants and, thus, the decrease in human power. Therefore, diversity was required to maintain the events. This situation, which was the beginning of the thaw, limited the movement possibilities

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<sup>58</sup> “Örneğin hayvan hakları veya kadın mücadelesi konuları o dönemde ilgilenilen siyasi konuların yanında önemsiz konular olarak görülüyor ve dayanışmanın tamamının değil, ilgili atölyelerin etkinlikleri olarak sınıflandırılarak önemsiz kılınyordu.” Translated by the author.



of the squatted house in many ways. In addition, the requirement of altering the organizations and teams responsible for the continuance of the duties was not taken into consideration. When it came time for the rotation, the other teams refused to participate. As there was no such thing as allocating duties to individuals, tasks were severely disrupted. Another difficulty was caused by the forum, which served as an organizing tool. Since the decision was taken by consensus in the forums, everyone's agreement was necessary for the plan to be implemented. In this instance, the inability to make judgments based on forum discussions proved to be a common obstacle. (Kocabiçak et al., 2020) While defining the act of squatting, I have already explored the determinants of the drive to produce discourse and social concerns in general. Among these societal issues, gender equality was one. Nevertheless, according to Kocabiçak & Seymen's analysis, (2020) concerns such as the devaluation of women's labor in the squatted house, the significance of men's statements in forums, and the desire to dominate with violent attitudes were additional factors that accelerate dissolution. The disagreement over accommodations in squatted houses accelerated the dissolution. Accommodation was one of the functions of the Don Quixote Social Center. Due to the nature of squatting, the door of the squatting house was often left open, according to information gleaned through interviews. However, individuals who misused the accommodation opportunity transformed this democratic endeavor into victimization, exposing the inhabitants to harassment and harm. (Kocabiçak et al.,2020)

From a different angle, when we look at the examples in Europe, we can say that the squatting movement started in the "squatted house" formation since the 60s, so the experience of organization has developed and systematized cumulatively, the solidarity networks have been strengthened, and today they are many and varied in number. However, although the squatting experience in Turkey was experienced with 68' movements, the "squatted house" formation first appeared in 2013 and did not exceed a few in number. Therefore, since the experience of squatted house

organization and bonds of solidarity are relatively current, it has been easier to be affected by external factors and not be able to resist dissolution.

Due to these obstacles, it was impossible to develop visions and establish long-term plans for the continuation of the squatting movement. All these difficulties have harmed and eroded solidarity. When this circumstance coincided with the state's external forces, resistance to forcible expulsion was impossible. In reality, the activists of the Don Quixote Social Center assumed responsibility for maintaining, rejuvenating, and improving the area they resided in, thereby appropriating it. Accordingly, this responsibility gives them a voice as the "actual producers" of the space that organizes the new life and space, as well as the right to participate in decision-making procedures. However, the laws that were the state's power exercising tool justified violating these rights, and the Don Quixote Social Center was subjected to eviction. It was later demolished by the state in 2016.<sup>59</sup>

The Don Quixote Social Center, a prominent instance of the squatting movement in our country, has contributed to the culture of resistance in several ways, as I will explain in more depth in the next chapter. One of these is the several squatting house efforts that followed. In addition to the criticisms discussed above, however, one of the reasons why the Don Quixote Social Center and other squatted house experiences have not been sustainable is that the squatting experience has not been fully internalized and coordination between these experiences has not been established to a degree that does not damage autonomy. I believe that the existence of shared activity and operation grounds at certain points among these squatted houses and the provision of solidarity may serve to the sustainability of solidarity. As we examine

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<sup>59</sup> Date information has been taken from: <https://www.e-skop.com/skopbulten/kent-haklari-agi/3402>

the examples from Europe, we see the presence of a collective named sqEk.<sup>60</sup> Thanks to this association, periodic meetings are organized in many European countries to share challenges and experiences. Hence, by preserving autonomy, ideas about solidarity networks, organizational structures, and solutions to comparable challenges are shared. Similarly, sustainability may be accomplished in the squatted house experience in Turkey by establishing commons that could meet with other squatted houses founded after Don Quixote and by strengthening connections with international collectives. One of the missing aspects of the Don Quixote squatting experience is that these networks of solidarity are not adequately developed and that diverse organizations cannot be formed on a global scale while maintaining on a local one. I believe that reinforcing the “squatting” culture with comparable formations in Turkey by gathering on occasionally at certain common bases may contribute to sustainability. The inability to develop these linkages may be added to the organizational mistakes I outlined above, as well as the critical stance I took against squatting house formations in Turkey.

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<sup>60</sup> “SqEK (squatting everywhere kollektive) also as known as Squatting Europe Kollektive is a network of radical activists and researchers from diverse social and political movements around the world. The primary aim of the collective is to produce reliable and fine-grained knowledge about squatters’ movements as a public resource, especially for squatters and activists. Critical engagement, transdisciplinarity and comparative approaches are the bases of this project. SqEK holds yearly meetings which have thus far taken place in Madrid, Milano, London, Berlin, Barcelona, Amsterdam, Paris, København, Roma, New York, Rotterdam, Praha and Catania.”

Source: <https://www.viruseditorial.net/ca/libreria/fondo/9082/fighting-for-spaces>, retrieved on February 18, 2023



## CHAPTER 4

### GENERATIVE CAPACITIES: 2013, SINCE THEN

The aim of this chapter is, to re-interpret the Don Quixote Social Center in terms of its contributions to the social and political spheres of Turkey. In this context, I examine alternative formations in which social concerns and struggles such as ecology, gender equality, safe and equal access to resources are carried by the further initiatives of the Don Quixote Social Center that continue their resistance practices after the disintegration of the center. To this end, the examination of this chapter will develop around these two main questions:

Could Don Quixote Social Center's solidarity networks and alternative spatialities serve as models for future urban practices?

What other kinds of creative resistance through space have come to light because of Don Quixote?

Although the Don Quixote social center has undergone a process of dissolution for various reasons, its social responsibilities and urban struggle will continue as long as the capitalist dynamics that triggered these situations are maintained. However, it would not be accurate to refer to all of these actors, who continue the struggle for the city, as the components of the Don Quixote Social Center. In this context, the initiatives in which the city dwellers gathered in the Gezi Park resistance and continued the struggle for the right to the city by gathering around various areas of interest were developed by a large group of activists, including the Don Quixote Social Center. These initiatives continue their resistance today and seek ways to produce alternatives with solidarity. Some of these initiatives are instances of squatted houses that carry the "squatted house" culture introduced by Don Quixote

Social Center to Turkey and take inspiration from it. Nearly contemporaneous with the Don Quixote squatted house, Caferağa Neighborhood Squat was also an ensemble of various types of performing resistance and freedom. To start with, interviewee 3, who was a squatter activist at Caferağa Neighborhood Squat, summarizes the precedent process of squatting practice,

During the radical democracy trials, when we were evicted from Gezi, it was stated during the approximately 30 park forums throughout Istanbul that “Everywhere Taksim, Everywhere Resistance” was not a slogan but a political stance. In order to develop this concept, through social media, etc., a number of organizations were founded via communication across various locations. The premise “if everywhere is Gezi, let’s go to the locals” was proposed as a consequence of these groups.<sup>61</sup>

Combining the desire to maintain this resistance with the necessity for space led to the concept of the squatted house. In this context, the Don Quixote Social Center’s pioneering role and realization of several resistance potentials, as detailed in the previous chapter, served as an inspiration for Caferağa solidarity. Additionally, interviewee 4 describes the factors that contributed to the squatting of the house in the Caferağa Neighborhood as follows:

The arrival of winter, the diminishing thrill of the Gezi revolt, the country’s heavy conjuncture, and everyone’s gradual return to normalcy were all reasons. In this instance, every effort was made to encourage involvement, but the disintegration was unavoidable. In such a setting, Yeldeğirmeni Solidarity, which had previously engaged in squatting, proceeded in a highly organized and crowded fashion. When we discovered that the distinction was space, the concept of squatting practice became stronger.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> “Biz Gezi’den atılınca, İstanbulda 30’a yakın sayıda olan park forumlarında, radikal demokrasi denemeleri sırasında “Her yer Taksim her yer direnis” mottosunun bir slogan değil, bir siyasal düşünce olduğu konuşuluyordu. Bu düşüncenin gelişebilmesi için de sosyal medya vs. ortamlarda haberleşerek bir takım örgütlenmeler gerçekleşti. Bu örgütlenmelerin sonucunda da “eğer her yer Geziyse yerellere gidelim” fikri ortaya atıldı.” Translated by the author.

<sup>62</sup> “Kışın gelmesi, Gezi isyanının heyecanının gittikçe azalması, ülkenin konjektörünün çok ağır olması, herkesin yavaş yavaş hayatlarına geri dönmesi gibi sebepler olmuştu. Bu durumda katılımın yeniden artması için her şey denendi fakat dağılma önlenemedi. Böyle bir ortamda işgal pratiğini gerçekleştirmiş olan Yeldeğirmeni Dayanışması çok örgütlü ve kalabalık bir şekilde devam ediyordu.

As also stated by interviewee 4, who was a squatter activist at Caferağa Neighborhood Squat and a cofounder of Kadıköy Cooperative,

The concept of squatting was previously debated on forums. Yeldeğirmeni Solidarity has taken the lead! (In a humorous tone) After they began squatting, we saw that interest in the resistance grew, the relationship between the solidarity and the residents of the neighborhood flourished, and people began to say, “something is going on here,” so we intensified our activity.<sup>63</sup>

In short, according to the information gathered through interviews, in January 2014, Caferağa Solidarity stepped into an abandoned historical property in their neighborhood and renamed it “Neighborhood House.” In the neighborhood house, which contains a library, carpentry shop, dark room, and barter market, forums, seminars, exhibits, and debates were organized, and meals were supplied to those in need. According to interviewee 3, several choices about events and spatial alterations were made in the forums. Space generated varied spatialities in response to the demands of community life by means of transitory and inventive modifications and arrangements. This implies that, contrary to the fixed and uniform capitalist view of space, the elements of space were continually questioned, and the meaning, function, and occupancy of space demonstrated flexibility and inventiveness in the flow of life. The resistance potentials of the space were revealed and evaluated. Interviewee 3 shares this situation as follows:

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Biz o zaman aradaki farkın mekan olduğunun farkına vardık ve işgal pratiği fikri güçlenmiş oldu.”  
Translated by the author.

<sup>63</sup> “İşgal fikri forumlarda zaten tartışılıyordu. Yel Değirmeni Dayanışması bizden önce davrandı! (esprili bir ses tonuyla) Onlar işgali gerçekleştirdikten sonra, baktık direnişe ilgi artıyor, dayanışma ve mahalleli arasındaki bağ güçlendi, insanlar “burada bir şeyler oluyor” demeye başladı biz de çalışmalarımızı hızlandırdık.” Translated by the author.

For example, one of them was the common kitchen, which I loved very much. Because food is a very unifying thing. You cook the food, there is bound to be someone to eat. There is also someone to help you do it.<sup>64</sup>

In this sense, Caferağa Neighborhood Squat also witnessed many types of appropriations of space. As shared by interviewee 3,

We used the area as a social hub. Over the course of many months, it was continuously revised and improved. We made calls on social media, and individuals sent goods. It has become a lovely place over time. In addition, we fixed the door and installed a lock. Additionally, we attempted to keep everything as clean as possible. We have successfully created a place that resembles a semi-open area. We conserved and enhanced the historical building. Among us there were art historians, architects, etc. We organized a committee with like-minded people who knew how to act.<sup>65</sup>

On the other hand, the inspirations provided by the Don Quixote Social Center to Caferağa Solidarity were not limited to strengthening the bond with the neighborhood. The Don Quixote Social Center actually led to the experience of many situations that were new to Turkey's repertoire of resistance. One of them was the full realization of radical direct democracy in the squatted house. As shared by the interviewee 3,

We did not engage in such an extreme kind of direct democracy. We were advocating socialist democracy, etc., but we were also unfamiliar with the radicalization of direct democracy to this extreme. When we saw that these practices could be accomplished in an unusual manner and that we might

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<sup>64</sup> "Bunlardan biri mesela ortak mutfaktı ben onu çok seviyordum. Çünkü yemek çok birleştirici bir şeydir. Yemeği yaparsınız yiyecek biri bulunur illa ki. Yaparken yardım edecek insan da bulunur." Translated by the author.

<sup>65</sup> "Biz mekanı bir sosyal merkez olarak kullandık. Sürekli düzenledik yani aylar içerisinde daha da güzelleşti. Çağrılar yaptık sosyal medya üzerinden, insanlar eşyalar gönderdi. Çok güzel bir mekana dönüştü zaman içerisinde. Kapısını da tamir ettik bir kilit de taktık. Elden geldiğince temiz tutmaya da çalıştık. Daha yarı açık bir alan gibi bir alan yaratmayı başardık. Tarihi bir binayı koruyarak güzelleştirdik. İçimizde sanat tarihçisi, mimar vs. gibi arkadaşlarla bir komite kurduk ve neye nasıl davranılacağını bilerek davrandık." Translated by the author.



benefit from them, we said, “Let's proceed from here.” Consequently, I believe squatted houses were comparable.<sup>66</sup>

Interviewee 3 also mentions the sweet competition between solidarities by supporting interviewee 4 and talks about the collaboration between Yeldeğirmeni and Caferağa solidarities during the squatting process of Don Quixote squatted house. He claims that members of Caferağa Solidarity also carried the boards, the doors were installed, and the squatted house was repaired from hand to hand by teamwork. Apart from all this tangible cooperation, there was an intellectual flow between the two solidarities. According to him, some of the generative capacities provided by the Don Quixote experience for Caferağa Solidarity were the ideas of moving the neighborhood forums indoors, that the presence of the space would strengthen the bonds of solidarity and increase visibility. Also, according to him,

Don Quixote was not only a pioneer for Caferağa Solidarity, but also created a situation that paved the way for the idea that “anyone who can do it should do it everywhere.” For example, an anarchist group found a place by the old Tuesday market and occupied it, even accommodated there. We occupied an empty and historical detached house in the Caferağa neighborhood, and it went like this.<sup>67</sup>

Furthermore, Don Quixote experience aided future initiatives by fostering mindsets. As shared by interviewee 4,

It demonstrated that communal living is achievable, that private property, exploitation, and hierarchy are not obligatory, and that despite everything, alternatives may exist. It demonstrated that squatting might well be

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<sup>66</sup> “Bizim böyle bir radikal doğrudan demokrasi pratiğimiz yoktu. Biz sosyalist demokrasi vs savunuyorduk ama, doğrudan demokrasinin bu boyutta radikalleşmesi daha yeni bir şeydi bizim için de. O pratiklerin garip bir şekilde başarılabilirdiğini ve oradan fayda sağlanabildiğini görünce bizim için şeye dönüştü “ya biz burdan devam edelim” Yani bence işgal evleri bir boyutuyla da böyleydi.” Translated by the author.

<sup>67</sup> “Don Kişot yalnızca Caferağa Dayanışması için bir öncü değil “yapabilen herkes her yerde yapsın” fikrine yol açan bir durum oluşturdu. Atıyorum bir anarşist grup eski Salı pazarının orada bir yer bulup yaptı, hatta içinde kalıyorlardı. Biz de Caferağa mahallesinde boş ve tarihi müstakil bir konutu işgal ettik ve bu şekilde devam etti.” Translated by the author.

successful in Turkey as well. It also demonstrated that individuals may live a life based on commonalities despite their differences.<sup>68</sup>

From a different point of view, the Don Quixote experience's generative powers were not only effective in demonstrating that inspired impulses and resistive potentials may be performed in various ways. Negative experiences and lessons learnt were also additional contributions it provided to subsequent encounters. According to respondent 3, accommodation in the squatted house was one of these circumstances. He states that,

It was named a neighborhood house since it served as a social center and was not our dwelling. Don Quixote was nonetheless complex. Due to the fact that Don Quixote was the pioneer, and it was the first squat, there were so many disagreements among them. As a result of the lesson, it taught us, we chose not to accommodate in the beginning. However, there were profiles like this, which one of Deniz Gezmiş's attorneys had been keeping accommodating recently (he adds with a smile) since he wanted to have this experience and share the atmosphere in this manner.<sup>69</sup>

Separation between the Don Quixote Social Center and Yeldeğirmeni Solidarity was an additional lesson acquired. This was one of the factors that made it difficult to overcome issues and led to the collective's disintegration. According to Interviewee 3, lessons were learnt from this circumstance as well at the Caferağa neighborhood house, and the functioning of the forum and the neighborhood house's unity were indistinguishable institutions that moved hand in hand. He states that,

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<sup>68</sup> "Komün yaşamın mümkün olduğunu öğretti, özel mülkiyetin, sömürünün, hiyerarşinin bir zorunluluk olmadığını, alternatiflerin her şeye rağmen var olabileceğini gösterdi. Türkiye'de de işgal evi deneyiminin başarılı olabileceğini gösterdi. Ayrıca insanların farklılıklarına rağmen bir arada müşterekler temelinde bir yaşamı paylaşabileceğini gösterdi." Translated by the author.

<sup>69</sup> "Orada yaşamıyorduk orayı biz sosyal merkez olarak kullanıyorduk, zaten bu yüzden adı da mahalle eviydi. Ancak Don Kişot karıştı. Don Kişot öncü olduğu için, ilk işgal evi olduğu için onlarda öyle tartışmalar oldu. Biz de ondan ders çıkarttık baştan itibaren kalınmamasına karar verdik. Ancak şöyle profiller de vardı onu da size söyleyeyim, mesela Deniz Gezmiş'in avukatlarından biri son dönemlerde gizli gizli kalıyormuş mesela (gülümseyerek aktarıyor) çünkü özellikle bu deneyimi yaşamak ve atmosferi bu şekilde paylaşmak istiyormuş." Translated by the author.

We organized the community house in a manner that promoted neighborhood cohesion. Don Quixote was not taking this action. Don Quixote was an independent squat with its own forum and collective. Yeldeğirmeni Solidarity gatherings were conducted independently of it. Therefore, while the solidarity and the squatted house handled things jointly, they were unable to reach consensus on some matters. We, on the other hand, managed them by melting them into a single pot and subordinating everything to the concept of solidarity itself. In this sense, there was a difference in methodology.<sup>70</sup>

Consequently, the Caferağa squat is open to debate as a possibility demonstrates that alternative modes of living and creating that are non-exploitative are possible, based on the inspirations and lessons derived from the Don Quixote experience. The building was evacuated by police in December 2014, and afterwards, in 2016, it was burnt suspiciously.

Another squatted house experience that set up the motto “Reject, occupy, rebuild!” was the Bay Samsa squatted house. Bay Samsa squatted house was occupied in Söğütlüçeşme, İstanbul in 2014. It was experienced as another of the squatted houses that started by being inspired by the resistance sparks and organizations in the space initiated by the Don Quixote experience. Bay Samsa squatted house terminated in 2015 due to a lack of remaining activists. The structure remains locked.<sup>71</sup> Their self-expression was as follows:

We accept the concept of reject, occupy, rebuild without uniting behind any ideology or even setting aside ideologies. Bay Samsa squatting house allows anyone to enter and exit. Members are denied entry. Bay Samsa Squat is not inside any country’s boundaries. Anyone who desires may join us and behave as he/she deems appropriate. Our present objective is to bring this building,

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<sup>70</sup> “Mahalle evini biz mahalle dayanışmasıyla iç içe bir formatta yürüttük. Bunu Don Kişot yapmıyordu. Don Kişot, kendi başına bir işgal eviydi, kendi forumu, koltifi vardı. Yeldeğirmeni Dayanışması’nın toplantıları ondan bağımsız yapılıyordu. Dolayısıyla, dayanışma ve işgal evi beraber iş yapsa da bazı konularda uzlaşmıyorlardı. Biz ise bunları tek bir potada eritip her şeyi dayanışmanın kendisine tabii kılarak yürütüyorduk. Metod farkı vardı bu anlamda.” Translated by the author.

<sup>71</sup> Information gathered from <https://foodnotbombs-istanbul.tumblr.com/post/153645740065/i-istanbulda-i%C5%9Fgalevlerinin-son-durumu-latest>, retrieved on December 21,2022

which has been vacant for years, back to life as Bay Samsa squatted house via tolerance and collaboration.<sup>72</sup>

Another squatted house that contributed to the squatted house culture was Beşiktaş Berkin Elvan Student Squat. A derelict building occupied by a group of students for cultural and artistic activities. The squatted house could only stand for one month.<sup>73</sup>

Their manifesto was as follows:

We came to this neighborhood as friends and neighbors. We invite everyone, especially the forums and the neighborhood, to clean up. We will make this house a student house by making it public. Over time, we will establish a library here, create a study center, and hold a symposium. We will have cultural and artistic activities.<sup>74</sup>

Experiences with squatting were not restricted to Istanbul alone. In Ankara, a squatted house known as the Atopya squatted house appeared. As a generative resistance capacity of Don Quixote Social Center, Atopya started the anti-capitalist struggle in Ankara's Seyranbağları district in 2014. It started when 15 activists occupied an abandoned building in Ankara, inspired by the experience of Don Quixote squatted house and demanded to spread alternative life experiences in Turkey. Atopya created itself from an anarchist perspective and attempted to live with its own disciplines and the emerging order of chaos. Atopya, or "going astray,"

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<sup>72</sup> "Hiçbir ideolojide birleşmeden hatta ideolojileri bir kenara bırakarak, reddet işgal et yeniden inşa et fikrini benimsiyoruz. bay samsa işgal evi ne herkes girebilir, herkes çıkabilir. üye olan giremez. bay samsa işgal evi hiçbir ülkenin sınırları içinde değildir. dileyen, gelip aramıza katılabilir ve canı nasıl istiyor ise öyle davranabilir. hoşgörü ve ortaklaşa çalışma ürünü bir birliktelik ile yıllardır boş olan bu binayı bay samsa işgal evi olarak tekrar hayata döndürmek şuan ki amacımız." Translated by the author. Information gathered from <https://foodnotbombs-istanbul.tumblr.com/post/153645740065/i-stanbulda-i%C5%9Fgalevlerinin-son-durumu-latest>, retrieved on December 21,2022

<sup>73</sup> Information gathered from <https://m.bianet.org/biamag/toplum/154258-besiktas-ta-bina-ısgal-edildi-adi-berkin-elvan-ogrenci-evi>, retrieved on December 21,2022

<sup>74</sup>"Bu mahalleye dost ve komşu olarak geldik. Başta forumlar ve mahalleli olmak üzere herkesi temizliğe çağırıyoruz. Bu evi kamusallaştırarak öğrenci evi yapacağız. Zamanla burada kütüphane kuracağız, etüd merkezi oluşturacağız, sempozyum yapacağız. Kültür sanat etkinliklerimiz olacak." Translated by the author.

in Foucault's words, tried to demonstrate, along with its practices, that it is possible to build a new existence, in contrast to utopias, which are projects for a utopian future in which everyone lives in harmony. Atopya squatted house, which is in search of an autonomous life with these principles, unfortunately closed in 2014 by announcing that it dissolved itself.<sup>75</sup>

Based on these experiences, it is possible to state that squatted house experiences have not become widespread in Turkey. However, there are still resistance movements that take social responsibility, continue the struggle for the right to the city, and produce discourse. These ongoing initiatives that I focus on as generative capacities, Karşı League, Kadıköy Urban Solidarity, Kadıköy Cooperative

#### **4.1 Karşı Lig<sup>76</sup>**

From the struggle for a life without exploitation to the struggle for the right to the city, one of the initiatives that continues by producing alternative discourses is the "Counter League". In addition, Counter League is a subculture of resistance that creates oppositional areas against the commodification of sports in popular culture. (Kara & Güngör, 2021) Because, in the production of capitalist culture, sports, and especially football, which is widely popular, enter a commodification process that turns the large wheels of capital in a professional sense. Apart from this, thanks to mass media and other communication tools, we see football as a means of capitalist discourse played only by men. In this sense, the Counter League is an initiative created to oppose all these and blend the culture of resistance with sports. It is an alternative league established by the insurgents, who are uncomfortable with the

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<sup>75</sup> Information gathered through <https://kaosgl.org/haber/ankararsquoda-bir-iskal-evi-atopya>, retrieved on December 21,2022

<sup>76</sup> "Counter League" is an alternative league to industrial football and the commodification of sports. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020, p.217)

definition of sports by capitalist discourses as an area of industrialization and, oppression, and who are against industrial football, racism, nationalism, sexism, and all kinds of hate speech. The Counter-League movement sprouted at the Don Quixote Social Center when the solidarity components, who had a football history before the occupied home was founded, played football with the inhabitants and immigrant children. Counter League was founded on the idea that one of the squatted house's social values, equality and a lack of violence and competitiveness, could be performed by men and women of different genders. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020) The Counter-League, which emerged as an example of resistance and struggle subculture, is a formation that concretizes the discourses produced against oppression, competitiveness, and patriarchy in the Don Quixote squatted house and Gezi experiences in the field of sports. In this context, one of the first slogans of the Counter League was "We are the League against corruption, reason, industrial football, animal cruelty, and racism!"<sup>77</sup> (Kocabıçak et al.,2020, p.217) As it can be understood, the principles of the Counter League were collective wisdom against individuality, women's subjectivity against power domination, amateurism against professionalism and industrial sports, and respect for labor.

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<sup>77</sup> "Yolsuzluğa,aklın hükmüne, endüstriyel futbola, hayvan eziyetine, ırkçılığa karşı Karşı Ligdeyiz!" Translated by the author.



Figure 4.1 : Counter League as an Alternative to Industrial Football,2019 (Source : <https://esitlikadaletkadin.org/baska-turlu-bir-futbol-mumkun-karsi-ligin-kadinlari/>, retrieved on December 12, 2022)

This approach was also understandable from the names of the amateur teams of the Counter League which are, “Cafer İdman Yurdu, Gamsızlar, Selamsız Bandosu, Karşı Semt, Kuzguncuk Bostan Celtics, Spartak İstanbul, Ayak takımı, Forza Yeldeğirmeni, Beleştepe, A-Raf, Fahrenayt 451, Karşı Radyo, Karaköy İdman Yurdu, Başka Takım, Bome Dersim, Lazona, Nankatsu, and Koop Gücü.”<sup>78</sup>

In this framework, the regulations of the Counter League, whose slogan was “another kind of football is possible,”<sup>79</sup> were likewise unique. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020, p.217) In this instance, the game would be played without a referee and without the usage of cards, profanity was absolutely prohibited, and harshness was not tolerated. Additionally, each roster had to include at least three women. In this manner, the

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<sup>78</sup> Information has taken from: <https://esitlikadaletkadin.org/baska-turlu-bir-futbol-mumkun-karsi-ligin-kadinlari/> .retrieved on December 11,2022

<sup>79</sup> “Başka bir futbol mümkün” (Source: <https://esitlikadaletkadin.org/baska-turlu-bir-futbol-mumkun-karsi-ligin-kadinlari/>, retrieved on December 11,2022) Translated by the author

goal was to establish an alternative football culture that disregarded all the norms of traditional football. Therefore, the Counter League is not only a sports league; it is a battleground that widens the powers and possibilities of the struggle for the right to the city by producing alternative discourses and, most importantly, mindsets.

#### **4.2 Kadıköy Urban Solidarity<sup>80</sup>**

Kadıköy Urban Solidarity is a volunteer-led struggle effort that sprung from the Gezi Park resistance of the components converging on the axis of the right to the city. It is a solidarity that puts on the agenda crimes against the city and the natural environment that were allowed by the urban transformation legislation, which I addressed in the second chapter. After the Gezi Park uprising, Kadıköy Urban Solidarity was founded as “Neighborhoods Against Urban Transformation” to resist urban and nature crimes committed for the advantage of privileged classes against urban lands and environment as a common. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020) As interviewee 5 states,

In line with the problems of Kadıköy regarding nature and the city, we have some works that stand out from our other works. One of them is the actions and organizations we do against urban transformation (we call it rent-based transformation). Later, we established the Kadıköy Urban Solidarity, thinking that the issue is not limited to urban transformation, but that we should look at it from a wider perspective.<sup>81</sup>

As a result, it is a form of solidarity that attempts to engage in commoning practices by gathering around the axis of the right to the city and working to protect nature as the most fundamental common. To exemplify, we can show the urban resistance they generated on Kuşdili Meadow, Kurbağalıdere, Haydarpaşa and Validebağ Grove.

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<sup>80</sup> “Kadıköy Kent Dayanışması” Translated by the author.

<sup>81</sup> “Kadıköy’ün doğaya ve kente dair sorunları doğrultusunda, yaptığımız çalışmalardan öne çıkan bazı çalışmalarımız var. Bunlardan biri, kentsel dönüşüme karşı(biz rantal dönüşüm diyoruz) yaptığımız eylem ve organizasyonlar. Daha sonrasında konunun sadece kentsel dönüşümle sınırlı olmadığını, konuya daha geniş perspektiflerden bakmamız gerektiğini düşünerek Kadıköy Kent Dayanışması’nı kurduk.” Translated by the author.





Figure 4.2: Latest Achievement of Kadıköy Urban Solidarity: Haydarpaşa Train Station (Source: [https://www.birgun.net/haber/17-yillik-mucadelede-onemli-kazanim-trenler-yeniden-haydarpasa-gari-na-gelecek-412408?fbclid=IwAR0\\_XrIw6K3pGJyi52JxqUAqq18WpEvDNwEolnpGw0ysziDIhk84iFg\\_AwQ](https://www.birgun.net/haber/17-yillik-mucadelede-onemli-kazanim-trenler-yeniden-haydarpasa-gari-na-gelecek-412408?fbclid=IwAR0_XrIw6K3pGJyi52JxqUAqq18WpEvDNwEolnpGw0ysziDIhk84iFg_AwQ), retrieved on December 12, 2022)

As shared by interviewee 5 regarding their projects,

In Kadıköy, all urban and environmental issues are within our domain. For example, there is Kurbağalıdere in Kadıköy. The Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality undertook a project to replace the Kurbağalıdere bed. We believed this to be improper. Because when this project was completed, it would technically affect the way it passed.<sup>82</sup>

The purpose of solidarity is not limited to forming public opinion against crimes against the city and the environment. Solidarity routinely discusses and makes

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<sup>82</sup> “Kadıköy’de kent ve doğayla ilgili tüm sorunlar bizim çalışma alanımıza giriyor. Örneğin, Kadıköy’de Kurbağalıdere var. Kurbağalıdere’nin İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi tarafından yatağının değiştirilmesi projesi vardı. Biz bunun yanlış olduğunu düşünüyorduk. Çünkü bu proje yapıldığında geçtiği yolu teknik olarak etkiliyordu.” Translated by the author.

decisions amongst itself on the local challenges it has identified. After forming a partnership with organizations such as the Chamber of Civil Engineers and subject matter experts, they protested the involvement in the city by stating why they did so. Regarding their working mechanism Interviewee 5 states that,

As you are aware, the participants in neighborhood solidarities and forums belonged to a vast array of professional categories. As Kadıköy Urban Solidarity, we are not only a group of uninformed activists. In addition to stating “we are against it,” we demonstrate why we are against it via study, effort, and projections. Consequently, we collaborate with chambers. Our information comes from them. Based on technical studies, we provided the facts on how the Kurbağaldere project should be executed to both the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and the public.<sup>83</sup>

In the subsequent phase, they collaborate with specialists to develop complete ideas and solution suggestions, which they then offer to the appropriate authorities. Therefore, it conducts its solidarity operations inside a highly strong infrastructure and therefore produces an effective urban resistance force. (Uludağ, 2022)

Another project for which the struggle for the right to the city was waged was the urban transformation project in Fikirtepe.

In Fikirtepe, there were property owners. However, the municipality was excluded, and the region was designated by the government as an urban transformation area. As a consequence of this procedure, an agreement was reached with “partisan contractors,” and the property owners were victimized. One of the grievances was the connection of all the wastewater from the anticipated 200,000 people to an insufficient pre-treatment facility. Due to this deficiency, the wastewater was carried to Kurbağaldere and entered the Marmara Sea directly. Kadıköy faced a grave health risk. We

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<sup>83</sup> “Biliyorsunuz hem mahalle dayanışmalarında hem forumlarda bulunan insanlar çok farklı meslek gruplarının mensup insanlardı. Biz Kadıköy Kent Dayanışması olarak sadece aktivist olarak bilgi sahibi olmayan insanlar değiliz. Sadece "buna karşıyız" demekle yetinmeyip neden karşı olduğumuzu da araştırarak, çalışmalar yaparak projelendirerek gösteriyoruz. Dolayısıyla biz meslek odalarıyla beraber çalışıyoruz. Bilgi kaynağımız odalar. Bu sayede Kurbağaldere projesinde de hem İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi'ne hem de kamuoyuna nasıl olması gerektiğine ilişkin verileri teknik raporlara dayalı olarak sunduk.”Translated by the author

plotted our resistance against it. We achieved this by meeting with the Chamber of Physicians and the Chamber of Environmental Engineers and reporting directly to them. In order to enlighten the public, we held discussions in Yoğurtçu Parkı. Initially, the municipality didn't take our demands into account or even listen to us. When the event became public, however, they were required to take it into consideration. All our endeavors and struggles yielded fruit. The proposal was created from scratch and declared acceptable by the municipality.<sup>84</sup>

Like these mentioned projects, there are so many projects where solidarity struggles on the Kadıköy scale. On the basis of these accounts, it would not be incorrect to assert that Kadıköy Urban Solidarity engages in delicate and profound struggles for the right to the city, using methodical and scientific methods. Therefore, solidarity is a framework that displays the potential of the resistance that questions, organizes, and protects the city's commons with a critical mindset. In this context, Kadıköy Urban Solidarity is an extremely promising formation for the future of the struggle for the right to the city. One aspect of this optimism is that, in addition to completing scientific investigations, every strategy is attempted until a result is obtained. In addition, the fact that people are intentionally fighting problems such as the loss of public and green spaces, the displacement of people, and the danger to public health for the sake of urban rent without anticipating any monetary advantage illuminates the spirit of Gezi.

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<sup>84</sup> "Fikirtepe'de ev sahipleri vardı. Fakat bakanlık tarafından belediye dışlanarak kentsel dönüşüm alanı olarak ilan edildi. Bu sürecin sonucunda "yandaş" müteahhitlerle anlaşıldı ve mal sahipleri mağduriyete uğradı. Mağduriyetlerden bir tanesi de buraya gelmesi planlanan 200.000 nüfusun tüm atık sularının yetersiz durumdaki bir ön arıtma tesisine bağlanması oldu. Bu yetersizlikten dolayı ise atık sular Kurbağalıdere'ye aktarıldı ve doğrudan Marmara Denizi'ne ulaştı Kadıköy sağlık açısından ciddi bir tehditle karşı karşıya kaldı. Buna karşı mücadelemizi planladık. Bunu yaparken de doğrudan Tabipler Odası ve Çevre Mühendisler Odasıyla görüşüp raporlayarak yaptık. Daha sonra Yoğurtçu Parkı'nda forumlar yaparak halkı bilgilendirdik. İlk etapta belediye taleplerimizi dikkate almadı hatta dinlemediler bile. Ancak olay kamuoyunda duyulunca dikkate almak zorunda kaldılar. Tüm bu çalışmalarımız ve mücadelemiz sonuç verdi. Proje belediye tarafından baştan yapılarak uygun hale getirildi." Translated by the author.



Figure 4.3: Kadıköy Urban Solidarity Meeting, 2022 (Source: <https://www.facebook.com/KadikoyKentDayanismasi/photos/pb.100067669863932.-2207520000./3414831608784987/?type=3>, retrieved on December 12, 2022)

### 4.3 Kadıköy Cooperative

Kadıköy Cooperative was one of the consistent formations in which the resistance potentials of the Caferağa Solidarity and their struggle for the right to the city were concretized. Kadıköy cooperative investigates the potential for production and consumption relationships that are effectively free of exploitation, prejudice, and environmental and natural damage. Through food production and consumption, the cooperative, which began with this concept, intends to generate these social discourses and awareness. Therefore, it focuses on topics such as assisting small-scale businesses, generating mutual initiatives in production and consumption, collaborative work and sharing, producing without ecological exploitation, and promoting the common good by sending the profits directly to the producer. The cooperative, which began with all these principles and operational procedures but lacked a physical location, enhanced its visibility by establishing the Cooperative

store in 2016 and continues to operate within the framework of the social obligations it has established. (Kocabıçak et al.,2020)



Figure 4.4: Kadıköy Cooperative,2022 (Source : <https://www.facebook.com/KadikoyKoop/photos/2265097206985144>, retrieved on December 12, 2022)

The primary objective of the cooperative's initial phase of operation is to search for and identify producers who produce clean and healthy goods based on the principles of cooperation and sharing, without exploiting living things and nature, and without devaluing the work of women and other genders. (Kocabıçak, 2022) In this context, sending the goods for systematic analysis is the process for determining if they are clean. Interviewee 4 provides the following information,

The goods are sent for analysis. We have a group for the cooperatives. All the cooperatives Ovacık, Koşuyolu, Beşiktaş Cooperative, Anadolu'da



Yaşam Cooperative, and Salkım Cooperative operate in collaboration in that group. We submit the requested products for analysis. If there is an issue, we communicate with one another and the manufacturer. Many procedures can operate.<sup>85</sup>

At this stage, there is a priority order for the selection of producers. This order of priority is as follows “women producers, those engaged in organized production (cooperatives, associations, unions, foundations, initiatives, collectives), those who show solidarity with organized consumer groups, disadvantaged groups (LGBTI+, precarious people, immigrants, groups in resistance) singular and subsistence production. small manufacturers”<sup>86</sup> (Kocabiçak et al.,2020, p.226) The following phase of the process is delivering the products directly to the customer, by passing the middleman. Therefore, all decision-making procedures directly connect to the consumer’s active engagement and collaborative processes. The primary goal is to ensure that everyone has equitable access to clean and safe food, as well as to challenge and disrupt mass production and consumption forms and relations. (Kocabiçak, 2022) Because Kadıköy Cooperative, which is an anti-capitalist formation, has social concerns and criticism of the capitalist system as a cooperative structure. For this reason, there are notions such as taking a stand and self-positioning on issues such as ecology, gender equality, diversity, devaluation of labor, along with access to food and other goods. Therefore, it seeks ways for people to benefit fairly from the shared value produced in the cooperative, without generating profit. In this direction, it also has shared activities that it organizes on the axis of social benefit, believing that another world is possible. In addition, the cooperative is open to

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<sup>85</sup> “Bu bağlamda, ürünlerin temiz olduğunu anlamanın yöntemi ise ürünleri sistematik bir şekilde analize göndermek. Interviewee 4 şu verileri paylaşıyor, Ürünleri analize gönderiyoruz. Kooperatifler ortak grubumuz var. Ovacık, Koşuyolu,Beşiktaş Kooperatifi, Anadolu Yaşam Kooperatifi, Salkım Kooperatifi hep birlikte ortak grupta faaliyet gösteriyoruz. Sırayla ürünleri analize gönderiyoruz. Bir sıkıntı varsa birbirimizi haberdar ediyoruz, üreticiyle görüşüyoruz. Bu gibi farklı süreçler işleyebiliyor.” Translated by the author.

<sup>86</sup> “Kadın üreticiler, organize üretim yapanlar (kooperatifler, dernekler, birlikler, vakıflar, inisiyatifler, kolektifler), organize tüketici grupları ile dayanışma gösterenler, dezavantajlı gruplar (LGBTI+, güvencesiz insanlar, göçmenler, gruplar) tekil ve geçimlik üretim yapan küçük üreticiler” Translated by the author

everyone's participation. Anyone who wants to volunteer can participate in the study. As Interviewee 4 states, "Anyone interested in becoming a volunteer may join. In operational life, organization, and meetings, there is much work to be done."<sup>87</sup>

On the other hand, as an objective evaluation of the findings of this research it should be discussed that, as with other solidarities, the Kadıköy Cooperative is hampered by the fact that these social concerns are not fully internalized within the sociopolitical contexts of Turkey, the discourses developed, and the anti-capitalist struggle, which are the cooperative's primary objectives, are not adopted by the neighborhood. As a result, one of the reasonable concerns of the cooperative's activists is that the neighborhoods are not fully embracing the struggle for the right to the city. In this context, interviewee 4 reveals the following:

We even think of closing it sometimes. Because being viewed as such a "grocery" is pointless. We cannot convince people that this is self-organization, that we can achieve something together, that we want to change things for ourselves, and that we are not a location where people can get high-quality cheese at low prices. This effort has been ongoing since 2014, and it has thousands of Instagram followers. However, only ten people are taking responsibility.<sup>88</sup>

Considering these facts, she also evaluates these initiatives as both essential contributions to the resistance repertoire and failures in terms of their inability to be temporary. As she states,

My perspective on whether the neighborhood house and the Cooperative generate resistance potential fluctuates daily. When I speak with my friends, I believe that on certain days, both initiatives have significantly altered the

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<sup>87</sup> "Kooperatif gönüllüsü olmak isteyen herkes katılabilir. Yapılacak çok iş var hem operasyonel hayatta hem organizasyonu, toplantılar." Translated by the author.

<sup>88</sup> "Bazen kapatmayı bile düşünüyoruz. Çünkü böyle bir "bakkal" olarak görülmek anlamsız. İnsanları bunun kendi kendine örgütlenme olduğuna, birlikte bir şeyler yapabileceğimize, kendimiz için bir şeyleri değiştirmek istediğimize ve insanların yüksek kaliteli peyniri ucuza alabileceği bir yer olmadığımızı ikna edemeyiz. Bu çaba 2014 yılından beri devam ediyor ve binlerce Instagram takipçisi var. Ancak sadece on kişi sorumluluk alıyor."

neighborhood's way of life and made significant contributions. However, some days I believe that it left no trace at all. It also relies somewhat on the circumstances inside the cooperative. Positively, it was an essential success that he transformed and enlarged the mindset and people's viewpoint it generated. I have personally seen my neighbors' transformations of opinion. I suppose that activities that bring differences together and overcome preconceptions create these advances. Again, the significance of space becomes apparent. Obviously, this is also correlated with the political climate of the country. Because at that time, a totally different air was flowing in Turkey, and people were more inclined to get closer. I believe that the participants significantly altered the living culture and were able to establish a viable alternative to capitalism. However, when compared to the present day, economic and social situations are drastically different. Therefore, these resistance potentials cannot be permanent; they are failures in this regard.<sup>89</sup>

In light of these various arguments and discoveries, it should be highlighted that these initiatives, inspired by Don Quixote and the Gezi Resistance, embody resistance and liberation aspirations and capabilities. However, based on the shared experiences gathered from the interviews, one of the objective conclusions of the thesis is that the activists interpret the inability to preserve these experiences as “failure” and “disappointment.” One of the reasons for this characterization was that the desired bond with the locals could not be established. Again, based on the interviews, it can be stated that the participation of the locals was insufficient, since their approach to solidarity-based living alternatives was not fully internalized. For instance, the residents of the neighborhood came to the squat only when they needed

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<sup>89</sup> “Mahalle evinin ve kooperatifin direnişe dair potansiyel oluşturup oluşturmadığıyla ilgili fikrim her gün değişiyor. Arkadaşlarla da konuştuğumda bazı günler iki insiyatifin de çok şeyi değiştirdiğini, mahalledeki yaşam kültürünü değiştirdiğini, çok anlamlı katkıları olduğunu düşünüyorum. Bazı günler de hiçbir iz bırakmadığını düşünüyorum. Bu biraz kooperatifteki duruma da bağlı bir şey. Pozitif olarak, ürettiği mindset ve insanların bakış açısını değiştirmesi ve genişletmesi önemli bir kazanımdı. İnsanların düşünce değişimlerini bire bir komşularımdan deneyimledim. Farklılıkları bir araya getiren ve ön yargıları kıran eylemlerin bu kazanımlara sebep olduğunu düşünüyorum. Burada da mekanın önemi ortaya çıkıyor. Bu tabii ki de ülkenin politik atmosferiyle de ilgili. Çünkü o dönem Türkiye'de çok başka bir hava esiyordu ve insanlar da yakınlaşmaya daha açıktı. Katılımcıların yaşam kültürünü de çok ciddi şekilde değiştirdiğini, gerçekten kapitalizme alternatif bir yaşam örgüsü geliştirebildiğini düşünüyorum. Ancak, günümüze baktığımızda çok farklı ekonomik ve sosyal şartlar söz konusu. Dolayısıyla da bu direniş potansiyelleri kalıcı olamadı bu bakımdan da başarısızlıktır.”  
Translated by the author.



help, as interviewee 4 states. In this respect, the squatted houses could not go beyond being a problem-solving mechanism in the eyes of the locals. In addition, since squatters were not “deed owners” of the buildings they inhabit, the residents of the neighborhood do not see them as rights holders, and their views reflect this. In the light of these consistent results provided by interviews, it becomes possible to understand the reasons that create despair for the activists. Despite all these obstacles, the accomplishments of these resistance experiences, notably the Don Quixote Social Center, in terms of solidarity and commons in Turkey’s sociopolitical context are undeniable. The accomplishments of the Gezi Park Resistance and squatted house experiences are that people with different life dynamics shared ideas, that direct democracy could be experienced to this extent, that capitalist institutions have indeed been protested through space, and that a communal life has been experienced, albeit temporarily, without exploitation, hierarchy, and on the basis of solidarity. Moreover, the persistence of organizations that continue to generate alternative living practices despite all of the difficulties is an incredibly encouraging proof that the resistance persists.



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

As a realm of conflict, a communicative system, or a sphere of expressive encounters, the city is a responsive organization that not only accommodates but also engages in these relationships. In this sense, the city is the arena of cooperation and heterogeneity. The “merging” of these relationships occurs in the city’s public spaces and denotes a presence in which all the complications, paradoxes, and discrepancies acquire their own viewpoints through touch and interaction with one another. This thirst for discussion and conflict is the only way of exposing the city’s political life to fresh, contingent, and original solutions; without which, the city would construct a predefined, tyrannical arrangement of affairs. (Aureli, 2011).

On the other hand, one of the strongest aspirations that constitute urban life is the economic structure of a city, which is mainly practiced through urban space. As we all experience, the identity of the contemporary metropolis is determined by the predominance of this economic demand, which is a form of demands that are complimentary to each other and to the components of the city. The fact that capital is a form of authority that governs the organization of the city has resulted in the urban space being the outcome of design strategies that emphasize material and immaterial divisions that have been established to permit complete exploitation in every sense. By arranging cartesian divisions around the “efficiency” constraint in order to maximize surplus extraction over the urban space, these strategies largely established the physical fragments of space, such as form and function, with respect

to finance. The functioning and organization of urban space have developed around strategies that “make the land pay.”<sup>90</sup> (Willis, 1995)

Clearly, capitalism does not solely manifest itself through overtly tangible economic actions. Through its intrusions into every facet of urban life, it establishes the socio-cultural legitimacy upon which it may accomplish these advances. As a result, in the context of this study, capitalism is viewed as a set of procedures that continuously discover new methods to generate profits via the daily dynamics of urban dwellers who generate and regenerate urban life. The sociocultural foundations of the processes that establish capitalism as a compelling hegemony over urban space and urban life are marginalization discourses that promote immaterial divisions. In other words, it is a fact that, through its sociocultural means and structures, global capitalism dominates and inhibits the democratic mechanisms of living compassionately in the metropolis. This urban reality constructs itself on the strategies of defining the urban space as a surplus source over the exchange value and creating the socio-cultural background through space to legitimize them. (Harvey, 2014)

In this regard, urban space becomes the whole of the strategies that generate the processes and dynamics of integrating the exploitative weapons of capitalism into every aspect of existence. Instead of being oriented towards urban dwellers, these strategies might be executed via capital-centric design approaches. In short, the superiority of economic demand positions urban space, where political activities occur, at the service of commercial requirements by turning the public space into the realm of the new public interests of private property owners. This entails excluding the inhabitants, who are the true proprietors of urban space, and placing the city at the disposal of capital. Although these strategies, whose principal operation domain is urban space and urban reality, are the cause of numerous global discontents and injustices, they should always be fueled by local particularities in order to function

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<sup>90</sup> Willis appropriates the definition of Cass Gilbert, his famous explanation for skyscrapers.

smoothly. In summary, the realm of capitalism no longer consists just of production and labor patterns but also of the urban reality that produces the city. (Harvey, 2014) As a result, if capitalist urban dynamics discover numerous ways to territorialize our lives through the instrumentalization of local data, the arena of struggle is also the city and the unique dynamics of life itself. (Harvey, 2012) In this framework, the primary objective of this thesis is to uncover the hidden means of resistance in urban life and search for ways of resisting through space via the creative possibilities provided by the exclusive fragments of space. In the light of the above objectives, in Chapter 2, research is shaped around evaluating the capitalist patterns responsible for the various forms of discontent, inequality, and misery, which are the triggering causes of resistance in Turkey's socioeconomic circumstances and comprehending the oppressive urban processes. On a worldwide scale, state capitalism in Turkey primarily manifests itself via the construction industry, which is a vehicle for urban transformation. The commodification of urban space through processes such as urban renovation and gentrification has been the constant fate of Turkish cities for decades in today's urban reality. In the background of this reality, there are occurrences such as the construction industry activating many surplus industries at the same time, and the occupations resulting from this sector determining which part of society will inhabit and territorialize urban land. (Balaban, 2011)

Therefore, it is evident that the top-down appropriation processes of urban space concretized via the operations of the construction industry are not only a method of demonstrating economic power, but also social and cultural control. Akcan (2015), emphasizes that this situation has turned into crony capitalism by disabling the decision-making mechanisms, professionals, and academia by being thoroughly systematized in Turkey. Criminalization, urban unrest, displacements, and social inequalities brought about by all these processes have also led to results such as hatred, nature massacres, religious oppression, and violence against women, minorities, and different human groups. In summary, the country is experiencing a "prolonged state of exception" in which laws are developed to benefit specific classes, extreme situations such as delirious projects, mass housing policies, and

“urban clearance” strategies are created, and accordingly, experts and urban dwellers who are the true owners of the city are disabled. (İğsüz,2014, p. 29) However, these urban strategies and pressures are also resistance-inducing forces. The field of struggle is thus not just the workplace but also the urban realm, where all forms of labor that generate and regenerate urban life. (Harvey, 2012) As urban spaces where various labors are combined and intertwined, streets are the focal points of revolutionary act since they are the venues of encounters, conflict, heterogeneity, and fluidity. (Lefebvre, 2003) The possibility of this particular resistance lies in the struggles for the right to the city, participation, and appropriation. Regarding these analyses, this section problematizes urban social movements, specifically the Gezi Parkı Resistance, in an attempt to discover egalitarian, liberated, fair, and optimistic living conditions and urban space alternatives. In this framework, the Gezi Parkı Resistance became an “empty signifier,” through which people from across Turkey voiced their demands for the right to the city via their struggle for survival.

Due to the spatialities it generates, the Don Quixote Social Center, which is one of these searches as the first example of the squatting practice in Turkey and seeks non-exploitative living alternatives through space, provides the backbone of this argument. Despite the brutality of the police, the Gezi Park Resistance has been a communal living experience based on the collective way in which freedom is practiced, many everyday chores are addressed through sharing and solidarity, and capitalism patterns such as gender roles and division of labor are abolished. (Gambetti, 2014) Also, according to Zibechi (2012), urban social movements have an educative quality in which new forms of resistance are introduced to the existing repertoire. In this perspective, Gezi Resistance, as an urban social movement, encompasses multiple kinds of resistance that challenge capitalist living and production patterns, as well as the generative powers of these resistances, in addition to being a resistance movement itself. These rhizomatic and regenerated resistances as distinct new forms of solidarity from fragments of each other are performed in a variety of spatialities, including workshops, a library, children’s areas, performing arts, piano recitals, and the “standing man” demonstration in Gezi Park. (Öztürkmen,

2014) The Don Quixote Social Center was one of the spatialities that this rhizomatic resistance structure modified and defined in line with the circumstances. In this manner, Chapter 3 addresses squatting in the Don Quixote Social Center as the performed state of resistance through space appropriation. The concept of “space appropriation” is to manipulate and deconstruct the data of space in accordance with one’s free will and ever-changing daily requirements through active involvement. (Graumann,1976; Noschis et al.,1978)

In this context, according to the approach of this study, the purpose of appropriation in this context is to rupture the fixed, given qualities of the space through events and everyday flow, and to reintroduce the urban space and the urban dweller with the creativity that arises from these tensions. (Wigley, 1989) The creativity stemming from the rupture of tactical interventions is evidently system critique addressed against several aspects of capitalism, such as private ownership, gender roles, religious oppression, and proper family discourse, as opposed to only being an instantaneous phenomenon. As a result, at the Don Quixote Social Center, where decisions are made through direct democracy, production areas such as the bicycle workshop and compost garden, as well as spatialities such as training courses, art workshops, and the women’s room, can be regarded as the concretized version of these system criticisms.

In this framework, the Don Quixote Social Center has consistently recreated the spatialities that develop perspectives on topics such as ecological justice and gender justice, going much beyond mere habitation, as its European counterparts have done. It has been attempted to construct alternative urban realities based on the lessons learned from living in communes in these spaces. (Zibechi, 2012) Although Don Quixote squatted house resulted in dissolution due to factors such as the limitations of horizontal organization, the difficulties of neighborhood solidarity, internalized capitalist life patterns, and the pressures of Turkey’s sociocultural environment, it has served as a source of fresh initiatives due to its contributions to the repertoire of resistance through space. In this direction, as discussed in Chapter 4, the squatted

house has allowed the sprouting of surviving networks such as sub-cultural resistance formations, urban solidarity, and cooperatives, which have continued to produce discourse in different domains of social life since 2013. In this context, besides the squatted house experiences such as Caferağa Neighborhood House, Bay Samsa Squat, İstanbul, 2014-2015 Berkin Elvan Student Squat, İstanbul, 2014, Atopya Squat, Ankara, 2015, three formations that are still not extinguished and continue to struggle today have been the main focuses of Chapter 4.

The first of these three subcultural formations is the Karşı Lig, which generates discourses of gender equality and opposition against industrialized football. Another organization is Kadıköy Urban Solidarity, which defends a humane, nature-friendly, non-exploitative life against urban and nature crimes and struggles to protect our most fundamental commons. Kadıköy Urban Solidarity is a solidarity that continues the struggle for the right to the city by not only protesting, but also providing documented and reported projects and solution suggestions in collaboration with professional organizations such as the Chamber of Civil Engineers. (Uludağ, 2022) The Kadıköy Cooperative is the third active organization. Kadıköy Cooperative, on the other hand, continues to seek alternative living opportunities with its efforts on equality of opportunity, in addition to questioning capitalist production-consumption relations, with its activities conducted in accordance with certain principles such as access to clean food, production without intermediaries, and giving priority to groups such as women, precariat, and immigrant producers. (Kocabıçak, 2022)

In light of these discoveries, I would assert that the struggle for the right to the city is an unending question. Since I believe that triggering conditions would continually renew and the capitalist approach to life will take on a variety of forms, urban life's challenges will also take on new forms. I firmly believe, however, that the requirement for decision-making about our environment, cities, labor, bodies, and minds will remain constant. As previously discussed, if people inherently construct themselves by questioning, demanding, and exercising their rights freely and in their own unique ways within the city in which they reside, it is inevitable that they will



confront the cry of organizing and participating equally in the space in the same questioning and demanding manner and refuse to accept capitalist unequal life conditions. According to me, regardless of how strongly these demands and people's natural ways of being are denied, all the reflections of this free will and right struggle will continue to be seen in the urban space, which is an intrinsic part of the self-reproduction of the inhabitants.

When these demands and people's distinctive ways of life encounter the possibility of effective resistance, they transform into actual conflicts that, by acting in urban space, challenge and replicate the space in unique ways each time. It is typical for these needs and demands to find appropriate manifestations in everyday life. Because everyday life holds all the potential for resistance and optimism embedded in diverse ways. When these possibilities materialize at particular moments, they threaten capitalism's habit of standardizing, fragmenting, and (un)equalizing everyday life. As raising voice in the streets for the struggle for rights such as equal life, housing rights, etc. in an organized manner, people's sustaining their own natural and valuable presences, providing their full participation in public life and in every aspect of life, as they really are, by rejecting the social roles that capitalism imposes on them by positioning themselves in the proper places in which it tries to fit them, is also a way of performing individuals' right to the city. (Harvey, 2012)

In this regard, I believe that the multiple ways of manifesting our right to the city are also producing and reproducing the common grounds of gathering and resisting together. The possibility of action, gained visions, creative and critical mind and the most importantly the hope we acquire through past experiences are also our common achievements and the fuels of further struggle. In pursuit of the above objectives, as an urban dweller living in Turkey and an individual suffering from state-led capitalism, I preferred to seek the fuel and hope of this possibility of action in the experience of the Gezi Resistance, which was an overall urban reaction, and the Don Quixote Social Center, Turkey's first squatted house experience that sprouted from there. I believed that the effort to reproduce such hope by researching, learning, and expressing my thoughts was to resist in my own way. With this motivation, in my

research, I approached squatting as a spatial assemblage of social concerns that challenge all kinds of exploitation against all the inequality created by state led capitalism with the social discourses it produces from daily life practices. According to this approach, the appropriation of space is the spatial embodiment of sociopolitical concerns. Therefore, regarding the approach of this study squatting is a performed way of space appropriation. In brief, the appropriation of space is the activity of space-based resistance.

The various exercises of this resistance embody our struggle against intolerable disparities via the intellectual reproduction of ourselves and our perspectives in space. From the occupation of the Don Quixote Social Center to its dissolution, this research investigates the capacity of this struggle to critique segments of the capitalist system across space over the period from the center's occupancy to its dissolution. This capacity for criticism expands to the extent that it can propose lifestyles without hierarchies, as independent as possible from the market economy, and without exploitation, while reproducing it with active engagement with space. It is an undeniable fact that the mentioned capacity expands in the Don Quixote Social Center with original forms of right to city manifestations, the contingency brought by the unpredictability of everyday life, and the creativity of the critical mind and free will.

Moreover, in an environment where the logic of state-led capitalism is constantly reproduced under the guise of religious discourse, hatred of the environment, gender discrimination, and various violations of human rights, and where exploitation has become the norm of life, searching for alternatives by producing numerous forms of resistance is an extremely valuable and courageous gesture of anti-capitalist struggle. This experience has introduced to the repertoire of resistance in the Turkish sociocultural milieu ideals such as horizontal organization, the possibility of a life without property, and coexistence with diversity without hierarchy. As I discussed in the previous chapter, one of the most significant accomplishments of this experience is empowering independent and alternative solidarity practices that have continued the struggle for the right to the city in many different ways since 2013 and

instilling hope that an equal and free existence is possible. With these accomplishments, I recognized that the endeavor of discovering ways to resist, to live equitably and compassionately, and to reappropriate our spaces, bodies, minds, and lives that are appropriated from top-down capitalism is resistance itself. Developing this motto is one of the hopeful achievements of the Don Quixote Social Center experience.

However, it is an undeniable fact that the political and social contexts of Turkey have become more and more radically dependent on the market economy since 2013 Turkey. It has also become more oppressive in multiple manners such as free will, gender equality, freedom of speech, etc. This situation might be viewed as the common outcome of an undeniable majority of the people who have internalized polarizations, discriminations, capitalist life patterns and adopted capitalist institutions, as well as a segment that has a progressive and yet superficial understanding of opposition by adhering to certain patterns. Moreover, it is difficult to speak of a social consciousness in Turkey that has embraced the complexities, tensions, and grave challenges beyond superficially defending a communal life based on commons and shared practices and attempting to develop living practices in this manner. Since this embracement involves challenging one's own life practices, prejudices, and everyday repetition of one's own mentality, as well as interrogating individuals with opposing ideas, in addition to generating debate.

In fact, even in an egalitarian experience that produces alternatives and resists exploitation, such as Don Quixote Social Center, sexist attitudes, groupings, neglecting responsibility, and establishing seniority-based hierarchies, as a sign of superficially reducing the act of questioning, lead to the inevitable dissolution of the collective. Therefore, many factors, such as the fact that squats are not widespread in Turkey, the urban opposition remains superficial at certain points, and the struggles for the right to the city do not always receive a comprehensive solution from the authorities, call into question the possibility and viability of resistance in Turkey. As Tafuri (1998) has highlighted, as a consequence, the things we have produced using repetitive patterns inside this system, which we critique, might be

regarded as serving the system itself. However, in my opinion, all this is not enough to demonstrate that the urban social resistance movements, including the squat experience, have failed. In addition, this is not only a scenario unique to Turkey, but an open-ended examination of the struggles for the right to the city. As outlined in the preceding chapter, despite being associated with what we term accomplishment, these experiences have generated substantial achievements in the struggle for the right to the city. Developing the mentality of questioning oneself, one's habits, and one's routines demonstrates the potential of the movement by motivating opposition. To develop resistance in unprecedented ways on a daily basis, it is necessary to choose optimism and seek alternatives. In this sense, I consider the Don Quixote Social Center's experience and the initiatives engendered by its creative tendencies to be urban actors that illuminate this path.

Therefore, considering the outcomes obtained from this research and interpretation process, it is reasonable to assume that these generative capacities can be a starting point for the future projection of this thesis. To start with, since 2013, these generative capacities have become crucial for demonstrating that opportunities may be sought in a variety of circumstances in a world where authoritarianism is rising at an alarming rate. Solidarities that expand resistance activities by fighting for the right to the city in different domains within this urban reality can open space for possible urban realities.

In the same way that the Gezi Park resistance and the Don Quixote Social Center made numerous spatial, social, and political contributions to the resistance repertoire, this thesis study, in which all these contributions are revealed and discussed in detail, may lead to the formation of innovative interpretations of the aforementioned repertoire, in addition to the already existing initiatives. This may lead to the investigation of other resistance tactics in space, therefore advancing study in this regard. Thus, rhizomatic structure, which is the study's fundamental approach to resistance, has served as the foundation for further investigation. On the other hand, considering the Don Quixote Social Center, the keystone of the thesis, as an assemblage of the appropriation of space and the spatialities where resistance and

freedom are enacted, has the potential to broaden the horizons in a number of different ways. One might also begin by reading about the spatial modification of the Don Quixote Social Center and the abundance of creative, chaotic, and transformative freedoms provided by the incompleteness of abandoned buildings. In this framework, abandoned buildings may provide fertile ground for new research in architecture, art, and design. Consequently, the concepts of emptiness and incompleteness may liberate buildings from preconceived data that conforms to stereotypes, thereby creating room for design studies.

Apart from that, Don Quixote Social Center introduced the “squatted house” culture to Turkey, if not the squatting culture. In this context, it has provided the opportunity to experience many aspects of life without exploitation during its duration of survival. In this context, considering the socio-political structure of Turkey, the future projection of this thesis might be discovering the transforming potentials of communal life that have not yet been uncovered in Turkey’s social and political contexts in today’s conditions, accordingly, the individual and collective squatting experiences might be studied. In addition, this research assessed the Don Quixote squatted house as a process in which many forms of resistance are practiced, generating social knowledge and a mindset rather than merely an unlawful occupation, a physical place that fulfills the demand for space.

In this regard, it has been an example where numerous combinations of sharing, commons, and self-governed mechanisms have been performed in light of subjective information gathered through the experiences of interviewees. Therefore, it is expected to shed light on the future of commoning activities in the social and political settings of Turkey. Since personal experiences and subjective ideas transmitted with all their positive and negative qualities also contain firsthand forecasts of future actions. Additionally, the social, political, economic, internal, and external obstacles that led to the downfall of the Don Quixote Social Center are examined. In this regard, an objective perspective has been constructed in which all elements of the squatted house practice in Turkey have been considered and data has been attempted

to be compiled so that the geographical and social dimensions of the causes for this situation might well be investigated. In conjunction with these viewpoints, one of the prospects of this dissertation is that it incorporates the intersections of multidisciplinary fields such as urban sociology, urban politics, and urban architecture. In this setting, the creativity and productive cooperation of these intersections may foster several interesting topics for further discussion.

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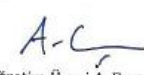
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## APPENDICES

### A. Ethical Committee Permission Document

<p>UYBULAMALI ETİK ARASTIRMA MERKEZİ APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER</p> <p>DUMLU PINAR BULVARI 06800 ÇANKAYA ANKARA/TURKEY T: +90 312 210 22 91 F: +90 312 210 79 59 ueem@metu.edu.tr www.ueem.metu.edu.tr</p>	<p> ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY</p>
<p>Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu</p>	<p>21 EKİM 2022</p>
<p>Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)</p>	
<p>İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu</p>	
<p><b>Sayın Prof. Dr. Güven Arif SARGIN</b></p> <p>Danışmanlığımı yürüttüğünüz Fatma Fulya Akın'ın "<b>Kentsel Bir Pratik Olarak "Temellük Etme": 2013'ten Günümüze İstanbul Don Kişot Sosyal Merkezinin Eleştirel Bir Okuması</b>" başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek gerekli onay <b>0546-ODTÜİAEK-2022</b> protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.</p> <p>Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.</p>	
<p> Prof. Dr. Sibel KAZAK BERUMENT Başkan</p>	
<p> Doç. Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK Üye</p>	<p> Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ Üye</p>
<p> Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Şerife SEVINÇ Üye</p>	<p> Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Murat Perit ÇAKIR Üye</p>
<p> Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Süreyya ÖZCAN KABASAKAL Üye</p>	<p> Dr. Öğretim Üyesi A. Emre TURGUT Üye</p>

## **B. Questions for Interviews**

### **1. QUESTIONS TO UNDERSTAND THE DON KISOT SOCIAL CENTER AND THE OCCUPATION EXPERIENCE**

1. Don Quixote Occupation House, which is the first Occupation House experience in Turkey, with examples in Europe were there any specific aspects specific to the Turkish context?
2. What were the horizontal organizational forms in the Don Quixote Social Center, the first squatting practice of Turkey?
3. How was the solidarity with the locals during the occupation and restructuring/renovation processes of the building?
4. How was the plan design and spatial organization of the building before the occupation? (For example, 3+1 residence, business center etc. What was the building intended to be?)
5. What physical changes were made in space?
6. How was the spatial organization after the occupation?
7. Were the functions permanent, was it possible to use the same space for different functions in the house?
8. How were spatial transformations and organization decided?
9. What were the daily life practices like in the occupation house?

### **2. QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE THE CREATIVE POTENTIALS OF RESISTANCE, FROM DON KISOT INVASION TO THE PRESENT**

1. What did the experience of the Don Quixote Social Center, Turkey's first squat, add to the "resistance" repertoire in Turkey?
2. Do you think that solidarity and initiatives, including the Don Quixote squatted house, can produce transformative/transformativ perspectives in seeking alternatives?
3. To what extent has the practice of occupation and the solidarity that sprouted thanks to it, able to develop the ability to speak and act on issues related to the agenda of the country and the world?

4. For what reasons was the Don Quixote Squatted house demolished?
5. Could there be a solidarity organization that could resist the demolition of the squatted house?

### **KADIKOY COOPERATIVE**

1. What are the activity areas of Kadıköy Cooperative?
2. How does the production take place in Kadıköy Cooperative?
3. What is the area of influence of the Kadıköy Cooperative, is it related to local problems and demands in the neighborhood and on the street?
4. Is Kadıköy Cooperative in contact with other solidarity initiatives?
5. What are the contributions of the Kadıköy Cooperative to the culture of resistance in the context of Turkey?

### **KADIKOY CITY SOLIDARITY**

1. What kind of resistance areas does the “Kadıköy Urban Solidarity” create in order to organize alternative living practices?
2. What is the role of Kadıköy urban solidarity in the struggle for the right to the city?
3. What are the activity areas and activities of Kadıköy Urban Solidarity?
4. What are the initiatives and solidarity that Kadıköy Urban Solidarity is in contact with? Are there any ongoing joint studies?