

Special Issue

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CITIZENS' ASSEMBLY-TURKEY

CONTEMPORARY TURKEY: AN ECOLOGICAL ACCOUNT

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"Turkey's climate policies have reached a deadlock" - Interview with Ümit Şahin

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Land Occupations and Local Resistances in Turkey - Begüm Özden Fırat

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We talked of “the need for and effort towards being free of the state of eeriness and patchiness that seeps into every area of daily life” in the first issue of **saha** when describing the justification of its setting out on a path. We wanted to express that this widespread state of uncertainty and its political implications must be taken into consideration if the concept of citizenship is to be valorized once again in today’s world where its meaning has thoroughly faded. For as has probably clearly emerged in the time that has passed in between, a form of existence in which uncertainty has become the rule is carrying the global authoritarian wave to further heights. As a result, the values which the concept of citizenship once alluded to are disintegrating one by one. States of precariousness which ordinary people experience in all dimensions of social life from the struggle to make a living to immigration policies are opening the door to the curbing of freedoms, naturalization of inequalities and even the invalidation of the idea of equality as an ideal itself. Furthermore, this form of existence itself buttresses this rapid drift that is taking place in the person of authoritarian political figures.

While we often define the landscape that we face by focusing on the economic trajectory or political developments, the crisis which we are witnessing today is not limited to these two areas. We cannot understand the times we are living in without taking into account another crisis dynamic that thoroughly darkens the scenery and that perhaps renders even political and economic developments in a sense secondary; we are on the brink of ecological destruction. Likewise, the fact that the relation humans have established with nature produce destructive results now confronts us day by day through a series of manifestations: Forest fires that cannot be put out for months, increasingly frequent flood disasters, dramatic rises in sea levels and extreme weather events like hurricanes which at times raze even metropolises of the western world to the ground for example. It would be a mistake not to think that disasters of such kind which experts view as symptoms of the climate crisis becoming ordinary and therefore the ecological crisis becoming overt do not reinforce the anxieties and fears that color the times that we live in.

On the other hand, we are also witnessing the intensity of the reaction to this course of events rise day by day. It is even possible to say that the intellectual, political and administrative progress in the ecology field is in large part a product of this civil reaction. If it weren’t for the social movements large and small spread out across the four corners of the earth, researchers who fight the denialism in their own fields, journalists who persistently follow what the mainstream media refrains from observing and non-governmental organizations, the agenda that we have been discussing in this area would probably not be this wide. Else, a section of governments that are dragging their feet notwithstanding, summits where the future of the globe is put on the table would not be organized. It is possible to read this patient effort itself as a different kind of response to the uncertainty of the moment and as a way of rethinking and rebuilding citizenship today.

In light of all of these, the second special issue of **saha** focuses on Turkey in the 2000s and this time aspires to produce a balance sheet from the ecological perspective. It would no doubt have been impossible to analyze from start to finish this period in which the country went through a rapid and dramatic transformation. Therefore, we rather tried to provide an introduction to the discussion in this field, present the cornerstones of the debate and by such means transmit part of what has accumulated in the context of Turkey to the reader outside of the field, in hope of playing a part that will prove conducive of learning what we have left incomplete and what we have not sufficiently considered in our search for a freer country and world.

THE TURKISH SPRING/AUTUMN OF POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Political ecology is a field of knowledge and struggle formed by the intertwining of the academy and social struggles, and one that is undergoing a thorough process of accumulation in Turkey at that. In his article in which he presents a balance sheet of contemporary dynamics and tendencies in this exciting field, sociologist Sinan Erensü thinks over the ways to realize its potentials.

“All ecological projects (and arguments) are simultaneously political-economic projects (and arguments) and vice versa. Ecological arguments are never socially neutral any more than socio-political arguments are ecologically neutral. Looking more closely at the way ecology and politics interrelate then becomes imperative if we are to get a better handle on how to approach environmental/ecological questions...”

David Harvey, 1993¹

Energy projects that invade the Anatolian countryside from end to end, temperatures that break a new record every year, floods that we all the same observe to be more violent every summer, cities that are rebuilt to the extent of leaving no empty space, rubble that gets dumped outside of demolished cities or is made into landfills, natural beauties damaged by excessive tourism, roads that cross uncanny paths such as over the peaks of highlands, trees bloodthirstily cut down, saplings—which are claimed to be in the billions—planted to replace the trees, eye-catching ornate highway landscapes, polluted shores, invaded coves, dried out lakes, foods which we can never decide whether are healthy or not, forest fires which are belatedly or never put out, progressively narrowing city parks and “nation

gardens” erected across them, city cats that become subjects of documentaries, dogs chased out to the perimeters of the city, crops left on the fields and orchards unharvested, the prices of the ones that do get harvested multiplying fivefold and sometimes tenfold before reaching our dinner tables...

Ecology has been right at the center of Turkey’s political and daily agenda for a while. Environmental destruction is greater and deeper than ever before, environmental issues are more visible and elicit more curiosity than ever. Furthermore, sustaining through an apolitical naivete this surging interest in the relations between nature, humans and society and this longing for living in a good environment is neither desirable nor possible. Political ecology—even if is not named as such—has intersected the country’s politics and its heavy agenda and issues right at the middle at least since Mehmet Ali Alabora’s famous social media post: “The issue is not only Gezi Park my friend...” Citizens, of whatever political view or social class, now have the prescience that everything concerning the environment can in some way have political meanings. Simple environmental issues can easily evolve into heated political debates. Many of us see and increasingly frequently tread the paths leading from olive trees to political power, organic products to capitalism, expensiveness of food to neoliberalism, water inundations to climate change, forest fires to nationalism, and HPPs

We must therefore see political ecology not as a solely academic pursuit, but as an acting community consisting of activists, scientists, humanities and social science scholars, experts and grassroots movements. We must ponder over how to form this community and how to maintain its togetherness.

(Hydroelectric Power Plants) to regional injustice. So then, does the politicization of the field of the environment mean that we now have a political ecology perspective? Is this level of politicization sufficient for a qualified political ecological critique? This article tries to search for an answer to this question through the successes, agendas and shortcomings of the political ecology teaching in Turkey.

The search for a heterogeneous community for a multifaceted narrative

Before answering this question, we need to briefly think once more about what political ecology means. Yes, in

its roughest sense, as David Harvey also points out above, political ecology means thinking about what is related to ecology in conjunction with what is social, cultural and political. On the other hand, however, it must also be stated that ecology does not dictate a singular and integrated theory, methodology and canon. In fact, the discipline draws its strength precisely from this lack of discipline. Political ecology can be fleshed out when ecology is brought together with what is political, cultural and social, with different methodologies and theoretic pursuits. This is precisely why Marxist, poststructuralist and postcolonial approaches are most able to talk to each other through political ecology. Paul Robbins, who reminds us that this heterogenous character is an inseparable part of the discipline, claims that what holds political ecology together are those who practice political ecology and the narratives that they form.² We must therefore see political ecology not as a solely academic pursuit, but as an acting community consisting of activists, scientists, humanities and social science scholars, experts and grassroots movements. We must ponder over how to form this community and how to maintain its togetherness. The field of

political ecology can only come into being as the totality of the various components of this community and their research.

It is on the one hand possible to say that such a community is slowly but surely forming in Turkey. The field of the environment is both more crowded and more heterogeneous compared to ten years ago. It is possible to speak of specialized environment reporters, institutionalized environmental movement lawyers, grassroots movements and associations that succeed in forming relations with them, non-governmental organizations that specialize in protectionism, activist platforms and ecological lifestyle collectives; and to come across special ecology sections in bookstores. It is still not so possible however to say that the different components of this heterogeneous structure have the intention to speak to each other and connect with each other's experience. To the contrary, the sectarianism and even polarization which has infected every corner of the country's politics has also affected the field of the environment. The competition in the field resembles not an eclectic text but a blind struggle between parties at cross purposes with each other.

Gezi's sediment

In an article printed about a year before the Gezi resistance, geographer Murat Arsel discussed why environmental studies just haven't sufficiently developed in Turkey.³ As reasons for this, he mentioned the absence of interdisciplinary approaches to enrich political ecological research methods in the country, the weakness of the discipline of geography in Turkey which shoulders this field in the Anglo-Saxon world, and the lack of social movements (for example, the fading away of the Bergama struggle without leaving many traces) to stimulate the intellectual world. While there hasn't been much change in the first two items of this three-pronged explanation, it would not be wrong to say that we are facing an entirely new situation in terms of the last item. Actually, it is evident that there was an environmental upsurge that began before Gezi that even inspired it, but which became a moment with the June Rebellion that has a large influence on today's political ecological line in the country. Even though Gezi was repressed, the Gezi spirit lived on and continues to live on in environmental struggles which can be attached to a space. It is not a coincidence that Gezi reminded



Source: Buğday Association for Supporting Ecological Living.

us of itself first in park forums, then in Hevsel Gardens, in Istanbul's orchards, at the Artvin Ecology Camp and the Cerattepe struggle. This continuity was reflected in academic literature, the media and civil society; Gezi became an accelerated course for the political ecological community and the texts it was producing. Environmental sociology courses were offered for the first time in many universities, media organs were forced to prepare environment-themed pages and enrich existing ones.

Is this an altogether positive effect however? Did the social opposition meanwhile use the political ecological orientation that Gezi pointed towards in a meaningful enough way? It doesn't seem to be possible to answer this question in the positive. The pit that the country's politics has fallen into after Gezi and the failure of social opposition to descend into that pit have greatly contributed to this failure of course. Beyond that however we must also accept that Gezi narrowed down our political ecological imaginary as much as it expanded it. The common space that the Gezi moment reminded us; the construction economy and the image of the tree is very important for us in



HPP construction in the Black Sea Region. **Source:** ekopangea.com

We must also accept that Gezi narrowed down our political ecological imaginary as much as it expanded it. The common space that the Gezi moment reminded us; the construction economy and the image of the tree is very important for us in understanding Turkey's journey in the last ten years, however the field of interest of political ecology does not consist of these topics alone.



The ecology movement is constantly expanding its scope. Climate change protest in London. **Source:** Allan Denney, November 29, 2015.

understanding Turkey's journey in the last ten years, however the field of interest of political ecology does not consist of these topics alone. We can observe an example of not being able to transcend Gezi in the before-after, green-gray Istanbul photographs that are shared almost daily in social media. Setting aside the fact that our cities have become a concrete jungle, we must remember at once that political ecology is not nostalgia for a pristine primitive nature. Moreover, the political regime sees through such a praise of green that is cleansed of society and frankly does its best to internalize it as well. We have to see that over-designed city landscapes and nation gardens which large masses of people are expected to "roll around" in are capable of turning the objection of before-after environmentalism into an advantage.

The periphery of the environment

Political ecology brings with it a perspective which is expected to push both downward and upward the boundaries of the nation state as much as the academic disciplines. Ecology, by definition, points to a totality that knows no boundaries. A political ecological perspective must see this boundlessness and render it comprehensible. This brings along with it a field with an interest that goes beyond borders, the insistence on being able to make

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comparisons, and the necessity to read an ecological issue in one spot in conjunction with political and social transformations in others.

It cannot be said that the political ecological kernel that is dominant in Turkey is altogether uninterested in transnational connections. To the contrary, we cannot deny that the left tradition, which has a place in environmental activism, wishes to see and show the connections between environmental issues and global capitalism. However, this effort most of the time either lacks empirical bases and is reduced to slogans, or the global linkages are confined to an anti-imperialist line that is bereft of capitalism. It is possible to see that such a predicament is reflected onto

the political ecological language (for example, the struggle against HPPs). The movement against HPPs for a long time attributed the unexpected rise in the number of HPPs and the overnight conversion of rural areas into energy basins to the European Union and its Water Framework Directive. The dynamics which rendered HPPs possible however, were both larger (neoliberal developmentalism) and smaller (the accumulation model of Turkey's bourgeoisie) than the EU. On top of that, Euroscepticism can be considered but a qualified example of the anti-imperialist line that influenced anti-HPP language. The other end of this line was made of conspiracy theories that bordered on chauvinism. It is unfortunately not possible to say that those who interpret HPPs as part of Israel's plan to seize



The struggle against the gold mine in Bergama is one of the longest running examples of environmental struggles in Turkey.

the waters of the region, or those who claim that dividing valleys with dams is a necessity of the Greater Middle East Initiative have been excluded from the struggle. Let us remind that the historical roots from which this chauvinistic environmentalism that damages both the political and the ecological dimensions of political ecology derives its energy lie in the state's reaction to the Bergama struggle; that those who have put up an environmental struggle have been systematically accused of being props of foreign agents since Bergama.

In the most distant (but actually closest) environment of environmental issues lies climate change. Climate change connects the local and the global in a clear and threatening manner. This field which is very likely to be technicized through a language of expertise, is attaining a political ecological narrative through academic studies⁴ that have increased in the recent period and through extensive campaigns like *iklimadaleti.org*. In countries like Turkey however, as much as climate change is on the one hand an indispensable line of struggle for political ecology, it is on the other hand also a hard to scale wall that must be confronted. While the road to socializing the struggle against climate change passes through political ecology; in a society where the perpetrator is to such an extent invisible and diffused, where the oppressed nation identity still has meaning and social inequality is so deep, this road is not at all easy to bestride.

The commons/commoning

The concept of the commons and the debates around it constitute a serious portion of the political ecological literature and our political ecological imaginary. There are many reasons for this. Perhaps the first that comes to mind is that common living spaces are being sacrificed with dizzying speed to

high profile residences and shopping malls in cities and to energy and mining infrastructures in the countryside. What is perhaps more decisive however is that young people especially, are unable to enthusiastically place the public sector in juxtaposition to the private sector. To many of them, public solutions are at least as problematic as private sector solutions and this conundrum brings along with it the search for new formations and alternative constructs. The desire to live together constitutes a third axis which intersects all of these. This desire which is concretized in images of a highland or a river being used together portrays the need for commoning as much as the need for the commons itself.

What we must think harder about is precisely this aspect of the discussion of the commons around organization, which is the condition of commoning. The condition of becoming common means questioning issues and methods concerning the condition of commoning as much as the resource we use in common, if not more so. Therefore, we must shift our focus onto "the commons for itself" (remembering that the Gezi Park became a commons in the full sense only with its occupation) together with "the commons in itself". In this context, the commons points not to a resource but to the network of social relations that can be formed around it. And these bonds do not form spontaneously (for example, by a few environmentalist youths settling into the countryside). Political ecology encourages us to study common processes as much as common assets. What is ironic however, is that this interest concerning commoning and efforts to commonize are not being nourished by already existing sources. For example, practices regarding fishing which is an important part of the commons literature which earned

Elinor Ostrom the Nobel prize came out of this geography, but no one is going back and showing interest in this example.⁵ Similarly, it is possible to see examples of cooperatization as failed and Islamist organization as successful (but conservative) practices of commoning. Our belief that the commons will necessarily and immediately give birth to progressive, revolutionary and liberating practices make it difficult for us to see different examples and draw lessons from them.

The political ecology of consent⁶

"Don't tell us not to use these places [highlands, pastures, forests], tell us to use but to protect them. We are going to protect these places but we are also going to use them! Oh, and we are going to go up by automobile to the highlands that we used to scale by mule, this is also our right, and let no one take offense. The people of this place have suffered the mud and snow of these very mountains long enough. Over here in our environs, politicians promise to build roads and demand votes. Have you ever heard of one which got votes by promising not to build roads, of one which didn't build roads and got votes? Can such a thing be? Can your minds conceive of such a thing?"

A district mayor in Rize,

October 2014

Political ecology turns its focus firstly to the oppressed, the weak, the dissident, the minority and the lower classes. For environmental inequalities both render visible and intensify social inequalities. Issues such as dispossession, expulsion and unequal access to a healthy environment closely interest political ecology and one of its important arms; environmental justice studies. At this point the research contributes to the struggle for rights and lays the foundation of the political ecology community. Let us remember that the foundations of the political ecology school in the West were born mostly as a method of struggle from within struggles for rights that aim to address environmental injustices.

Let us remind that the historical roots from which this chauvinistic environmentalism that damages both the political and the ecological dimensions of political ecology derives its energy, lie in the state's reaction to the Bergama struggle; that those who have put up an environmental struggle have been systematically accused of being props of foreign agents since Bergama.



Artvin Cerattepe residents who have conducted a patients struggle against gold mining for years.

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Yet political ecology can help us understand not only the one who rebels, but also the one who consents. Despite just recently becoming an object of critique, let's face it: development is still very popular in Turkey (and in similar countries) and is a dream that entices people. Even though powers that be take hold of this dream and

use it to discipline societies, use it to render them countable, measurable and governable, even though development often goes hand in hand with structural and symbolic violence, development still corresponds to positive things in the eyes of citizens. We don't have to explain this only through a bunch of abstract national ideals either. This is an excitement felt for the simplest project of development, its project, its personnel and even its vehicle. For example, the concrete counterpart to this hope, this excitement in the Turkish (especially in the Eastern Black Sea Region) countryside is the excavator, known colloquially among the people as the scooper. The village that the scooper arrives at is cheered up, all the villagers—especially young men—run to chase after the scooper. It is demanded of the scooper that it strikes hither and thither without purpose, in defiance of the tough conditions of the land and climate. They desire that once the scooper emerges all tasks be fulfilled, whether necessary or not. As much as the scooper represents power and domination over nature—especially in the motherland of the building contractor—it also becomes a symbol of the possibility of class mobility. Maybe one day one can become a scooper operator, or even a scooper owner, even undertake small construction work. As a district mayor

claims in the quote above, opposing something done by a scooper in a place where the scooper is loved so much is equivalent to madness.

What ecologists have trouble countering are—if not the scooper itself—precisely the feelings and desires mobilized by discourses and practices that we simplify with the term “development”. In its various colors, the political left either promises that these same desires will be mobilized in a better, more egalitarian way, or that it will completely abolish them, that it will remove the need for desire. Neither a middle ground nor a completely different version of this has been able to be expressed yet. We are still bereft of social horizons that can constitute an alternative to mainstream development. With that being the case, in the absence of a realistic alternative political imaginary, struggles against HPPs, mines, coastal roads and The Green Road, which have shown the courage to be born in the capital of “building contractorism,” are forced to struggle alone against a very powerful specter. The Green Road and similar projects are marketing a dream, if even a false one, to rural geographies that are being dragged into depopulation at top speed. In the absence of alternative political and social imaginaries and practices,

The Green Road and similar projects are marketing a dream, if even a false one, to rural geographies that are being dragged into depopulation at top speed. In the absence of alternative political and social imaginaries and practices, the only adversary to this dream, no matter what it is called and no matter how risky it is, is present conditions.

the only adversary to this dream, no matter what it is called and no matter how risky it is, is present conditions. The present conditions of rural life which is depreciating with all of its components is able to challenge speculation only at a handful of points in the enormous Eastern Black Sea geography.

In stead of a conclusion: Transcending the winner-loser calculus

The political ecological literature and orientation in today's Turkey developed in large part by way of environmental conflicts and struggles for rights that took place around these conflicts.⁷ Furthermore, political ecology, understandably became popular as a method of critiquing political power. This form of critique provides both a safer and more legitimate grounds for social opposition and the opportunity to think about various struggles for rights in conjunction with each other, and it widens our political horizon. However, we must also not forget that our political ecological conception is in large part shaped and limited by this historical context. Reducing the political ecological imaginary to a struggle for rights will amount to rendering it a colorful background to analyses of winners/losers, taking this field lightly and separating the political claim from the ecological. We can view it as a certainty that this will take us back to where we started, meaning a narrow reading that takes into

account no context other than the human and their relations with other humans.

One way to transcend this predicament is by means of observing relations of society and nature closely, beyond heroic slogans. Nature is neither a silent backdrop to human activity, nor a holy space untouched by human hands. People have transformed nature and nature has transformed societies throughout history. The starting point of political ecological critique is precisely this mutual relationship. It is necessary to present this relationship in all its plainness and contradictions and to shield the nature-society complex both from a green romanticism and a vulgar materialism. While this can take place in the form of documenting the non-material meanings of nature and how these meanings have changed historically (for example, the mutation of the infertile Black Sea Region perception of the early Republic era into singing praises of the pristine Black Sea Region), it can also take place in the form of analyzing the city, which is taken to be outside of nature, as a society-nature combination, and reading the city not as damaged but as transformed nature (for example, as is done at the summer school of the Center for Spatial Justice). Similarly, the sanctity attributed to nature and some of its components, the use of nature for consumption and for vacationing, and the

nostalgic meaning that nature induces in city folk are all within the field of political ecology. The knowledge that what we call the environment only exists through social use and meaning interpretation and that nature is as related to culture as it is to the economy will not undermine political ecological critique – to the contrary it will place it on firmer ground.

Another way to distance political ecology from the calculus of winners and losers is by means of carrying it beyond an anthropocentric reading. Actors which are within the field of interest of political ecology are not limited to the state bureaucracy, local communities, environmental activists and owners of capital. Stray animals, GMO foods, natural disasters, technological innovations and physical infrastructures are not only the objects but also the subjects of political ecology and they complete the complex world that this field points towards. The complexity of this world only becomes more comprehensible not when it is reduced to a struggle over resources but when its layers are expounded one by one. In this context, we must mention the new steps that are being taken and formations like the Rural Researches Network and Science and Technology Studies Network of Turkey and we must remind ourselves that the field of political ecology can also be enriched by agencies outside of environmental struggles.

¹ David Harvey, "The nature of environment: Dialectics of social and environmental change", *Socialist Register*, no. 29, (1993). Translation by author.

² Paul Robbins, *Political ecology: A critical introduction (Vol. 16)*, (John Wiley & Sons, 2011).

³ Murat Arsel, "Environmental studies in Turkey: Critical perspectives in a time of neo-liberal developmentalism," *The Arab World Geographer*, no. 15(1), (2012), s. 72-81.

⁴ E. Turhan, S. Cerit Mazlum, Ü. Şahin, A. H. Şorman ve A. Cem Gündoğan, "Beyond special circumstances: Climate change policy in Turkey 1992–2015," *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change*, no. 7(3), (2016), s. 448-460.

⁵ Fikret Berkes, "Local-level management and the commons problem: A comparative study of Turkish coastal fisheries," *Marine Policy*, no. 10(3), (1986), s. 215-229.

⁶ The quote and evaluation in shared in this section has appeared in different form in this article as well: Sinan Erensü, "Yeşilin Yolu Vesilesiyle: Bir Siyaset Yapma Biçimi Olarak Altyapı," [By Means of The Green Road: Infrastructure as a Form of Doing Politics] *Ayrıntı Dergi*, (November 2015).

⁷ M. Arsel, B. Akbulut, ve F. Adaman, "Environmentalism of the malcontent: Anatomy of an anti-coal power plant struggle in Turkey," *Journal of Peasant Studies*, no. 42(2), (2015), s. 371-395; C. Aksu, S. Erensü, E. Evren, *Sudan sebepler: Türkiye'de neoliberal su-enerji politikaları ve direnişler*, (İletişim, 2016); S. Erensü, E. Turhan, F. Özlüer, ve A.C. Gündoğan, *İsyanın ve Umudun Dip Dalgası Günümüz Türkiye'sinden Politik Ekoloji Tartışmaları*, (Tekin, 2016); Özge Yaka, "Rethinking Justice: Struggles For Environmental Commons and the Notion of Socio-Ecological Justice," *Antipode*, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12422>.

IS THE DEMOCRACY SPRING FOR THE “ENVIRONMENT” OVER

The ecology movement in Turkey gained important traction in the 2000s. Cemil Aksu tries to tally up this period, if such a feat is possible, asking questions about the boundaries and potentials of the movement. His discussion is founded on the notion of locality, highlighting the importance of overcoming dualities such as local/global, horizontal/vertical and macro/micro.

We have witnessed a major transformation process in Turkey in the last decade, both in major and peripheral cities. The accumulation model adapted by the AKP governments have been focused on the construction and energy industries, turning the commons of the urban and the rural into sites of investment in projects executed by companies affiliated with the government. While each one of these investments became another environmental and urban crime and the whole country seemed to become a construction site, a partial process of democratization influenced by various paradigms was happening alongside it;

the democratization can be interpreted as a hypocrisy of the AKP government that served to strengthen and to consolidate their power, as a step in the process of obliging with the European Union standards or as meeting the demands of the Kurdish opposition.

The 2001 crisis and the reforms implemented to emerge from the crisis prepared the conditions for the implementation of the neoliberal populist model in the 2000s. With the 2001 crisis in Turkey, the political center collapsed and was dissolved, paving the way for the AKP, which came out of the political Islamic tradition.

The revitalization of the EU accession process and the fulfillment of the accession conditions served the critical function of attracting international capital to Turkey, which helped to revitalize the economy through capital transfer, and also helped to break down any remaining traces of the old order in Turkey. In particular, the re-organization of the civilian-military relationships to favor the former under the framework of democratization and demilitarization brought AKP together with the liberal and the left-liberal groups under the rubric of “fighting against the military tutelage.”¹



A protest organized by the Solidarity for Creeks Platform. Source: Cemil Aksu.

The contradiction between the government's promise of "progressive democracy" and the model of accumulation based on construction and energy investments, which are impossible to realize without committing environmental and urban crimes and thus violating boundaries of democracy, resulted in putting democracy in the "freezer" between the 2010 Constitutional Referendum and June 7, 2015, elections. This process also corresponds to when the economy in Turkey started to slow down.²

"Urban transformation projects" are brought up on urban agendas to transform public areas and estates into large shopping mall and construction sites; large-scale road and infrastructural projects spearheaded by the mega projects of the 3rd Bridge, the 3rd airport and the Osmangazi Bridge, river and dam projects including hydro-electric power projects (HES) in rural areas, coal and geothermal power plants, quarries, coal and lignite mining, and other types of mining, even the wind power plants and solar power plants, "Green Road Projects" to boost tourism and energy and construction-focused licensed/unlicensed construction projects on water shores and forested areas, were resisted by the citizens who lived where the projects were to be realized. Many of these reactions and protests actually happened in the "back yard" of the government, or what was perceived to be the back yard of the government, the Black Sea region.³ The influence of these movements can be seen as a democracy spring for the "environment."⁴

Most of these reactions have become manifest as efforts to obtain information about these projects, to participate in the decision-making processes or to prevent the projects from being realized. Following the approval of the relevant



A protest organized by the Solidarity for Creeks Platform. **Source:** Cemil Aksu.

ministries, the public participation / information meetings took place, obligatory under the Environmental Impact Assessment process, and these meetings became the sites for the first actions from which these movements emerged. One of the three pillars of the struggle was always legal, while the other two pillars are creating public opinion/presenting information, and taking direct action. A group of environment and ecology lawyers formed within the Turkey Bar Association in 2011, which shows that the lawyers either supported the fight or became leaders of the movements in certain places. The hallways of the courthouses became the main site for the movement and helped cancel numerous projects.

This struggle is sustained by tens of local platforms and associations made up of people defending their rights to make statements on and participate in the process of everything that affects their "living areas" (to use their words). It

constitutes one of the most widespread, mass-scale and long-term rights defense struggles in the post-September 12 military coup era and in certain ways, has even surpassed the movements before the coup. If we define democracy as the citizens and individuals becoming aware of their own rights and their self-organizing to defend these rights to become sovereign, it is possible to propose that the political culture in Turkey has been deeply transformed by the environmental movement, both in terms of increasing democratic awareness and contributing to the knowledge of self-organization.⁵ As the movements were able to remain outside of traditional political parties, defining themselves to be "above politics", they bring together members of oppositional parties around a single problem and create an idiosyncratic legitimacy. Their persistent efforts to obtain information through trials despite the financial and political preventive methods of the government to take part in the decision-making processes, their ability to organize using both vertical and horizontal networks among themselves and centralized protests are indices of a culture and consciousness about democracy. This is why it is very meaningful that the two symbols of the movement are the retired imam Yurttas Kazim who sold his cow to be able to sue and Havva Ana who said, "who is the state, the state is the state only because of us!"

If we define democracy as the citizens and individuals becoming aware of their own rights and to self-organize to defend these rights in their struggle to be sovereign, it is possible to propose that the political culture in Turkey has been deeply transformed by the environmental movement, both in terms of increasing democratic awareness and contributing to the knowledge of self-organization.

These counter-movements that emerged from people using their most fundamental democratic rights made it difficult for the accumulation regime to function, triggering the government to limit democracy. During this aforementioned period, the highest number of legislation hours were spent on laws of environment/forests, ÇED regulations, making it increasingly difficult to sue and re-organizing the extents of the citizens' rights to participate in issues relating to their living areas.

The spring of democracy created by these efforts in the "environment" enabled local movements to become the focus of issues of participation / representation in macro-politics, locality, and nationalism, decentralization and democratic centralism.

Democracy on the local level

Locality has been recognized as the new site of politics both by the defenders of globalization as well as those opposing globalization.⁶ In general, the local scale is regarded as an indispensable part of and even the only site of existence for democracy. The local is accepted as the main scale for direct participation in order to overcome the traditional lines of division (right-left) of "high politics" and to create a new subjectivity.

Locality has become popular across the board, ranging from the economy to politics with anachronistic discussions of globalization. In this sense, while some see this as a globalist conspiracy, others see it as a possibility afforded by the use of mass communication using information technologies, which are widely accepted to have created globalization. In the first case, locality is the Maraş ice cream entering the product portfolio of the global company Algida, and thus permeating through the borders of nation-state and its applications. In the second case, locality is the thriving of the problems created by its practices or the differences that were not assimilated, dissolved, repressed by the pre-globalization era (modern, nation-state, and nationalism etc.).⁷

From the second perspective, the strongly self-confident definition of locality as the scale of politics is a consequence of the developments in information technologies that have also been instrumental in discussions of globalization. In particular, the Internet's ability to create a flow of information/news even in the remotest parts of the worlds created fissures in the monopoly of mainstream media through the use of social networks. For example, the Shore Road Project, which was constructed by filling the shore from Samsun to the Georgia border with rocks, has caused a

much bigger ecological disaster than the hydroelectric power plants (HES), but the struggle against this project did not thrive as well. As major environmental disasters had happened before and counter movements had formed, it is possible to say that the only reason these movements are now more visible is due to environment created by the new media technologies.

Furthermore, these new media technologies allow for quick and easy access to information for the individual, potentially increasing their ability to express themselves, to make a statement, and to communicate with others, helping them to get out of the alchemy of representative democracy,⁸ which is based on parliamentary elections that happen every four-five years. Although some of the activists belong to political parties, individuals are able to form platforms without the support of political organizations, self-organizing regional and national-scale protests; their finding support on larger media outlets was because they were able to establish their own media. An infinite number of internet sites, blogs, Facebook, and Twitter accounts spread, reproduce, amplify the voice of the individual and the local to the point that everybody has to hear them, serving as a megaphone to give them the right to speak for themselves.



A protest organized by the Solidarity for Creeks Platform. **Source:** Cemil Aksu.



The “Green Road” project protest in Rize. **Source:** The Wheat Association.

It is thus possible to say that local environment/ecology movements have created an accumulation of knowledge on rights, communication, and self-organization both in urban and rural contexts. Furthermore, as the AKP transformed into an authoritarian single state-party, using all the resources of the state and monopolizing the media, and even in elections that are accepted to be rigged, the opposition did not drop below 49 percent; this is thanks to the awareness of democracy raised by these movements.

Localization or commoning?

The emergence of locality a site of existence for environment/ecology movements can be seen as both an indispensable/normal situation and also as a disadvantage. The local becomes the primary scale for these movements, because the projects of the state or of companies directly threaten the commons. Water, creeks, rivers, forests, parks, gardens, and any other commons or for the commons to be “fenced off” by the state or a company to keep off those who use the commons (this includes everybody and nobody; other creatures are not even discussed here) invites everyone who lives in that locality to protest. Thus, many differences and discriminations are put between parentheses and the call receives a response. As the commons calls upon

everyone, those who respond to the call feel that they are “above politics”, which helps them speak up as such. This situation also undermined the dominant narrative of the government using the language of “us vs. them”, to even neutralize it in certain locations. In many places, representatives of oppositional parties came together on the same platform and attended the same protests. Citizens who voted for the party in power in the elections did not refrain from resisting and protesting against projects that are enemies of the environment/nature.⁹

On the other hand, there are some disadvantages to prioritizing the local scale in the environment/ecology movement, when taken into consideration within the commoning process. First of all, the commons cannot be localized due to its very nature. Anything that is the subject of the commons is timeless and boundless and belongs to no one. Since the first action of surrounding a part of nature and saying “it’s mine”, the “culture” of boundaries that we have constructed is not valid for ecology. The water, the soil, forests, the air belong to every one, all creatures, and thus they belong to no one. National, political, cultural boundaries are only valid in the world of people, and even that is partial. The struggle to defend the commons is a

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timeless and spaceless fight that is for everyone (including all creatures) and it is by everyone. If the global climate crisis that has been worsened and deepened by the states that pollute our world the most –USA, China, EU countries– is inflicted on the whole world/nature, fighting in any place against carbon emissions on any scale is globally important. Thus, it is important for everyone to fight together

and in solidarity.¹⁰ While this quality means that commoning is ontologically global, on the levels of thought, discourse and organization/partnership it becomes local, creating a rupture.¹¹ Here, locality does not go beyond defending your own “area of living.” In other words, it becomes a situation of demanding rights, legality, democracy for their own valley, village, neighborhood or problem, not forming or not being able to form a partnership with others who are suffering under similar circumstances. This situation also limits efforts of democracy/self-organization. The best example to illustrate this notion is to be indifferent to the demands of others asking for democracy, while fighting for your own rights to democracy.¹²

As Aykut Çoban points out, “the spontaneous ideology of localism” severely limits the partnership with “outsiders – those who are outside”. It is possible to say that this is largely due to the pressure created by the government criminalize those struggling as “3-5 environmentalists with roots outside the place” or even as foreign agents. The participation of Nur Neşe Karahan, the director of the Green Artvin Association and others in the Media and Communication Workshop for the Environment, instigated by the World Mass Media Research Foundation and supported by the European Union, was labeled as espionage.¹³ People from Çamlıhemşin who were opposing the “Green Road Project” were directly labeled as being members of a terrorist organization by the Minister of Internal Affairs could be another example. This pressure put on by the government push the activists into a defensive position, as they had to prove their “national” identities.¹⁴



Istanbul City Rally, December 22, 2013. Source: Northern Forests Defense.

But the “narrow” vision of the locals is not only because of the pressures of the government. The habits of the leaders of the movement from an older type of politics, nationalistic ways of thinking, their concerns to protect their own positions in the movement are also factors to take into consideration. The most important aspects of the movement is that it is not hierarchical, that there is a possibility of direct participation and encountering professionalizing titles such as “director”, “founding director”, “spokesperson”, “board of directors” is counter-intuitive. The tendency of the professionals in the movement to act as “experts” estranges “regular people”, allowing for a traditional mode of politics to become overbearing. These internal circumstances have led to local movements to become organizationally problematic in places and tapered the stamina. And this has led to a search for a shared program, united organization discussions in the ecology/environment movement.¹⁵

Thus the acceptance of the local as a new scale for democracy and democratic politics should not create the illusion that the relationships and organizations on the local level are democratic by definition. There is no such thing as an authentic local or a local movement — they never existed. The micro-identities on the local level, the relationships of kinship-enmity, the patronage structures between the local wealthy class and the general population are all influential. The importance of the local movements for increasing democratic awareness and

self-organization does not mean that they do not have to undergo the training to become democratic. As was experienced in many cases, local movements function anti-democratically despite their initial good intentions. This situation reveals itself most often in “managerial” level entities not including any women. Spokespeople are often men for local movements, for example. The processes such as decision-making, information sharing, representation and forming a common opinion all include weak spots.¹⁶ Local movements creating a spring for the environment should not keep us from looking at their weaknesses with democratic terms. On the contrary, such criticisms can help realize the democratic potentials of these movements.

Is the spring over?

After a “decade that has relatively transformed Turkey” the environment/ecology movement has encountered a series of internal and external problems created by the political-economic shift in the country. These internal and external problems form a complicated structure with intertwined layers. Problems on both levels can be overcome only when tackled together.

The developments since the crisis in 2008 can be regarded as a conflict between the regime of accumulation and democracy. The conditions of repression after Gezi were complemented by the elections on June 7 with a return to a “protective politics”, turning lawlessness into an advantage for the government. The new situation



Istanbul City Rally, December 22, 2013. Source: Northern Forests Defense.

created by the Executive Presidential System created a sort of Party-State equality and has led to a series of major problems and responsibilities for the ecology movement. These problems and responsibilities include the Canal Istanbul project, which is on the government's agenda, mining activities and in particular coal mining, nuclear and thermal power plant projects, which are anti-nature investments and which should be prevented; a barrier for democracy needs to be built to prevent the country's shift towards fascism. However, the establishment of such a barrier requires for the new organizational techniques, discourses, and practices captured by the local movements to become universal, permanent, and sustainable.

How can such heavy national and global-scale issues / responsibilities be met by movements on the local scale? This question is undoubtedly the case when it comes to global problems such as the climate and the food crisis. The problem we face here is not just the problem of locality or partiality. The main problem should be defined as overcoming the dilemma between direct action / participation, the formation of new / different subjectivities, *local politics* associated with horizontal organization and direct democracy, (democratic) centralism, hierarchical organization, *national / global scale politics* associated with the power of professional politicians and professionals. It should not be forgotten that the hallmark of local movements is that democracy begins to bring solutions to the crisis of representation despite all of its associated limitations and problems.

The connection between the rise of the right-populist, fascist party and their leaders and the deepening of the ecological crisis is obvious. Many factors, such as Trump's withdrawal from the climate crisis work as soon as he became the president, and the full-on continuation of war and security policies, and the return to policies of economic austerity, also put great pressure on local movements. The exit from this difficult situation will be possible not by reverting to the old-fashioned politics, but by the developing a new style of politics, which local social movements with a history of more than half a century have been carrying out.

¹ Ümit Akçay, "Neoliberal Popülizm ve Yeni Emek Rejimi," [Neoliberal Populism and The New Labor Regime], *Bir+Bir*, 19 March 2018, <https://birartibir.org/emek/36-neoliberal-populizm-ve-yeni-emek-rejimi>.

² Ümit Akçay, "Değişen Emek Rejimi ve Siyasal Rejime Etkileri," [The Changing Labor Regime and Its Impact on the Political Regime], *Bir+Bir*, 24 March 2018, <http://birartibir.org/emek/38-degisen-emek-rejimi-ve-siyasal-rejime-etkileri>.

³ For more information on these protests and organizations on a national scale, see: Cemil Aksu and Ramazan Korkut (Ed.), *Ekoloji Almanacağı 2005-2016* [The Ecology Almanac 2005-2016], (Yeni İnsan Yayınevi, 2017).

⁴ I am using environment here both to refer to the environmental movement and to what is outside of the "center", the peripheral, the rural.

⁵ In fact, it can be argued that the Gezi Resistance and the June Uprising, which continue to linger as a ghost in the horizon of the government, are based on the democratic accumulation created by these local movements. See: Sinan Erensü, "Gezi Parkı Direnişinin İlhamını Yerelde Aramak" [Seeking for the Inspiration of the Gezi Park Resistance within the Local], *Bianet*, June 10, 2013, <http://bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/147400-gezi-parki-direnisinin-ilhamini-yerelde-aramak>.

⁶ I have tried to write more extensively on these impressions previously in this article where I discuss the particularities of the anti-HES movement: "Derelerin Özgürlüğü Mücadelesinden Yaşamın Özgürleştirilmesine: HES Karşıtı Kitle Hareketlerinin Politik Ufukları Üzerine Bir Deneme" [From Liberating Creeks to Liberating Life: An Essay on the Political Horizons of the anti-HES Mass Movements], in *Sudan Sebepler*, ed. C. Aksu, S. Erensü and E. Evren, (İletişim, 2016).

⁷ Adopting locality as the scale for politics is also related to the TINA ("There is no alternative!") regime, which was triggered by the dissolution of the socialist bloc, showing that "meta narratives" and savior stories are no longer valid. Within the TINA regime, the most appropriate behavior is for everyone to participate in the "governance" processes so that life is "sustainable" for everyone.

⁸ Pierre Bourdieu explains the term representational alchemy: "Political alienation arises from the fact that isolated agents -the more so the less strong they are symbolically cannot constitute themselves as a group, i.e., as a force capable of making itself heard in the political field, except by dispossessing themselves in favor of an apparatus." Pierre Bourdieu, "The Social Space and the Genesis of Groups," *Theory and Society*, No. 14(6), (Nov., 1985), pp. 740.

⁹ An example in point is the experiences of the 17-year old Leyla Yalçınkaya who was victimized by the gendarmerie during the protest of the Erzurum Aksu valley villagers and who was punished by the court by not being allowed to see even her family.

¹⁰ Although "everyone" categorically covers all people, in reality, it does not include those who consider the profit they will achieve despite creating the climate crisis or even by contributing to the climate crisis. But of course they will also benefit from the gains of this struggle.

¹¹ Aykut Çoban, "Ekoloji Mücadelesinde Strateji Tartışması: 'Yine dene yine yenil' nereye kadar?" [The Discussion of Strategy in the Ecology Struggle: 'Try Again Fail Again' Until When?], *Bir+Bir*, July 31, 2018, <http://birartibir.org/ekoloji/122-yine-dene-yine-yenil-nereye-kadar>.

¹² For more information on the limitations of the locality literature, see: Sezai Ozan Zeybek, "Ekolojinin Politikası: Yeni Sınırlar, Yeni Aktörler" [The Politics of Ecology: New Borders, New Actors], *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 138-9 (2016).

¹³ Cerattepe'de Alman Parmağı," [German Influence in Cerattepe] *Star*, February 24, 2016, <http://www.star.com.tr/guncel/cevreci-degil-alman-devsirmesi-haber-1091444/>.

¹⁴ It is possible to encounter narratives of "our grandparents fought in Çanakkale/the Independence War and became martyrs" in the statements and declarations of these local movements.

¹⁵ For a more detailed discussion of this, see: Cemil Aksu, "Hatı Müdafaadan Sathı Müdafaaya" [Moving from Defending Borders to Defending Surfaces], *Express*, February 2018.

¹⁶ For more information on this, please see: Cemil Aksu, "Derelerin Özgürlüğü Mücadelesinden Yaşamın Özgürleştirilmesine: HES Karşıtı Kitle Hareketlerinin Politik Ufukları Üzerine Bir Deneme" [From Liberating Creeks to Liberating Life: An Essay on the Political Horizons of the anti-HES Mass Movements], in *Sudan Sebepler*, ed. C. Aksu, S. Erensü and E. Evren, (İletişim, 2016).

Thematic journalism in Turkey: Environmental-ecological reporting

We talked to two of the figures that come to mind on the issue of ecological and environmental journalism, Pelin Cengiz and Utku Zırığ, about being an environmental-ecological journalist in Turkey and the particular debates and difficulties of this thematic journalism practice.

I would like to begin with a usual but basic question. Do you define yourself as an “environmental journalist” or an “ecological journalist”?

Pelin Cengiz: “Environmental journalist” is the more common term but it is more accurate to call it “ecological journalist”. On the one hand this is a debate in journalism in Turkey that has not been settled yet. On the other hand, it is determinative of the kind of journalism that one does. This is because what we call “the environment” actually doesn’t encompass everything we do and want to convey, but since we set out from and were situated in “the environment” from the get go, it’s a little difficult to replace it with “ecology”.

Utku Zırığ: To add to what Pelin has said, I can perhaps suggest that we use the term “environmental-ecological journalism”. That’s how I try to use it. Naturally, this is a debate that goes beyond journalism. Shall we say “environmental movements” or “environmental-ecological movements”? Recently, there are those who prefer “environmental-ecological”, for example, Environmental and ecological movement lawyers (ÇEHAV). I strongly agree with Pelin. The difference here is one of perspective. There is undoubtedly a difference between the environment and ecology. If we look at it in terms of journalism and journalists, those who want to use the term ecology usually say “I look at issues from an ecologist perspective”. Their reasons for not using the term ecology exclusively stem from a kind of familiarity that Pelin stated. Perhaps people won’t understand,

whereas environment is a more ingrained term. In the end we are doing this work to make comprehension easier.

Does this change according to the medium of journalism? How is it termed in the mainstream or the non-mainstream media?

U.Z.: There isn’t much difference actually. Both the mainstream and the non-mainstream, including what is referred to as the dissident press, present the environment-ecology news under the “environment” tab.

P.C.: The expression “environmental journalist” isn’t used in the mainstream anyway. Journalists in this field work and are employed as energy correspondents/journalists. Certain issues related to the environment are in turn followed under that title. For example, Serkan Ocak who works for the *Hürriyet* newspaper and who we know as an environmental journalist is not referred to as such by *Hürriyet*. Serkan Ocak works as an energy correspondent under the economy service.

Which means that the issue is viewed from the energy perspective.

P.C.: Of course, it was the same in the mainstream media that was shut down or downsized.

U.Z.: Then there are news items that are evaluated to fall under the category of “life”, such as a species that goes extinct or a newly discovered form of life. Recently, there was scientific publishing on how plants are able to communicate with each other. NTV for example acknowledged this news item under the “life” category. This important

development was in fact at the same time a piece of ecology news.

Similarly, social struggles and examples of resistance that can be seen as environmental-ecological dissidence may appear under the category of news from the motherland rather than the environment-ecology category.

P.C.: Yes, a struggle for a right, if villagers somewhere are resisting the construction of a dam or a power station for example, can also be presented under the category of current news. Opposite situations are also possible. The restarting of an environmental impact assessment (EIA) report process due to a judiciary ruling becomes an environmental-ecological news item. The content of the news item is therefore decisive. However, a human issue such as a resistance or a struggle for a right is very piercing, which makes categorization difficult.

Should the inability to place a news item within a defined category in environmental-ecological journalism be viewed as a hindrance?

U.Z.: I actually approach all of these debates from a kind of frontline perspective. The gathering of many developments, news items and facts under the field or category we describe as environmental-ecological reporting or journalism is actually an intention. In this manner we declare the intention. For example, we follow matters concerning the energy issue, create news, write articles, make interviews; in the end we talk about the subject and make it into a topic of conversation. We also follow the stories of people who struggle to defend a living space within a national

park and we follow their trials. This is essentially what makes our work difficult. You're supposed to be knowledgeable about energy and you're supposed to follow politics as well. For example, this Climate Summit thing is in the belly of international politics. You have to follow that summit, come back and follow the legal issues too. That's why it diverges into lower categories as well. We encounter the city as a category for ecological-environmental journalism, climate reporting becomes a specific category. When we look at England for example, we find "sustainability" as a category. *The Guardian* has a page with this title and this page has editors. It's all headed towards such a branching out.

Let us also discuss the conditions of conducting thematic journalism of this

sort in Turkey. Can a journalist sustain environmental-ecological journalism in Turkish media as a professional?

P.C.: This is a topic entirely and directly connected to the ownership structure in the media. Leaving aside the point we have reached today which of course ought to be analyzed in its own right, looking at the last 10-15 years of the traditional mainstream media and the activities of the media owners in other lines of business, we know that almost all of them engage in production related to energy, mining and to be more specific, fossil fuels, which we have said, is dirty. This wasn't hidden or secret anyway. With that being the case, within this structure of patronage and ownership, it isn't possible to do environmental-ecological journalism in the sense we are after. Why? Because we are describing

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a journalism that directly contradicts the interests of the media bosses. What do we say? That there is a fact in the world today called climate change. This is accepted by various disciplines in the scientific field. From now on, humanity is at a point where the line between death and life will have to be decided. What needs to be done to forestall and reverse climate change is to change the forms of production and consumption that have been ingrained till now, starting with forms of energy production and consumption. Humans have warmed the world by one degree and a half since the industrial revolution up until today. How did this happen? Humans introduced into production processes dirty forms of fuel, such as coal at first, and then oil and natural gas, in an intensely widespread and rapid manner. All the dirty sectors related to this grew rapidly. Humans are using nature as they please, imagining it to be an infinite thing. No, nature is a finite thing and now human activities have destroyed its capacity for self-renewal. Therefore, a boss who is engaged in these activities, and a journalist who has positioned themselves in exact opposition to this and who has set off to protect not only the rights of humans but also of other living beings on the surface of the earth cannot be in unison. They shouldn't be in unison anyway. It is therefore that such kind of journalism was easily able to find space in more alternative and more dissident media and rise out of such avenues. This liberates the journalist and journalism. But there is also a dilemma here; and that is alternative/dissident media's limited capacity of reach. I wish it could reach wider masses.



Climate Summit, Katowice, Poland. Source: Akcja Demokracja, December 2, 2018.



Climate Summit, Katowice, Poland. Source: Akcja Demokracja, December 2, 2018.



The climate strike of Greenpeace Poland. **Source:** Greenpeace Poland, December 14, 2018

Let us also talk a little about your own professional experiences. How possible was it to conduct environmental-ecological journalism in the institutions that you previously worked at?

U.Z.: The “Green Bulletin” period at imc TV was a quite lucky time for me, because I was given there the opportunity to do this work every day. Later of course, I had to publish in other fields and for longer in order to earn a higher income, but I was still able to continue doing environmental-ecological journalism, I was able to do that every day. We even managed to form a team, if only with one other person. We managed to get dear Özlem Türkdoğan into this field and she now works at *Magma* magazine. But imc TV is a very unique example in terms of environmental-ecological reporting. This should be expressed and discussed more often. I infinitely agree with Pelin. It is not possible within this media ownership structure to do ecology journalism in the way we define it. The reason why this cannot be done lies in the content of ecology journalism. Pelin described that. This is what actually came to my mind while she was explaining it: In recent times, a new kind of journalism began to take

In recent times, a new kind of journalism began to take hold under the patronage relations in the media. I call this “green economism”. It is evident that the environment-nature has become a field that “can generate income”. The environment-nature-ecology can only find space in the media through this transformation and within a certain media ownership model. There is a concept called a “green career” now.

hold under the patronage relations in the media. I call this “green economism”. It is evident that the environment-nature has become a field that “can generate income”. The environment-nature-ecology can only find space in the media through this transformation and within a certain media ownership model. There is a concept called a “green career” now. There are even internet sites that

publish with monthly regularity. When we put all of these together, we see that it’s all headed towards another field. Ecology journalism and green economy journalism are advancing in symmetry; they are slowly growing.

Let’s get to the Climate Summit, the full title of which is the “24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change” organized in Poland on December 3-15, 2018. As we know, energy sources and the use of energy sources other than fossil fuels were on the agenda of the summit. When this is what’s on the agenda of governments, it’s also what’s on the agenda of supranational or national scale corporations. For they want to determine the direction for their investments. With that being the case, the media’s attention has also turned to it. When we talk of energy sources and direction of investments, do we not fall into the fold of “green economism” journalism?

P.C.: “Green economism” is actually the complete essence of the matter. I wish to talk a little bit about my experience with this. I switched to environmental-

ecological journalism from economy journalism. Investments are pretty front and center in this kind of journalism. The importance of investments is constantly brought to the fore. An endless praise of investment, the need for constant investment... "A cement factory, fantastic!", "a coal-fired power plant, please, give us more!", "we are growing", "we need to develop, investments for development"; these are always what get expressed. This is the past experience of not only myself but of many other journalists. The difficulty of a transformation of ideas manifests itself right here. It is not very easy to cast aside what you have internalized and memorized for years and acquire a new set of knowledge and a new framework of thought. That is the first hindrance. But we must still be alert. For are we faced with the consequences of this hindrance that I mentioned, or with the state of "pretending to do as if" dubbed "greenwashing"? Clearly, we are at a time when you can become environmentalist and ecological by spending labor and resources that ought to be spent on becoming ecological-environmentalist on public relations campaigns instead. Of course, there ought to be some corporations and civil society initiatives who want to do good things, but we are talking about a world where the abandoning of existing habits of production and consumption is not desired, where on the contrary the desire to produce and consume more is aggressively promoted while polluting is in no way being refrained from. Therefore, the following must be underlined over and over: The environmental-ecological journalist must be in possession of very basic economic knowledge. How does the economic system function? How did it function until today? What happened so far due to it functioning in this way? How should the economy be established from now on, how should it be built? Answers should be sought to such questions. If not, the whole scaffolding of your journalism might topple over and you might end up crushed underneath. The energy issue is a multifaceted, multiscale, very detailed topic. An environmental-ecological journalist must be knowledgeable about the field of energy. They must be following the climate change issue very closely. They must know what the corporations

The environmental-ecological journalist must be in possession of very basic economic knowledge. How does the economic system function? How did it function until today? What happened so far due to it functioning in this way? How should the economy be established from now on, how should it be built? Answers should be sought to such questions. If not, the whole scaffolding of your journalism might topple over and you might end up crushed underneath.

are doing about this issue. They must look into the financing dimension of this subject. Many large global banks are having reports related to climate change prepared. They must look into the reasons for this. They must observe the fact behind the curtains, that credit is being offered to underdeveloped and developing countries. They must follow civil society very well. Their eyes and ears must be open to the demands of and paths taken by civil society, to local communities and social movements. I say so, but we are in a very ambivalent field. This must not be overlooked. It is also possible to observe some journalists enterprising to become spokespersons of corporations and governments from time to time.

It is civil society that will spur governments and corporations into action. The main cornerstone of the environmental-ecological journalist lies there. Civil society is where the environmental-ecological journalists position themselves, where they can receive answers to these questions and where they really ought to stand.

After this long overture, let's get to the climate summit. There are 195 countries that are party to the Paris Climate Agreement. This is an agreement that has been accepted by signature of all parties in the UN. Naturally, it must be made into domestic law by party countries. Turkey for example still has not done this. Party countries, signatures, domestic law aside, it is crucial to look mainly for answers to questions like "what is civil society saying?", "what is the street demanding?", "what do local communities want?" and "what are those who are harmed and affected by the delay or slow pace of the desired transformation saying?". Because it is civil society that will spur governments and corporations into action. The main cornerstone of the environmental-ecological journalists lies there. Civil society is where the environmental-ecological journalists position themselves, where they can receive answers to these questions and where they really ought to stand.

And this actually carries us towards a basic issue and debate in journalism.

U.Z.: Without a doubt. Look, ecology journalism in the sense that we described, modifies all journalism. Pelin described this nicely as someone who has moved from economy journalism over to this side. Think a bit about economy journalism: In the dead center of the newspaper, 8-10 pages, with lots of ads. Naturally, the editors and reporters of these pages stay at five-star hotels and are hosted in the nicest restaurants. And what about the environmental-ecological journalists? They can never be honored by such interest, unfortunately. It's better this way anyhow. Teachers' lodges without hot water, homes with cold rooms but a warm atmosphere where they are put up suffice.

P.C.: Absolutely. Last month we were riding a tractor on muddy roads up mountains and down hillsides in Kirklareli chasing news.

U.Z.: And that's what it means for a journalist to move from over there to over here.

And what if there was an investment on that mountain or hillside?

P.C.: The journalists would have been carried by helicopter.

U.Z.: Let me provide an example as to how far behind we are. You said that

countries discussed not burning fossil fuels at COP24 (The Climate Summit) but in the rulebook that emerged at the end of the summit, the expression “fossil fuels” is not used. “Emissions reduction” which is a technical term is used instead. There was mention of something called clean coal at the opening of this summit.

P.C.: There was even coal being displayed at booths during the summit.

U.Z.: You won't hear the phrase “fossil fuels” from a diplomacy reporter who follows the Climate Summit. It is environmental-ecological journalism that renders the fossil fuel issue a matter of debate and brings it onto the agenda.

P.C.: Scientists naturally use a certain set of concepts and a jargon. But we can say that environmental-ecological journalists take the lead in putting those concepts into the language of journalism and in spreading their use. For example, we talk of a concept called climate justice. This concept denotes that disadvantaged communities are deprived of certain very basic rights such as housing and living in a clean and healthy environment due to climate change. Recently we started to see the concept of “ecocide”, meaning “ecological genocide” frequently in many articles and news items in the international media. We can speak of a language harmonization between the scientific world and the journalists who follow this field. With time, a journalism language is formed as well. I believe however that it is a little early to talk about all of these in Turkey right now. Because we still appear to be somewhere on the first steps of the “environment or ecology” debate. I wish to return to the Climate Summit discussion that Utku mentioned just now. “COP” summits are in the end UN meetings. A different language gets used there, one that is very soft, a language that is inclusive and that won't anger anyone is aimed at. Meaning it is the language of diplomacy. Reflect for a moment; there have been countries that even affixed annotations to the expression “halting global warming at 1.5 °C” in the rulebook which was the output of the summit. We can therefore say that a new journalism language has been formed with the language established here.

We discussed the mainstream in spades. We had started discussing the non-mainstream media with Utku Ziriğ's imc TV experience. Is there not an unavoidable situation in the non-

mainstream media brought on by limited opportunities as well?

P.C.: Of course. What I am doing right now is essentially economy editorship once more. But it seems I got myself accepted by doing environmental-ecological news throughout many years. I managed to divide the tasks into making an environmental program on television, writing ecology themed columns and making a radio program. With time, people in institutions where I work at have accepted the need for a “reporter who writes in the environmental-ecological field as well”. The path was not easy however; it was a path opened by journalists who did things in their own capacity and who perhaps advanced and furthered it by hacking through so much. Fellows who came afterwards then used this path to arrive. This path is naturally not as challenging in alternative media.

Let's talk a little about the content of the news. How much of the difference in the journalism being done is reflected in the content of the news?

P.C.: Look, many scientists, meteorologists and physicists tell us how incorrectly certain concepts are used in the mainstream. These are especially certain meteorological concepts related to climate change and global warming. For example, every year in the mainstream media, a news piece such as the following appears: “A mini-ice age is coming”. An ice change or anything of the sort is not coming. We are not cooling down, on the contrary we are warming up. We will not freeze, we will burn. Where is this news coming from then? There is a very simple answer to this question. Fossil fuel industries are rich enough to almost globally direct governments. They are on the scale of large lobbies. They mobilize large lobby groups. Scientists can also be part of these groups. That's the dramatic part. Studies and reports are being produced which present global warming as non-existent, which are written in climate denialism and with no factualness. These reports are used readily in especially mainstream media. We see another example especially in winter months. In a period where the weather is coldest, the headline of the news appears as follows: “Rejoice! Temperatures will rise in the next week by 10 degrees at once”. This extremely fateful climate change is presented as something positive. Think about it, while

a dam lake has dried out due to global warming and people are no longer able to do agriculture or fishing where this has taken place, instead of making the connection of this with climate change, there are news pieces that paint a newly opened coal-fired power plant or a mining field that causes trees in the middle of a forest to be cut down as “a new area of employment” opening up. These are perhaps the most disadvantageous aspects of the mainstream. We see a bunch of news items that present these without any questioning, any conceptual discussion taking place or expert opinion being asked. This is also an example of one of the very important disadvantages of the mainstream.

U.Z.: Again, a piece of news that gets made almost every year: “Such precipitation only happens once in a hundred years!”. Yet no one sees anything abnormal in this “extreme climate event”. Maybe the cause for this is that ecological journalism and climate journalism haven't fully developed or haven't been established yet.

There is also disaster journalism. “We are warming”, “icecaps are melting”, “waters are rising” etc. Naturally, I am pointing out these news items without denying their truth.

P.C.: There is a piece of research on climate change news. It says that when news is always made about disasters, it does not have an effect on people. It claims that it doesn't mobilize people but instead creates cynicism. A more positive journalism is when you show people that we can fight individually too, that things we do individually are also valuable and can mobilize communities. Presenting good and nice examples is also a way. As in people who have changed something or sparked a struggle in their own village or town. There it is, the world is talking about 15-year-old activist Greta Thunberg. There is no non-governmental organization or government behind her. It's just a girl who sprang up and said: “Why aren't people doing anything? I will do a sit-in action on the stairs of the parliament to fight climate change. What would I need school for when the earth is being destroyed like this? This is how the earth is being destroyed and you aren't doing anything.” The school action that Greta initiated influenced many youths in the world and now every Friday there is a school boycott. An action took place in Poland as well,



Climate activist Greta Thunberg.

during the Climate Summit. And it was on the agenda at the summit.

U.Z.: I have an objection regarding disaster journalism. What Pelin has said is very valuable, but a journalism-reporting activity requires defining the disaster too. I mean we just as well might be facing a disaster. Is this disaster journalism? I almost refrain from using the expression climate change. This is a climate crisis now. I want to scream: "Oh humanity, we are in a crisis!" Let us first come to notice this crisis. For there is a lot that needs to be done.

Amplifying the effect of the truth and dramatizing it further without distorting it can also be seen as a journalism technique.

U.Z.: This is especially used in television. This important journalism technique sometimes assumes ridiculous and laughable forms too of course. But I'm actually talking about the content. We have an important issue concerning content. Now, at the top of the list of those who must do something are states. One of the responsibilities of

the journalist is to remind this. This is perhaps a form of journalism that we have forgotten about in Turkey, but what I am talking about is journalism that pressures governments and states about what they really ought to be doing. Seizing on the point that will mobilize individuals and spreading good examples are very critical. Alright, but where is that point located? When it comes to the environmental-ecological movement, it is in local struggle. That's why what Pelin said in the beginning of the interview is very important: Environmental-ecological journalism must position itself on these and use them as points of departure. Environmental-ecological journalism must raise and promulgate people's voices. Because people are saying, "Don't build a coal-fired power plant here, my friend". They are saying "Don't cut down the tree to build a road, my friend". They are saying "You are upsetting the ecosystem, don't erect a wind turbine here, my friend". Humans are within what we call the ecosystem. That is precisely why I try to pull humans, the people and the journalists into the struggle. The critical

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thing is that environmental-ecological journalism in Turkey is being born. I don't know when it will mature or how, but it will happen. It has to happen and it will happen in alternative media. And I claim that in the future, this journalism will find its place in the mainstream too.



The danger awaiting Istanbul's north following the mega projects. **Source:** Northern Forests Defense.

What is the source of this claim? What are the signs that you can see?

U. Z.: The source of this claim is actually the climate crisis that we are in, the disaster on the doorstep. There are steps that must urgently be taken against this crisis. This crisis demands of us everything from small changes in our consumption habits to transformations in state regimes.

P.C.: One of the examples of very good, very on point environmental-ecological journalism is in *The Guardian*. There are, no doubt, avenues that do independent climate publishing on a global scale, but there is pretty much no bigger example than *The Guardian*. We write about these things in Turkey of course but our reach is limited because we are in the alternative media. Furthermore, even after all the local struggles which are multiplying by the day in Turkey, the connection between the climate crisis and coal-fired power plants, between climate crisis and mines, between climate crisis and hydroelectric power plants and between climate crisis and mega projects have not been established in the full sense. Meaning people have not understood that every time that electric switch gets flipped and the electricity produced in coal-fired power plants reaches them, the world is a little more polluted and more people will die in mines.

Is there not a role for the journalist to play here?

U.Z.: Actually, there is a role here for freedom of expression, for freedom of press. If freedom of press were to be provided in the full sense, "these news items have buyers". But unfortunately, the media is not shaped by the reader. The media is shaped by the boss or by advertising.

P.C.: Another interesting point is the following: In much the same way that corporations always want themselves to appear on the economy pages of *Hürriyet*, local movements also – and I have to introduce criticism here – wish to see their news appear on *Hürriyet* and their action to be shot by CNN Türk cameras and the news to be viewed on CNN Türk. But that news does not get printed on newspaper pages, and is not able to enter the feeds of news bulletins. Local movements and social struggles also have a lot to change. They have to find ways to express themselves with the means they have at hand. New media opportunities and citizen journalism techniques need to be used. But most importantly, they need to develop their relations with media that provide publicity to their news. As communities struggling at the local level, you have to look out for the journalist who makes your news too.

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The climate crisis is a subject that is at the very forefront of environmental-ecological journalism. What then are the other topics that an environmental-ecological journalist ought to chase after when we think about Turkey in particular?

U.Z.: A very fitting question. We are always discussing the climate and this inevitably becomes the main theme of ecological journalism. It is of course necessary to take the discussion further

than fossil fuels, however. There are so many critical topics... The “waste problem” for example is an incredibly biting area. Look, municipalities have environment and sanitation units, which means that to municipalities, the environment means that unit, it means being able to manage waste. It means being part of the infrastructure system, including rainfall, and an urbanization that is in accordance with that. Let’s continue the line of thought; we observe that the gigantic waste problem that emerges in cities becomes a serious micro plastic problem in seas and oceans. From the perspective of ecological journalism the way we understand it, the waste problem is a burning issue that must be analyzed in depth and in multiple dimensions. Another topic is “healthy food”. Ecological journalism also discusses healthy food. It should include this issue even further, because it is connected to ecosystemic movements. You pollute the water or use chemicals, damaging agriculture. Yes, the agenda is locked on to the climate crisis, but all of these issues tie into the climate crisis at some point too and are carrying us into disaster.

P.C.: We have started experiencing this disaster too. 2018 turned out to be a very specific year in this sense. Flash floods took place in one place in the world somewhere while simultaneously in another geography people died of extreme heatwaves. Fires broke out within the arctic circle in Sweden that flamed out for more than two weeks. These strike not only the poor but the rich as well. Tens of people died in Japan and in Canada due to extreme heat.

Mega projects, airports, highways and bridges must also exceedingly enter the



Construction of the Third Istanbul Airport.

ecological journalist’s area of interest when it comes to Turkey.

U.Z.: For sure. It is furthermore their responsibility to say, “don’t do these things”. That is what I mean when I say “we modify journalism through ecological journalism”. Does the journalist have such a responsibility? Yes. This is first of all the responsibility that comes from being witness, from being in the know. That is why as environmental-ecological journalists we said, “Don’t build The Third Airport in Istanbul”. How vindicated we were when the images in the middle of December appeared.

P. C.: We wrote many times about The Third Airport. It’s in the EIA report. This area is a stone pit-mining field and after these quarries were abandoned the excavated lands there have filled with water, becoming lakes and lakelets. In addition, part of them are natural lakes. The first EIA report mentioned the presence of 70 lakes and lakelets. They were cited as water puddles in the second EIA report and their numbers did not appear. It was told from the very beginning that this place was being built on a wrong foundation and that these things could happen to us. It was built afterwards in full knowledge. Now when this is pointed out they say that “you say no to everything”, “you are against everything”. No, we are not against everything at all. Yet we know that mega projects have a lot of negatives. The multiauthor study by Prof. Bent Flyvbjerg of Oxford University titled “Megaprojects and Risk: An Anatomy of Ambition” (Cambridge University Press, 2014) is a book that explains the unhealthy aspects of mega projects very well. It states that the ecological and even economic damage and loss that will result

is incalculable. When this is desired to be discussed, it gets criminalized. These projects occupy a very important space in terms of environmental-ecological journalism, especially in developing countries. A journalist who writes about these must be ready to face up to a harsh process of defamation.

U.Z.: There is something weird in this. When mega projects can be praised in the mainstream and agitation in favor of construction can be done openly, why is it considered to be outside of journalism when we tell them not to do it?

Turkey is experiencing a kind of deadlock. It is very clear that while trying to escape the economic bottleneck that we find ourselves in, due in part to the contribution of uncalculated mega projects as well, high-rent mega projects and the “economization” of nature will again not cease. It looks like the pillaging of nature will continue even under possible changes of government. I think that a lot of work falls once more on environmental-ecological journalists on this point.

P.C.: You are probably aware that a journalist opened a debate in the recent past. To summarize, it was a debate that revolved around claims that “a journalist should not be an activist” and “good journalists are found in the mainstream”. I would now like to say this: As environmental-ecological journalists we are of course objective but we are also parties and we are on a particular side. We are on the side of nature and life.

U.Z.: On top of that, we are on the side of truth...

P.C.: We are on the side of right and justice. We are on the side of entities and living beings that cannot defend their own rights. In this manner, environmental and ecological journalists find themselves in a kind of activism. This is in the nature of the job. Of course, I am not trying to suggest that we get carried away and stand together with the villagers who have blocked the road against a mine and confront the gendarmerie. It is all about experiencing that moment along with the villagers. There is a large mass of people who refrain from referring to journalism and activism under the same heading and referring to them within the same framework. I know that. But this is closely related to what you are engaged in activism about. ☺

“Turkey’s climate policies have reached a deadlock; it takes courage to resolve it”

When we speak of climate change, we feel as if we are talking about a giant end-game boss. Where then, lies the main difficulty in this issue? Many answers can be given, of course, but Ümit Şahin draws the fundamental line at “reestablishing civilization.”

COP24 took place this year in a relatively small and calm city of Poland, thus ending another United Nations (UN) Climate Summit. The issue of climate change nowadays interests a mass of people that goes beyond environmental professionals. 15-year-old Greta, who has begun a sit-in protest in front of the parliament in Sweden for the bureaucrats to take action, is among the most important evidences to this. The young surpass the elders. A completely different generation is growing up, as against the politicians who do not take action concerning climate change.

Senior Scholar at the Istanbul Policy Center and Climate Change Studies

Coordinator Ümit Şahin teaches Global Climate Change and Environmental Policies class at the Sabancı University Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. We asked him to explain what happened in Katowice in a way us mere mortals can understand. According to him, Turkey’s problem is not that it doesn’t take climate change seriously, but that it downplays its share in creating the problem and sees industrialized Western countries as solely responsible. Whereas this discourse should have been long obsolete, for yes, our greenhouse gas emissions were not this high ten years ago, but today, compared to 1990 for example, they have increased by 135% to half a billion tons

and we are responsible for more than 1% of global emissions. According to Şahin, especially in an era where climate denialism is rising, Turkey is nevertheless one of the countries developing a discourse in a positive direction but we fail when it comes to taking action. Within this context, in the interview below, you will read why and how Turkey’s climate policies have reached a deadlock.

Şahin also explains that the participation of the people to climate summits have progressively been made to diminish. With the meetings that take place being closed off to observers and the language being used assuming an increasingly



The COP 24 summit was organized this year in December at the Polish city of Katowice. **Source:** Pedro Garcia.



Climate summit talks at the UN General Assembly hall. **Source** United Nations.

technical form, the negotiations began to be bureaucratized. The unpermitted demonstrations at summits on the other hand are banned since 2009. The atmosphere of the summit is determined by the country it takes place in.

Şahin speaks of an important framework of "awareness": Everyone on Turkey's negotiation team knows that the country is not a coal country. This also points to the need for the country to increasingly switch to realistic policies. For example, it means that at least 80% of present fossil fuel reserves have to be left in the ground. Turkey on the other hand is distant to this reality.

We refer to everything that we talk about in relation to climate change as urgent and critical, but what is the really critical thing? To take precautions or to accept climate change?

Ümit Şahin: To reestablish civilization. To rewrite the rules of the economic system. To change the way of life. Accepting climate change does not mean anything if we do not understand that disaster is very near and it is not possible to survive without changing the system as a whole. Of course, it is also known that this kind

of disaster discourse does not mobilize people. We need to communicate that mobilizing will not only allow us to survive but that this is also the only way to achieve a better life in all respects. Solving social and economic issues, resolving many chronic problems from unemployment to improving air quality for example will be a direct result of fighting climate change. Meaning that the decarbonization of the economy, energy and production systems will go hand in hand with changing overconsumption and a wasteful way of life, and with constructing an ecological society.

Why is the UN Climate Summit important? How did it begin and what form did its strategy assume later? How would you describe it for those who don't know anything about it?

Ü.Ş.: The international climate policies regime began when the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which was accepted at the Earth Summit that took place in 1992, went into effect in 1994. That means that if we disregard its preparation phase, the convention has a history of about a quarter of a century. Today it is known to be the international policy groundwork

with the widest participation, for there are no countries who are not party to it. Such universal participation surely shows the gravity of the issue and that it is embraced by countries for one reason or another.

All this time that has since passed however, has not yet led to embarking

The most important difference of the Paris Agreement is that it confers responsibility upon all countries of determining their own roadmaps and goals to struggle for, regardless of whether they are developed or underdeveloped. This means that as opposed to the Kyoto Protocol, not only developed countries but developing countries as well have to determine a target by drawing up a roadmap that will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

on a path to solving the issue within the climate change regime that we mentioned. Even if it went very slowly, with much delay and in a “two steps forward one step back” fashion, we nevertheless cannot say that no positive steps have been taken since the beginning. First, the Kyoto Protocol, which in hindsight we better understand to have stalled the world for ten odd years, was prepared in 1997. After that, when Kyoto was understood to be useless, a new regime based on different principles began to be established, but this too took almost another ten years. At long last, we entered a new era with the approval of the Paris Agreement in 2015.

The most important difference of the Paris Agreement which sets it apart from the era of the Convention and the Kyoto Protocol is that it confers responsibility upon all countries of determining their own roadmaps and goals to struggle for, regardless of whether they are developed or underdeveloped. This means that as opposed to the Kyoto Protocol, not only developed countries but developing countries as well have to determine a target by drawing up a roadmap that will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. This system essentially functions from the bottom up, however. Countries cannot be told, “from now on you will pollute less by this amount”. Naturally, the principle of differentiated responsibility in the old regime is still in effect; industrialized countries are required to have faster and higher emission reduction targets as a matter of historical responsibility, but the exact number is up to the decision of the governments. On the other hand, the new era is not entirely bottom up either. A system of monitoring and reporting is prescribed that is much closer than before, especially with the Paris Rulebook agreement reached this year.

The Paris Agreement has another important difference. While the 1992 Convention had the general goal of preventing dangerous climate change, this time countries have agreed to halt global warming at a lot lower level than 2 degrees and to increase their efforts to halt it at 1.5 degrees. This means that every country that is party to the Paris Agreement must determine its greenhouse gas reduction target according to the 1.5-2 degree goal. Declaring targets that would take global

warming to 3.5 degrees like they do now is actually contrary to the agreement that they signed, but do they care! While the agreement is binding and it introduces a tight system of supervision that each country has to comply with, in the end there is no world police that will punish a country that does not fulfill its pledge. An agreement that is binding but which has no means of sanctioning those who do not comply cannot be very powerful of course. Which is to say that the known dilemmas of international relations apply here as well.

How was Turkey’s participation to the climate summit and its efforts this year? Why does the Turkish government choose to not take the climate issue seriously?

Ü.Ş.: Actually, Turkey is a country that takes climate change seriously. If you make an international comparison and accept that discourse is the first step in climate policies, it can be said that Turkey is one of the countries that establishes a strong discourse in the positive direction concerning climate change. As you know, there are important polluter countries, foremost of which is the USA, where through changes of government the discourse of denial has been adopted; such as Australia and nowadays Brazil with the election of Bolsonaro, in addition to Trump’s USA. Turkey on the other hand, from the very beginning never denied climate change and how important an issue it is. While there were belittling declarations by public officials from time to time, this did not become state policy and was more a result of

Because Turkey, as a member of the OECD, was in the Western club at the time of the Convention in 1992, it was accepted to be a developed country and this in turn created a situation which caused Turkey to evade international climate policies for years, fearing that they will impede its economic development.

lack of knowledge. The problem in this area is not that climate change is not taken seriously, but that Turkey’s share in creating this problem is downplayed and Turkey is taken to be innocent while only the industrialized Western countries are seen to be responsible. The discourse that Turkey is innocent was more easily bought ten odd years ago because our greenhouse gas emissions were not this high. The moment Turkey became party to the Convention and started to produce a yearly inventory of greenhouse gas emissions however, it was revealed to be one of the countries that increased its emission the most. According to latest statistics, Turkey’s yearly greenhouse gas emissions of half a billion tons is an increase of 135% compared to 1990 and we are responsible for more than 1% of total global emissions. 1% is not a small number. The emissions of many of Europe’s industrialized countries are



Climate change protest that took place at Paris on October 13, 2018. Source: Pelle de Brabander.



Climate change protest that took place at Paris on October 13, 2018. **Source:** Jeanne Menjoulet.

between 1-2%. Since Turkey is one of the 20 most populous countries and one of the 20 biggest economies, it is also among the top 20 in total emissions and as a rapidly growing country its responsibilities in fighting climate change are important. Accepting this fact is important in understanding the issue correctly.

Then of course the per capita emissions of Turkey are not as high as developed countries. This in turn is in proportion to its per capita national income. This means that while its total emissions are comparable to European countries due to the size of its economy, its per capita emissions are at world average level because its energy consumption is lower. Its historical responsibility is small because its past emissions are also very low, which means that as a matter of the fairness principle, its commitments must not be as heavy as industrialized Western countries. Because Turkey, as a member of the OECD, was in the Western club at the time of the Convention in 1992 however, it was accepted to be a developed country and this in turn created a situation which caused Turkey to evade international climate policies for

years, fearing that they will impede its economic development. This is the source of the demand to leave Annex I, in other words, of the insistence on not wanting to be among developed countries. In the meantime, however, Turkey grew; it is not as underdeveloped as it used to be and its greenhouse gas emissions increased a lot. Furthermore, the regime has been constructed in such a way that without the consensus of all countries, or at least without convincing all of the dominant countries, major changes cannot be made. Due to this, Turkey's demand to join the developing countries by leaving Annex I is not finding support. Because convincing the European Union alone is not enough for this. There is a slew of countries that are active in negotiations, from India to The Philippines. These countries do not wish that Turkey be provided with an exemption. Neither do they want to share the climate financing which Turkey wants to acquire by being recognized as a developing country.

Turkey is not ratifying the Paris Agreement because this problem is not resolved, but it is not able to do much to resolve the problem either. And as long as this situation stands, it appears

as a country that is unwilling to join the international climate fight process, a country that constantly drags its feet. Due to this, Turkey's climate policies have reached a deadlock. It takes courage to resolve it.

Is the participation of the people felt or their opinions represented in these meetings? If you think so, how? If you think not, how should the people's participation be accommodated?

U.S.: This is the most important difference of climate negotiations compared to other international environmental policy processes. Yes, the participation of the people is at a level which is higher than in all other areas. Thousands of civil society activists, academics and volunteers participate in each climate summit. They follow every stage of the process, open new agendas and seriously influence the agenda. Climate summits are gigantic meetings that take place with 20-30 thousand people anyway. Aside from the state delegations; international associations, non-governmental organizations, environmentalists, rights associations, unions, representatives of native peoples, women's associations, youth associations

and journalists are all always there. The people are therefore represented, but of course by sections that pay attention. Green groups and environmentalists are dominant. It would not be a bad idea at all for other sections of civil society to pay more attention to the issue and for the direct participation of the people to be greater.

The basic problem in this area is that states and the United Nations increasingly conduct the negotiations behind closed doors. The process slowly began to transform in this way especially since the 2009 summit in Copenhagen. A technical language increasingly became dominant, negotiations became bureaucratic and most meetings started to take place closed to observers. We too follow the summits in situ every year but it is becoming increasingly difficult for us to understand how the negotiations are going. We have begun to create more alternative agendas and focus on side events or press conferences. Actually, all negotiations ought to take place open to the public. Closing the process might be allowing negotiators to go faster but it actually causes the decisions that are taken to be more general and useless. The participation of the people should not be limited to representing the conscience; civil society should be able to truly supervise the negotiations, demand accountability and intervene in a technical sense as well. This function is now left only to certain representatives of professional environmental organizations and rights associations. The banning of unpermitted actions and demonstrations at summits since 2009 also increasingly closed down the process and started to render it undemocratic. Still, we should be thankful. If they turn climate summits completely into a technical process, that will be a real disaster.

How did civil society fare this year in terms of participation and ability of representation?

Ü.Ş.: The participation of civil society changes according to the country the conference takes place in. In Western Europe for example it's livelier and more environmentalist, while in Latin America a more radical and leftist picture of civil society predominates. If the civil society and political movements of the country where the summit takes place are strong, a livelier opposition is observed, if not,

The basic problem in this area is that states and the United Nations increasingly conduct the negotiations behind closed doors. The process slowly began to transform in this way especially since the 2009 summit in Copenhagen. A technical language increasingly became dominant, negotiations became bureaucratic and most meetings started to take place closed to observers.

there are only demonstrations by those who come from without. Poland was not a good example in this sense. Naturally, because it was in Europe, European participation was high, however because it took place in a small and relatively distant city of the country, Katowice, lively actions did not take place. The police of Poland were unpleasant to a degree not quite observable in Europe anyhow. Though it seems it's starting to be like that everywhere nowadays.

In Turkey, climate change is something that captures the attention of the media in the summer, only to be forgotten in the winter. With that being the case, the issue recedes into the background. Why is this and where can we locate the solution to it?

Ü.Ş.: I wish I knew the answer to this question. The media in Turkey is still in the earliest phases of covering the climate agenda. It only occurs to the media to cover climate change if climate disasters occur, and then only if it they last long and cause major destruction. But I remember vividly for example that last year *Cumhuriyet* covered the Harvey and Maria hurricanes for ten days straight on their back cover but it did not occur to them to speak a word of climate change. Other newspapers are no better. The general condition of the media is well known anyway. It's getting worse and worse in terms of both professional quality and freedoms. Therefore, I believe it's going to be a long while before the difference between climate change and the weather is understood. But one point is important: If civil society and experts

voice an issue strongly enough, the media listens. In that sense I suppose we should try to be more visible rather than expecting much from the media.

How do you think the negotiations went? What are your observations and comments? Will you be conducting any studies in Turkey following the climate summit?

Ü.Ş.: The course of the negotiations was rough in terms of their own agenda but ended quite successfully. All in all, the Rulebook that will render the Paris Agreement functional was accepted. There is no turning back now. The post-2020 era will play out under the rules of the Paris Agreement. Part of the agreed upon themes are important as well. For example, the rules that apply to the developed countries and the developing countries will be more or less the same. The transparency and follow up mechanisms are better. Steps have been more or less taken concerning financing as well. Topics lacking full agreement as of yet will also be resolved within a few years.

The crux of the issue is whether the agreement will be able to stop climate change even if it is applied perfectly. Unfortunately, the answer to this is negative. The world is 1 degree warmer at the moment compared to a century ago and it was feared that the warming would reach 4-5 degrees till the end of the century if emissions continue to rise like today. Fortunately, the countries made the Paris Agreement in 2015 and decided to curb warming at 1.5-2 degrees. Fine, but what happened next? The United Nations calculated that if the plans of the very same countries regarding their commitments between 2020 and 2025 or 2030 which they presented in the same year are added up, it turns out that the earth would warm up by at least 3 degrees even if they do everything that they said they would to the letter. So, their Paris commitments would not stop global warming. What is the logical course of action in this situation? Immediately renewing these commitments, making them a lot stronger and reaching the 1.5-2 degree target, right? In Katowice however, as well as in previous years, countries on the one hand accept that there is such a targeting issue, which they call the emissions gap, and on the other hand

they do not budge in order to rectify this situation. The outcome of Katowice might mean the postponing of this issue until 2031. It will be a disaster if that happens. It must be understood as soon as possible that strengthening the targets is as important, if not more so, as establishing rules.

You are at one of the few centers in Turkey that produce current information on climate change. What kind of studies are you conducting in the recent period?

Ü.Ş.: The Istanbul Policy Center is a research center within the Sabancı University and climate change is one of the main fields of study of our center. We work in all areas of climate policies and produce reports, policy notes and academic studies. We have conducted studies in areas such as the effects of climate change, its economic aspects, low-carbon development, climate migrations and the security centered discourse, reduction of emissions caused by transportation, energy, agriculture and wastes, and of course Turkey's climate policies and international climate negotiations. At the same time, we organize meetings in order to form climate policies in Turkey on a more democratic and negotiated basis. In addition to academic studies and policy research, we organize regular seminars

such as "Climate Cafe" and "Nature and Climate Talks" which are open to the public. Recently we have been running an international project focusing on the other social and economic benefits of fighting climate change that I just mentioned. At the same time, we were among the founders of the Shura Energy Transition Center this year and we formed a separate unit to produce policies for the decarbonization of the energy system as well. Recently we have also started to give more thought to the health and biodiversity aspects of the issue.

Beyond all of these, one of our purposes at the IPC is to render the relations between academics and researchers working in the climate field permanent, especially in Istanbul. We made a lot of headway in this area in recent years and I think that we succeeded in creating an area where civil society and the academy meet. For a stronger climate movement and better policies, we need to increase both our numbers and these relations.

Climate change is ultimately a scientific fact. Ömer Madra says that "not believing or not taking measures is to deny science". Talking about climate change is in turn discussing a huge topic. How should we talk about, explain and discuss this topic?

Ü.Ş.: We need to never tire or be afraid of telling the truths. It may be true that doomsaying is not a good form of communication, but if disaster is approaching, it is useful to get used to hearing about it. Otherwise it is naturally a lot more comforting to keep deluding ourselves. For forming policy, however, it is not enough to only keep repeating that the situation is dire. We need to work with the scientific method to find what needs to be done and put forth the options. State institutions are unable to do this, either due to lack of capacity or due to worries about change. This then is the task of the academy and research institutes. This is actually how it happened in the world as well.

If Turkey were to become party to the Paris Climate Agreement, it would amount to taking a step. But we are nowhere near that, are we?

Ü.Ş.: You never know. Turkey lost its special position in the regime after the Paris Agreement. This is because within the Agreement, the real special circumstances status was bestowed on the least developed countries (47 of them). The special circumstances status that Turkey had acquired in the past became meaningless. For example, when Turkey tried to place its demand to leave Annex I on the agenda by putting forth



Climate change is on the agenda of the business world as much as it is on the agenda of governments or social opposition. The 2018 Global Climate Action Summit met in San Francisco. **Source:** Global Climate Action Summit archive, September 13, 2018.

its special status in Katowice, four other countries prevented Turkey's demand from being accepted by presenting agenda proposals for the recognition of their own special circumstances or of the special circumstances of all countries in their region. It is no longer a realistic option at all for Turkey to demand recognition as a developing country because there is serious resistance in the regime against the creation of such a state of exception. But the Annexes themselves have lost their previous importance anyhow. With the latest rulebook, the difference between countries on issues such as taking inventory and reporting is much diminished.

The issue of whether a country is developed or developing only applies to the Green Climate Fund which is a particular form of climate financing. Turkey has already announced many times that it is not eyeing the grants reserved essentially for underdeveloped countries in the Green Climate Fund or the Adaptation Fund which are insufficient in any case. Turkey's concern is to not be cut off from accessing the renewable energy credits that constitute the financing required for reductions. This problem can be resolved within the regime but Turkey needs to find support for this. I don't think this is that difficult either, provided the right method of negotiation is employed.

The first thing Turkey needs to do is to take part in the regime as a serious party by ratifying the Paris Agreement in parliament and proving that it is serious about joining the collective fight against climate change. This is because Turkey has been evasive for a quarter of a century based on the justification that it has been miscategorized and it now needs to convince both the other parties and civil society and the climate movement that it is determined to join this fight. If not, support will be hard to come by. As long as support is not found, what we can achieve by closed-door diplomacy is apparent. Even Turkey's most sensible demands are not accepted. Of course, becoming party to the Paris Agreement is not enough either. Actively making progress, taking the side of countries that strengthen climate action against classic feet dragging countries and acting along with countries that group together to render climate action

stronger such as the "High Ambition Coalition" at negotiations will help Turkey solve its financing issue.

This naturally requires dropping the meaningless obsession with coal. Everyone on Turkey's negotiation team, including the energy bureaucracy already knows that Turkey is not a coal country. The government is taking the correct stance in establishing a discourse against imported coal. Yet it just doesn't drop its love affair with domestic coal. In fact, domestic coal is very low quality and even if you were to risk burning the earth, you cannot become a Poland with this coal reserve anyway. On the other hand, with its rich renewable energy sources, Turkey is closer to becoming Costa Rica than becoming Poland. For this to happen there needs to be an active policy change that will accelerate the energy transition as soon as possible, renewable energy must be used not to supplement but to replace fossil fuels, and a priority schedule for exiting coal in a planned manner must be created. If these are not done and Turkey insists on the old demands and the old strategies, the problem will be further deadlocked and Turkey will be excluded from the process. One of the costs of this may be not being able to access any climate financing after 2020. I believe that our negotiation team is aware of this too. Therefore, a possible policy change within the next year won't come as a surprise to me.

What are the priority measures that governments must take concerning climate change?

Ü.Ş.: It's actually very simple, but I will try to answer without saying "reducing greenhouse gas emissions". Abandoning fossil fuel use completely and switching to 100% renewables by 2050 are a must. This has to take place rapidly and must begin as soon as possible. Early industrialized countries like the USA and the EU must abandon coal by 2030. Developing countries must follow suit in the subsequent years. In 2050, the small amount of fossil fuels that can still be burned can only be designated to the least developed countries that need them. This simultaneously means that at least 80% of present fossil fuel reserves will be left in the ground.

Of course, not only the energy sector but the entire economy must be

decarbonized. Electricity production, transportation, heating, buildings, food... Industrial agriculture and especially animal husbandry are important sources of global warming. The transformation of the entire agricultural system in line with the changing climate and a plant-dominated food regime, localization and conformance to ecological principles are unavoidable. The protection of nature is of critical importance to both fighting climate change and adapting to the changing climate. Of course, this whole economic transformation also requires the changing of the industrial way of life. We cannot proceed by riding airplanes, using motor vehicles, spending energy generously and living on meat. An ecological lifestyle is also needed for a cleaner environment and a healthy society. All government policies, meaning not only environment, energy or agriculture policies but industry, finance and economy policies as well, must be transformed in line with fighting climate change. Naturally, rejecting the dogma of economic growth and redefining the economy on a human scale will have to be the most important principles of this transformation.

When is the next meeting? What is your imaginary regarding that meeting? The general picture is a little disheartening. Would you agree?

Ü.Ş.: Climate summits take place every year in the months of November or December. The COP25 that will take place in Chile will be a critical conference for strengthening the goals and commitments. Due to this importance, the United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres is inviting all country leaders to a climate summit on September 23, 2019 in New York, ahead of the conference in Chile. A message of political determination must be communicated there and promises must be obtained from leaders. I hope that Turkey will also do its work to strengthen its national contribution by September 23 and will become partner to the Paris Agreement.

The general situation is of course disheartening. As one of the newest and most important climate activists of our day, 15-year-old Greta Thunberg says however, we are not going to accept defeat because hope is scarce, because in reality hope is born of action. ☺

NEW APPROACHES TO SCALES OF URBANIZATION: ISTANBUL UNDERGOING REGIONALIZATION AND MARMARA UNDERGOING URBANIZATION

Özlem Altinkaya Genel of the Özyeğin University Faculty of Architecture emphasizes how important it is to think in novel forms about the increasingly diverse and complicated scales of urbanization processes in today's world. While the author points to the need for and ways of thinking of Istanbul and the Marmara Region in connection, she reveals through examples concerning Istanbul and its environment that urbanization processes inevitably have an ecological dimension.

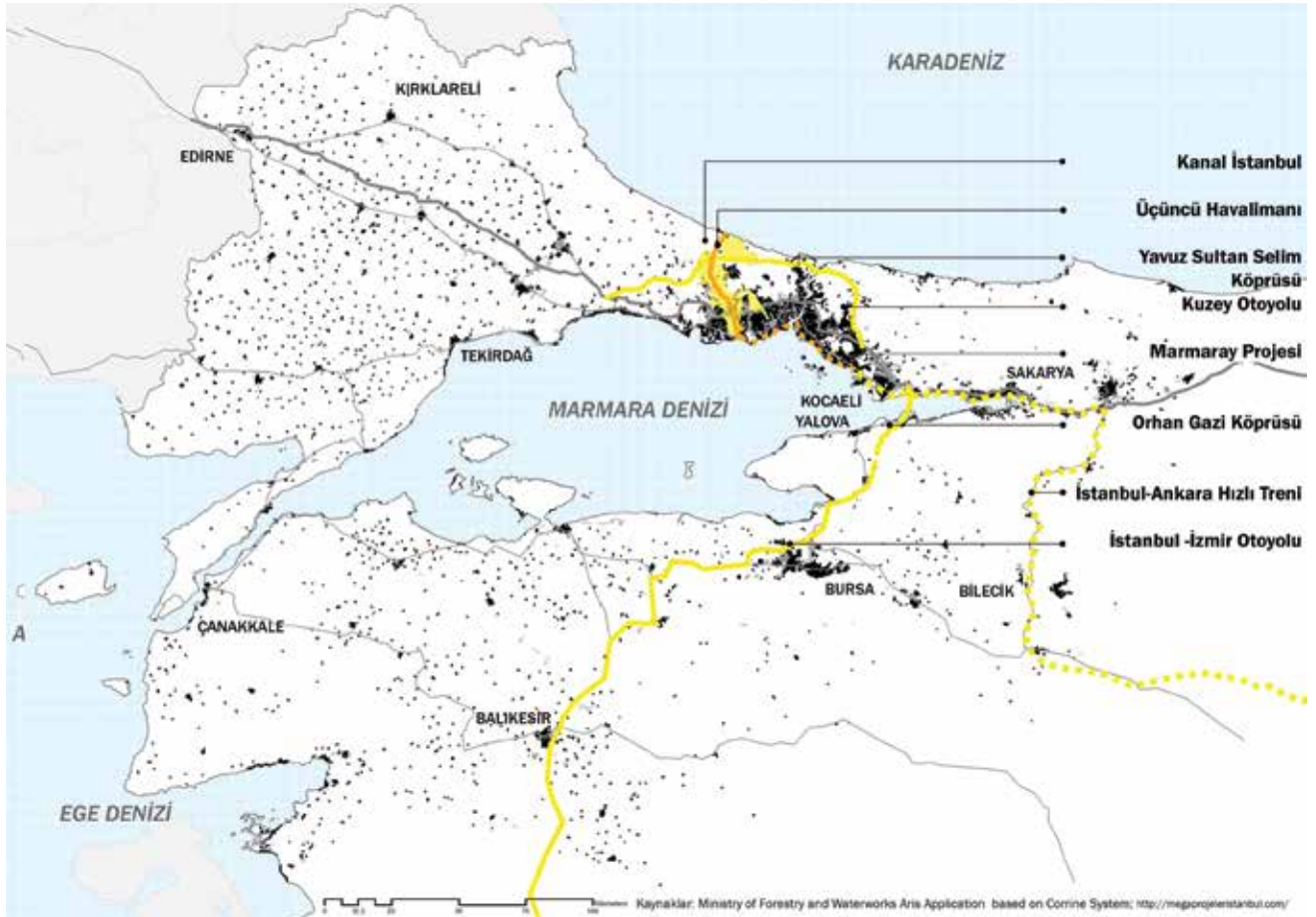


Figure 1: Mega projects and urban spaces on the Istanbul and Marmara Region scales. **Source:** Özlem Altinkaya Genel, *Shifting Scales of Urban Transformation: The Emergence of the Marmara Urban Region between 1990 and 2015*, unpublished doctoral thesis, Harvard Graduate School of Design, 2016; TR Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs Corine Project; <https://megaprojeleristanbul.com/>.

Introduction

Istanbul and the Marmara Region have witnessed a very rapid urban transformation triggered by mega projects like the Third Bridge on the Bosphorus, Northern Marmara Highway, Third Istanbul Airport, Canal Istanbul Project, Marmaray Project, Osman Gazi Bridge and the Istanbul-Ankara High Speed Rail project and changes in laws such as the Metropolitan Municipalities Law 6360 (Figure 1). This spatial transformation which took place around the Istanbul metropolitan region and the Marmara Region¹ and which affected the entire habitation system unearthed new approaches, awareness and concerns in both the academy and civil society regarding topics such as ecology, rural transformation, food security, sustainability and the commons which previously were not referred to in the context of urbanization. The transformation also especially caused the scales framed by administrative borders to be questioned. Newly developing civil sensibilities and urbanization scales will be scrutinized through contemporary theories and concepts of the city within the framework of this article. On this point, it can be helpful to look at the wide spectrum provided by contemporary approaches which analyze the scale change that urbanization has gone through, in order to be able to discuss the specificities of the spatial transformation

that has taken place in Istanbul and its environs.

Conceptual framework

Among these approaches can be counted William Cronon's environmental history which explains the city through hinterland relations, Richard T.T. Forman's urban ecology where he analyzes urbanization and ecology in conjunction, landscape urbanism conceptualized by landscape architects like Charles Waldheim and James Corner, and works of Ignacio Farias and Thomas H. Bender which inquire into the effect of actor-network theory on urban studies.² Openness to interdisciplinary studies including social sciences and humanities (in other words the spatialization of social sciences and humanities),³ questioning explicitly identified scales (the metropolitan area for example) and rejection of binaries such as city-countryside and nature-built environment in order to understand urbanization are among the common features of these contemporary approaches.

Within this rich discussion setting that brings together very different disciplines, the concept of "region" emphasized by the Los Angeles school and the concept of "planetary urbanization" revived by Neil Brenner can help us draw up a framework for new scales of urbanization taking place in Istanbul and its environs.⁴ The

basic point that these two approaches rely on is Lefebvre's approach which on the one hand defends "the right to the city" and on the other hand undermines the "city" as an administrative unit in the traditional sense.⁵

The concept of "region" which is the basic unit of the science of geography has been used by landscape architects, landscape ecologists and geographers such as Ian McHarg, Patrick Geddes and Jean Gottmann to define the areas where hinterlands consisting of ecologies and economies merge with urban agglomerations.⁶ The Los Angeles School of Urbanization on the other hand revived the concept of region at the end of the 20th century in order to decipher the network-type multicentered and fragmented structure of contemporary global and neoliberal urbanization.⁷ Meanwhile, the concept of planetary urbanization essentially introduced by Lefebvre and developed by Neil Brenner claims that urbanization must be analyzed with techniques of representation that can encompass the entire planet and even further; beyond distinctions of city-countryside, ecology-economy and human-nonhuman. With this aim, it defends the need for the development of an urban theory "without an outside."⁸ The planetary urbanization approach, in similar fashion to the Los Angeles School, which emphasizes the importance of spatial transformation in understanding contemporary urban formations, emphasizes the importance of understanding urbanization through spatial transformation rather than through the concept of urbanization that is measured through conventional demographic data. On this point, the concept of "operational landscape" which Neil Brenner underlines and uses to explain urban landscapes, is important. Despite not including population and settlement, social structure and infrastructure hardware in the traditional context, the concept of "operational landscape" which is used to describe areas that support urban centers with raw materials, energy, water, food, labor, logistics, communication and waste processing functions, draws up a quite different framework than the traditional definition of "hinterland" by also drawing attention to the issues of sustainability that these areas face.

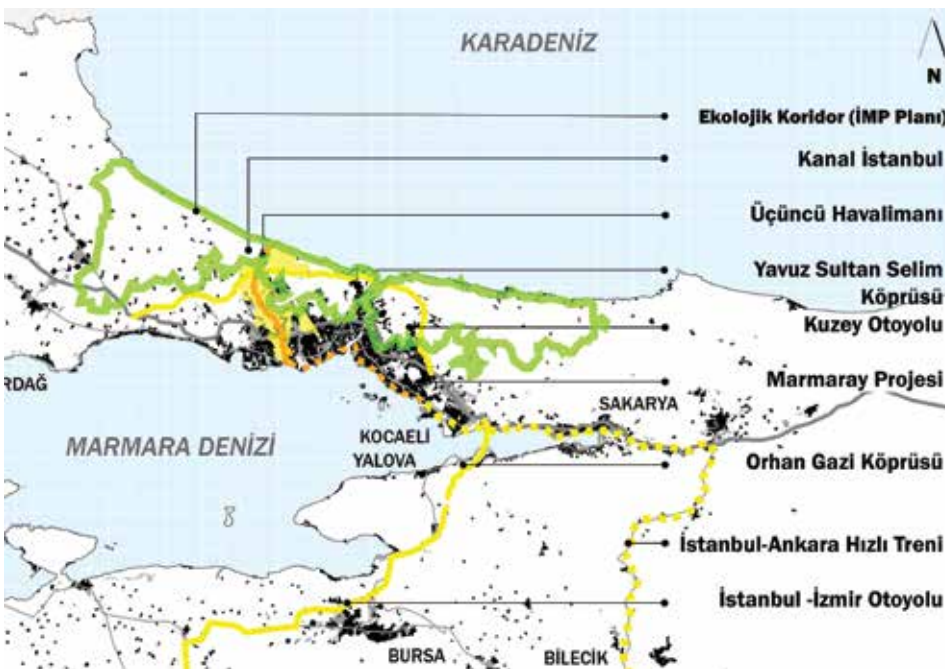


Figure 2: Mega projects and the ecological corridor defined in the 1/100000 scale Istanbul Province Environmental Plan. **Source:** Altınkaya Genel, *ibid.*, 2016; TR Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs Corine Project; <https://megaprojeleristanbul.com/>.

The regional urbanization of Marmara and its land cover patterns

How then can these quite abstract concepts related to contemporary urbanization provide overtures for understanding the scale and scope of urbanization in the geography that we live in? Moving from these approaches and concepts, we can start with the question “How accurate are a scaling and scope based on province borders in understanding and explaining urbanization in Istanbul and its environment?” Istanbul, which is presented as “the city beyond the distance the eye can see” in many different sources, is one of the smallest provinces of Turkey in terms of administrative area and is furthermore constrained by two masses of water, the Marmara Sea and the Black Sea, which prevent its growth in the northern and southern directions. The congestion caused by these geographic thresholds and administrative borders lead to an immense urbanization pressure not only in the center of Istanbul but in the Marmara Region and even beyond, affecting all land uses (Figure 2). In other words, it is necessary to view the urbanization of Istanbul beyond its administrative borders and to understand and track the spatial shaping of the Marmara Region in order to understand the urbanization dynamics made up of the centripetal and centrifugal forces that occur between the mega city of Istanbul with a population of 14 Million and the multipolar Marmara Region with a population of 23 Million.

On this point, certain axial ruptures can be useful for drawing the main lines of urban landscape formation at this scale. One of the main determinants of this rupture is the climactic transition that occurs along the north-south axis. A fragmented geography created by the climate of transition from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean has affected the distribution of the flora and especially the distribution of forest areas both in Istanbul in particular and at the scale of the Marmara Region, on a basic level. A good example to this climactic transition is that sections near the Aegean Region are covered in needle-leaved trees, as opposed to the broad-leaved trees which reside on the Black Sea shores of the region and which are observed on hills facing the Black Sea. A similar

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rupture is in effect in the distribution of agricultural areas. While arable land makes up an important part of especially Thrace and the Adapazarı Meadow, mixed agricultural lands dominate the south of the Marmara Region. Similarly, when we look at the topography, we see that elevation increases from north to south. We can speak of a second axial rupture taking place within the context of the settlement system along the east-west axis. While a rural structure was dominant in Thrace and Southwest Marmara until recently, a multipolar urban agglomeration dominates East Marmara, beginning from Istanbul and passing through Kocaeli, reaching all the way to Bursa. The overlapping of these axial differentiations has caused the formation of micro-ecologies with landscapes of different characters in the region such as the Kaz Mountains and Thrace and created impressive richness

The industrial expansion that took place in the Marmara Region with the deindustrialization of Istanbul has caused environmental pollution on significant scales. The negative externalities brought about by the deindustrialization of Istanbul have especially affected Thrace and Southwest Marmara wherein agricultural areas and rural settlements are concentrated.

in terms of distribution of land cover and land use patterns.⁹ Moreover, the presence of an inland sea that is the Marmara Sea with its own unique ecology where the waters of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea intertwine and the presence of the Çanakkale and Istanbul Straits add a further layer to this diversity. The spatiality of these different micro-ecologies which reside in the Region are beyond administrative borders such as the province and the district, and protecting and ensuring the sustainability of these basins require partnerships on a local level that go beyond administrative borders.

The deindustrialization processes which began after 1980 in the metropolitan area of Istanbul have triggered a regionwide industrial decentralization and furthermore created a fragmented landscape in which the industrial and agricultural uses of land and urban sprawl have been scattered among the forests, prairies, vineyards, olive groves and wetlands of this specialized geography. The industrial expansion that took place in the Marmara Region with the deindustrialization of Istanbul has caused environmental pollution on significant scales. The negative externalities brought about by the deindustrialization of Istanbul have especially affected Thrace and Southwest Marmara wherein agricultural areas and rural settlements are concentrated. The urban and rural area distribution differentiated along the north-south axis mentioned above –as can be followed through Figure 3 and 4– has shown a rapid change between the years 2006 to 2012 because of industrial expansion, and rural areas residing in Thrace and Southwest Marmara have begun to rapidly urbanize.¹⁰ Commercial and industrial areas such as Çorlu and Çerkezköy that developed just outside of the administrative borders of Istanbul’s European Side in this period have

MARMARA BÖLGESİ'NDE 2006 YILINA AİT KENTSEL VE KIRSAL ALAN KATMANLAŞMASI

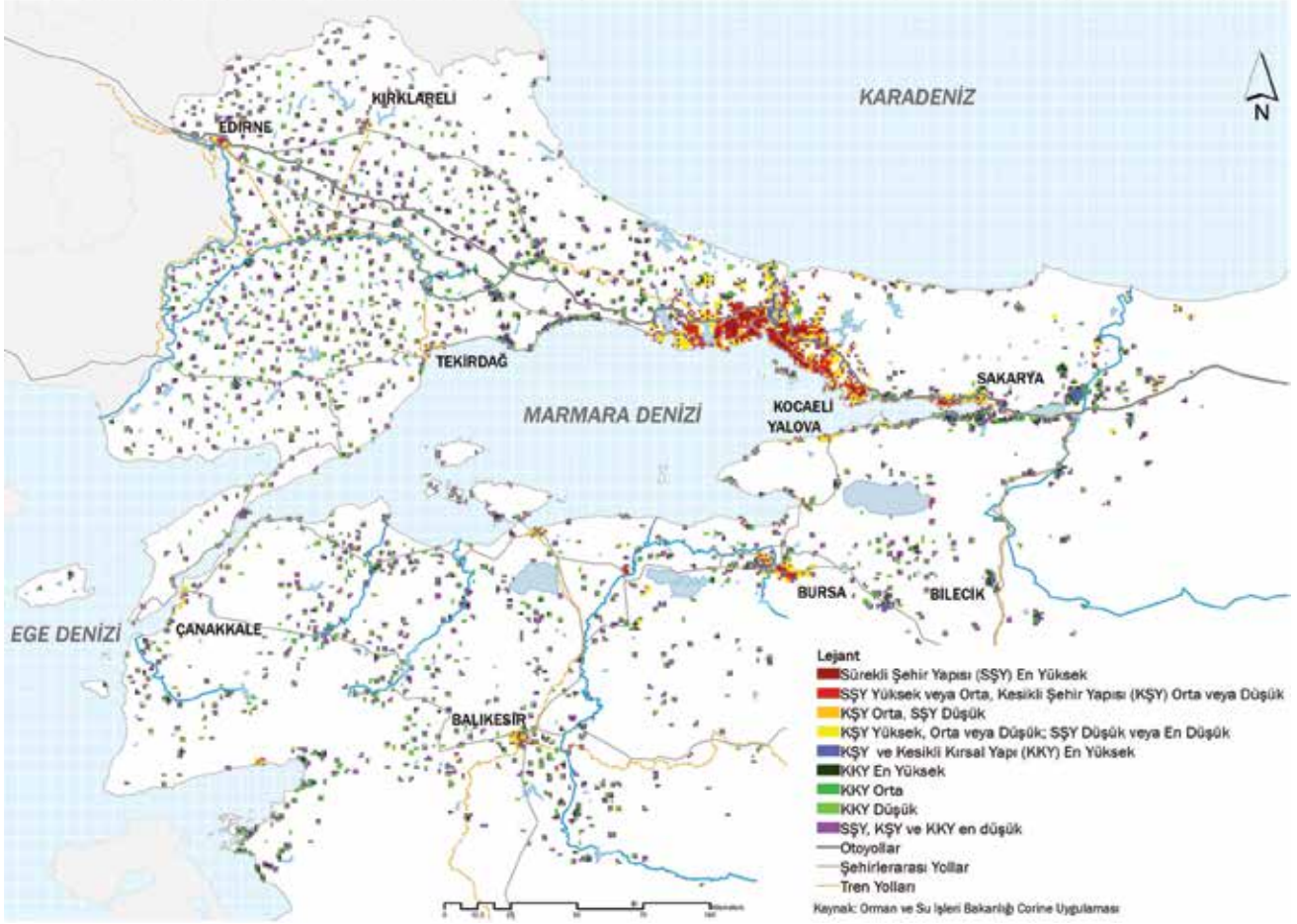


Figure 3: Urban and rural area layering in the Marmara Region of 2006. Source: TR Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs Corine Project.

MARMARA BÖLGESİ'NDE 2012 YILINA AİT KENTSEL VE KIRSAL ALAN KATMANLAŞMASI

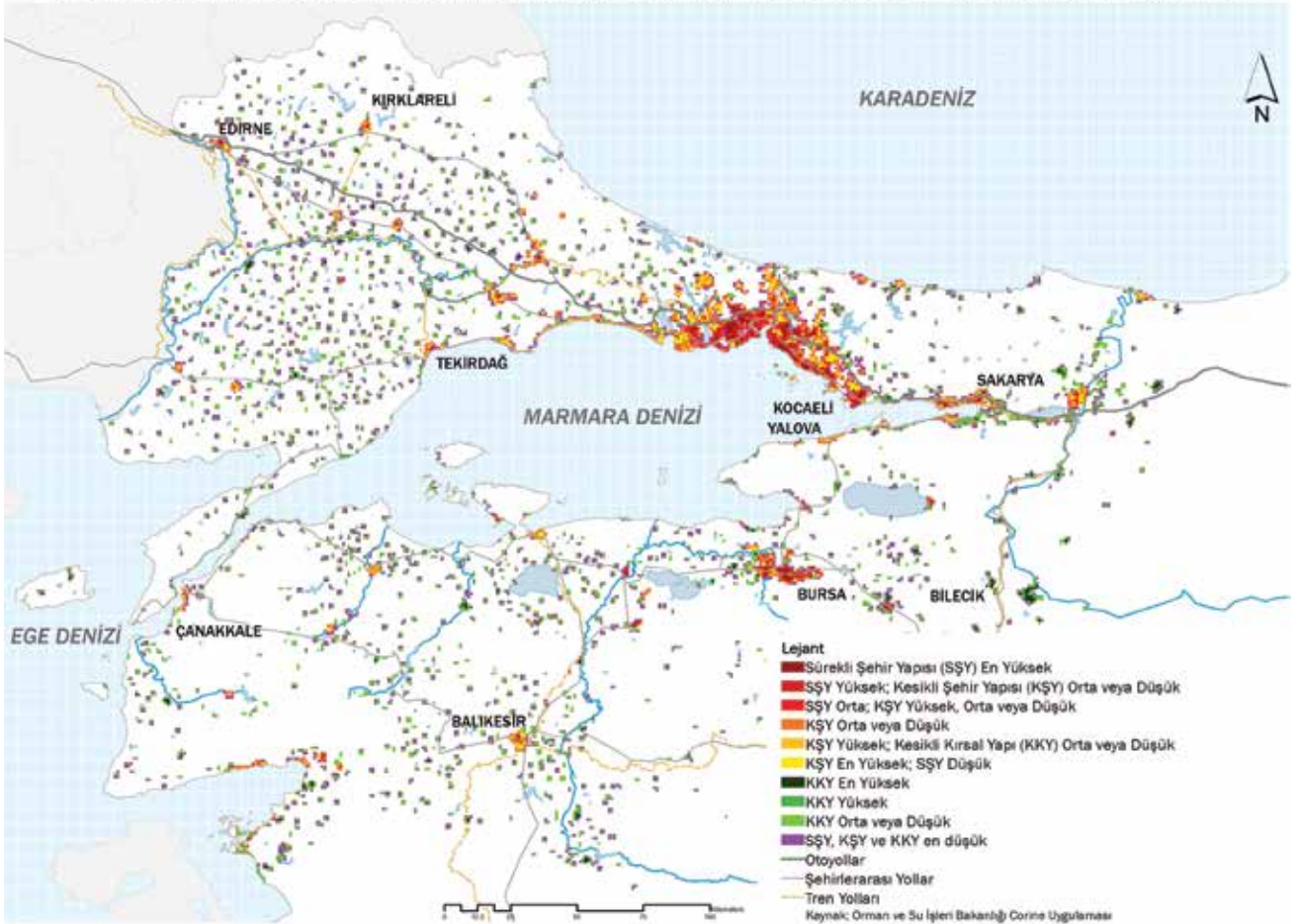


Figure 4: Urban and rural area layering in the Marmara Region of 2012. Source: TR Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs Corine Project.

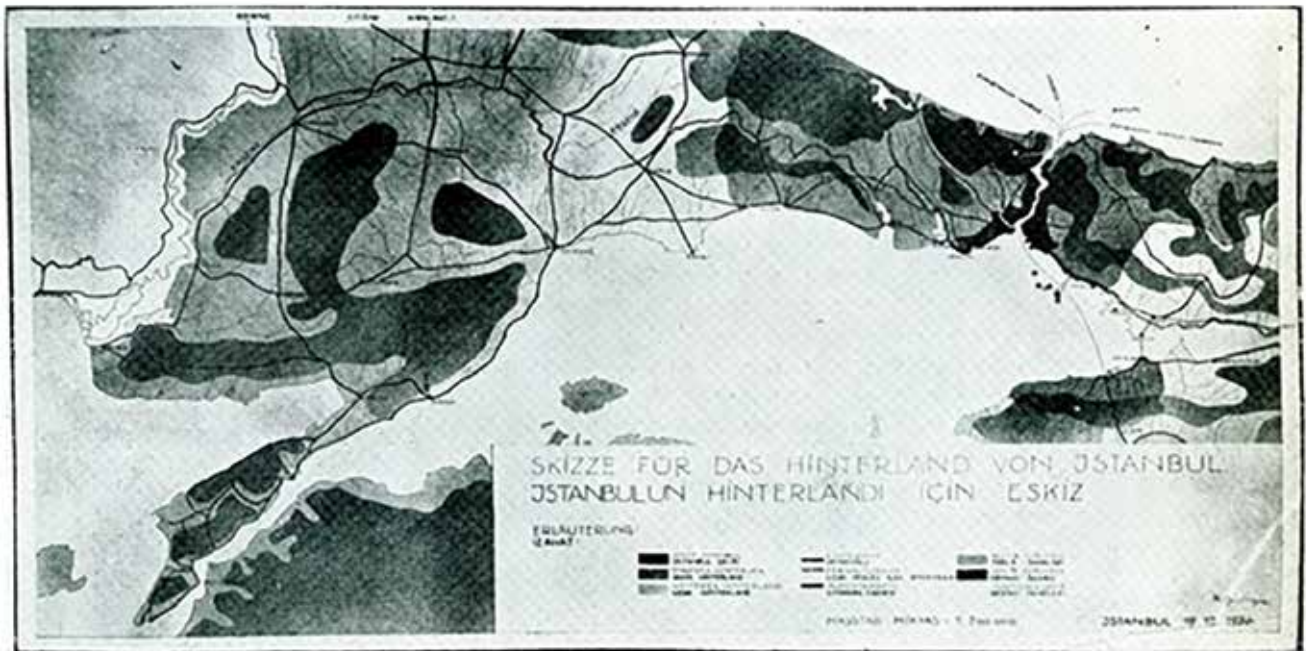


Figure 5: Wagner Plan: Sketch for Istanbul's hinterland.

polluted the Ergene River and have begun to threaten both the agricultural activity in the basin and the basin's ecological sustainability.

Along with this, the number of private harbors on the Marmara Sea has significantly increased since the 1990s in parallel with the industrial decentralization that occurred in the Marmara Region. The mushrooming of industrial complexes and private harbors around the Marmara Sea is threatening the unique ecology of this inland sea. In addition, water masses which have

interactions with the Marmara Sea such as the Bosphorus, Golden Horn and Büyükçekmece and Küçükçekmece Lakes have also been negatively affected by these processes. Istanbul's water problem exhibits another aspect of the regional effects of Istanbul's urbanization. The project to bring water to Istanbul from the Melen Creek—which constitutes the eastern border of the Marmara Region and is 180 kilometers away from the city—shows that the operational scale employed to bring water to Istanbul is about to surpass even its regional borders.

When we consider all of these physical and legal interventions, we see that the ecologies of geographic entities and basins where physical areas do not overlap with administrative borders, such as the Marmara Sea, Ergene Basin, Melen Creek, Northern Forest System and Kaz Mountains which reside in the Marmara Region, are under constant threat and that these areas are under risk of turning into Istanbul's operational landscapes. Today, the spatial transformation that the Northern Forests went through under the effect of projects like the Canal Istanbul route, the Third Airport and Yavuz

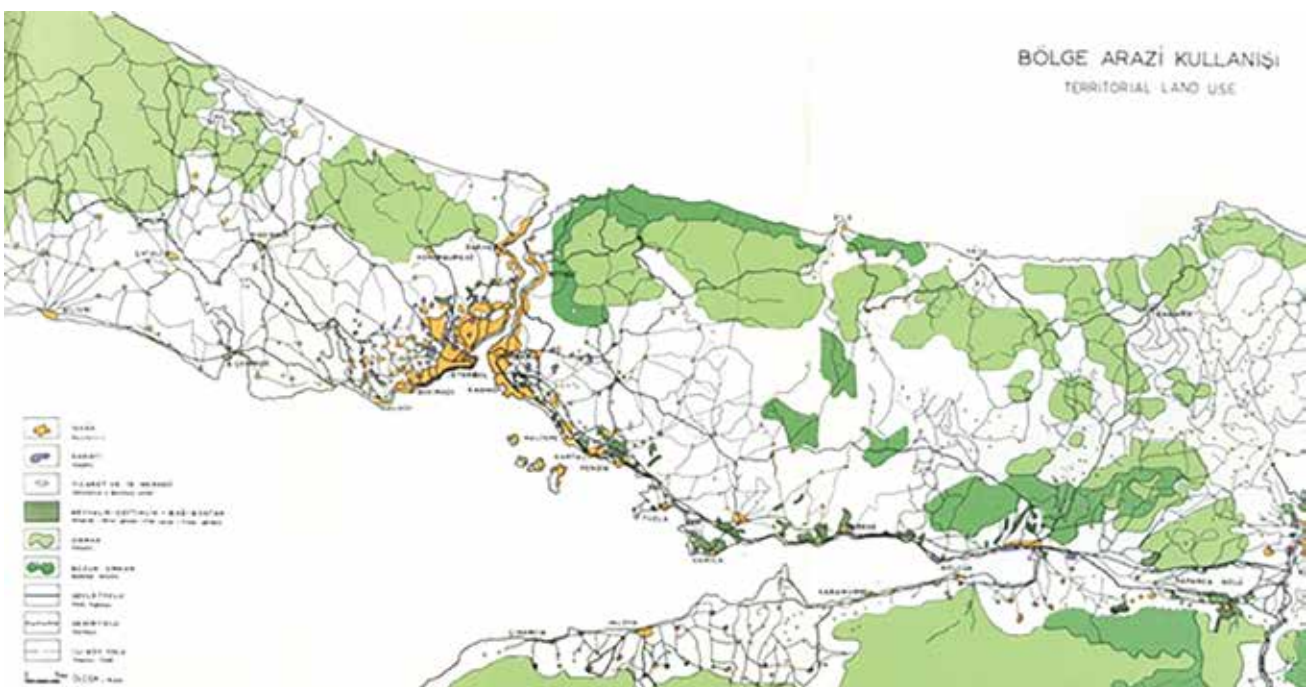


Figure 6: Eastern Marmara Pre-Plan: Region land use.

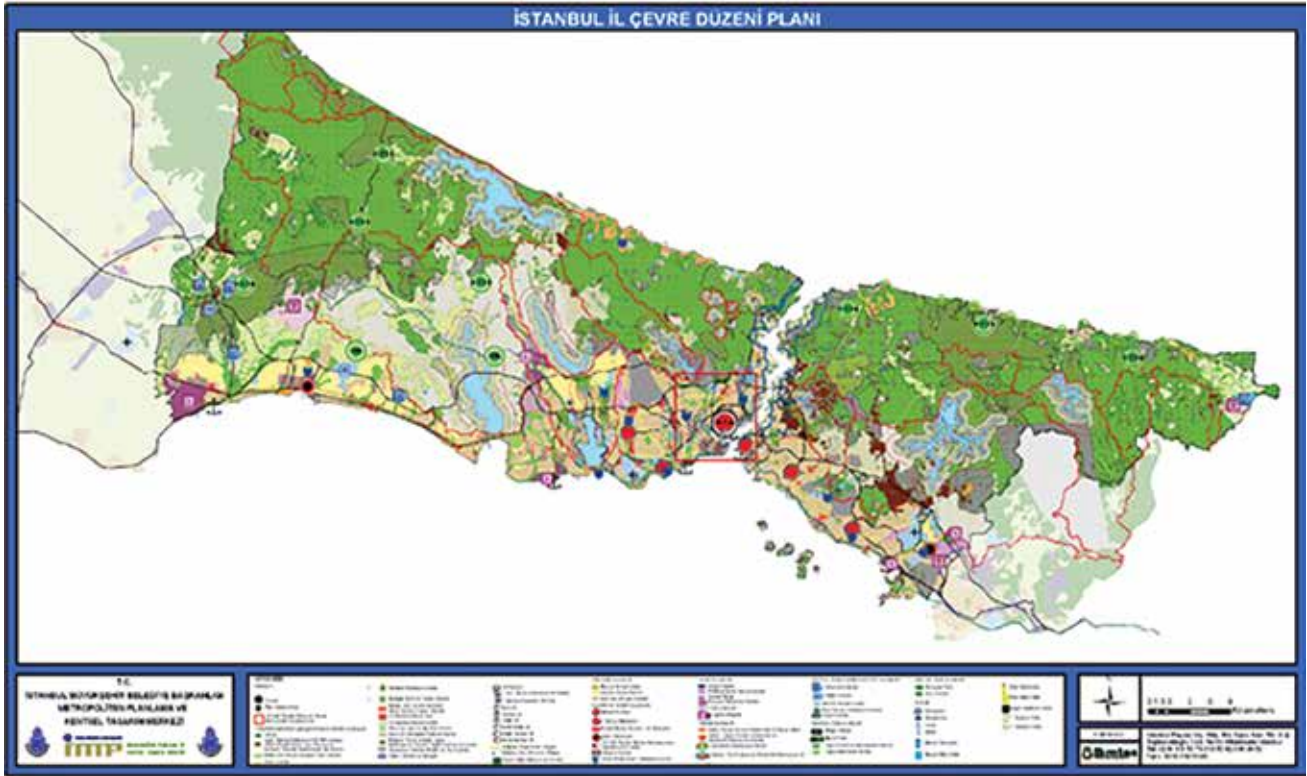


Figure 7: 1/100000 scale Istanbul Province Environmental Plan.

Sultan Selim Bridge is a good example of operational landscape formation. When interventions like the mining pits and Terkos Dam are considered, this history of operational landscape formation can even be taken back to the 19th century. In other words, an important part of the city which the Istanbul resident does not experience in daily life, that is out of sight, has been witnessing a violent spatial transformation for more than a century so that the needs of the city residents can be met.

Regional initiatives in the planning of Istanbul

Despite the fact that the scales and regions belonging to the geographic entities and micro-ecologies mentioned above are not administratively represented, it is important to underline the efforts in this direction in the planning history of Istanbul and the Marmara Region.¹¹ This regional scale spatial structure with its geographic thresholds, ecological features and settlement system structure has come on to the agenda in various periods in the planning history of Turkey. It is possible to come across studies which analyze the urbanization of Istanbul in relation with the Marmara Region since the early period of the Republic. The “Istanbul Environs Plan / Der Landesplan

von Istanbul” study conducted by Martin Wagner between the years 1935 and 1936 has drawn attention to the tense relation and problems between the city center and the hinterlands of various scales that surround the city center of

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Istanbul (Figure 5).¹² The East Marmara Pre-Plan prepared by Tuğrul Akçura in the 1960s under the authority of the Ministry of Public Works and Settlement that focused on the industrial corridor and urban agglomeration the northeast of the Marmara Sea following the study by Luigi Piccinato who was invited to Turkey for the planning of Istanbul in 1958, which promotes decentralization on the regional scale, is among the important initiatives in this area (Figure 6).¹³ The Union of Marmara Municipalities on the other hand which was founded in 1975 as the Union of Municipalities of Marmara and its Straits and which assumed its present name in 2009 is an important initiative in terms of establishing a union on the level of local administration against the negative externalities triggered by the urbanization of Istanbul.

Many important laws that define administrative borders and areas of authority came into effect following the coming to power of the AKP in 2002. The metropolitan municipality areas of Kocaeli and Istanbul were extended to the borders of the province within the scope of Law 5216 which came into effect in 2004. Again, within the scope of this law, the 1/100000 scale Istanbul Environmental Plan was prepared by the IMP (Istanbul Metropolitan Planning). It

is emphasized in the Environmental Plan that Istanbul has turned into an urban area that develops together with Bursa, Tekirdağ, Kocaeli, Kirklareli and Yalova, and a sensibility regarding the ecological situation and natural thresholds of Istanbul and its environment is exhibited.¹⁴ More importantly, as seen in Figure 7, the plan has characterized the forest areas in the north of Istanbul as natural resources that must be absolutely protected and has defended the notion that Istanbul ought to grow towards the east and the west. An important part of the Northern Projects announced in April 2011 which include interventions such as the Canal Istanbul, Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge and the Northern Freeway however, resides in the region defined as the Ecological Corridor in the IMP. This intervention has rendered the IMP's proposal for growth on the east-west axis invalid, caused the opening up of Istanbul's water basins and forest areas to urbanization and has transformed the rural structure in the north of Istanbul and the hinterland relations established by this structure. While an important subset of these interventions resides within the administrative area of Istanbul, the effects of the mega infrastructure projects go much beyond the administrative borders of Istanbul. The Canal Istanbul Project which prescribes the construction of a new canal to constitute an alternative to the Bosphorus is of a capacity that can affect the ecologies of the Black Sea and Mediterranean basins. Furthermore, the mega infrastructure projects taking place in Istanbul and its environment are not limited solely to the northern projects. In addition to these projects, the Osman

Gazi Bridge, Istanbul-İzmir highway and the Istanbul-Ankara high speed rail projects are of a scale that will transform spatial relations not only in Istanbul and the Marmara Region – it will transform spatial relations inter-regionally as well.

The 26 Regional Development Agencies established by the State Planning Agency in 2006 with law number 5449 for the 26 Statistical Territorial Units in Turkey (*Turkey Statistical Territorial Units Classification / nomenclature d'unités territoriales statistiques, NUTS*) has brought the regional scale back on the agenda.¹⁵ "Accelerating regional development, ensuring its sustainability and reducing inter-regional and intra-regional differences in development" are cited among the founding purposes of the agencies. The Marmara Region meanwhile has been divided into five sub-regions and a development agency has been founded for each sub-region.¹⁶ When "reducing intra-region and inter-region inequality to a minimum" which is one of the purposes of founding the agencies is considered, the way TRAKYAKA, GMKA, BEBKA, and MARKA which are the other agencies of the region besides İSTKA approach Istanbul becomes important. When we analyze the plans of the development agencies however, we see that the plan decisions are limited according to Statistical Territorial Units and that topics such as interactions with Istanbul and the other urban centers residing in the Marmara Region, the rapid change the region has gone through on various scales and the reflection of this change on localities remain outside the perspective of the development agencies.

Another important development after 2000 which has affected Istanbul and the urban structure around it is the Metropolitan Municipalities Law 6360 which came into effect in 2012.¹⁷ According to this law, if a population larger than 750000 lives within a municipality in a circle with a radius of ten thousand meters from a city center, that municipality is considered a metropolitan municipality and the administrative status of villages that fall within the borders of these municipalities are converted to neighborhoods. When this law went into effect, it caused a significant change in the ratios of urban and rural populations. After the new regulation, the population in Turkey that lives in urban areas rose from 72 percent to 86 percent while the village population halved, falling from 30 percent to 14 percent.

Another important change introduced by the Metropolitan Municipalities Law 6360 is to not consider villages which have been converted into neighborhoods as legal entities. Therefore, villages have lost their authority over real estate such as pastures, highlands and winter quarters.¹⁸ In other words, villages which have been converted into neighborhoods within the scope of this law have lost their autonomy and control over their commons. The village –which is a singular unit– losing its commons may appear to be unconnected to regional and geographic scales that are the topic of this article. However, analyzing villages from a higher scale as a part of the settlement system instead of evaluating the village as a singular unit may allow us to view the commons

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Figure 8: Land cover distribution of pasture areas in the Marmara Region of 2012. **Source:** TR Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs Corine Project.

in a different way. For example, Figure 8 shows how large an area pastural land covers on the Marmara Region scale. The number of metropolitan municipalities in the Marmara Region have risen to six within the scope of law 6360 – Istanbul, Tekirdağ, Kocaeli, Sakarya, Bursa and Balıkesir. This situation shows that law 6360 affects various scales far beyond “the village” as a singular administrative unit.

Conclusion

The changing scales of urbanization have been evaluated in this article both through a theoretical framework and in connection to the urbanization dynamics that took place in the Marmara Region and in Istanbul in particular. The spatial

transformation triggered by the physical planning interventions and legal changes depicted above is affecting the urban and geographic scales of the Marmara Region and especially of Istanbul through non-linear processes. While this rapid urban transformation is on the one hand becoming part of daily life in metropolises, it is on the other hand affecting the unique ecologies such as the Marmara Sea and the Kaz Mountains, agricultural lands, forests and wetlands in the region in diverse ways. Meanwhile, evaluating the dynamics of the picture that emerges requires new theories, awareness, sensibilities, concepts and research methods. This situation should be utilized by civil society as a potential,

The changing scales of urbanization have been evaluated in this article both through a theoretical framework and in connection to the urbanization dynamics that took place in the Marmara Region and in Istanbul in particular.

clear the way for multidisciplinary avenues and be able to bring together stakeholders from different backgrounds.

¹ In order to maintain consistency among the data sets from different dates being used in research, this article uses the geographical region borders instead of the Statistical Regional Units Classification.

² W. Cronon, *Nature's metropolis: Chicago and the Great West*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991); R.T. T. Forman, *Urban ecology: Science of Cities*, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2014); C. Waldheim, *The Landscape Urbanism Reader*, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2006); J. Corner, “The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention,” in *Mappings*, (ed.) Cosgrove, (London: Reaktion, 1999); Farias and T. H. Bender, *Urban Assemblages: How Actor-Network Theory Changes Urban Studies*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2010).

³ On this process, which Fredric Jameson calls “the spatial turn,” see F. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1991).

⁴ N. Brenner, *Implosions/explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization*, (Berlin: JOVIS, 2014).

⁵ H. Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003).

⁶ I. L. McHarg, *Design with Nature (25th anniversary ed.)*, (New York: J. Wiley, 1992).

⁷ A. J. Scott ve M. E. Porter, *Global City-regions: Trends, Theory, Policy*, (Cambridge, UK and New York: Oxford University Press, 2001); E. W. Soja, “Regions in Context: Spatiality, Periodicity, and the Historical Geography of the Regional Question,” *Society and Space*, no. 3, 1985.

⁸ N. Brenner, *Implosions/explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization*, (Berlin: JOVIS, 2014).

⁹ On the notion of micro-ecology, see P. Horden and N. Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, (Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 2000).

¹⁰ These maps have been obtained by using Multiple Correspondence Analysis to interpret the Aris (Land Monitoring Systems) 2006 land cover data set that was generated by the Ministry of Forests and Water. To this end, a Graphical User Interface developed by Murat Güvenç and Savaş Yıldırım was used and the results were re-mapped in CBS (Geographical Information Systems).

¹¹ It is important to remember that the geographical regions whose borders were determined in 1941 in the First Geographical Congress have never been recognized as administrative units in Turkey.

¹² M. Wagner, *İstanbul Havalisinin Planı Der Landesplan von İstanbul* [The land plan of Istanbul], (İstanbul: Arkitekt, 1937).

¹³ İmar ve İskân Bakanlığı [Ministry of Development and Housing]. *Doğu Marmara Bölgesi Ön Plânı* [Preliminary Plan for the Eastern Marmara Region], (İstanbul: İmar ve İskân Bakanlığı, 1963).

¹⁴ İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi İmar ve Şehircilik Daire Başkanlığı [Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Head of the Department of Development and City Planning], 1/100.000 Ölçekli İstanbul Çevre Düzeni Planı Raporu [Istanbul Environmental Plan on a 1/100,000 scale Report], 2009, <http://www.planlama.org/index.php/haberler/guncelhaberler/1180-1100000-oelcekli-istanbul-cevre-duezeni-plan-ve-plan-raporu>.

¹⁵ 5449 Sayılı Kalkınma Ajanslarının Kuruluşu, Koordinasyonu ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun [Law 5449 Concerning the Establishment, Coordination, and Duties of Development Agencies], Resmi Gazete [Official Gazette], 2006. <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2006/02/20060208.htm>.

¹⁶ İstanbul Kalkınma Ajansı, 2014-2023 İstanbul Bölge Planı [Istanbul Development Agency, 2014-2023 Istanbul Region Plan], 2014. <http://www.istka.org.tr/media/1063/2014-2023-%C4%B0istanbul-b%C3%B6lge-plan%C4%B1.pdf>.

¹⁷ 6360 Sayılı Büyükşehir Belediyesi Kanunu, Resmi Gazete, [Metropolitan Municipality Law 6360, Official Gazette], 2012, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2012/12/20121206-1.htm>.

¹⁸ <http://tapu-kadastro.net/index.php/makaleler/diger-tapu-kadastro/523-mahalleye-doenuesen-koeylelerin-tasinmazlari>.

THE ECOLOGY STRUGGLE IN THE MEGAPOLIS: DEFENDING THE NORTHERN FORESTS AND THE CITY

The most important developments concerning the future of Istanbul are perhaps the developments of the recent years in the north of the city. A number of factors triggered by large-scale infrastructure projects quickly destroy the unique ecological balances that are necessary for the wellbeing of the city dwellers. Of course, there are those who struggle to draw attention to and prevent these developments. The Northern Forest Defense is one of them. Even though their roots go back further, this initiative is a gift of the Gezi Uprising. The activists of this initiative reveal threats to the Northern Forests on the one hand, and underline the extent of the ecology struggle in a city like Istanbul on the other.





Photo: Northern Forests Defense

The zone that is delineated by the already-existing residential areas of Istanbul and the Black Sea shore is an integrative ecological area where catchment basins, dunes, dams, reservoirs, natural parks, and numerous endemic animal and plant species (species that do not exist anywhere else) co-exist. The forests in the north of the city include the Istanca, Terkos, Büyükçekmece, Alibeyköy and Sazlıdere catchment basins, Ömerli, Elmalı and Darlık catchment basins that meet the drinking and tap water needs

of the European side and the Asian side, respectively. The forests, when taken into consideration with the drinking water catchment basins, constitute the primary elements of the ecological belts and corridors that are indispensably important for the sustained development of Istanbul.

For example, the Belgrade forest, which is one of the most important forests of Istanbul and which includes seven water dams within its borders,

has been meeting the water demands of the city for centuries. The Atatürk Arboretum (botanical garden), which is uniquely positioned globally in terms of its contributions to the field of forestry, hosts 450 important species of plants that are well-known across the world. There are other sites of nature with ecological and biological importance in Istanbul other than the Belgrade Forest: the forested area and shore area located between Terkos and Kasatura, Ağıl Dere and Ağaçlı Dunes, Gümüşdere Dunes, Northern Bosphorus, Büyükçekmece Lake, Küçükçekmece Lake, Western Istanbul Pastures, Ömerli Catchment Basin, Sahilköy, Şile, Ağva Dunes, Ağva Stream, and Şile islands.

The forest areas in and around Istanbul are very important in terms of biodiversity (the diversity of the species of animals and plants); these areas are also concentrated sites for bird migration. This area hosts hundreds of thousands of water birds, wild and singing birds during migration.

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the micro climate. The forest areas have a cooling effect on the microclimate; the destruction of the natural flora and the open areas that have been developed further contribute to the heat island effect.

The Northern Forests are close to the sea level and are formed mainly by broad-leaved trees that shed their leaves in the winter; in areas with little human intervention, the forests are particularly fertile and display excellent development. This belt of integrative ecosystems is the meeting point of three different climate areas and present a transitioning zone, which produces extremely rich biodiversity. This diversity approximately includes 3000 different plant species, 46 tree species, 2800 weed-like plant species, and other endemic plant taxa. In addition to being the passageway for the migration of birds, these forests are home to 48 different species of mammals, 350 fish species, 350 reptile/frog species. There are 15 “Important Natural Sites”¹ in the Northern Forests, which include forests, open fields, wetlands, rocky areas, dunes, and floodplains.

As the northern Marmara region has been inhabited since the Neolithic times, the Northern Forests are home to not only diverse natural assets, but also to cultural inheritance. Forest villages, archaeological sites, castles, bridges, historic roads, aqueducts, and examples of industrial architecture are part of the cultural inheritance of the Northern Forests. Furthermore, the tradition of agriculture and animal husbandry and the diversity of local products are the rural assets of all of the Northern Forests.

of animals and plants); these areas are also concentrated sites for bird migration. This area hosts hundreds of thousands of water birds, wild and singing birds during migration. It is exactly for this reason that the Istanbul Strait is one the best sites to watch bird migration both within Turkey and globally. Furthermore, the natural parks of Türkmenbaşı in Sarıyer and Polenezköy in Beykoz –locations of recreation and relaxing for the people and home to important flora and fauna– are also included within these forest areas.

Transportation projects such as the Third Bosphorus Bridge and the roads that connect to it and other such projects in Istanbul, which transform the terrain on a vast scale, are crucial because of the “heat island” effect these projects and the development they trigger create on

The threats against the Northern Forests: The lungs of the Marmara Region

Due to the policies of importing inhabitants for industrial development as well as the agricultural policies that triggered the dismantling of small-scale village life, a massive, uncontrolled rural population started to migrate to the city. The unplanned and irregular urbanization around the concentrated industrial regions of Istanbul was one of the first threats for the Northern Forests. The massive migration waves from cities in Anatolia to Istanbul and to the larger region around it, hit the agricultural land around the city as well as the Northern forests.

The first victim of the new liberal urbanization policies that were put into effect after the 1980s was again the Northern Forests — in particular, the construction of the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge and the TEM highway pushed the limits of the city up against the “dense” forestry of the Northern Forests.

The AKP government has been the executor of the most brutal applications of the imperialist-capitalist system, and the consequent neoliberal urbanization policies, which have threatened nature and the urban space. At this time, the Northern Forests are under the attack of the political authorities who have come into power through wrongful and illegal means, a power sustained unjustly and cruelly, and factions that hold capital, who have been ordered by the politicians to conquer and loot natural areas. The energy and construction industries are intensely trying to occupy and loot the unmatched forest ecosystems north of Kırklareli, Tekirdağ, Istanbul, Kocaeli, and Sakarya. The workshop we organized in June 2017 clearly shows that the Northern Forests are facing a multi-dimensional threat today.²

To summarize the sources of these threats:

- The construction of fossil-fuel plants in the area between Çerkezköy and Silivri and in Vize will not only destroy the fertile agricultural terrain of the Thracian peninsula, but can also threaten the Northern Forests.
- The third nuclear power plant planned for construction in İğneada will have repercussions for the larger region.

- As the catchment basins north of Istanbul get smaller, the construction of new reservoirs to meet the water needs of the city emerge. In this context, the reservoirs to be built in Kandıra and Çatalca will flood the agricultural land and forests in the area.
- There are discussions of constructing numerous wind power plants across the Northern Forests. These power plants will potentially contribute to the destruction of the forests' ecosystem through the transmission lines and the service roads that will be built to serve them.
- Quarries and concrete batching plants that dig under the forests and that remove stones, pollute its water and air, growing like tumors under the ground to consume the forests have enveloped the northern region of Istanbul on all sides.
- Organized industrial zones that are spread across the agricultural basins that have become one with the forest and which are polluting the environment without government supervision, surround the Northern forests on three sides.
- Garbage storage/burning/elimination plants and construction waste disposal sites are transforming the region into a trash site.
- The Third Bridge, Third Airport, and Northern Marmara High-Way mega-projects are murder, and their negative impacts on the forests are very clear.
- The transportation, energy, water, natural gas transfer and transmission lines, consequences of the construction and energy-focused policies, are disruptive within the forest, threatening the wild life there.
- Harbors and the artificial sea

embankments that push the shore further into the water affect the sea and the shores of the northern forests.

- All the settlement areas within the forest, which include villages, small towns, are penetrating further into the forest as a result of the increased construction in the area.
- Water filling stations that are owned by private companies and municipalities carry on their activities without the necessary planning and calculations, taking over the underground waters that are needed for the forest and the surrounding agricultural terrains.
- Wrongly using names such as city forest, natural park, the forest is being transformed into a commercial place, a stage prop.
- Animal species that are hunted by unchecked hunting gangs is another threat to the biologic diversity of the forest.
- In order to transfer the natural gas from Russia to Europe, a pipeline is planned, called "TurkStream". This line will disrupt the Northern Forests with a 30 km long barbed wire, spanning Kiyıköy to Vize, directly affecting the wildlife.
- Another element that is threatening the forest is the wrongful administration of forest grounds, under pressure from the forest industry — another favorite industry of the current government.

Northern Forests Defense

The resistance at the Gezi Park was a resistance against the enemies of trees, forests, ecology, and this movement continued with the forums that were organize. The most important aspect of the forums was that it was a place where

everybody had a say, without a hierarchy, an area where decisions were made with shared participation. This unique experience of the Gezi Park became a role model for many movements in Turkey. Northern Forests Defense (NFD) emerged from this experience to create a form of defending life.

NFD was founded at the forums organized at Beşiktaş Abbasağa Park, which had begun right after the Gezi resistance in July 2013. At the time, forums of the Gezi Park resistance were still ongoing at Abbasağa. Later on, individuals who would come together at the NFD would gather in the small forum area of the Abbasağa Park. Those who issued the call for the forum were the participants of the "Life Against the Third Bridge Platform" who struggled against the construction of the third bridge Sariyer in 2007. According to the project that was prepared in 2007, one of the legs of the 3rd Bridge was to be in Sariyer, which would negatively affect the natural and urban order of Sariyer. The "Life Against the Third Bridge Platform" struggled for three years in Sariyer and their experiences provided support for the forums organized in Abbasağa.

The platform was able to prevent the bridge's construction in Sariyer, but five years later, the 3rd Bridge and even the 3rd Airport became issues again. So the issues of these life defenders were similar, who had gathered at Abbasağa right after Gezi: The forests that would be destroyed in the construction of the Third Bridge and the Third Airport, the animals whose natural environments would be destroyed, endemic plants that would not grow anywhere else ever again, the lungs of Istanbul that would never recover.

The name Northern Forests emerged in the forums after Gezi. These forums labeled the forests that enveloped the northern section of the Marmara region, which included the northern part of Istanbul, the forests that gave the city its breathing air and its winds, that sustained the ecosystem, were now the Northern Forests. The defending efforts were also thus labeled. The Northern Forests Defense's first task was to organize bike trips to the Northern Forests, which became their home and to organize protests in the villages of the Northern Forests. The defenders went to the



Photo: Northern Forests Defense



Photo: Northern Forests Defense

forest villages numerous times and also organized protests in Istanbul.

The Disaster waiting to happen in Istanbul

At this moment, the ecological and urban destruction in Istanbul had gone beyond the Northern Forests. Shantytowns were destroyed under the rubric of urban transformation, the transportation projects that would expand Istanbul to the north were realized one by one. As old neighborhoods lost their identities, old buildings were destroyed and new high-rises were being built. During this process, the administration of Istanbul was transferred to groups who were interested in insensitive real-estate development after the 1980s. Istanbul was suffering from being the biggest and most impressive city in Turkey. In the last 15 years, its position as such has been strengthened. Economist Mustafa Sönmez, who spoke at a panel organized by the Istanbul Urban Defense on October 19, 2017, said about the position of Istanbul:

“Istanbul became a focal point in Turkey in the last 15 years. The government

started to apply the policies of their new regime in Istanbul. Turkey was formulated in the testing field of Istanbul. The policies of construction and real-estate development hindered the transition from construction to industry. They arrived at such a point that the sustenance of this fiction also prevented its own mechanisms from working. This is why Topbaş and Gökçek were removed from their posts. They became the scapegoats with hopes that the past will no longer be remembered.”³

It is without a doubt that the roots of the threats against Istanbul go back further. Istanbul has been in danger for a long time. On the other hand, Istanbul has been moving in the direction of becoming more conservative, hosting open-ended projects that are disparate from the city’s history and its spaces. The construction projects are transforming this ancient city into a caricature. Those who have been governing Istanbul for many years have been eager to loot the city’s nature, historic and cultural inheritance, memory sites, and urban public spaces, ecosystems that are thousands of years old for the sake

of those who have capital. Even post-disaster gathering areas have been opened up to real-estate development projects, risking the wellbeing of those who live in the city; low-income groups and the urban poor have been exiled to the TOKI bunkers on the periphery of the city. The Environmental Plan of 2009, which dictated that the city should not grow in the northern direction, has also been violated. All of these developments have left behind an Istanbul that is economically, socially, environmentally, and ecologically unsustainable.⁴

Defending Istanbul

Istanbul was under heavy real estate and cultural pressure, just as it is today. After the Gezi Resistance, protest movements were forming in the city. Istanbul City Defense was established through the resistance of its local inhabitants. In December 2013, Istanbul City Rally was held in Kadıköy Square, initiated by the Northern Forests Defense and the Istanbul City Defense.

The Validebağ Resistance, which rose due to the buildings to be constructed in Validebağ Grove, a heavenly place on

the Anatolian side of Istanbul, became the focus of the city's revolt. All the protesters who were involved in the Gezi Resistance found themselves in Validebağ. As a result, most of Validebağ Grove was recovered, but unfortunately the construction networks consumed some of it. The Validebağ Grove is faced with the danger of turned into a National Garden today.

Another appeal came from Büyükçekmece-Albatros. The Büyükçekmece Municipality wanted to build a tourism facility at the Albatros Park. Albatros inhabitants objected to the opening of the park by the Mayor of Büyükçekmece for two years and won this struggle.

Meanwhile, Bahçeşehir, once the most precious region of Istanbul, had its share of real-estate development. The pond that was located in the middle of Bahçeşehir and giving its breathing to the area, was going to be taken over by the shopping malls. In the end Bahçeşehir inhabitants also protested and founded the Bahçeşehir Pond Volunteers. The volunteers are still trying to defend their pond today.

In 2014, Istanbulites faced another environmental threat: the project of a villa complex to be built in Fatih Forest. Diren Fatih Forest Initiative, which was founded by participants from neighborhood organizations, vocational chambers, and Northern Forest Defense, organized meetings for the project prepared by Bilgili and Doğuş Holding Conglomerates and carried out nearly twenty protests. The project, which consists of stadiums, shopping centers,

and villas to be installed in the forest, was removed from the agenda as a result of the actions of the Diren Fatih Forest Initiative.

At this time, the city movements in Istanbul, Sarıyer, Adalar, Beykoz, Haliç, Cennet, Bebek and Bakırköy continued. In the meantime, the Dekovil Train Line project to be built in Belgrade Forests came up. Life and city advocates started a campaign and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality took action to cancel this project. Nearly a hundred thousand signatures were collected and many protests were organized in front of the Belgrad Forest and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. This project, which would impact the Belgrad Forests, has also been canceled.

However, despite all of these efforts, Istanbul has continued to be heavily assaulted by administrators and construction companies whose are greedy for real-estate development. Trees were cut down for the 3rd Bridge, which was presented as "a transportation project, not a real-estate development project", the villagers who lived in the forest were removed from their villages with rapidly transforming the terrain into public assets. Agriculture and animal husbandry in Istanbul and Marmara regions are almost completely destroyed. For transportation projects such as the Third Bridge and the Osmangazi Bridge, the guarantees given to the companies were in terms of dollars, which still comes out of tax money. Nearly twenty ponds were dried, hundreds of thousands of trees were cut, the living spaces of tens of thousands of animals were destroyed at the expense of the construction of

Transportation projects such as the Third Bosphorus Bridge and the roads that connect to it and other such projects in Istanbul, which transform the terrain on a vast scale, are crucial because of the "heat island" effect these projects and the development they trigger create on the micro climate.

the 3rd Airport; dozens of workers died on the construction site. Construction workers are still killed every day at construction sites. Construction vehicles are all around the city, threatening the safety of city dwellers. In Istanbul alone, 60 people were crushed by earthmoving cranes and concrete cranes in the last two years and many more were injured, some disabled permanently. .

The government continues to destroy the identity of Istanbul and surround it with cement islands. It appears that the only thing remaining behind from these developments will be the specter of the city. Preventing the realization of this destiny relies on those who struggle to save it.

¹ "Important Natural Site" is a technical term used to denote fragile environmental sites that are particularly important for species to reproduce (ed.n.).

² For the announcement and program of the workshop organized on June 10, 2017, please see: <https://kuzeyormanlari.org/2017/05/30/kuzey-ormanlari-kurultayi-10-haziran-cumartesi-gunu-yasar-kemal-kultur-merkezinde-yapilacak/>.

³ For reporting on the panel: <http://mezopotamyaajansi.com/tum-haberler/content/view/3126>.

⁴ Cihan Uzunçarşılı Baysal, "Hedef Muhafazakar Kentler İnşa Ederek Yeni Bir İstanbul Yaratmak," *Bianet*, November 30, 2017, <http://m.bianet.org/1/138/191970-baysal-uzuncarsili-hedef-muhafazakar-kentler-insa-ederek-yeni-bir-istanbul-yaratmak>.



Photo: Northern Forests Defense



Birdwatching as a citizen science

As the physical and social geography of Istanbul is changing, the lives of the non-human urban dwellers also change. Ranging from highway construction to the food left out for street animals are among the factors that influence the habitats of animals in the city. High up on this list are birds, with diminishing numbers and diversity. To better comprehend this complicated ecosystem, we talked to bird watcher Kerem Ali Boyla.

The Bird Atlas [Kuş Atlası (www.kustr.org)], which you have pointed out as the most extensive biodiversity inventory study that has ever been conducted in Turkey, documents all of the bird species that nest in Turkey, mapping their distribution across the country based on observation. This is a unique study both in terms of its production process as well as its identification of species before they go extinct. Could you tell us more about this study?

Kerem Ali Boyla: The idea of a *Bird Atlas* has been in the works since the 1970s. But at the time, Turkey did not have enough bird watchers, so this idea did not go any further. The goal of *Turkey Reproducing Birds Atlas*—with its longer name—is to scan a wide geography in Turkey systematically to identify where reproducing birds exist and support these observations with solid evidence. Here, evidence refers to notating observations using standardized forms, including the date, hour, conditions of the observation and observations on the reproductive behavior of the species. “A1: The specimen has been observed possibly in their reproduction habitat during their reproductive phase; B3: A couple has been observed in their reproductive phase in an environment appropriate for breeding; B7: Excited behavior and anxious chirping by adults have been observed; C14: Adults who are carrying food to or removing debris from the nest have been observed.” These are some examples of the standardized codes. It appears to be very technical work, but this is a standard application for studying biodiversity; biologists who study plants or whales would do the same. It is an

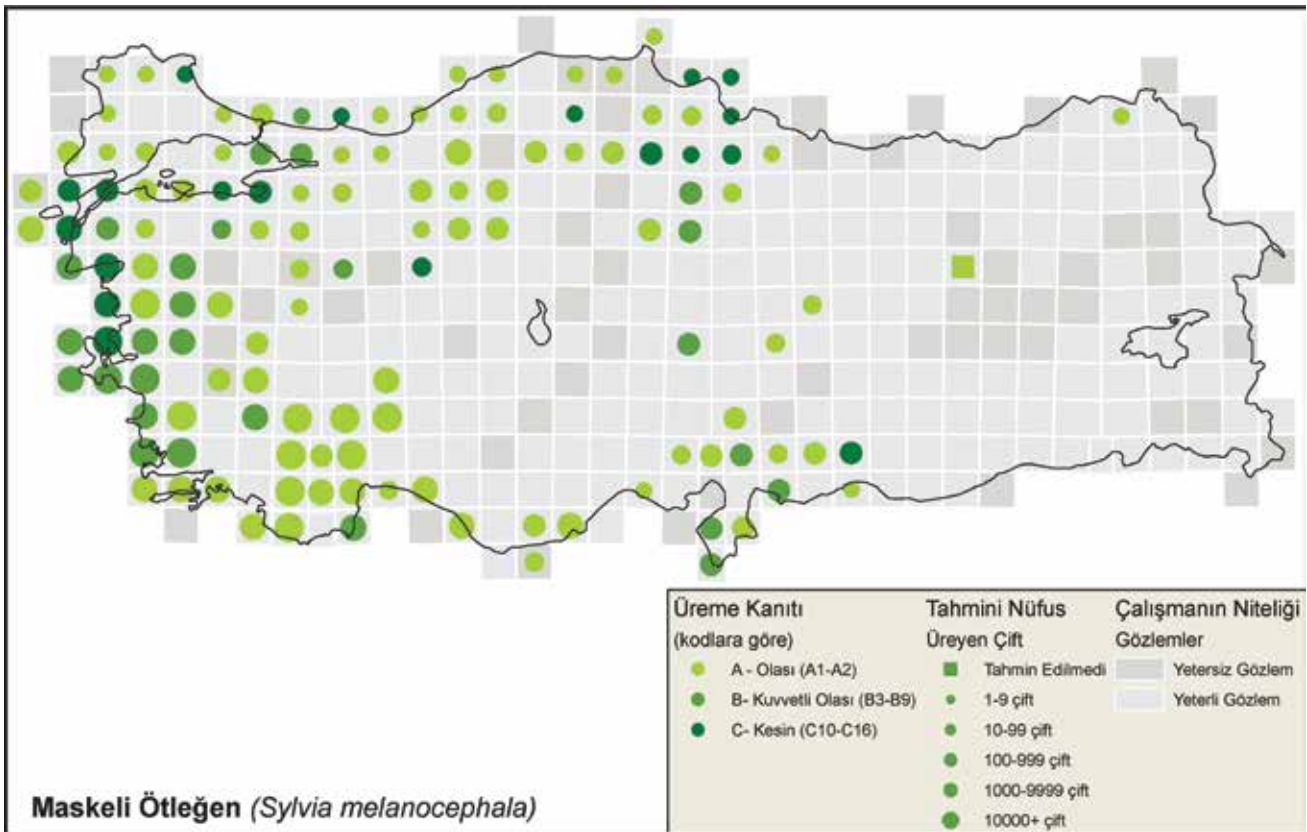
easy method; we split up the geographic area that we are studying into squares and then we study the movement in each square.

We divided up Turkey into 375 squares, using a standard geographic reference system; we then encouraged people to visit each square and gather information in that area. All of the people who perform this task are volunteers. Members of this community go to locations near their homes to observe birds in April-May-June, without receiving any payment; the area covered is approximately three quarters of Turkey. We don't know all of them, but I know that there is a bird watcher in Bartın, I know that there is a teacher Şebinkarahisar who is also a bird watcher.

This study is actually not only about birds, but is also a study of the health of nature in Turkey. We take photographs in 50x50 kilometers of square areas called “atlas squares”. Although it might not mean that much to an ordinary person, it is important to know in exactly how many squares the great bustards live; the great bustard is a bird that lives in steppe environments, a species with rapidly diminishing numbers all across Europe that is heavily impacted by hunting. Yes, there are fewer great bustards, but what does that mean? For example, there used to be many bustards in Ankara, there is still some; they used to be widespread throughout, now they only exist in the Polatlı region. Furthermore, the great bustard is a species that we already know is diminishing in numbers and there are already studies and action plans in place.

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There are other species, the names of which have not come up yet. For example, Montagu's harrier: We believe that this bird used to nest in the Thracian peninsula, but there are no nests there now. We are able to trace their diminishing numbers by looking at the atlas squares and following the trail of the narrowing. In this atlas, we identified three species, which are no longer nesting in Turkey, or in other words, they no longer reproduce in Turkey. I'm not saying that they are extinct, the species continues to exist, they nest outside of Turkey, and some of those which nest outside of Turkey are also seen in Turkey during migrations.



Atlas prepared for the sardinian warbler. **Source:** Kerem Ali Boyla.

It is very difficult to see if some of the common species are diminishing in numbers or not. We could see if there are fewer bald ibises, but it is hard to say for sparrows and skylarks. The future of these animals is not guaranteed either, because although there are many of them today, the numbers can change very drastically very quickly.

Which species, for example?

K.A.B.: Demoiselle cranes, velvet scoters, marbled teals. For example, the velvet scoter used to nest in five different areas, now they no longer exist. The marbled teal nested in Mersin Göksu Delta in 2013, but in the Atlas report, there is only one photograph of the last offspring. This is very sad. In five to ten years, other species might also disappear and the atlas is a good method to see these changes.

In the last few years, there has been a major shift. The expanded spectrum of

agricultural products as well as increased mining efforts meant that there are “harvests” and that all natural habitats have been opened up to forestry. It is very difficult to see if some of the common species are diminishing in numbers or not. We could see if there are fewer bald ibises, but it is hard to say for sparrows and skylarks. The future of these animals is not guaranteed either, because although there are many of them today, the numbers can change very drastically very quickly.

The Bird Atlas is also a collective initiative. The team that has been overseeing the project includes both professionals and volunteer bird watchers. On the website of the Bird Atlas, you talk about this work being a citizen science project. What is a “citizen science” and for how long has this method of working been called that?

K.A.B.: This movement stems from the visions of what was formerly known as the Association for Protecting Natural Life and then the Nature Association. The first developments on this topic started with the Ramsar Agreement (Ramsar Convention on Wetlands of International Importance especially as Waterfowl Habitat) and continued with the BirdLife

Bird watchers do what many urbanites do not do and spend their weekends by the lake; they document if a truck is disposing construction debris there, if a bulldozer is flattening off an area—bird watchers witness these things. This is where volunteer citizen science emerged from.

International. In every country, there is a non-governmental organization that is a member of this community. These organizations are very strong in Europe and the USA, but in countries like Turkey or Bulgaria, they are much weaker. It is possible to speak about a northern-southern collaboration here too, because countries from the North see that for one thousandth of their spending in the North, they can do ten times the protection work in the south. The wetlands in Turkey are observed by volunteers since 1967. Then BirdLife started to work towards creating an inventory of the birds using scientific/semi-scientific criteria. One of the most important stakeholders of



Bird watchers at Istanbul Maçka Park. **Source:** Kerem Ali Boyla.

BirdLife is their bird watchers of course. Bird watchers do what many urbanites do not do and spend their weekends by the lake; they document if a truck is disposing construction debris there, if a bulldozer is flattening off an area—bird watchers witness these things. BirdLife is where volunteer citizen reporting emerged from. But of course, it is not only bird watchers who do this, this is why the collaboration with BirdLife did not work. We could not protect these important areas by this method. We had charged the bird watchers with too big of a task.

Yet this spirit has shaped our birdwatchers, because they are the ones who know the areas well and are willing to follow the birds. Citizen science has come to be in this way, and then we realized that as computer and phone technologies progressed, we could digitalize the information that everyone kept in their notebooks. We used to say that we needed three things to observe birds: bird book, binoculars, and notepad. We don't need the bird book anymore, it can be downloaded on a phone, the binoculars and the camera are enough.

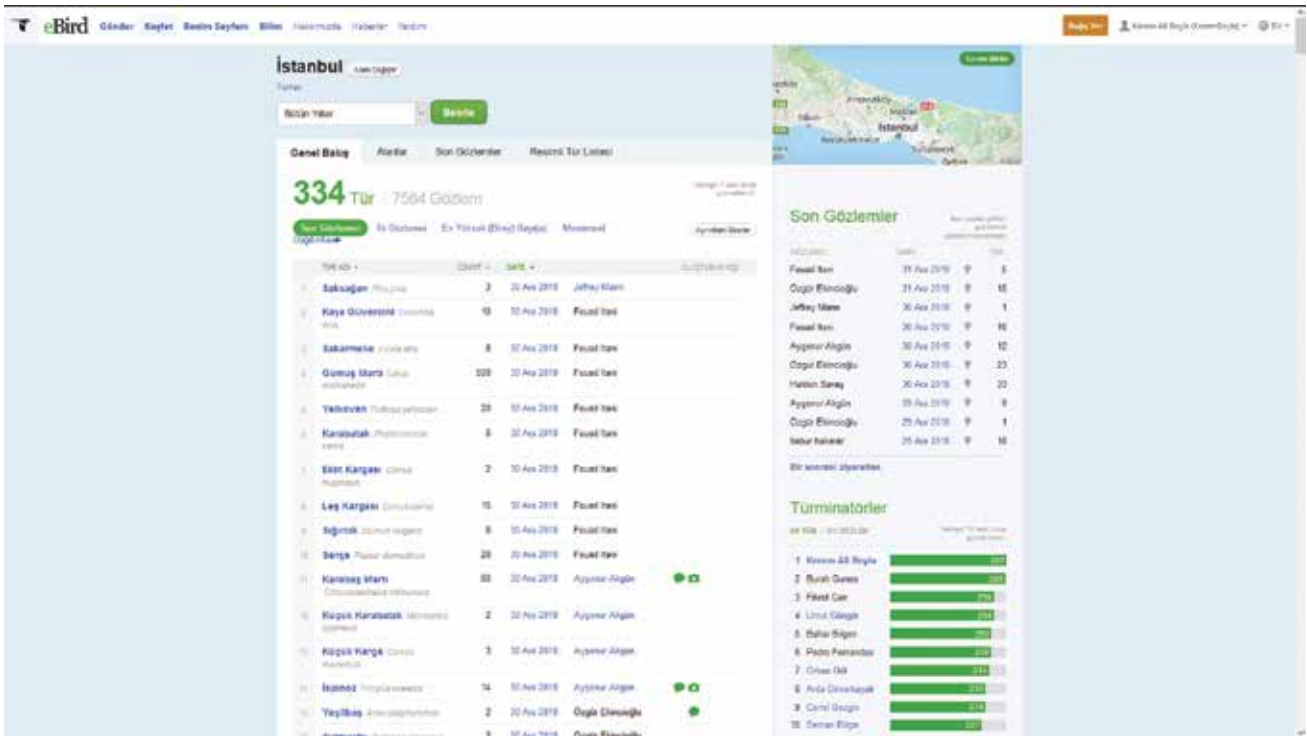
In 2003, Uygur Özesmi founded *Kuşbank* [Bird Bank] (www.kusbank.org) and this system has grown and continued until 2007. In 2007, we transferred the system to another database, and lastly in 2014, we moved to Cornell University's e-bird (www.ebird.org), which is used globally. It's a very powerful database. You can see the photos of a species in various parts of the world, work in this field has progressed very much. They can model the movements of birds, for example. I'm going from Maçka Park with my cell phone, I'm entering a fieldfares record, that fieldfare is a point in a very complex migration map. This makes the map even more meaningful because it is the only record that shows the transition through Istanbul.

Who deals with the data on the *Bird Bank* or the *Bird Atlas*?

K.A.B.: The first user is the public. I have friends at the Ministry for Forests and Environment or other relevant ministries. They encounter ÇED [Environmental Impact Assessment] reports or a project proposal; they need concrete information to make an assessment, they need maps and we did not have such maps before.

Also, this data is going to be used by the academia. For example, Lider Sınay, who graduated from the Hacettepe University Biology department, is a colleague that I have been collaborating on for the atlas project; they are co-authoring a graduate thesis, researching the impact of climate factors on the distribution of birds in the specific case of Turkey. Because the first step is to look at this information, make a model, when there are places that do not comply with the model, the possibility of human intervention is questioned, a steppe map is created, when a species is not seen in a field, the reason is researched. For example, there was too much hunting there or there was a watering project there, the steppe has lost its qualities etc.

The third group of users is the non-governmental organizations that need scientific arguments for their protection work. There are too many arguments, in my opinion, and the inaccurate information hurts our cause. For example, last November, the Nature Association celebrated the bald ibises being taken out of the "critical danger" category, which is globally the highest danger



e-bird database, launched by Cornell University and now used worldwide. Source: Kerem Ali Boyla.

class, and their being included in the “danger” category; the number of bald ibises had gone up in Urfa as well. However, the change in the categories was due to the increased number of bald ibises in Morocco; the local population in Turkey has been extinct since 1989. The bald ibises in Urfa are not different from animals in cages at a zoo. I think it is critical to use a shared language and common reference points.

What could we say about places where the pressure to become more urban is very intense? For example, Istanbul? What kinds of habitats do cities provide for birds? What do birds mean in our anthropocentric life in cities?

K.A.B.: The distribution of birds in Istanbul is very heterogeneous; there are four-five areas and many bird watchers go there. On the Asian side, there is Riva, on the European side, there is Terkos, Büyüçekmece and Küçükçekmece. Furthermore, a lot of observations are based on migrations. Even if all of Istanbul becomes a slab of concrete, the birds have to go through here on their way; they also cross over the Sahara Desert and the worst war zones in the Middle East.

It is crucial for our bodily and emotional development to stay connected to nature, but very few our society’s needs

are actually related to nature. Work, education, health centers, hospitals, roads, traffic... When people are defining their own problems, the green areas are always secondary. Many things that replace nature are met with satisfaction; this could be a parking lot, this could be a road. We are thus at an impasse; we want to protect nature, but our behavior is moving in the opposite direction. But I believe that across Turkey, there is a tendency to see how things develop and to make plans afterwards, this appears to be a deeply embedded cultural code. Urban dwellers are not able to sustain their living standards, they cannot prevent this and as time goes by, they start seeking alternatives. When this is the situation, our capacity to fight for the green areas, for nature, is vastly diminished.

Birds are a part of city life—how do they adapt to the transformation of their habitats, human interventions or construction materials shifting from the natural to the artificial?

K.A.B.: Those who are able to adapt continue to live, those who cannot die off. Along with the concretization of the city especially in Istanbul, a special bird fauna emerged. After fires and demolitions, the wood houses were replaced by concrete. A good example are the doves. The type of dove that also exists in Izmir, which

We transform the ecosystem here; it becomes more appealing for some species while becoming more difficult survive in for others. For example, when there are fewer trees, the dove can no longer survive there, but the concrete is good for the little doves and their numbers go up. The dove cannot survive under the crow pressure, but the little dove can.

they called “dragonfly”, was local to here, a gray dove; among foreign species, it is called the Turkish dove. But now, there are no more doves in Istanbul, there is another type of dove, the emperor had brought them from Tunisia to the palace, a small, red dove with a different chirp. This dove is not local to Istanbul, but what is interesting is that it is now very widespread in Istanbul, because it likes concrete. It is an African animal. As a species, its natural habitat in Turkey is the south east and in particular, Urfa. But the birds in the South East prefer the deep valleys like those in Birecik, the rocky corners and stone buildings in the region.



Little dove. **Source:** Kerem Ali Boyla.

When their habitats became urbanized, they discovered concrete and started spreading in the city. Jumping from city to city, from Adana to Mersin, from Central to Eastern Anatolia, the doves are now widespread. They are discovering all of Turkey; a small dove was seen for the first time in Ayvalık a week ago. There will be small doves everywhere soon enough. This is why they adjusted to Istanbul better.

We are differentiating the ecosystem here and we are creating circumstances that are more difficult for some or less difficult for others. For example, when there are fewer trees, there are fewer doves, but more small doves. The dove cannot survive with the number of crows, but the small dove can. The smaller dove is bolder; they build their nests behind a sign on the inner side of a building, preventing the crow from eating their offspring or their eggs. The life habits of the small dove give them an edge.

There is a dense population of the Alpine swift in Istanbul; they are often mistaken for a swallow (there are no swallows in the city, all the birds who nest around İstiklal Avenue are Alpine swifts).

We can talk about animal lovers as a secondary effect because they determine a lot of things about bird life. But most of the time the effect of the animal lovers is unfortunately negative. The purpose of an animal lover in feeding animals is to raise the standard of living for cats and dogs, to ensure that they are healthy and full. When we take into consideration

the population ecology, feeding means population increase. And all of these populations have an upper crust that has access to resources and then there is the suffering population. This suffering population is rapidly eliminated, as is the case in nature. The individuals who are not genetically strong, those who are ill, those who do not have access to resources or those who are unlucky. Feeding means to increase the population. The cat and dog population on the street in Istanbul is very high and I'm not saying that this should change. But as a result, it becomes very difficult for animals to survive in the parks. For example, there are no squirrels left in some parks. The Boğaziçi University campus used to have squirrels, now they don't. Ouzels, robins, finches, bird species that like wondering on the ground, no longer exist on the islands. There are only titmouses, sparrows, starlings, pigeons and crows, because the density of cats is too high. There are cats even on the remote parts of the island. There are very few birds in Yıldız Park. This is again related to the high density of cat and dog food and the increase in the crow population. The populations of crows are very high, ranging from Kadıköy to Bostancı to Pendik. The crow doesn't let any other birds survive. The number of crows is very high because of the human presence. Cat food is a high protein food and it makes a huge difference for the chances of an animal to survive. Even the unhealthiest crow survives in Istanbul. The crow population is very close to a saturation point in Istanbul.

Another impact is the "disturbance" effect. This is a technical term. It is very common in our country. One of the things I noticed when I traveled abroad was that animals were very warm, very friendly. There are lakes here, ponds, urban/park ponds, larger wetlands, but no ducks in the small ones. The ducks don't go there, even if they go, they don't stay, because the ducks are disturbed. Natural ducks are not able to wander around in Turkey, but in other countries, they mix with people, they eat out of people's hands. The only exception to this is Gölbaşı in Ankara. There are coots and red-crested pochards there. The red-crested pochard is a spectacular duck with a red head. Maybe it is one of the most beautiful ducks in Turkey. People in Gölbaşı feed them, because at Gölbaşı, the Mogan Lake has become very urbanized and nature has become part of the city, people and nature got to know each other.

How are birds, migration routes taken into account when undertaking major projects such as airports, highways, wind power plants, or when the environmental impact assessment (EIA) for these projects are being written?

K.A.B.: There is a highway project I'm working on, there is an EIA process related to this, after the process of EIA, a biodiversity action plan is created. But at the very beginning, even before the start of the EIA process, the ministries agree on a route where natural habitats and birds are affected the least. Because everyone has their own jurisdiction and one does not want to involve another in their jurisdiction. This motorway goes through a lot of agricultural terrain and areas that are outside of the protection zones, this applies to the geography too. I see this happen elsewhere too.

In fact, the EIA should be perceived as a document of consensus building. The EIA is perceived as "EIA positive" or "EIA negative". There may be some aspects that can have negative impacts on the project, but this negative impact can be reduced or even eliminated. This requires a good adaptive management. For example, when the road is built, water can accumulate on one side of the road, and in fact an arid ecosystem can be destroyed under water, but there is a solution, a pump, a drainage system, a channel can be built etc. In

order to eliminate the damage, it may be necessary to take a precaution, to cover the electricity cost of a pump. As long as such costs are met, ecological damage could be minimized. The EIA should be seen as a process where impacts are uncovered and recorded on paper. But EIA is very problematic in Turkey. I do not have specific research on this, but according to my knowledge, only 5 thousand of the 55 thousand projects that have initiated the EIA process have completed preparing the EIA report and the other projects have foregone the process. There is no EIA for every project in the world, but these processes are not transparent. Up to 2018, about 40 of the 5 thousand projects subject to the EIA process have resulted in a negative result, most likely due to procedural reasons related to paragraphs, titles, templates. So our EIA score sheet is pretty bad. EIA firms we are working with ask: "Are we going to do an EIA or are we going to do an international EIA?" An international EIA involves international financial resources; when Turkey's own resources are not enough, international resources come into play. This practice was launched after a highway project going through the Brazilian Amazon forests that the Deutsche Bank financed back in the day had a huge impact on the environment, which they realized only too late and a decision to be more meticulous was made. There are also investors who try to minimize the consequences of a project.

What is the impact of the wind power plants on the habitats of the birds?

K.A.B.: Wind farms are established all across the world now. There are two methods that would help decrease the impact of these power plants on the bird population: The first is to analyze the site before the construction and to make sure that the power plant is not built somewhere that would impact the birds too much. There are no wind power plants near national parks; for example, there are no power plants near the Manyas Lake or near where the pelicans live. There is a military runway right near it, which might have an impact. Although this area receives a lot of wind, the ministry does not give permission to build power plants here. Dalmatian pelicans and white pelicans are native to here and both of these species could be impacted by the wind power plants. There are

very few wind power plants in Istanbul; this is probably due to visual reasons as well as the real-estate value of the area being higher in value. It is important to be careful all across the migration route. For example, there are wind power plants around the Belen Pass in Antakya, which is a primary site for bird migration.

A lot of birds could be hitting the wind power plants, but it is very hard for us to know the extent. We do not know the damage; to find out, we would have to see how many birds died at the power plants. There are very few projects working towards identifying this damage, they are by no means enough. For the work to be done properly, it is not enough to only look, but also to be able to distinguish what is a bird and what is not; bird watchers are tested by putting bird-like objects underneath the tribunes, because it is not easy to find the carcasses of the birds in the field. So it is important to test the effectiveness of the observers. Furthermore, predator animals such as crows, foxes, dogs, and seagulls pick up the carcasses before an observer has had a chance to find them. And lastly, people working for the company hide the dead birds, they do not report them. We need to talk about what can be done in Turkey, we need to discuss what is possible. There are wind power plants all across Germany, but they watch everything very carefully. I think one of the best solutions is to have the wind power plants to be closed depending on the circumstances, when a bird watcher notifies them. This is very possible. In comparison to the money earned and the electricity produced, the costs of such an enterprise is very low. This would be very difficult in Turkey, but the process needs to be pushed and improved in Turkey.

How do mega projects threaten the lives of birds in Istanbul? How are their habitats impacted?

K.A.B.: The numbers of birds have diminished both inside and outside of the city, there are people everywhere, people use cars to go everywhere, there are fishermen all over the place, roads are all over the place, it is a dream to find an empty lot, a beach. It appears that more and more plots are used for construction; what used to be a meadow now becomes a project site, it is sold, little huts become a hobby house, a casino, a restaurant, nobody is left to their own devices. We

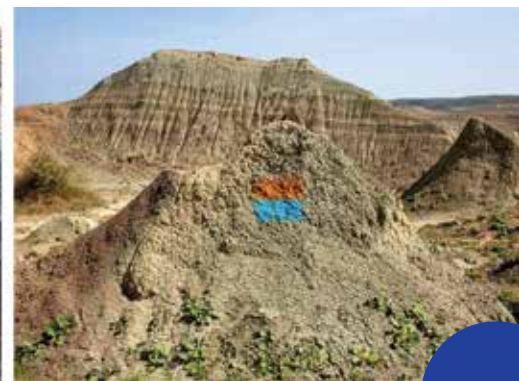
In general, there is a diminished number of birds, but this is only a natural result—these are the circumstances all across the world. If we see five species on a lake where there were 40 species before, if we only see mallards and grey herons, this lake is no different from a city park. The return of these animals depends on our decision-making; if we make a decision in this direction in Istanbul, the birds will come back.

are not able to see the birds we used to see. In general, there is a diminished number of birds, but this is only a natural result—these are the circumstances all across the world. If we see five species on a lake where there were 40 species before, if we only see mallards and grey herons, this lake is no different from a city park. The return of these animals depends on our decision-making; if we make a decision in this direction in Istanbul, the birds will come back. We can plant trees, we can use fences to create areas for the birds to live undisturbed, we can even use pumps to keep up the water levels so that they could live comfortably etc. There are many methods. What I care about is first to document what was here, to document the culture.

I looked at the satellite images of the northern forests in Istanbul, we see spots of quarries, debris disposal sites, like spots due to a skin condition, opening up the forested area. This is not a good direction to be going in. What remain behind are only certain areas. How are we to become one with those areas? We are talking about protecting areas that we have not been to, that we have not even seen, this is not possible. The true owners of the northern forests at the moment are the trucks. They are either going to a mine or to a sand field. We can't even go in because they drive like crazy. The Belgrade Forest is used for bird watching for example, that is really great, people are connected to that site. We need to find a solution. 🌿

BETWEEN TWO SEAS

Between Two Seas is a form of artistic action inspired by the Gezi Resistance, which interrogates the relationship between the city and nature through notions of the right to the city and the longing for nature. Bringing up questions positioned at the intersection of social sciences, politics and art, the creator of the route, Serkan Taycan, sums up this collective experience in its five years.



Photos: Serkan Taycan

Between Two Seas is a walking route. Its total length is 62 km. The route is situated west of Istanbul, between the Black Sea and the Marmara Sea. It starts on the periphery of the city and approaches the center. Going through forests, rural areas, and water collection basins, it arrives at the center of the city. The itinerary goes through lignite quarries, the third airport and its surrounding areas, the Northern Marmara high-way and its network of roads, excavation debris sites, industrial and social housing projects, where the city's transformation and growth with a disregard for ecological and social balances, can be observed first-hand. Also on the route are the Yarımburgaz Cave, the oldest human settlement in the city, and sites of cultural and historical texture including the urban gardens.

Our world is undergoing massive ecological and social transformations. The global competition grows in parallel to this, pointing to an increasingly hardened political polarization. Urban spaces are the most visible sites of this competition. In particular, developing countries instigate ambitious projects to polish their big cities in this competition.

Most of these projects are realized with top-down approaches, without paying enough attention to the projects' local impact. Within this framework, alternative strategies and projects that aim to minimize the environmental impact and which prioritize sustainability, have limited access to get their voices heard. The artistic action by definition has the potential to push boundaries, patterns, and rules. Concepts can be reinterpreted within new frameworks and gain new functionalities; new encounters and new relationships can

The artistic action by definition has the potential to push boundaries, patterns, rules. Concepts can be reinterpreted within new frameworks and gain new functionalities; new encounters and new relationships can be created.

be created. What kind of contributions could art make concerning urban-focused social issues? What kind of a discussion platform could artistic action become in social processes, specifically about civil rights? How could we raise our awareness of the problem? How could people be drawn into these discussions? How could discussions be facilitated? In this article, *Between Two Seas*, which started as an art project, will be discussed within the framework provided by these questions; I aim to exemplify how artistic action can play a role in social processes.

The foundations of *Between Two Seas*

Between Two Seas is a proposal and an invitation. It is a participatory and activist project that aims to create opportunities to defend urban rights and to be included in public decision-making processes. The route looks at the western periphery of Istanbul to research these possibilities. It proposes that the section between the two seas is a site that facilitates the comprehension of urban transformation. The route aims to create opportunities to observe on-site the impact of the change in the natural and constructed



environment that has been realized, and that is currently being realized here. It aims to record tangible and abstract values and to create opportunities to discuss the preservation and development of these values.

The route was first created as an art project that was exhibited at the 13th Istanbul Biennial in the September 2013, right after the Gezi Protests. I was supported by many people in the process of creating and researching for the route. Jean-François Pérouse, who is an expert on Istanbul, was my advisor and he also helped me write the text for the guide. Didem Ateş Mendi designed the map. Kate Clow and Hüseyin Eryurt from Cultural Routes Association contributed to drawing the route.

To better understand the context of the route, it is essential to look more closely at the transformation that Istanbul has gone through in the last fifteen years. Istanbul's population has increased dramatically since 1950, going up to 18 million from 1 million. This increase is mainly due to migration within the country, triggering a significant transformation in the city's areas of inhabitation; the city's limits reached Izmit on the east and Tekirdağ on the west. The construction of two different bridges on the Bosphorus shifted the city's axis from the south to the north.

The implementation of the construction-focused economic development program of the government meant a remarkable increase in the construction of housing, bringing about an era when urban transformation projects in different neighborhoods and large-scale construction investments were announced one after the other, making headlines all the time. Specifically the years 2010-2013 were marked by an increase when Istanbul was selected as the "2010 European Cultural Capital", the construction craze appeared to grow as Istanbul became a global city. The projects realized at this time did not have strong foundations in the efficient use of public resources and democratic participation, bringing up many issues and discussions.

Between 2013 to today, the 3rd Bridge, Northern Marmara High-Way connection roads, and the third airport have been constructed in the northern part of our city.¹ These projects pose an important threat to the forests and wetlands, which are of critical importance for Istanbul's ecosystem. The accessibility brought about by the construction of roads for different modes of transportation will open up these areas to residential construction very soon.

The transformation taking place around Istanbul affects the lives of people living

Istanbulites wanted to see and understand these changes, which were and are being realized without their knowledge; they wanted to see and understand these changes on site. However, before the details of these projects were never shared with the public, the constructions started without discussing their environmental and social impacts.

in the city directly; their environmental and economic impacts can be observed and the inhabitants of the city became increasingly aware of these effects. This awareness emerged mostly through the urban rights movements that took place throughout the city. The realization of large-scale construction projects without paying attention to the public opinion was also an essential factor of this. Istanbulites wanted to see and understand these changes, which were and are being realized without consulting





them; their lives would be deeply affected by the changes even though the projects were physically removed from the center of the city. However, the details of these projects were never shared with the public and their construction started without discussing the environmental and social impacts. There was not enough flow of reliable information through the media. The participation of the urban dwellers in decision-making processes is not encouraged and the debates raised on these issues have been seen as the voices to be suppressed, which prevented the projects' progress. The reaction to the top-down policies and people's becoming more aware of their rights paved the way for Gezi. The concept and demand for the right to the city became even more critical during and after the Gezi Resistance. Participation was one of the most important arguments in the Gezi movement.

Also, all over the world, urbanites are increasingly demanding to be in nature more. They are trying to relieve the longing for the green areas lost in the city by spending time in nature. But within the city, they are less and less likely to do so. They are also aware that the city is the ultimate living space. Therefore, they are looking for formulas to develop a healthy life in the city. These two impulses after the Gezi movement, which we can summarize as the right to the city and the longing for nature became the main starting points of the *Between Two Seas*. *Between Two Seas* emerged from the question of asking what kind of new perspectives can be gained by opening up urban notions through walking, which would respond to these actions.

At this point, I would like to open up the concepts of walking routes and walking on the urban periphery.

Walking

Walking on two feet is one of the characteristics of being a human. It is widely accepted that one of the most important phases of the evolution was

gaining the ability to walk. Walking is a bodily activity that is critical for a healthy and creative life. Walking can be defined as a resistance method that opposes the world's increasingly fast-paced rhythm as it is an experience determined by the person walking. Furthermore, it is an activity that facilitates thinking. Many philosophers see walking as a part of their practice. Walking also holds a crucial place in the history of religions and the formation of nations. The "Salt Walk" led by Gandhi in 1930 is an example of civilian disobedience against the colonialist rule of Britain. The long walk of the Communist Party's Red Army in 1934-1935 has led Mao Zedong to power. In other words, it is possible to say that the two most crowded states have been founded through long walks. The first act of the struggle for rights is to walk. In 1913, women in the USA organized the "Suffrage Parade" for gender equality and the right to vote, walking to Washington to have their voices heard. African-Americans organized the "March on Washington" with demands for equal economic and social rights in 1963, led by Martin Luther King.

Walking is also a critical method for experiencing the modern city. In the second half of the nineteenth century, the *flâneur*, who observes Paris through walking in the city destroyed and rebuilt by Baron Haussmann, the city planner of Napoleon, emerges as a new figure in the modern city. The revolutionary Situationist International group, which was influential in Paris in the 1960s, developed the approach of psycho-geography; they pointed to the importance of walking in urban spaces with an emphasis on drifting and random encounters in urban spaces. The Rome-based art collective Stalker continues to walk the city's peripheries, forgotten, abandoned areas since the

mid-1990s. They try to understand the transformations by accepting these areas as a research space or as a laboratory. Permanent walking routes have been designed with similar approaches on the boundaries of different cities. The GR2013, prepared by a group of artists when Marseilles was European Capital of Culture in 2013, is an important example. In Istanbul, Sinan Logie and Yoann Morvan gathered their spatial research of walking in different parts of the city in a book.²

Walking route

Today, there is an increasing interest in walking and thus walking routes. Long walks on predetermined routes allow people to meet their surroundings without intermediaries. The route is the facilitator of this active initiative. In this way, it enables participants to get to know facts more closely, to observe, to become witnesses, to be involved in the transformation process. A walk done in a group brings a sense of solidarity and becomes a workshop. Let's also not forget that the word "yoldaş" in Turkish [comrade-literally translated as those sharing a path] point to the action of "walking together".

There are widely accepted universal criteria for walking routes. Routes vary in length, ranging from several hours of walking to a few months; they are usually designed by a person or a group. There is an identity and a guide-map for each route. These maps are accompanied by a guide text that provides information on the urban, geographical, historical, and current situation of the places on the route. Routes pass through rural paths, empty fields, and pastures between fields, and public spaces such as sidewalks in the city. The followed route is marked on the land, and the goal is for those who do not know the terrain well to be able to easily walk with the help

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İki Deniz Arası Between Two Seas

of the guide-map and the accompanying text, thus facilitating their experience.

Istanbul's periphery and its state today

The peripheries are important places for better understanding the city and foreseeing its future. The land on the edge of Istanbul is in continuous transformation; we can even talk about a landscape transformed entirely by human hand. Agricultural lands are still present but are rapidly decreasing in surface area. People in villages often earn their living from working in the city.

Being a villager in the traditional sense is disappearing. New buildings are being built constantly. As there are massive plots in the periphery on a scale that can no longer be found in the city, major construction projects are being realized. These plots are at the center of real estate speculations.

In the relationship established between Istanbulites and the periphery of the city, there is the sensibility that the center is exploiting the periphery. The periphery is also where the state and its checks and balances appear to be dissolving, which is why the periphery is the site for illegal construction activities. As nobody really sees themselves as an Istanbulite, they do not feel responsible to preserve the city's periphery. However, Istanbul has a unique natural environment as features of the Black Sea, and the Mediterranean are combined here. However, this is often disregarded by those who live in the city.

Between Two Seas and Canal Istanbul

There is a multi-dimensional relationship between the Canal Istanbul project and *Between Two Seas*. *Between Two Seas* was formed by transforming a potential path for the Canal into a walking route. I wanted there to be an activity that

was harmonious with nature to take a position against the destruction the Canal's construction would trigger. I aimed to create a platform where people could discuss the ambiguities of the Canal project, to bring up questions and for people to gain first-hand experiences.

The canal project was announced by the then Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2011 as an election promise. Before the specific announcement, it was stated to be under the rubric of a *Crazy Project*. According to the project, there was to be a 125 meters-wide, 45 meters-deep transportation canal on the West side of Istanbul, connecting the Marmara Sea and the Black Sea; the naval traffic on the Bosphorus would be transferred to here, diminishing the burden on the Bosphorus and this change would also generate income. In addition to the transportation function, the project was also announced as a construction project. The construction of a new city of 7.5 million parallel to the land on which the canal would be built was also a secondary goal of the project. Neither Tayyip Erdoğan's first statement nor the other statements made during the six years until January 2018 mentioned where the Canal would be. The route of the canal remains an unknown even to this.



In scientists' discussions of this project with an undetermined site, the potential ecological and social impact of the project was highlighted. As a result of the opening of the canal, an unpredictable transformation would occur in the ecosystems of the Marmara and Aegean seas. According to scientists, some of the multi-dimensional effects of the change are as follows: The Black Sea is connected to the outside only through the Marmara Sea and the two straits. The Black Sea is 40 cm higher than the Marmara Sea due to the low evaporation rate and the Danube, Dnieper, Dniester and Don rivers feeding it. Its salt density is less than that of the Marmara Sea, causing a strong surface current from the Black Sea to the Marmara Sea. There is also a bottom current to counterbalance this. It is a fragile ecosystem that has been formed in thousands of years and is unique to the Bosphorus. According to the scientists, building a canal parallel to the Bosphorus will change this delicate balance and turn Marmara into a dead sea.³

The Canal will also destroy the Sazlıdere reservoir and negatively impact the Terkos lake. These two water bodies are important freshwater sources of Istanbul. The Canal will also damage an important water collection site and a natural asset, the Küçükçekmece Lake.

It is also an unanswered question as to what will happen to the tons of excavation debris that will emerge from the construction of the Canal. It has been announced that three islands will be built on the shores of Marmara with this excavation material. It is clear that the transportation of this material from one end of the city to the other will hugely impact life.

Another important impact will be on underground water. The canal will turn Istanbul into an island, cutting the underground water that comes from Trachea.

The new city surrounding the current city will lead to a population increase of 7.5 million, exponentially adding to Istanbul's social problems.

Another effect of the Canal is the destruction of important archaeological sites that are on this itinerary. The

Yarımburgaz cave, which is the first inhabited place in Istanbul, is in the Altınşehir neighborhood of the Başakşehir county located on the Canal's planned route. Findings that can be traced to the Paleolithic Era reveal that Yarımburgaz is one of the oldest settlements within the borders of Turkey. Furthermore, the relationship between the Canal Istanbul Project and the Turkish Water Straits regulations that were determined by the Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits is still controversial. As the details of the project have not been revealed yet, the impact of the Canal is not clear.

The route of the *Between Two Seas* walk

The route consists of four stages of 15 kilometers that can each be walked in one day. Each stage begins in a village and ends at a point where public transport can be reached. The route starts at the Black Sea and is directed to the Marmara Sea, but can also be walked in reverse. If the beginning point is the Black Sea, one goes through the lignite quarries in Yeniköy, Baklalı, Dursunköy, Sazlıbosna, and Şamlar villages, agricultural lands, Sazlıdere creek bed, Sazlıdere water collection basin and forested area to arrive at the periphery of the city. From the Kocabayır hill that is located approximately in the middle of the route, the whole geography can be seen, from the Black Sea to the Marmara Sea. Then by walking over the Sazlıbosna dam, one arrives at the shantytowns around Altınşehir. Walking on the shore of the canal that connects the reservoir to the Küçükçekmece Lake, Yarımburgaz can be reached. From here, one goes through industrial plants and crosses the TEM freeway to arrive at the Küçükçekmece Lake. On the shores of the lake are urban gardens, which there are not too many examples of left in Istanbul. The route is between security-gated residential communities such as the Bosphorus City, which is on the shore of the lake, project housing and apartment buildings. It goes through the lagoon and islands where the lake merges with the sea and ends at the Marmara Sea. Because of these qualities, *Between Two Seas* can be seen as a walk about urbanization where the different stages of Istanbul's urbanization can be observed over the course of the route.

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Once the route was formed

When *Between Two Seas* was first exhibited as part of the 13th Istanbul Biennial, the goal was for people to pick up the map and join the group walks to walk the route. However, as the biennial withdrew from public spaces due to a curatorial decision, the walks could not be realized as part of the biennial. This led to the walks to be organized using social media and to spill over outside of the Biennial, becoming an entity independent of the Biennial. Social media thus became the mode of communication for the route.⁴ The group walks were organized throughout the biennial through this medium. Over the last five years, more than thirty walks were organized, 750 people walked together. People from different professions who were all sensitive to issues of the city and the environment participated. These walks also became day-long workshops where ideas were produced through discussions that lasted all day.

There has also been participants who came on their own or in small groups. There were independent participants from Singapore and Belgium. Students from Harvard University, Minnesota University, Bergen University, Swedish Royal Technical University, ENSA Paris-Malaquais Architecture School, Konstfack University, MEF University, and the International Architecture Students Meeting and their accompanying teachers walked the route, which served as an educational tool and as a research activity. Furthermore, as part of the Harmony with the City and Nature for the Children Istanbul project, the route was used by 90 children of the ages 10-12 and their teachers from the counties of Ümraniye and Kağıthane.

Various groups have been inspired by *Between Two Seas* and they have been organizing walks around Istanbul. One



of these is Hiking Istanbul, designing 25 different daily routes around the city and they have been walking on these routes. Some people ran on this route. Four ultra-marathon runners ran the whole distance as a one-day activity and shared their experiences on their social media accounts.

The guide map for *Between Two Seas* is available in certain bookshops in Istanbul.⁵ Furthermore, Atlas, which is a geography magazine, added the map to its special annual edition on Istanbul in 2013. This means fifty thousand copies were distributed. *Between Two Seas* also became part of the Association for Cultural Routes in Turkey. These developments meant that *Between Two Seas* went beyond the art context and became anonymous to such an extent that participants/walkers do not even remember that *Between Two Seas* started off as an art project, which is a positive development.

Conclusion

Between Two Seas gives us the opportunity to observe the multi-

dimensional effects of a possible future and to become part of the process. It is an attempt to connect the city's past, present, and future through walking. It physically relates this connection through opening up a bodily experience. This experience helps urban inhabitants perceive the space they are living in and to reconsider the relationship they have built with it. The route proposes to go from one sea to the other by walking rather than with construction machines, which is the form of transport that is most integrated with nature, leaving behind only the traces of the walking bodies. The departure point is the idea that as one walks, social history will become a larger part of their memory, that they will take ownership and keep record of that social history. As the people who participate in the walk increase, there will be a larger collective memory of the urban periphery. I collect the photographs, videos, sound records, drawings by the participants since the beginning of the project. By organizing these materials and making them available for others (it does not matter if the Canal is built or not), the

Between Two Seas gives us the opportunity to observe the multi-dimensional effects of a possible future and to become part of the process. It is an attempt to connect the city's past, present, and future through walking. It physically relates this connection through opening up a bodily experience.

transformation of this specific geography will have been recorded. Furthermore, the route is not positioned for or against the destruction triggered by the Canal Project; it only points draws attention to it. *Between Two Seas* aims to create a platform where all of these notions and ideas can be discussed.

Between Two Seas emerged as a project that set out with the goal of intervening, which was a notion that was highlighted by the Gezi resistance; people took ownership of the project with the impact of the resistance in mind. In other words, if Gezi had not happened, *Between Two Seas* would not have taken place.

There are still walks organized on the route. However, the first five kilometers of the route, starting with the Black Sea shore, is no longer walkable due to the construction of the third airport, which was instigated after the route was mapped out. As can be seen here, the construction of the channel will cause the destruction of the route as well as the valuable assets that the route was aiming to make visible. In this sense, walking this route and keeping it alive are acts of taking ownership of the city and the rights to the city, reminiscent of an act of civil disobedience. Through walking, potentials for a poetic resistance is sought after.

Hope to meet you at *Between Two Seas!*

¹ These large construction projects labeled "mega projects" have various tangible and symbolic purposes. Among the tangible goals are to create new jobs and income through construction-based economic developments and by creating new real estate demands in the market. The symbolic goals are to gain political strength and to make this strength more visible.

² Sinan Logie and Yoann Morvan, *Istanbul 2023*, (Istanbul, İletişim, 2017).

³ Cemal Saydam, "Kanal İstanbul'un Karadeniz'e Olası Etkileri," [The Possible Effects of Canal Istanbul on the Black Sea] *Kent Akademisi*, no. 8(2), (2015): 44-52.

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/ikidenizarasi>.

⁵ Bookshops that carry *Between Two Seas* are: Robinson Crusoe 389 (SALT Beyoğlu and Galata), FiL (Karaköy), torna (Kadıköy).

The Vintage Trend is Now Influencing Cooperatives: “We are looking for new ways of communicating”

There used to be cooperatives in the “Old Turkey” and what’s interesting is that they also exist in the “New Turkey.” As food cooperatives are on the rise, we bring together Life in Anatolia Cooperative and Kadıköy Consumption Cooperative, which formed in different neighborhoods, and a social psychologist, talking about the in and outs of the notions of healthy living, organic and food.



Kadıköy Consumption Cooperative

We meet at a table placed by volunteers at the door of the Kadıköy Consumption Cooperative, which opened in the November of 2016, for an interesting conversation. In order to create an impression of the discussions on cooperatives and also to understand where we were at and maybe to provoke a discussion, we brought together cooperatives from lower-income neighborhoods including Sarıgazi, Gazi, Gülsuyu as well as the Life in Anatolia Cooperative and the Kadıköy Consumption Cooperative, which was founded in the slightly more middle-class environment. This group comes together every once in a while, so in order to add another layer, we want to understand the social background of the rise of the healthy living discourse and our yearning for it from a social psychologist’s perspective. Psychologist Çağatay Çoker responds to our call.

Kadıköy Cooperative responds to our one-person call with a team of three to confirm their own plurality. We meet with Bahar Özgül, Özden Ovalı and Evrim Kalkan. Gökhan Geçgin, who is one of the founders of Life in Anatolia Cooperative, and Çağatay Çoker are also coming. Everybody will put aside the daily life of after work, we will start to talk about the everyday in the time remaining from the everyday. The Kadıköy group has prepared simit, olives, and tea for us and the discussion begins. The passion for healthy living, people who stop from the organic market for their children



Life in Anatolia Cooperative

and not for themselves, the shifting notions of the cooperatives, stories of participating and not participating in cooperatives, Çağatay's assertion that ideology now markets conflictlessness and a point of consensus among the cooperatives: We are looking for new ways to communicate. A semi-concealed discussion on the organization's philosophy will take place between Gökhan and Çağatay, also featured here, you'll feel it.

As the hours for our discussion was after work hours, people came by to shop at the Kadıköy Cooperative. It is possible to read this discussion as a section from a conversation among six people who come from different backgrounds, sitting at the door of a practice in flux.

Gökhan Geçgin (Life in Anatolia Cooperative): We filed our official application in 2003, but due to technical difficulties, we were legally established in 2004. We have branches at Okmeydanı Mahmut Şevket Paşa Neighborhood, Maltepe Güleusu Neighborhood, and Yavuz Selim and Başaran Neighborhoods in Sultanbeyli; we also have an initiative in Ankara Tuzluca'yır.

The first question during our initial discussions was this: In places where solidarity networks are dissipating, what kind of a tool could bring people together again? As the problems of the city grew over time, solutions can only be found when people come together. This

dissolution also affected the syndicates and rights organizations and people did not go after other tools of course. For example, the practices of providing financial help every three months, handing out coal, support for raising children have all been canceled. These initiatives were also undermined because the syndicate struggles were withering. This affected neighborhood life, people reached a point where they closed their doors to their neighbors, conversations among friends in the doorways decreased, the way of looking at urban life changed. The issue became how everybody could get their own deed and own rights to build on the land of their house. We started our discussions by thinking about finding a way to improve solidarity networks. At that moment, ecologic food and food sovereignty were not on the table. There was the New Life Cooperative in Ankara and it was about to be dissolved. They would come to a specific neighborhood every once in a while and they distributed. Of course cooperatives are much more common before 1980. My father worked on these things in the 80s, he brought in sugar and flour. There are still people who owe him money. It seemed possible when we thought about it. The official part was difficult, because we had to go to the department for cooperatives, but they no longer knew anything. It has been covered up, they did not know. There was the Foundation for Utilizing Female Labor, they helped us navigate the legal frameworks.

The problem of our neighborhood is not only of consumption and ecologic food, because this is not where the needs of the neighborhood emerge. Workers earning minimum wages live in the neighborhood. There are periods of time when there are not jobs available or they are between jobs. They're unemployed. They need to be able to buy food at more affordable rates.

At Okmeydanı, we tried to organize mass purchases from markets around the cooperative that were about to go bankrupt, but then we realized that this is just like running a grocery shop. In this case, we noticed that there was something strange. Then we tried to bring the product by ordering it and removing the intermediaries. In direct order, we informed the supplier in advance and received samples. We announced the date we agreed upon in advance and people came and picked up their things. Until then we did not need to store and stockpile, but today we cannot work as such because as the business evolves, as the number of buyers increased. We solved the transportation issue with TÜMTİS (All Carriage Workers Union) and they helped us.

The problem of our neighborhood is not only of consumption and ecologic food, because this is not where the needs of the neighborhood emerge. Workers who work for the textile and construction industries, earning minimum wages live in the neighborhood. There are periods of time when there are not jobs available or they are between jobs. They're unemployed. They need to be able to buy food at more affordable rates. They want the price of the market place outside of the market and they want the quality product. This is of course the natural desire. We have tried to respond from time to time to meet this need, but we have encountered the same problem of the producer. We were never able to buy the same quality product twice. Even when there was more Caferağa Solidarity, which is the beginning

point for the Kadıköy Cooperative, we were buying cheese from Ezine. We were buying two kilos of cheese for 7 liras and then suddenly the price became 35 liras. You cannot explain it to the local. This is why the need to self-organize emerged.

We can move from here to the Kadıköy Cooperative. Gökhan said it was after the Caferağa Solidarity. Taking your personal observations and participations as the foundation, how would you tell this story?

Özden Ovalı (Kadıköy Consumption Cooperative): I have been volunteering for almost a year and have been actively involved for the last six months. First I started by following the social media accounts and shopping. Once when I was shopping, I learned that they work on a voluntary basis and they can do a better job if they had more people. I attended the introductory meeting, then I was trained and started as a volunteer in the cooperative. As far as I know at the beginning, they emerged from the communities that emerged from the neighborhood forums after the Gezi Resistance. İlkın BÜKOOP (Boğaziçi Members Consumption Cooperative) meets with Life in Anatolia and they reunite with the idea that a shop can be opened a year later. First the packaging work is done, orders are collected and products are brought. These are all BÜKOOP and Çiftçi-Sen approved products. The store opened in November 2016.

Were you organized before the cooperative and how did your paths cross?

Ö.O.: I had never been part of a movement other than Gezi, I never worked in a collective. I want to know where my food came from, I want to even know the name of the producer. Yes I do not know the answers to basic questions: I eat chickpeas, but I don't know when, how and in which geography chickpeas grow. The cooperative made me feel that it brought together a lot of people with different life experiences and it was based on fundamental need, I was very excited. This is an experience that I thought would be a good place to start.

Bahar Özgül: I'm actually a physiotherapist, but I work in a school. My interest was born in a similar way. Everybody has a turning point. When I had health problems, I started to

question what I ate. It's a problem that many urban dwellers experience. We do not know anything about the processes of any product. People can produce, but this ability is lost in urban dwellers unfortunately. I started thinking about seeds while these thoughts were going through my mind. Heritage, hybrids, GMO... I started to do balcony gardening, I started to question the products sold in markets and that the markets imposed on me, I started to think about alternative ways. I tried to get in touch with the producers but it was difficult, so I started to learn about food communities and cooperatives. I encountered the Kadıköy Cooperative. When I read their five basic principles, all our ideas seemed to overlap. I came and met, observed, and got involved.

Evrım Kalkan: I'm a marine biologist. The meeting with the cooperative coincides with the period of studying and studying at BÜKOOP. I noticed them and said, "When we were children, there were cooperatives." Although I was not a part of it, I was following the Gezi movement, the involvement of the cooperatives, I followed the process. In terms of organization, I have been in solidarity movements from time to time as much as life allowed me to. I had only one thing in mind; solidarity is a good thing especially in this geography. Then the food is inevitable. As I read about it more, I realized how political it was. There are huge problems like the climate change. I always think of biodiversity and the oceans, I said that there is also food here, and I realized that there is the Kadıköy Cooperative near me. I thought I could come in and get involved, I thought the time had come and I said, "I want to join you." I'm still new.

There are such initiatives in many neighborhoods, right?

G.G.: There are a large number of initiatives and food communities, and politics has now obviously discovered food communities. There is Koşuyolu, Beşiktaş, Şişli, Ovacık Cooperatives. There are cooperatives in Izmir, there are trying to open one in Ankara Kızılay. Mersin and Adana. They tried to do it through the associations in Sarıgazi but it didn't work. There are also some communities that are opposed to cooperatives, but they want to remain small. This is not very sustainable though.

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Çağatay Çoker: What do you mean by not sustainable?

G.G.: There are advantages and disadvantages of institutionalization. First of all, what feels familiar is the institutional. The producer as well as legal obligations push you towards institutionalization. For example, in Tokat and in Sivas, people harvest their products, they find an intermediary and they collect their products on a certain date. This is a cooperative working method actually. Or it existed as such until the 2000s; they would buy the largest size detergent available and because of the cost of packaging, the largest one would end up being cheaper. For example, they would share 30 kilos of detergent. Or when they were making tomato paste, they would buy the tomatoes together. This stems from experience, but there are associated difficulties. The first is the legal difficulty, the treasury inspects these things. And now you know you can't even farm heritage seeds in your garden. There was a woman who did this and she was in the news in the summer, because they intervened, this is what is dictated by food policies. The situation we are in today, the seeds with GDO and many illnesses stem from this. The Slow Food movement is trying to resolve this issue by slow consumption. But this is a political issue and the producer and the consumer need to self-organize. The producer needs the consumer to produce well and the consumer needs to build a relationship with the producer. The system is created by the intermediaries. The intermediaries make profit. They buy the apple for 80 cents and it reaches you for 4 liras. The ones in between appear to have a different attitude. It is very important for this to move on to a legitimate ground and even make progress there. So even though it is more difficult, we started this process as an

institution. We wanted to make it clear what the entity was. Nobody is trusting any more and everything is marketed as natural. Natural became a brand.

E.K.: Nobody can decide for us and tell us what's healthy and what should be consumed. Everything begins with this kind of awareness. It is important to become legally recognized: When the consumer asks you where something is from, it is not something that they can just trust by saying they trust you.

Ç.Ç.: The main problem with what you are saying appears to be this: the producer and the consumer are always spoken as being separate. I will give an absurd example, we think of music as a way of being, something that brings the body and the mind together and you have been speaking about something similar. We do not know how chickpeas are produced, but we eat it as is. It is interesting that we aestheticize our food and this is what happens at a table, we put the plates and the forks next to each other. There seems to be reason behind our aestheticization. If we are trying to make something look beautiful, there is a side to it that we are trying to hide. When we are eating an animal for example—I'm not a vegan, but I can understand the logic—when we see a chicken thigh, we do not think of it as a thigh. This is also related to middle-class values. We use forks when we are eating, the oils squirting when we bite into it bother us — this is actually alienation. Being alienated from the soil. What we are hiding even from ourselves we are not only disgusted by what we

are eating, but we are disgusted by our own killing. The whole industry steals the act of killing from us. As the middle class, we forbid the act of killing and it is disgusting for us, we design ourselves as if there is no violence, but that is not the case. I'm not saying that the root of the human being is intertwined with killing, but I'm saying that we are making it ugly by creating a value out of it. We try to hide it and aestheticize it. There is another othering relationship here that we try to disregard on two levels. There is the thing I was saying about music; if the relationship of the musician and their audience—the producer and the consumer—is separated, it becomes completely separate entities. Or think about pornography. There is the realization of pornography, realizing the scenes, working on it and there is a consumer. The consumer does not own the act of sex, they cannot realize it. It is similar to the story of the chickpea. The one realizing the action is never able to realize the action itself. Because what is being done there is a scene-by-scene action, a form of deception. Thus, both sides of the thing are removed from reality. So existence never really happens, it becomes an absence.

G.G.: The notion of food being political is also related to this. We cannot resolve the issues stemming from the cooperative system, of course.

Ç.Ç.: On the contrary, I don't see this as not being able to resolve it; when you are establishing an alternative and when you think about the general health discourse, you are establishing an alternative to

that discourse. This does not have to be through an argument of “the producer-consumer will no longer exist”. This is not where I was criticizing you.

I understand this as a comment on their having formed an alternative, of having created a new reality.

G.G.: The alternative that we were able to form could also be the solvable part of the issue. By taking a lesson from a situation, as people who eat this tomato, we form a direct relationship with the producer without the intermediaries. The reason we cannot access it is because of the intermediaries and the system that taxes it to such an extent that many products are important and feeling alienated. It is similar to how construction workers who build buildings cannot live in them; they can only look from far away. But we can resolve a lot of problems from where we are standing. Because the things that happen have tangible consequences. The oncology section of the hospital is full of patients, little kids are walking around with masks. In the past, when you asked the question of just how unhealthy food could be, there was no real response.

Then does seeing such a real, clear pictures agitate us, are we horrified, do we become involved? Is it difficult to be confronted? On the other hand, as the whole world moves towards cooperatives, another part of the world is full of detox recipes and healthy living coaches are kept very busy. Everybody is aware of how dirty the food is. It appears that we are pulling on the same toy from different sides of capitalism.

Feriköy organic market. **Source:** Buğday Association for Supporting Ecological Living.





Feriköy organic market. **Source:** Buğday Association for Supporting Ecological Living.

Ö.O.: For me, it's a bit about our consumption habits. The world I was born to was a place where I didn't know where anything came from. I haven't eaten meat for 4-5 years, but before that, I didn't even question it. The next generation of marketing about the detox world you're talking about is included in what I'm going to say. All of them are versions of consumption and they are madness. I have a very valuable experience in the cooperative; I visited a producer for the first time at a very random geography. I went to Niğde, which I could only do by taking my annual leave. With a friend, we visited the farm of the fruit producer. They are so beautiful and they are doing something that requires so much effort! They gave years to this work, they are very open to share, but they had to give their harvest to the intermediary for next to nothing. They want to work with cooperatives very much, but there are some unresolved issues. I now see how much labor costs and what price is paid for the product that is packaged and in front of me. Having this experience causes me to take a step back when entering the market. I always keep in mind the question of how much the producer puts in their pocket.

Does becoming a cooperative also take effort? It doesn't matter if it is the Gazi neighborhood or Kadıköy, we could say that it appeals to a limited

audience. Are we falling into the same trap as capitalism, or are we opening the door to a new world? Here we are establishing a new world for ourselves. For example, it is possible to feel this way at the organic market too. I had met a woman there, who couldn't buy for herself, but she was buying the organic vegetables and fruits only for her child.
Ç.Ç.: Maybe I'm going to go around this question without fully responding to it. What you are saying made me think of Žižek. The ideology of the modern world changed after the 1980s. They don't just sell us coffee anymore, we're being charged for third-generation coffee, and then we're loading up on that value. We're sitting in a cafe, not in any coffee shop. I'm trying to track myself and find it worthwhile. This is actually something that creates a rupture with creation, but Žižek talks about a second thing; formerly, ideology worked in this way, but now, as in your example, coffee is the result of a colonial thing, you don't give your labor, and they can't benefit from it; just as a construction worker couldn't sit in the apartment building they constructed. But we call the middle classes — I keep saying the middle class, but the middle class has a fundamental impact on these issues. Yes, I'm consuming coffee, but I actually consume coffee when young children die in poverty. Ideology is no longer marketed as a value, but what it actually sells to me is like this non-

Yes, I'm consuming coffee, but I actually consume coffee when young children die in poverty. Ideology is no longer marketed as a value, but what it actually sells to me is like this non-conflict.

conflict. When you buy from Starbucks coffee, they do something like, "We're sending 1 percent to Guatemalan kids." The coffee itself no longer cares about me, but rather takes the battle away from me. Or I'm buying my conflict. In fact, the boats carrying Syrians sank and they die, but the narrative is that they are shot, shot, they explode. There's an American company that does this. The German government itself operates an immigrant-friendly policy, and in Germany, you can see that people are immigrant friends. On the other hand, the German government hires this firm. A citizen is aware of this. We are aware of the results of our actions, but we just say thank you to this conflict. Just like in the same dish I can aestheticize and hide it, for example, in my plate. Your question includes this aspect; in fact, we are entering into a crisis as the middle classes and across the world our values are conflicting. Violence is not a good thing in the middle class. We live in contact even without the severity of



Bayramiç, Çanakkale. **Source:** Buğday Association for Supporting Ecological Living.

contact. Gökhan, as you say in the first place, for example, the weakening of the relations with your neighbors. We're fundamentally experiencing a lack of contact. This is a crisis for the middle-class. Harassment and rape are, of course, terrible things for us, but on the other hand, they produce the no contact condition. Government and states no longer need to hide their existing violence. That is why the Gezi resistance and the following period is a time when we all look for a number of answers, and therefore enter into different orientations and are hopeful in this sense. Because we are going back to practice and trying to break the contactlessness that is making us unhappy.

B.Ö.: Are we repeating ourselves by being curious or excited about healthy food? There's no real overlap here. I don't think there is an overlap between the luxury market in the organic market and the cooperative and alternative paths. We are in contact with the producer here and we are restoring the contact that was lost. If one produces a tomato from heritage seeds and if they cannot sell this produce, this kind of production will not take place again and traditional farming will be weakened. There is not one but many touches in the cooperative. We are on both consumer and producer sides. We help the producer realize how valuable their work is.

G.G.: Is what we're doing reproducing capitalism? It is not actually like that. If

you don't make the right connections, it could become that. This is called economism in political terminology. The healthy thing here is what Özden described as her own experience of meeting the Kadıköy Cooperative. If what we are doing helps for such people to emerge, then we'll say it's a good thing. Think of it, what was the defining quality of the 68 generation? Young people who had come to the big cities to study, whose families were members of the Justice Party first find out about the boycotts and then their issue becomes how education can be improved. When they go down to the field, they realize that this education is deemed worthy by some. Some people have constructed it like a turning lathe. The education system doesn't have the sharp and numerous delienations that it has today. For example, if somebody doesn't do well in school, they would go to a vocational school. They would do their military service, get married, and have kids. There is a middle-class story here too, the middle-class serves as a mediator. This is the class that prevents contradictions from being made visible.

Ç.Ç.: The issue is that it is the middle class discussing these issues. This is a paradox.

G.G.: What we are doing helps us come together with them. A white-collar worker who works at Vakko dresses "casually" because of the circumstances of their job, they feel that their kids have to go to certain schools. But we see that they make the same salary as

Cooperatives is a tool that was belittled in our society. Today, it has become a tool that has become profitable for some people. The feeling of trust was negatively impacted by some of the cooperatives in the 80s. There is a Cooperatives Day, which is attended by the Minister of Industry, you see people with briefcases, it is a mafia-like field.

a bus driver who lives in Gülsuyu. There are only spatial differentiations. They don't see the contradiction within the system. Those from the lower class says, "They eat this, I can't eat that, my child, you should study so that you don't do this menial work and so that you can eat what they are eating." But what do they eat? They eat everything that we eat. This is the issue of the packaging being different, which you had mentioned. What we are doing is to tell the producers that they don't have to live under these circumstances, that they could produce under better circumstances. We tell them that it is possible to get rid of the system that chains them to using chemical methods, to the 1 TL price. At the root of this is not only food but also health and education policies. As this center is pushed by people like Özden, there are more and more people who meet each other, whose horizons shift. The second issue is horizontal organization. We have this at the Kadıköy Cooperative, we call it a more transparent, inspectable management sensibility. A management sensibility in which problems are resolved together is the solution. The issue of participation is critical.

Ö.O.: Yes, for example, the Kadıköy Cooperative supports the ecology movement with what it does. This is social solidarity. It's not just a matter of food. I live in Kadıköy and I'm a white-collar worker who only goes to certain places. But now I was able to be aware of the experience of Gökhan in Okmeydanı. For me, social solidarity is important. Therefore, my answer to the question "Does it reproduce capitalism?" is not "no", but because of these points, it

seems that it will make it more difficult to “reproduce” it. Of course there will be occasions when it reproduces capitalism, but we are trying to make sure that that doesn’t happen.

Sharing experiences is important for such an organizational model, right?

E.K.: The issue here is not, “Let’s be very healthy, let’s live for a very long time, let’s not die.” We are trying to reach people who are only able to buy organic for their children as in the example you gave, telling them that the system doesn’t have to be like this. We tell them that this is only possible through solidarity and moving together. The issue is to find a means of communication.

Cooperatives are like finding a new way to communicate, right?

B.Ö.: Of course, at the root of cooperatives is cooperation, it comes from doing something together, coordinated. We do feel that we are doing something beyond healthy food. Since we have lost this, there are similar concerns today, similar uprisings, but they are not turned into action.

Ç.Ç.: You’re pointing out something very important. At the end of the day, we are all looking for happiness, this was something different at the end of the 80s, today we are looking for happiness. The problem is probably related to our own crisis. A children’s game is the state of being itself, we all played, we were all children. It’s important to remember that. We are aware of the game, yes, but we produce a kind of reality there. The same thing applies here. If I say, “I smell smoke,” we would all smell the air and notice something. We are moved to act, we create objects. We are able to create something where nothing existed before. We believe in the game itself and when we are playing, we do not notice it, we just play, we are convinced that it is over. We say, “It can end.” I think this is also related to being an adult: When we are adults, we play games again, but this time we suffer from a problem with the game ending. We start doing everything so that the game is not over, the classes that do not want the game to end intervene. For example, does everyone need to go to university these days? Why? To gain a kind of value, to avoid a sense of valuelessness. By constantly following the past or the future, a relationship of

following is sustained. What you have been talking about is also important, because the real issue is not the health discourse—I do find the health discourse very problematic—, but using the health discourse as a tool with which we can re-establish a game. Just like the games we played when we were children. A sort of spontaneity. It is a very good thing to watch and say, “Are we doing the right thing or the wrong thing? or saying “we cannot say if we are doing something good at this moment.” This means that we can exist within it, to be present.

G.G.: Cooperatives are actually quite old, there were many cooperatives until the 80s violently crushed them. For example, in Soviet Russia, they are just like any other connection. Community relationships always form through cooperatives. It is a tool that was belittled in our society. Today, it has become a tool that has become profitable for some people. The feeling of trust was negatively impacted by some of the cooperatives in the 80s. There is a Cooperatives Day, which is attended by the Minister of Industry, you see people with briefcases, it is a mafia-like area. But there is something meaningful in what we are doing, we are getting people to ask questions. We are saying, “There are people keeping you from eating good food!” Capitalism turns something into a need, then we see people who are addicted to sodas. People don’t comprehend the abstract notion of “Capitalism is repressing you, exploiting you, it produces your health policy, your education policy and you are re-creating it every day.” They understand it when we talk about why the tomatoes no longer smell the way they used to. This topic is like a wolf. If you can take it to the appropriate place, if the self-organized entities can go to the right place, they can begin to determine the policy.

The 80s coup was political, why did it hit cooperatives and associations? Because they were treated as a back yard by some and there was an involved relationship. The importance of cooperatives forming again is that a new and different kind of discussion of cooperatives is now possible. We are discussing it alongside horizontal organization. We made a fundamental decision when we founded the Life in Anatolia Cooperative: “The cooperative cannot accumulate capital.”

Our policy is to spend the money in our cash register to help found another tool of solidarity. Because Tansaş and Halk Ekmek used to be cooperatives. They grew so much that one day the board of directors emptied their account, buying the small shares of the partners and transforming it into a company. The situation is only meaningful when discussed within this framework and through looking at the health industry.

People do not know that what they are eating at BIM is not cheese. Somebody needs to tell them, but they do know that they are being poisoned. When we do surveys of consumption habits in our neighborhoods, we observed that people in Gülsuyu know that they are being poisoned, but they don’t know what’s poisoning them. They know that to make kashar cheese, they use potatoes or add expired products to their new products, but if we tell them the rest of the story and if we can get them to ask the question, “Why this administration?”, people can start to believe that another form of governance is possible. We are connecting the topic back to the local governments.

Ç.Ç.: I agree and I disagree. There is a television troll, his name is Korcan. He participates in marriage programs, competitions. Wherever he is, he acts in a way that does not fit in. I don’t watch Korcan, but I watch the viewers to see what their reactions are. I think it was on one of Zuhâl Topal’s programs when they told him, “This might be your mentality, but don’t ruin this setup.” You can see that some of the viewers are taking these marriage programs seriously, while others are aware that a game is being played. They tell Korcan, “This is our place and we are happy with things as they are.” Maybe they are happy in their short-term, poisonous relationship with the cheese. What if you showed them this reality? But we should also note that Korcan is able to stay in this setup and construct his own value system within that cycle they are experiencing. This is the point I agree with. We are showing that the ways in which relationships are established can be different and this is exactly where things are a bit troubling, because we start believing that what we show is close to reality; this is exactly where the problem with the health system discourse lies.

B.Ö.: We said there was a cyclicity. The consumer who is aware that they are being duped or that there are tricks involved also believe that the notion of the organic is also a lie. There is no trust left, consumers don't know what to eat. When we are shopping from the organic market, we know that organic pesticides were used. The system allows their use to a specific extent. The consumer buys knowing that not as much as pesticides as other products have been used, but they still don't have access to the kind of ecological production that they wanted. This is why we are trying to show a different picture through awareness. "There is a system based on trust, you can join us and then start to see it."

E.K. (to Çağatay) Are we destroying people's areas of trust?

Ç.Ç.: Yes. We are also saying that "we know there is a game here" and this is what's implied by spoiling the game. We used to call those who were bad at a game either spoilsports or hoaxes, we did not like the game to be interrupted. I'm of course not supporting the continuation of the systems as they are, but I find the role of the "expert" more problematic. It appears that we are speaking from the outside, removed from reality. Our experience is what forms there. We make contact, it is not directed towards teaching something, it is a unique experience when people come together. Maybe it is not necessary to code things as correct or incorrect?

Is the question then about the kind of hoaxing? After all, we enjoy hoaxing at times.

Ç.Ç.: Maybe.

G.G.: This was the question Seçil was asking: Such tools of relief, of facilitation exist within capitalism, right? What you are doing could also open up space for that. Perhaps you are opening up space for things in places where they were stuck. Çağatay, if we get to what you were talking about, saying that what we do ourselves will result in something similar, doesn't make sense for me. I said this at the beginning: this corresponds to economism politically. If we continue to do what we are doing, people will see the naked truth. The world of people waking up and changing does not exist, you cannot expect this and you are



Kadıköy Consumption Cooperative

inevitably involved. I don't want money to exist in this world, but could I reject it? You get on the subway with money, unfortunately. There will be people coming to the cooperative asking if they can provide good food for their children and there will also be people who want to shake awake the whole world. On the level of the cooperatives, both of these groups have to collaborate. One group needs more healthy food, while the other group needs to do more. I didn't imagine that we could be talking in front of a cooperative one day. Our vision was this: the people who actually need this live in Sarıgazi or in the Gazi neighborhood. I lived in Kadıköy for eight years, I went to Okmeydanı every day and it never occurred to me to do something here. It turns out everybody needs this kind of food. Was the working class part of Gezi? No. It was a movement emerging from people who needed more. They were saying, "Living space, spaces of breathing." It was an uprising saying that you had been smothering Okmeydanı and now you're smothering me. We realized at the Karaburun Science Congress where cooperatives from Koşuyolu, Kadıköy, Anatolia and many other places gathered, that everybody learned to say, "Food community cannot exist without cooperatives," and we learned to say "communes are acceptable." Everybody needs this and to achieve it, we need each other.

For example, we had never discussed the cooperative and we had vaguely said that the way it functions is democratic, but we saw that the Kadıköy Cooperative discusses this. For example, we are going to organize a meeting and the Kadıköy Cooperative will tell us about the grounds of these discussions. We don't fully subscribe to Spinoza's thinking, but even if information is not liberating, knowing something sometimes suffices to get people to move, when combined with physical circumstances. There is a serious need at the moment. The other day, there was a talk at the Tüm-Tokatlılar Association and they also invited us. They told us that they have been filming the harvesting rituals in Tokat and turning this footage into a documentary. Why this search? On the one hand, the circumstances dictate the situation, while on the other, Ovacık emerges like a star. It told us that another kind of local government is possible. If the district has a population of five thousand people, maybe four thousand are disturbed by the activities of the mayor, even if indirectly. But still, Ovacık shines like a star. We share the posts of the Ovacık Cooperative and hundreds of people like and share these posts.

Ö.O.: At this point, we could take ownership of the word spoilsport and continue to look through a different vantage point. ☺

LAND OCCUPATIONS AND LOCAL RESISTANCES IN TURKEY¹

With her fieldwork in the Göllüce village of İzmir as her point of departure, Begüm Özden Firat sheds light on an aspect of Turkey's 1968 that is not talked about much: land occupations in rural areas. She reads the occupations which she interprets as resistances against enclosures in conjunction with changes experienced in the rural economy starting from the 1950s, revealing the links between the urban student movement and the mass rural protest wave of the period.

Since the mid-2000s in Turkey, we have been witnessing the opening up of "common goods" in the countryside such as pastures, forests, waters and mountains; and areas under the status of "public real estate resources" in cities such as public lands, buildings and parks under public property, intracity forests and coasts to acquisition by capital through a series of administrative and legal regulations especially favoring the construction and energy sectors. This process constitutes an important aspect of the economic growth program envisaged by the capital accumulation regime adopted in order to overcome the 2000-2001 economic crisis; and the legal, bureaucratic and financial power of the state is mobilized along these lines in order to render this transformation possible.² Legitimized by the discourse of development and new rent distribution mechanisms, this new economic growth model leads to the displacement of a wide section of the population by upending the rural and urban topography and transforms forms of urban and rural spatial belonging by tearing up networks of spatial socialization. How to name this socio-spatial transformation which is not solely economic but which is realized through extra-economic mechanisms?

Words spoken in June 2013 by Ethem Sancak at a meeting organized with AKP businessmen by then Minister of Food, Agriculture and Livestock Mehdi Eker

provide an interesting idea regarding how the aforementioned process should be defined. Sancak spoke as follows:

The founders of this country 80 years ago have bridled this feedstuff issue. They were of a Sovietic intellection. And they ruined our pastures by declaring them the property of the entire people. Pastures are unenclosed and unmaintained because they are the property of the entire people. If something is a property of the entire people it does not get maintained because it is the property of the people. If something is the property of the entire people it gets plundered. Human history has shown this to be so. [...] Thank goodness our Minister of Agriculture carried out a great revolution last month. I think it is a silent revolution. And they passed the law that renders the pastures enclosable. I do not know how they managed this but it was a constitutional problem. But in the end, they did it. Now I am very hopeful. With this law in effect we shall cultivate our pastures – which are an even more important form of resource than oil – in cooperation. We shall transform them into wealth. As an agriculture volunteer, I am grateful to the Honorable Minister.³

The changes that Ethem Sancak defines as a silent revolution consist of

regulations geared towards the allotment of pastures – such as changing the renting conditions for private sector investors, the changing of allotment when declared as project area for urban transformation and development, or the construction of the 3rd Bosphorus Bridge. What is interesting is that Sancak's expressions have a splendid affinity with the literature on "improvement" which propounded that subjecting land, forests or waters which were under a regime of collective use in England to private property by "enclosure" between the 16th and 19th centuries would render these areas productive.⁴ On the other hand, while Sancak does not explicitly refer to Garret Hardin's "The Tragedy of the Commons" (1968) which has become the credo of the process based on the usurpation of the commons on a global scale since the 1970's that was to be coined "neoliberal enclosures", he claims similar to Hardin that the plunder that would be caused by the common use of commons such as pastures can only be prevented by their privatization through "enclosures."⁵

What is even more interesting about this is that in the period following the Gezi resistance when Sancak's talk was published, the concept of "enclosure" also entered the critical lexicon of the fields of critical social sciences and social movements. Conceptualizations such as "neoliberal enclosures" or "accumulation by dispossession" that



Public Meeting for Land Reform and Independence. Source: Demokrat İzmir, April 17, 1969.

were developed in reference to Marx's primitive accumulation thesis appeared in this period to be quite useful for in depth understanding of energy and construction centered capital accumulation processes.⁶ Similarly, the concepts of the commons and commoning practices provided a new perspective for understanding local resistances that emerged against the construction of hydroelectric and coal-fired power plants and investments in mines in the countryside, as well as the social opposition that arose against the threat of urban transformation faced by neighborhoods and the sale of public lands and properties in the cities. In place of the tragedy alluded to by Sancak with the words "human history has shown this to be so", social scientists and activists were presenting a different human history and a different present based

on principles like solidarity, sharing and democracy.

While the conceptual pair consisting of enclosure and the commons is used today to define a new and widespread stage in neoliberal capital accumulation processes, we can make out two distinct periods of enclosure of land in Turkey with spatial pervasiveness and periodic intensity that predates this period. The first is the period that began in the 19th century with regulations introduced over land like the 1847 Land Deed Charter and the 1858 Land Code that in the words of Yücel Terzibaşoğlu changed "both the content and the property definition of the regime of land tenure rights" at its root.⁷ This period which can be defined as the first "privatization wave" concerning land points to "an erosion of collective

rights of disposal over collectively used pastures, woods and common village properties."⁸ The second "enclosure operation" emerged in the 1950s with modernization in agriculture. The second wave did not rest on the administrative and legal regulations of the state that the first did, however it attained prevalence and intensity over the entire geography. In this period which we will dwell upon in this article, widescale developments and structural changes took place in the agricultural sector in terms of infrastructure and technology as a result of a large amount of foreign aid and credit (such as the Marshall Plan aids) that was transferred for the modernization of agriculture.⁹ One of the immediate results of this transformation was that landlords needed more land to cultivate and they piece by piece



Cumhuriyet, February 4, 1969.

usurped lands that belonged to the public which were often used in common by landless or marginally landed peasants. In opposition emerged the first and perhaps largest (and least discussed) peasant land occupation movement, or in the terminology used in this article, “anti-enclosure” resistances of modern Turkey.

The spirit of 68

In his article titled “The Heritage of 68” in *The Encyclopedia of Socialism and Social Struggles*, Ragıp Zarakolu states that “The boycott and occupation wave that covered all the universities of Turkey in the beginning of the summer of 1968 presented a new means of action and self-expression to other sections of society as well” and that starting with students; very diverse sections of society, “from workers to street peddlers, from peasants to petty bourgeois strata, from young women’s institutes to nurses” experienced a sentiment of “de facto rebellion” in various shapes and extensiveness.¹⁰ While Zarakolu says that the occupations began first in



Demokrat İzmir, February 3, 1969.

the universities, landless peasants had taken actions, some of which took the form of occupations since the 1950's against landlords who usurped public lands, before the “sentiment of de facto rebellion” had spread.¹¹ It is quite difficult to follow the trails of these struggles which often took the form of “silent resistance” in the terms of James C. Scott on various local levels in this period, because these struggles are not visible enough to enter the annals or be newsworthy.¹² Nevertheless we see that against the unemployment caused by mechanization in the 1950s, the peasants directed their rage at the machines. For example, Burak Gürel draws our attention to Yaşar Kemal's observations on the poor peasants in Çukurova:

Animosities come in various sorts too... One rips out and smashes the most vital part of a tractor, another ponders solutions to destroy all engines in Çukurova. One of these had thought long and hard for months, and had found the solution for full-scale destruction. Tossing emery powder into the engines of tractors. Naturally, he was never able to put this into practice. The animosity is born of landlessness. The landless gnash their teeth in the face of the tractor with such intensity...¹³

While Kemal recorded the rage of the Çukurova peasants, we can imagine that this sentiment was shared by landless peasants in all four corners of Turkey. For

this silent “groundswell” turned into a social movement with common demands, a form of organization and a repertoire of action along the political and social mobilization that began to rise in the 60s. Masis Kürkçügil says that between 1967 and 1971, peasants returned to history “as a subject themselves,” without the forcing of the state or tribe. Indeed, along with students and workers who rose up in big cities, “68” was also the movement of poor and landless peasants and small producers in the countryside who struggled with demands “for land against large landowners and for fair exchange against usurers-merchants and the state.”¹⁴

Land occupations became visible and widespread in 1967, when the crops of landless peasants who had tilled the lands left over from the flooding of the Avlan Lake were crushed by landlords with tractors at the Elmalı villages of Antalya.¹⁵ Groups from the Middle Eastern Technical University Socialist Thought Club and the Faculty of Political Sciences Student Association were the first to go to Elmalı for support. Secretary General of the CHP (Republican People’s Party) Bülent Ecevit followed in visiting the villages and uttered the phrase “the land to those who till it, the water to those who use it” which was to become the slogan of the land occupations, in Elmalı.¹⁶ The resistance of the Elmalı peasants became the symbolic beginning of the landless peasant struggles; the first steps of the form of action that was to become widespread, the political demands and the encounter between various political actors who were to organize around the struggle for land were taken here. The movement continued uninterrupted till the occupation that took place in March 1971 at the Pınarbaşı village of Maraş. The number of these land resistances reached 146 at the end of the year of 1970. According to the list provided by Cevat Geray, the number of land occupations that took place was 10 in 1967, 13 in 1968, 27 in 1969 and 96 in 1970.¹⁷

We must focus on changes in the agricultural and social structure in order to understand the emergence of land occupations in such diverse regions within the short period of time that is 1967-1971. If we do not do this, we cannot interpret the emergence of land occupations in the period of the 1960s which carried

With the effect of the rising political and social movements that arose in the 60s, the structural contradiction that emerged from the 1950s onwards with mechanization in agriculture led to a spontaneous peasant movement in Turkey the likes of which had never been seen before.

positive values in terms of agricultural production and the level of peasant welfare.¹⁸ An article by Sezgin Tüzün, who joined the 1967 Elmalı resistance which is considered to be the first land occupation of the period and who for some time conducted research in nearby villages, published in *Aydınlık* (1970) is informative in terms of understanding the objective conditions which necessitated the land occupations. Tüzün asserts that the land occupations in the Elmalı villages “developed as reflections of the development process (the capitalist transformation process) in social structure and in the agricultural structure in particular.”¹⁹ According to Tüzün, the structural basis that was to lead to land occupations began to emerge with the transformation of relations of production starting with mechanization in agriculture and especially with the introduction of the tractor and the combine harvester into production in the mid-1950s. Up until this period, agricultural production was based on “the production carried out as sharecropping by the landlord who held property over the land and the peasant who held possession.” “The introduction of the means of production of a new mode of production into production” since the 1950s reduced the demand for labor and increased the demand for land. The fact that employment opportunities in non-agricultural sectors were very limited prevented the landlord from expelling the peasants from their land in their entirety.²⁰ Therefore, conflict emerged between the peasant who could not detach from the land and who could not participate in production as a

sharecropper, and the landlord who had to quantitatively increase the land that he held. Landlords enterprised to cultivate the mostly unregistered public lands that the peasants had come to use since “time immemorial” by de facto passing them into their property, and the peasants tried to preclude this usurpation, sometimes through legal objection but mostly by attempting to arrest the sowing and by sabotaging the tractors.

With the effect of the rising political and social movements that arose in the 60s, the structural contradiction that emerged from the 1950s onwards with mechanization in agriculture led to a spontaneous peasant movement in Turkey the likes of which had never been seen before. Land occupations in this period were especially concentrated in the Aegean Region. This concentration, which can be thought in conjunction with the integration of the region with the global world market since the 19th century seems to have caused stupefaction in public opinion. Suat Aksoy for example writes that within the framework of the ongoing land reform debate in the 60s, those who could not oppose the reform directly defended the position that the reform ought to be applied “regionally”, and proposed that it should begin with “the Eastern region where landlordism is most dominant and where residual feudal relations reign.”²¹ According to Aksoy, “the Atalan and Göllüce events [in İzmir] [clearly] reveal how baseless these claims are.” For “our peasantry has as intense of a desire for land in the West as they do in the East.”²² In the news piece titled “Land Reform is Secretly Being Implemented in the Aegean Region”, the *Demokrat İzmir* newspaper announced the ongoing land occupations in the Aegean with “bewilderment”. In the news piece it is said that, “we have learned that a land reform has been silently taking place within the İzmir province since the May 27 Revolution onwards. The Belevi Lake near Selçuk has been drained a while ago and the lands that emerged following the draining have been divided up by the nearby peasants. The same has taken place during the draining of the Çakal lake in Selçuk; the peasants have seized and claimed these lands as well.”²³ Indeed, the peasant land occupations which were probably taking place in secret gained visibility following the resistance that emerged in 1969 against the enclosures

of public land by landlords first in the Atalan and later in the Göllüce villages in the Torbalı district of İzmir. The growth of the land occupations in these two villages, but especially the one in Göllüce can be comprehended in conjunction with the presence of a series of subjective conditions along with the structural conditions discussed above.

Occupation in Göllüce

Today, Göllüce is an Alevi village with a population of 614 in the Torbalı district of İzmir. In the income registry notebook of mid-19th century origin, Göllüce is described as a 37 household “farmstead turned village” with unstated proprietor.²⁴ Adnan Menderes’s grandfather Hacı Ali Paşa who immigrated to Tire towards the end of the 19th century passed the larger part of the land in the Göllüce area into his property. We are unable to know how Hacı Ali Paşa came to own these lands, however we do know that a process of enclosure based on usurpation of land was common in this period and that the establishment of private property on land was shaped by power relations at the local level.²⁵ By the 1960s, the Evliyazade Farmstead belonging to the granddaughter of Hacı Ali Paşa and Adnan Menderes’s aunt Mesude Evliyazade and her spouse Nejad Evliyazade of one of the famous merchant families of İzmir, had come to reside right next to the village. An ongoing land “tug of war” was in effect for years between Göllüce residents and Mesude Evliyazade whom the peasants referred to as “Landlady”. While the Evliyazades were asserting a claim to private property on the lands in question that they based on Ottoman land deeds, the peasants were making a claim to common possession based on ancient usufructuary right.²⁶ The Göllüce residents who had worked first as sharecroppers and then as hired hands during sowing

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and harvest seasons of wheat, cotton etc. on the Evliyazade Farmstead up until the 1940s, lost their sharecropper status upon the decrease in demand for labor in production due to the increase in productivity provided by the use of modern agricultural technologies on the Evliyazade Farmstead.²⁷ On the other hand, the Evliyazades who needed more land to sow began piece by piece to usurp the public lands that reached to the bank of the Küçük Menderes river which the peasants had come to use especially to graze their animals, gather edible weeds and fuel and to a limited extent do agriculture.

The completion of the cadastral survey conducted throughout the year of 1968 and the realization that the lands which Landlady had usurped were registered to her personal property created a turning point in the conflict between the actors. As Abdullah Aysu states, during cadastral surveying the landlords were officially transferring the public lands which they had usurped to their property, and the officials were calling this usurpation “land deed surplus.”²⁸ The first occupation against the usurpation of public land registered by cadaster in the region was undertaken on January 28, 1969 at the Atalan village neighboring Göllüce. Following the finalization of the cadastral

surveys in Göllüce on November 18, 1968, the “land deed surplus” lands were reported to the İzmir Land Registry Directorate by the Torbalı District Revenue Officer on December 13, 1968.²⁹ The announcement of cadastral surveys must have been seen as an opportunity to render visible the ongoing land disputes between the peasants and the landlords in the vibrant political atmosphere of the first months of 1969. Upon the Evliyazades commencing to till the land by the Küçük Menderes bank that belongs to the public, the peasants attempted to stop the tractors. Following this action, on February 2, they drove their animals into the pastures.

While our knowledge on the daily life of the occupation which lasted about three months is quite limited, we are able to find out in the newspaper articles that the peasants took their animals for grazing in the pasture by knocking down the barbwire that the Evliyazades had set up. We also see that in addition to grazing animals, the peasants jointly sowed the land that they captured as well. We understand that the lands which the peasants had sown were emptied out by force of the gendarmerie and that the lands were either sown again or that the lands that were sown were expanded.

Graffiti in Göllüce. **Photos:** Begüm Özden Fırat.



The occupation was supported by various political actors too. The CHP established the language by politicizing the demands of the occupation, the Federation of Thought Clubs played an important role in sustaining the form of action and organization. While the opinions and ideological orientations of the two organizations regarding the rural class structure and the strategy of class struggle differed, both groups espoused these occupations as fields that would affirm and strengthen their own politics. On the other hand, land reform was a common demand that united all peasants and political actors. As Kadir Dede asserts, the new Constitution was indeed a political agent concerning these occupations.³⁰ Peasants justified their occupations based on Article 37 of the Constitution which provided for peasants to be granted land; and the main point which revolutionary students and politicians based their solidarity on and made common their struggles was again the Constitution and the demand for land reform.

The occupation concluded in 1970 with 32 families acquiring ten decares of land each by means of lottery by the bank of Küçük Menderes. The lands were purchased by the state at the end of negotiations by local administration with a landlord and sold to the peasants who were placed in debt against Ziraat Bankası (Agricultural Bank) credit. This distribution at first led to a fading of the struggle and created an inequality in the village based on land ownership. This did not mean however that the dispute between the farmstead and the peasants ended. The case filed by the Torbalı Land Deed Directorate for the correction of the “land deed surplus” which emerged during the cadaster process concluded in 1974 and the lands which were registered to the name of Mesude Evliyazade were transferred to the State Treasury. The land that was registered to the personal property of the Evliyazades however resided between the public lands used as village and pasture. Therefore, the access of peasants to the pastures was this time prevented by legal confirmation. This situation caused the land conflict to acquire a sustained character. As far as we understand, through negotiations and conflicts with the family, part of the pastures de facto passed into the use of the peasants. According to the telling of the peasants, this use was determined

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through periodic negotiations with the farmstead owners. Therefore, through their daily usage, the peasants made common the pastures that were subject to private property.

In 2015 the Evliyazade Family sold the lands subject to dispute to Defne Tarım Hayvancılık Gıda Üretim ve Ticaret A.Ş. (Defne Agriculture and Animal Husbandry Food Production and Trade Inc.).³¹ Upon the corporation surrounding the pasture in question with fences, 30 young men from the village who named themselves “The Committee of National Unity” first took down the poles erected during the perimeter measurements, then reached the decision to move towards collective resistance through widely participated meetings in the village that they organized. The peasants took down the fences installed by the corporation and took their animals to grazing. As a response, accompanied by the gendarmerie, the corporation dug ditches in order to prevent the passage of animals

and humans. These ditches were refilled by women. After this struggle which lasted about a year, a plot of land that contained about 25 deedless households and sheepfolds which the corporation had purchased was bought by the Torbalı Municipality and the use of his area by the peasants was continued to be in a sense purposefully overlooked. Furthermore, the corporation opened an area within its own land which could be used by the peasants as passage way for taking their animals to grazing on public land pastures.

Concerning the present

While we cannot know how the dual movement between enclosure and commoning in Göllüce will proceed in the future, the struggle still continues today. The peasants are planning to form a production cooperative that will involve various fields of agricultural production, while also taking their animals to public land pastures by leading them silently between the fences on the pasture lands of the corporation and continue to gather weeds, snails and fuelwood off corporation land.

The Göllüce story appears as an exceptional case where we can trace, over various periods the movement of land enclosures and opposing commoning actions that try to subject the land to the common use of peasants. On the other hand, it shows that the resistances which emerge against the neoliberal enclosures of today in various localities must be read in conjunction with enclosure waves in the past and the dispossession and proletarianization dynamics they created.

Locality is not only a given physical place but at the same time a social space shaped in the context of power relations among various local actors in the past. Consequently, the trajectory of enclosures and counter-struggles today are often

Locality is not only a given physical place but at the same time a social space shaped in the context of power relations among various local actors in the past. Consequently, the trajectory of enclosures and counter-struggles today are often determined by various processes of dispossession in the past. Therefore, struggles also contain historical conflicts whose “present” have been rendered invisible but which have been inscribed in space.

determined by various processes of dispossession in the past. Therefore, struggles also contain historical conflicts whose “present” have been rendered invisible but which have been inscribed in space. Reading the local struggles of today in conjunction with struggles in the past not only deepens the analysis of social scientists but is also important in terms of developing political strategies.

Such a perspective also allows us to learn from the struggles of the past. Despite the fact that the social, political and economic context of enclosures and commoning actions which emerged in the form of land occupations which became visible in the 1960s differ from the enclosures of today, the achievements and failures of the struggles of the period can be instructive for ourselves. For example, Haydar Teker who was 17 years old at the time of the 1969 occupation, expresses the disappointment he carries regarding the resistance when he looks back and says “back then we made the revolution of this or that person, that is not, as you know, the real revolution”.³² Teker expresses that fragmented local and particular movements are destined to fail. On the other hand, Ertuğrul Kürkçü claims that while the support provided to the peasant actions by the revolutionary organizations of the period failed to establish an organizational connection between the rural and urban resistances, it succeeded in creating “a mood” and “invisible bonds and sympathies” shared between them.³³ Land occupations had indeed created a revolutionary and unyielding mood in the countryside. When the foundations for material social relations which can provide continuity to this mood are not created however, “invisible bonds and sympathies” wither away. For example, Teker expresses that the land sale which was made in 1970 by lottery method broke the resistance and identifies the biggest mistake of peasants as not developing a model to commonize agricultural production. In this manner, he stresses the importance of creating institutions for the common management of the defended common areas. As Teker insistently underlines, the answer to the question of “what is to be done” in terms of the struggles of today lies in creating the non-market and non-state institutions of the defended common areas that will operate with principles of solidarity, sharing and democracy.

¹ Previously published articles based on the research focused on here are: Begüm Özden Fırat, “Mülkiyet ve Müşterek: Göllüce’de Toprak Mücadelesi” [Ownership and commons: land struggle in Göllüce], *Toplum ve Bilim*, no. 142, (2017): 105-133; “Köylüler, Devrimciler, Toprak, İşgal: Bitmeyen ‘68” [Peasants, revolutionaries, land occupation: unending ‘68], in *İşyan, Devrim, Özgürlük: 50 Yıl Sonra 1968* [Revolt, revolution, freedom: 1968 50 years later], ed. Ömer Turan, (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, in press).

² Ümit Akçay and Ali Rıza Güngen, *Finansallaşma, Borç Krizi ve Çöküş: Küresel Kapitalizmin Geleceği* [Financialization, debt Crisis and downfall: the future of global capitalism] (İstanbul: Nota Bene, 2014).

³ <http://kiyamet-projesi.blogspot.nl/2013/06/tarim-bakani-ve-isadamlari-ses-kaydi.html>.

⁴ See E.P. Thompson, “Görenek, Hukuk ve Genel Haklar” [“Custom, Law and Common Right”], in *Avam ve Görenek* [Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture], trans. U. Kocabaşoğlu (İstanbul: Birikim Yayınları, 2006). Marx sees the process of enclosure, which he investigates under the rubric of “primitive accumulation,” as the precondition of capitalist accumulation because it commercializes labor and land. See Karl Marx, *Kapital Cilt: I, Ekonomi Politîğin Eleştirisi* [Capital, Volume I: Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy], trans. N. Satlığan and M. Selik (İstanbul: Yordam, 2011).

⁵ Garrett Hardin, “Müştereklerin Trajedisi” [The tragedy of the commons], in *Herkesin, Herkes İçin* [Everyone’s, for everyone], eds. B. Akbulut, F. Adaman, U. Kocagöz (İstanbul: Metis, 2017): 25-43.

⁶ Respectively, Midnight Notes Collective, “The New Enclosures,” *New Enclosures*, (New York: Autonomedia, 1990) and David Harvey, *Yeni Emperyalizm* [The New Imperialism], (İstanbul: Everest Yayınları, 2004).

⁷ Yücel Terzibaşoğlu, “Eleni Hatun’un Zeytin Bahçeleri: 19. yüzyılda Anadolu’da Mülkiyet Hakları Nasıl İnşa Edildi?” [Eleni Hatun’s olive gardens: how were property rights constructed in Anatolia in the 19th century?], *Tarih ve Toplum: Yeni Yaklaşımlar*, 4, (2006): 122.

⁸ Terzibaşoğlu, *ibid*, 129.

⁹ Burak Gürel, “Türkiye’de Kırsal Sınıf Mücadelelerinin Tarihsel Gelişimi” [The historical development of class struggles in rural Turkey], *Devrimci Marksizm*, no. 91, (2008).

¹⁰ Ragıp Zarakolu, “68’in Mirası” [The legacy of ‘68], in *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi* [The encyclopedia of socialism and social struggles], (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), 2098.

¹¹ See Abdullah Aysu, “Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Köylü Mücadeleleri” [Peasant struggles from the Ottoman period to today], in *Köylülükten sonra Tarım* [Agriculture after the peasantry], eds. A. Aysu and M.S. Kayaoğlu, (Ankara: Epos, 2014), 613-670; Fikret Babuş, *Devrim Havarileri: 68 Hareketinin Köy Eylemleri* [The apostles of revolution: peasant actions in the ‘68 movement], (İstanbul: Ozan Yayıncılık, 2011).

¹² James C. Scott, *Weapons Of The Weak Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, (New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1985).

¹³ Gürel, *ibid*, 96.

¹⁴ *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi* [The encyclopedia of socialism and social struggles], (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1988), 2136.

¹⁵ Babuş, *ibid*, 136.

¹⁶ Yavuz Yusuf, “Elmalı Ovasında Devrim Provası” [Revolution rehearsal in Elmalı Valley], 1 November 2009, <https://www.acikgazete.com/elmal-ovasinda-devrim-provas/>, (accessed 10 July 2018).

¹⁷ Cevat Geray, *Planlı Dönemde Köye Yönelik Çalışmalar: Sorunlar Yaklaşımlar Örgütlenmeler* [Efforts targeting the rural area during the planned period], (Ankara: Türkiye ve Orta Doğu Amme İdaresi Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1974), 366. According to the Encyclopedia of Socialism and Social Struggles, some of the land resistances that took place in the period of 1967-1971 are as follows: In February 1969, peasants declare parts of the land belonging to the landlords to be public land and till it in common in the Uzunburun village of Tokat and the Kortuna, Pancar and Kuşçuburun villages of Torbalı. Towards the end of April 1969, Karadibek peasants of the Oğuzeli district in Gaziantep seize three thousand decarees of landlord land, which were to be rented out to others. Peasants and the landlords’ men clash in the Çolaklı village of the Manavgat district in Antalya when the landlords wish to seize 350 decarees of land; the village is taken under control by gendarmerie commandoes and 13 peasants are arrested. In June 1969, Akyayla peasants of the Dursunbeyli district in Balıkesir occupy public lands. Muratoba peasants in Gemlik protest the nationalization of their already insufficient lands due to a dam construction, without an alternative spot being provided. Peasants are wounded by the landlords’ men when clashes erupt as a result of the peasants taking to arms and rising up against the landlords upon landlords repeatedly occupying lands belonging to peasants and the public in the Tekmen district and Malatya, Düzyurt,

Kelef, Hıdır, Çekaluk and Madralı villages of Erzurum. Peasants in the villages of the Polatlı district in Ankara also demonstrate and protest against large landowners buying the Karailyas village wholesale. In the Kırıkharmanı village however, landlord lands are seized. In September 1969, the people of the Değirmenköy village of Silivri occupy half of the public land which owners of the Esece farmstead had seized. The Varışlı peasants of the Reyhanlı district in Hatay meanwhile enter the public lands occupied by the landlord and sow. In 1970, Araplar peasants of the Besni district in Adıyaman seize landlord lands. Irmakbaşı Kilise and Küçükaldırım peasants in Adana commence a struggle against landlords. In May, Olukpınar peasants take back the lands usurped by the landlord. Kızılcaavlu peasants of Tire descend upon the farmstead of the landlord and burn his storehouses and dynamite his engines. In August 1970, landless people of 30 villages hold a public meeting. Yenioba and Kızılcaavlu peasants of the Tire district in İzmir occupy landlord lands, peasants of the Osmanoğulları, Kuzuyatağı villages, the Narlıdere village of Nallıhan, and the Köşkenli, Aslanbey, Zeyneppınar, Filo and Dedeler villages of Pazarcık seize landlord lands and clash with the gendarmerie in Gaziantep. Emiroğlu peasants of Maraş occupy the lands which Hacı Ömer Ağa had seized from the public. Peasant leader Ali Rıza Keskin is killed by Şeyh Halit Gürpınar's men in the Teşt village of Siverek during their struggle to take back the lands usurped by Gürpınar. (STMA, 1988: 2151-2152).

¹⁸ Emin Alper, "Reconsidering Social Movements in Turkey: The Case of the 1968-71 Protest Cycle," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, (2010): 63-96.

¹⁹ Sezgin Tüzün, "Elmalı Toprak İşgali Üzerine bir Deneme" [An essay on the land occupation in Elmalı], *Aydınlık*, no. 16, (1970): 272.

²⁰ Tüzün, *ibid*, 272.

²¹ Suat Aksoy, "Atalan ve Göllüce Olayları" [The events in Atalan and Göllüce], *Milliyet*, 10 February 1969, 2.

²² Aksoy, *ibi*, 2.

²³ *Demokrat İzmir*, "Ege Bölgesinde Gizli Gizli Toprak Reformu Yapılıyor" [Clandestine land reform is being conducted in the Egeian Province], 5 April 1969, 1.

²⁴ Ertan Gökmen, "XIX. Yüzyıl Ortalarında Tire Kazası Çiftliklerinin Sosyal ve Ekonomik Durumu" [The social and economic condition of Tire County farms in the middle of the 19th century], *CBÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, no. 13 (3), (2015): 203.

²⁵ See Terzibaşoğlu, *ibid*, 2006 and Huri İslamoğlu, "Property as a Contested Domain: A Re-evaluation of the Ottoman Land Code of 1858", in *New Perspectives on Property and Land in the Middle East*, ed. R. Owen, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011). Şevket Süreyya Aydemir writes the following about Hacı Ali Paşa: "It is told that he has wandered the mountains, armed, for a while [...] It is told that in the end, perhaps relying on the strength and reputation he thus acquired, became steward to a farmstead near Tire. It is again told that, it was during this stewardship that Ali married the widowed lady of the farmstead and has thus become Landlord Ali [...] One day he received a decree of civil pashadom from the palace [...] And thus Ali became one Hacı Ali Paşa, loyal to the administration. He established his influence in the Küçük Menderes and Büyük Menderes basins both. He acquired fame as The Hacı Ali Paşa of Tire. We observe however the law of Anatolia in the story of this pasha as well. Presumably some Rum [Anatolian Greeks] peasants who thought that he harmed them, or perhaps as is told in that region bandits, just before or during the Balkan War ambushed and killed Hacı Ali Paşa." Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Menderes'in Dramı*, [The drama of Menderes] (İstanbul: Remzi Kitabevi, 2006), 18-19.

²⁶ For an evaluation of the Göllüce case in the framework of the establishment of private land ownership and the discourses and acts of social conflict created by private property, see Begüm Özden Fırat, *ibid*, 2017.

²⁷ Fatma İrfan Serhan, "Göllüce Dramı" [The drama of Göllüce], *Cumhuriyet*, 3 May 1962, 2.

²⁸ Aysu, *ibid*, 2014.

²⁹ According to Hikmet Çetinkaya, the land deed surplus rates are as follows: 1) Real estate registered to the name Mesude Elmas under series number 120 has been identified as 275400 square meters. In the original series number 52 of page 22, book 85, this real estate contains a deed to 210000 square meters. 2) Under series number 130 in the bill table the real estate registered to the name of Mesude Evliyazade is submitted to be 995500 square meters. However, in series number 63 of page 2, book 72, there is a deed to 91930 square meters, and in series 98, page 76, book 85 there is a deed to 400000 square meters for a total of 491930 square meters. 3) In series number 133 of the bill table, 427100 square meters appear to the name of Mesude Evliyazade. However, in series number 100 of page 72, book 77, the quantity of this real estate is very small. Çetinkaya, "A. Menderes'in Halası'nın Arazisi İşgal Edildi" [A. Menderes's aunt's land was occupied], *Cumhuriyet*, 3 February 1969, 1.

³⁰ Kadir Dede, "Altmışlı Yılların Siyasal Gündemi ya da bir Siyasal Özne Olarak 1961 Anayasası" [The political agenda of the sixties, or the 1961 Constitution as a political subject], in *Türkiye'nin 1960'lı Yılları* [The Sixties of Turkey], ed. M.K. Kaynar, (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2017), 809-843.

³¹ How the corporation will use the 1200 decares of land that it purchased is undeclared. The employees who tend to the small number of large and small cattle on the farmstead state that the pastures will be used for the production of clover. As of 2018, the corporation has not done any work in this field except for surrounding the pastures with fences. The resistance of the peasants must have played a part in this.

³² Interview with Ali Haydar Teker, Göllüce, 25 March 2018.

³³ Ertuğrul Kürkçü, "Devrimci Gençlik Hareketi Üzerine" [On the revolutionary youth movement], in *Pratiğin Akli Teorinin Heyecanı* [The intellect of practice, the excitement of theory], (Ankara: Dipnot 2014), 153.

