



Oeuvre vs. Abstract Space: Appropriation of Gezi Park in Istanbul

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ABSTRACT

The Gezi Park incidents of summer 2013 in Istanbul have marked a turning point in the political life and democracy in Turkey. The peaceful environmentalist protestations in central Gezi Park have turned into a countrywide upheaval against the neo-liberal and conservative policies of the government, pouring millions of people into streets in different cities. It was a time that Turkey witnessed the formation of a new type of public sphere that encompasses a variety of counter publics, and its spatial incarnation –the Gezi Commune-, reclaimed, created, shaped and inhabited by the free will of people. This was the instant creation of oeuvre through appropriation of the urban space, and a spatial manifestation of reclaiming the right to the city. This article is a reflection on possibility of creation of oeuvre in contemporary society, and a new way of architectural thinking and practice that can pave the way for it.

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1. Introduction

There is a strong relationship between city spaces, the way they are produced and social relations taking place in those spaces. Spaces are adapted by people through their diverse economic, political, social and cultural activities. All personal or common lived spaces make place for these dwelling practices of people (Sadri & Zeybekoğlu Sadri, 2012). The way that spaces are formed determines how we access to those spaces, how we use them and how we exist in them. Under the domination of state, capital, and institutional knowledge, spaces are produced as commodities (Sadri & Zeybekoğlu Sadri, 2012). Accordingly they reflect the order of a ruling power, and they start to cause exclusions of certain groups of people and their diverse

dwelling practices, which do not fit into the norms defined by the ruling power.

Henri Lefebvre distinguishes between space as "oeuvre" and space as "product". Space as oeuvre occurs as a result of collective creation, praxis. The French word oeuvre refers to lifetime "works" created by an artist. Since space as oeuvre is an outcome of collective creation of different generations during a long period of time, it is the accumulation of all works done by inhabitants of a city during its city's history. Thus,

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