Spatial Perspectives of Contention: Space, Place, and Policing in the 2013 Gezi Park Protests

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Introduction

On the night of May 31st, 2013, Turkish police violently evacuated a small group of demonstrators from Gezi Park, they burned their tents and used tear gas to disperse them. Gezi Park is one of the few green spaces in Istanbul, and the demonstrators were protesting its imminent demolition by the government. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Turkish Prime Minister and leader of the conservative Justice and Development Party (AKP), planned to transform the park into a massive commercial center, complete with a shopping mall and luxury apartments. In the years preceding the protests, Erdoğan introduced numerous conservative, neoliberal policies, and the demolition of Gezi Park became the final straw for Erdoğan’s opposition.

The police crackdown on May 31st backfired. The next few days led to even larger demonstrations. Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets to protest against the AKP, and protesters created a temporary encampment in Gezi Park, where they stayed until June 15th, 2013. Throughout this time, police clashed violently with the protestors in the park. Many of these clashes took place in Taksim Square, a prominent city square adjacent to Gezi Park. Police used tear gas, water cannons, rubber bullets, and beatings to suppress the demonstrators. These protests, which began as a struggle over public space and the future of Gezi Park, evolved into some one of the largest anti-government demonstrations in Turkish history.

Six months after the protests, in the spring of 2014, I spent a semester at Boğaziçi University in Istanbul. Boğaziçi, an esteemed public university of over 14,000 students, instructs most of its classes in English, allowing me to study with Turkish students and exchange students from all over the world. Istanbul is a beautiful, fascinating city to live in and explore, and I visited Gezi Park regularly during my stay. I had heard about the Gezi Park protests before I arrived in Turkey, but I did not know many details. It was not until I experienced a protest
myself that I began to understand the extent of political tensions between the AKP and its opposition, and the character of police repression in Turkey.

On a rainy spring day, while sitting in my “Turkey and the European Union” class at Boğaziçi University, a student walked in and made an announcement in Turkish. My professor translated: “For all of you exchange students in the class, we have just received word that the youngest victim of the Gezi Park protests, Berkin Elvan, has died, he was fifteen years old.” She continued, “there will be a march in his memory at 4pm starting on North Campus.” The class took a moment of silence before our professor continued with the lecture.

When I walked outside after class, posters of Berkin Elvan’s face were plastered on every building, and his name spraypainted on the ground with the words, “Berkin Elvan ölümsüzdür”: Berkin Elvan is immortal. Other phrases were graffitied on buildings around campus, such as “katil polis”: the police are murderers, or “katil AKP”: the AKP are murderers. I learned that Berkin Elvan had been hit in the head with a tear gas canister while buying bread for his family during the Gezi Park protests in June 2013. He fell into a coma and died on March 11, 2014. His death came to symbolize the police brutality in the Gezi Park Protests, and mobilized protesters to take to the streets against the AKP government once again.

I attended the demonstration on campus along with thousands of other students, flooding the streets and chanting against fascism and police brutality. People waved Turkish flags out of their apartment windows in support of the protest, and traffic was at a standstill for the entire afternoon. The protest on campus remained peaceful, and I returned to my apartment that night, inspired by the passion of my peers. The next day, as an act of resistance, many students boycotted classes, and most classes were cancelled.
Berkin Elvan’s funeral services took place the next morning, a short walking distance from my apartment. Thousands of people carried his coffin through the streets of Istanbul. I heard rumors that there would be protests after the funeral, and rushed home from campus early to avoid them. When I got to my metro stop, Osmanbey, I encountered hordes of people running in the opposite direction with their shirts over their mouths and their eyes red from tear gas. The protests had already started. I decided to continue home, and took the escalator up from the metro into the streets.

Below ground, the smell of tear gas was only faintly noticeable, but it grew stronger as the escalator climbed up to street level. People around me began covering their mouths and noses. Excited protesters shouting “to Taksim” streamed down the stairs, running to catch a metro towards Taksim Square and Gezi Park, where they would continue to protest into the night. Finally reaching street level, I was confronted with chaos: police men in riot gear, and protesters running in every direction. The entire scene was enveloped by a hazy cloud of tear gas. Street signs were spraypainted to say “Berkin Elvan Road,” and protesters were chanting slogans against the government and the police. I took the back road home, and encountered a cloud of tear gas. As I felt a burning sensation in my lungs, I ran in the opposite direction, my eyes filling with tears.

I ran home, and encountered lines of police officers in full riot gear: gas masks, batons, and shields. I reached my building, opened the door, and felt relieved to be in safety. While the number of protesters dwindled throughout the night, I still heard clashes outside of my window. Additional protests continued in Gezi Park and Taksim Square until morning. The next day, the streets were calm. Protesters and police returned home, and people continued with their daily routines. While the Berkin Elvan protests were much smaller and shorter than the previous year’s
demonstrations in Gezi Park, they exhibited many of the same elements, particularly around the character of police repression. Most importantly, many Berkin Elvan protesters returned to Gezi Park to air their grievances.

After my experience in Istanbul, I became interested in the routines of protest. Protesters occupied Gezi Park for over two weeks in June 2013, and while the original demonstrations had concluded months before, they returned to Gezi Park in March 2014. After the June 2013 protests, the park itself was transformed into a symbol of resistance for anti-AKP protesters. As I began to understand the political dynamics in Turkey, I became curious about the connection between protest and space. Through the research that follows on the spatial aspects of the Gezi Park Protests, I obtained a deeper understanding of the Gezi Park movement, and of the connection between space and social relations. The Gezi Park protests were about reclaiming space for the people, and publicly resisting government forces. They followed the same patterns of many protests that came before them, such as Occupy Wall Street, and Tahrir Square. These protests use public space to claim democratic rights, and by studying this case much can be learned about space and contention.

**Research Design and Orientation:**

The following chapters develop a spatial analysis of the Gezi Park protests, and address the following research questions: *What role do spatial perspectives have in social movements and contentious politics? Which geographical concepts can be applied to social movement theory, and how can they deepen social movement analysis?*

The chapters that follow develop a theoretical framework to study the Gezi Park Protests. This framework draws on Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) theory of the social production of space, Byron Miller’s (2000) discussion of geography and social movements, and the work of
sociologists and geographers who have connected space and contention (Auyero 2003; Leitner et al. 2008; Martin & Miller 2003; Tilly 2000).

I apply this framework to the Gezi Park case to examine the role of spatial perspectives in contention. The primary basis for my findings is a content analysis of a range of materials associated with the Gezi Park protests that relates to and furthers the general dimensions associated with my theoretical framework. These materials include news articles, online blogs, photos, and videos, as well as official reports from organizations such as Amnesty International about the events of the Gezi Park Protests, and interviews taken from news reports. My goal in drawing upon these specific materials was not to create a representative repository of data on the Gezi Park case, but rather to gain enough insight into the processes and perspectives of those on the ground to analyze the more general ideas of space, place, and policing that I present in my research.

The following chapters will focus on the spatial concepts of space, place, and policing in the Gezi Park Protests. Chapter 3 discusses the social production of Gezi Park as a space of anti-AKP resistance. Chapter 4 examines the role of material place in contention through symbolism and the act of airing grievances in the Gezi Park protests. It also underscores the importance of place-based identities in social movement mobilization. Chapter 5 considers the role of repression in contention, and the connections between repression and spatial strategies of protesters and police. Across these dimensions of my analysis, I argue that space and contention are connected through four main concepts: (a) the social production of space; (b) scalar strategies in contentious politics; (c) place, symbolism, and place-based identities; and (d) policing and spatial practices of repression.
Chapter 1: The Importance of Spatial Perspectives in Social Movement Theory

Throughout history, and particularly in the twenty-first century, public space has taken on an extremely significant role in contentious politics. From the Arab Spring to Occupy Wall Street, recent social movements have used space as a channel through which to air their grievances against ruling systems of power. In this way, public spaces in contentious politics become symbols for resistance, and create social movements that are, at their core, geographically situated and motivated. The study and analysis of contentious politics in sociology has lent itself to exciting debates, theories, and an important contextualization of social movements within broader social and historical structures. However, the majority of social movement literature and analysis does not account for the geographic and spatial construction of social relations, and contentious politics. Concepts such as space, place, scale, and policing are crucial components in a more complete analysis of social movements.

Why Space Matters

Space can add considerably to social movement analysis, and the majority of social movement theories lack a spatial and/or geographic perspective. Deborah Martin and Byron Miller explain that, “research on social movements and contentious politics has generally downplayed the spatial constitution and context of its central concepts such as identity, grievances, political opportunities, and resources. As a result, this body of scholarship remains by and large aspatial.” (Martin and Miller 2003, 143). In his book, Geography and Social Movements, Miller also explains that, while advances have been made in the connection between the spatial and the social, “For the most part, geographic structuring is ignored, or at best, treated as a minor side issue [in sociological and political science literature]” (Miller 2000, 4). Space impacts political contention through everyday spaces and mobilization, and the
foundational notion of space as socially produced and producing explains the dynamic relationship of space and contention.

Henri Lefebvre’s theory of socially produced space is core to the development of a spatial analysis of contentious politics. In his theory, Lefebvre stresses the concept of space as both socially produced, and socially producing, “itself the outcome of past actions, social space is what permits fresh actions to occur” (Lefebvre 1991, 73). With this in mind, Lefebvre introduces three types of socially produced space, perceived space (spatial practice), conceived space (representations of space), and lived space (representational space).

Lefebvre’s three notions of space give a deeper explanation and analysis of the social production of space. Perceived space, the physical and material space that people experience on a day to day basis, is important in reproducing social relations. Governments and states control many of these tangible spaces in order to control social relations, and oftentimes contention arises when populations attempt to challenge the control of perceived spaces. Conceived space is the social representation of spaces. Lefebvre explains that, “conceptions of space tend, with certain exceptions…towards a system of verbal (and therefore intellectually worked out) signs” (Lefebvre 1991, 39). Language and discourse are important parts of constructing the perception and meaning of a space. Lived space is space that is “directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’” (Lefebvre 1991, 39). Lived space is a combination of perceived and conceived space; it is the space that is directly lived, and also given symbolic meaning and value through language and other senses. Lived space is “the dominated—and hence passively experienced—space which the imagination seeks to change and appropriate” (Lefebvre 1991, 39). The process through which symbolism is assigned to a space can have a large impact on contentious politics. Lived spaces can also become spaces of
resistance, “where alternative orders of material and symbolic space are imagined and struggled over” (Martin & Miller 2003, 146).

**Using Lefebvre to Understand Contention**

Because social relations are spatially constituted, analyzing contentious politics through a spatial lens can lend itself to new insights about the complexity of contentious politics. Many scholars have used Lefebvre’s ideas as a basis to develop spatial perspectives of social movements and contentious politics.

*Everyday Spaces and Contention*

Mobilization patterns in contentious politics are impacted by everyday spatial routines, but these everyday routines can also be the force behind social discontent. “Everyday spatial distributions, proximities, and routines of potential participants in contention significantly affect their patterns of mobilization,” (Tilly 2000, 138). Exploring the spatial constitution of social movements in urban Brazil, Guidry (2003) emphasizes how social movements can center on geographies of inequality, and challenge existing systems of power by contesting “the way that constitutionally guaranteed citizenship rights are limited in the spaces where people work, live, and play.” Guidry also stated that, “movements attempt to alter the imbalances of power in the spaces of everyday life” (Guidry 2003, 189).

Guidry’s studies of two social movements in Brazil, a community-based activist movement in a poor neighborhood in Brazil, and a national movement for children’s rights, show the spatial dimensions of contention. Specifically, in the community-based case, contention arose when inequalities were seen and experienced in the spaces of everyday life. In addition, Brazilian community-based activism mobilized spatially, and its demands (allocating more resources to
poorer neighborhoods), grounded in citizenship claims, were aimed at changing the material space of a neighborhood. This study shows one of the ways in which citizens of a state see inequalities in space as unjust, and as an impetus for social action.

*Space is Socially Produced, and Space Produces Social Relations*

Understanding the constitutive relationship between space and society, and the importance of this relationship in acts of contention is crucial to the analysis of contention. Space is not only produced socially, but also produces social relations. Charles Tilly (2000), in arguing for the significance of spatial analysis in contentious politics, explains in his first point, “Contention always takes place in humanly occupied space, often including the built environment….spatial configurations present both opportunities and constraints to participants in public claim making” (Tilly 2000, 138) Because humanly occupied space is socially produced, and is also the setting for acts of contention, a spatial analysis of contention is necessary. This point ties into Tilly’s fifth point of the importance of the relationship between space and contentious politics, “Contention itself transforms the political significance of particular sites and spatial routines, as when locations of massacres become objects of pilgrimage or when funerals become major occasions for expressions of political preference” (Tilly 2000, 138). This last point shows that, while social space provides opportunities and constraints in contention, contention itself also has an impact on socially produced space. Tilly’s first and last points show the constitutive relationship between the spatial and the social, and its significance when discussing contentious politics.

Government regulation of space reproduces existing patterns of spatial routines and social relations, “Governments always organize at least some of their power around places and spatial routines. Hence contentious politics often challenges or disrupts governmental activity,
and thereby incites governmental intervention” (Tilly 2000, 138). The symbolic and political significance of a place (produced by social relations) helps to reproduce actions that are deemed acceptable in that place. This understanding is important in contentious politics because social action often attempts to challenge spatial routines and places that symbolize governmental corruption.

In discussing the geography of an urban protest in Argentina, Javier Auyero shows the mutually constitutive relationship between geography and protest, stating that the 1993 Santiagazo riot in Santiago, Argentina was both geographically *structured*, and geographically *structuring*. By explaining in detail the Santiagazo riot, Auyero touches on many spatial dimensions that allowed such a riot to take place. Auyero focuses on four interrelated processes: “1) the normalization of violence against public buildings and private residences; 2) the transformation of certain spaces (buildings and residences) into places; 3) the interaction between protesters and police that fueled the 4) process of mutual signaling occurring during the day of the riot” (Auyero 2003, 43). Auyero explains that the geography of the city structured the riot, while actions taken by the rioters structured the geographic meaning of certain spaces in the city of Santiago. The protesters in Santiago burned and looted spaces of symbolic significance to the government, including official government buildings and residences of government workers.

In Tilly’s discussion of the importance of spatial phenomena in contention, he says that “Routine political life, including the contained contention of parades, parliaments, public ceremonies, and the like, endows different places and spatial routines with symbolic significance, which is then available for adoption, parody, or transmutation by participants in transgressive politics” (Tilly 2000, 138-139). In Santiago, the symbolic significance of certain spaces allowed the rioters to move from place to place easily. Demonstrators had an
understanding of which spaces in the city were significant, and which spaces represented government repression. Auyero explains that in the months preceding the riots, certain places were “endowed with a particular symbolic significance, that is, defined as places that “deserved” to be sacked and burned.” By creating this symbolic significance, “the spatial dimension became part of the rioters’ repertoire...when the time came, ‘everybody understood’ what to do” (Auyero 2003, 64). Spatial significance created codes about which spaces were appropriate and significant to loot, making the spatial dimension of the protest extremely significant.

In addition to allowing the symbolic significance of certain places to craft the spatial dimensions of the protest, the participants in the Santiago riots also altered the symbolic significance of spaces in the city. The protesters in Santiago looted and destroyed buildings and homes that represented the government. In this way, they changed the symbolic meaning of these spaces. By destroying spaces that represented government repression, the rioters in Santiago resymbolized spaces. Because the riot was influenced by space, and also impacted the geography of Santiago, this case shows the importance of discussing the relationship between space and society when analyzing protests and riots.

In sum, understanding the social production of space is essential in fully analyzing the momentum behind contention, as well as physical acts of contention themselves. Social discontent can occur when populations see inequality in the fabric of their everyday spaces. Lived space can be seen as a manifestation of societal inequalities perpetuated by systems of domination. Martin and Miller explain that, “the potential for contention is often greatest where there are disjunctures among different types of space, e.g, when conceived spaces of order and equal opportunity are contradicted by material geographies of crumbling tenements, graffiti, pot-holed streets, dangerous parks, and resource-strapped schools” (Martin & Miller 2003, 147).
When spatial inequalities in everyday spaces are experienced, social unrest is more likely to occur. Spatial dynamics not only create social discontent, but they help movements mobilize people and resources, as seen in Miller’s analysis of the peace movement in Boston. Finally, within acts of contention space has an impact, as seen in Auyero’s discussion of the Santiagazo riot.

**Place and Contentious Politics**

Just as socially produced space is an important dimension in the analysis of contentious politics, place, or the material and meaningful site in which social relations are situated, is essential in understanding social movements and acts of contention. Place is “space filled up by people, practice, objects and representations” (Gieryn 2000, 465). An important aspect of place is its “distinct materiality” (Leitner et. al 2008, 161); this materiality is significant sociologically because it situates socially produced and producing space into material place filled with meaning.

John Agnew (1987) lays out the importance of place in sociology by describing three notions of place: 1) locale, or the “site of daily life” (Martin & Miller 2003) 2) location, or the geographic meaning of place, and 3) sense of place, or the personal investment in a place of meaning. Gieryn (2000) categorizes place in a similar way, discussing three necessary features of place: 1) geographic location, 2) material form, and 3) investment with meaning and value. These concepts lay the theoretical groundwork for the understanding of place in social relations.

Because of its physicality, place plays an important role in analyzing the creation and perpetuation of social relations and control. Place is the material space where people live, place is space that is given meaning, and regulates social relations (Leitner et. al 2008). Place can be
the location where power dynamics are materialized, which can have a large impact on social
discontent and contentious politics; place is a space where grievances are materially experienced,
and in turn, challenged. It is also a space imbued with meaning and identity, and place-based
identities are important in the formation and continuation of social movements.

*Place as a Site that Creates Grievances, and as a Site Where Grievances are Aired*

Martin & Miller (2003) help to contextualize place within contentious politics. Material
sites are where social relations such as “inequality, difference, power, politics, interaction,
community, social movements, deviance, crime, life course, science, identity, memory, history”
are *emplaced* (Gieryn 2006). Martin & Miller explain that because place is representative of
larger social forces and intersecting spatial flows, it can become a space where social discontent
is experienced, and expressed. Because place is *meaningfully constructed* (Martin & Miller
2003) by systems of power, and is the arena where the exertion of political control takes place, it
is also the space where resistance to that social control is articulated. Social movements and acts
of contention tend to occur in places where grievances are found. Place is a symbolic site,
saturated with meaning, in which social movements both experience and air their grievances.
The symbolism of place can also be manipulated by social movements.

Because meaning is so central to the creation of place, social movements often attempt to
recreate the symbolism and meaning of a place to fit with the vision of their movement. Lietner
et al. explain that social movements resignify places to “defend places that stand for their
priorities and imaginaries; and to produce new spaces where such visions can be practised,
within that place and beyond” (Leitner et al. 2008, 162). One way that social movements resist
systems of power is by creating new possible realities, and many times places are used as
symbols of these new realities. Struggles over place are manifestations of larger political
struggles, and by using place as symbols for alternative realities, social movements create place-centered acts of contention.

*Place-Based Identities and Social Movement Mobilization*

Place-based identities affect the creation and continuation of sustainable social movements. Byron Miller (2000) highlights the importance of place-based identities when discussing his research on the antinuclear movement in the Boston area. Identity, a central tool in social movement mobilization, is rooted in experiences of daily lives, which is situated in place. “Place-based attachments….constitute a form of collective identity that can promote or, if negative, hinder further activism” (Miller 2000, 117). Differences in place also come with differences in identity, which has a large impact on the process of social movement mobilization, and contentious politics as a whole.

As an example, Miller discusses the peace movement in three different communities in the Boston area, emphasizing their respective socio-economic, political, and social characteristics. Because of differences in socio-economic statuses and political opportunity structures in Waltham, Cambridge, and Lexington, the peace movement strategies of these three places were very different. While all three economies are connected to the defense industry, and therefore have a stake in weapons production, their peace movements mobilized differently because of differences in their identities and political structures.

In Lexington, the local political structure is a town meeting system, which creates a very open opportunity for political engagement. However, because Lexington is mostly upper-class, the city includes less radical activists and less incentive for political actors to create connections with activists in the peace movement. In Cambridge, the political structure is also very open, but the diversity of political opinions creates incentives for political connections with certain activist
groups. In Waltham, the political structure is controlled by the mayor and six city-councilors, which is a much less open structure than in Lexington and Cambridge. Although there are a number of peace activists in Waltham, they have little opportunity to push any sort of agenda.

In Cambridge, opportunities for social movement mobilization were very favorable because of the identity of its residents--diversity of opinion is welcome--and its open political structure. In Lexington, although the political structure is open, the lack of diverse identities made mobilization conditions slightly less favorable. In Waltham the closed political structure made mobilization much more difficult. Geographical differences in identity, resources and political opportunity structures can help understand the peace movement in the Boston area, and social movements in general.

Place is the material and physical manifestation of social relations and power dynamics; it is where these dynamics are experienced. Because populations experience social dynamics in place, place is important in understanding the grievances of social movements. Often, populations experience discontent when they see social issues manifest in places. In this way, places become symbolic of grievances, and are often the place where such grievances are aired. In addition, places can be transformed by social movements in order to create visions of alternative realities. Places are sites where grievances are experienced, systems of domination are challenged, and new realities are imagined.

Place is also a source of identity and social solidarity, which influences the mobilization and continuation of social movements. Different place-based identities have an impact on social movements, and the ways that grievances are aired. Place-based political dynamics, resource access, and social solidarity have an important role to play in contentious politics; The physical,
lived experience of contentious politics is situated in place, and place plays a pivotal role in the understanding of mobilization and strategy in social movements.

**Scale and Contentious Politics**

Scale matters to contentious politics because social movements often use “scalar strategies,” (Leitner et al. 2008) ranging from a purely local strategy to creating global movements. The relationship between scale and social movement strategies can be discussed in terms of the comparison between “free spaces” and public claims of space.

*Comparing Scales: Free Spaces and Spatial Claim Making*

Scale is important in mobilizing, strategizing, and creating social movements. Differences in scale can create distinct spaces within a movement, which can be seen clearly when comparing spatial claim making with “free spaces.” “Free” space refers to space in which movements are able to maintain some sort of autonomy from the dominant group, such as black churches during the American Civil Rights Movement, where large-scale actions were planned, activists were trained, and personal connections were made. These spaces are important in creating social movements because they are not under surveillance by a dominant group, people inhabit this space out of choice, and within the space a culture of resistance is created (Polletta 1999, 1). In free spaces, actors in contentious politics are able to engage in conversation that would be forbidden under surveillance of the dominant group (Tilly 2000, 144). In these small scale spaces, dissenters are able to communicate and connect safely with each other, and plan, mobilize, and act without repression.

These small scale components of contention are significant in understanding social movements, and by comparing free spaces to larger scale ideas such as spatial claim making, the
importance of scale in contention can be highlighted. Spatial claim making underlines the importance of the “spatial configurations of people themselves” in contention (Tilly 2000, 146). Actions such as sit-ins, strikes, large-scale demonstrations, and the act of “occupying” a space in contention are all forms of spatial claim making. These acts are on a much larger scale than the activities that take place in free spaces; spatial claim making takes the private ideas formulated in free spaces, and makes them public. Shifting the scale of a movement helps the movement to air grievances publicly, and make demands to create change. Both small scale and large scale aspects of movements help to create moments of contention and resistance.

**Policing and the Regulation of Space**

*Protest Policing: Escalated Force vs. Negotiated Management*

Because governments assert their power spatially, there are certain actors in place to regulate space, such as police. Police are not only tangible exhibitions of spatial state control, surveillance, and repression (Tilly 2000), but they also assert state power spatially, impacting the actions and spatial dynamics of contention. Police, “as agents of the state, devise ways of blunting, blocking, or finessing the actions of protesters, the latter devise variations and innovations in their collective actions to circumvent the control efforts of the former” (McPhail et al. 1998, 49). On a fundamental level, the policing of protest is about controlling space, and asserting spatial control over protesters.

There are two types of policing protest each with their own set of spatial attributes: *escalated force*, and *negotiated management* (McPhail et al. 1998). Escalated force, a common form of policing in the United States in the 1960s, occurs when police use force in order to control protests. *Negotiated management*, a form of policing that became more common in the 1980s in the United States, are pre-negotiated with the police beforehand. Often in negotiated
management protesters inform the police of their action, and are given a permit to demonstrate. Both of these tactics involve control of space by police forces. In escalated force police use force to assert their spatial control and disperse crowds, in negotiated management they use permits.

Key dimensions of protest policing, such as police tolerance for community disruption, police-protestor communication, the use of arrests as a method to manage protests, and whether force is used in order to assert control, contribute to the spatial outcome of protests (McPhail et al. 1998). These dimensions have an impact on how protests play out spatially. Using arrests to control crowds has a different effect than using force or violence, and can change the course and outcome of an episode of contention. Asserting power spatially, and regulating that space to maintain power, is a process that is manifested in policing and police actions. Police both represent this process of spatial state control, and also spatially impact the series of events that occur within protests.

**Categorizing Repression**

The categorization of repression into theoretical models can help understand policing actions in episodes of contention, and its impact on the trajectories of the social movement activism. Jennifer Earl (2003) outlines three major elements of repression, and these elements help to put certain repressive acts in theoretical frameworks. These three elements are: the identity of the repressive agents, the character of the repressive action, and whether the repressive action is observable (Earl 2003). These elements are outlined in Table 1 below. The identity of the repressive agent refers to the connection of the agent to the state. The repressive agents can be tightly connected to the state, loosely connected to the state, or private agents. The character of repression can either be coercion (the use of rubber bullets and tear gas) or channeling (restrictions on social movement organizations). Finally, the repressive action can
either be observable (overt) or unobserved (covert). These elements characterize repression under certain models.

Table 1. Three Key Dimensions of Repression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Identity of the Repressive Agent</th>
<th>The Character of the Repressive Action</th>
<th>Whether the Repressive Action Is Observable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State agents tightly connected with national political elites (e.g., military units and military governments)</td>
<td>Coercion (e.g., the use of tear gas and rubber bullets)</td>
<td>Observable (i.e., overt or manifest; e.g., the Tiananmen Square massacre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State agents loosely connected with national political elites (e.g., local police departments in the U.S.)</td>
<td>Channeling (e.g., restrictions on 501(c)(3) social movement organizations)</td>
<td>Unobserved (i.e., covert or latent; e.g., COINTELPRO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private agents (e.g., counterdemonstrators and countermovement participants)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 (Earl 2003, 47)

For example, if repressive agents are tightly connected to the state, and the repressive action is observed coercion, that type of repression can fall under the “threat” model of repression (Earl 2003, 55). This model argues that the more threatening a movement is to power-holders, the more severe the repressive action will be (Earl 2003, 53). Categorizing repression in this way can help contextualize repression in certain categories, and better understand the actions of repressive agents.

Spatial Strategies of Police and Protesters

Because protest police are often the spatial manifestation of governmental control, they often use spatial strategies to claim control over protesters. In return, protesters create spatial strategies to undermine the actions of the repressive agents. Protesters impact police actions, and
vice versa. In their discussion of the Occupy Wall Street movement, Edwards & Gillham (2013) discuss the fact that police use *spatial constraints* to control protesters and assert control over a space. By setting up barricades, and using crowd dispersal mechanisms, police attempt to control spaces of protest. In reaction, protesters often develop ways to resist this spatial control through “moves of resistance” (Edwards & Gillham 2013, 8) such as *blocking, evading, and satirizing*.

These moves of resistance create responses to the spatial constraints of repressive agents. In the act of *satirizing*, “Activists resisted the physical control of space around the statue by taking ownership of it symbolically through satire” (Ibid, 17). In *blocking*, protesters attempt to block police access to certain areas. In the Occupy Wall Street Movement, protesters blocked “by setting up blockades of bodies just outside police barricades established to control access to the financial district” (Ibid, 18). Finally, protesters in Occupy Wall Street *evaded* spatial constraints by simply finding other locations to hold their events. By creating spatial constraints, police use spatial strategies to control protests. In reaction to these strategies, protesters develop new strategies to regain control, and undermine the power of repressive agents.

*Short-Term and Long-Term Outcomes of Repression*

A central aspect of repression literature is the consequences of repression on social movement activism. The “repression-dissent nexus” explains the relationship between levels of repression and levels of dissent. Repression can increase social movement activism, or decrease it, depending on the nature of the repressive action as well as the nature of the social movement itself. Different repression strategies have different impacts on social movement trajectories. In their discussion on the impacts of repression, Jennifer Earl and Sarah Soule show that differences in police strategies can have distinct effects on social movements.
In episodes of contention, repressive agents can apply one of many strategies of repression. Such strategies include the “Do Nothing” strategy, where police are present at an event, but take no further action; the “Nothing to See Here” strategy where police are present and take little action; the “Legal Eagle” strategy, where police control spaces of protests through arrests; the “Dirty Harry” strategy where police only rely on violence; and the “Calling All Cars” approach, where police make arrests and use violence to assert control over protesters (Earl & Soule 2010, 82).

These strategies all have a different effect on social movements. In their research, Earl & Soule found that across all protests, the “Do Nothing,” and “Nothing to See Here” approaches had had no immediate or lagged effect on social movement activism; the “Legal Eagle” strategy had negative immediate and lagged effects; the “Dirty Harry” strategy had negative immediate and positive lagged effects; and the “Calling All Cars” approach had negative immediate and lagged effects, except in a situation where this approach was used multiple times, in which case it had a positive immediate effect, but negative lagged effect (Earl & Soule 2010). Earl & Soule’s research shows the importance of repression in social movement trajectories. Because protest policing is about the assertion of spatial control, and, as those control efforts take different forms, can have sizable and heterogeneous impacts on social movements, the repression-dissent nexus should be included in a spatial analysis of contention.

Conclusion

The following chapters will create a spatial analysis of the 2013 Gezi Park protests through concepts such as (a) the social production of space; (b) scalar strategies in contentious
politics; (c) place, symbolism, and place-based identities; and (d) policing and spatial practices of repression.

Chapter 3 will discuss spatial exhibitions of control in Istanbul pre-2013, and socially produced space during and after the protests. Through “urban renewal” projects and gentrification, power struggles manifested itself spatially even before the Gezi Park protests. During and after the Gezi Park protests, Gezi Park was produced as a space of AKP resistance, and protesters used scalar strategies to create free spaces, and claim public space as a site of resistance.

Chapter 4 explores the role of geographic place in the Gezi Park protests. Gezi Park became a site where grievances were experienced, through police brutality, and aired, through demonstrations. In addition, place-based identities influenced mobilization patterns in different Gezi Park neighborhoods.

Finally, Chapter 5 will discuss the police presence in Gezi Park, and spatial strategies utilized by police and protesters during protests and clashes. This research will illustrate the importance of spatial perspectives in the understanding of the processes involved in social movement mobilization, growth, and strategies.
Chapter 2: Case Background

In order to understand the significance of the events that took place in Gezi Park, we need to situate that struggle in the broader contours of Turkish history. The political tensions of 2013 did not happen in a vacuum. These tensions were connected to the secularization of the Turkish state in the 1920s, and the contemporary turn to religious, conservative politics in the twenty-first century. This chapter provides historical context for the Gezi Park Protests, and outlines key events in the 2013 protests.

The Creation of the Turkish Republic and the Secularization of the Turkish State

On October 29th, 1923, the Turkish Republic was created with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk as its first president. The Turkish nationalists under Atatürk were a strong oppositional force to the crumbling post-World War I Ottoman Empire, and British powers who looked to control parts of the Middle East. The Turkish revolution, which consisted of a period of national struggle between 1919 and 1922, followed by a period of nation-building and reforms (Kili 1980, 382) altered Turkish society and the meaning of Turkish identity. The Turkish nationalist movement sought to create a Turkish nation-state, and with its victory “freed the Turks from foreign domination and laid the foundations of a new independent state” (Kili, 383).

The nationalist ideology of Atatürk, known as Kemalism, attempted to break with Turkey’s Ottoman past, and create a new, more westernized Turkish identity through political and cultural reforms (Levy-Aksu 2014). The Turkish war of independence took place in a changing post-World War I world in which nationalism and independence were stressed, and new meanings of citizenship were created. Atatürk and his government quickly created a new
sense of Turkish nationalism by enacting extensive reforms that changed the meanings of Turkish identity and citizenship.

The Sultan, the political and religious ruler of the Ottoman Empire, resided in Istanbul, the epicenter of Ottoman political and cultural activity. With the nationalist victory came the abolition of the Sultanate, and the creation of a new capital city in Ankara (Levy-Aksu 2014). The religiosity of Ottoman leaders and the central role of Islam in Ottoman society was pushed away by the new Turkish state. Atatürk and his party aimed to create a modernized Turkish society, and in their opinion a modernized Turkey meant a westernized Turkey.

The Kemalist vision for the Turkish Republic can be seen in the “Six Arrows” of Kemalism. These six arrows--republicanism, populism, laicism, reformism, nationalism, and statism (Levy-Aksu 2014)--represent the radical change in Turkish society that occurred after the declaration of the Turkish republic. The reforms introduced by Atatürk’s government in the early days of the Turkish Republic are manifestations of these six arrows, and were aimed to “bring the nation-state of Turkey to the level of the advanced states of the world” (Kili, 384). Atatürk gave power and status to urban seculars, bureaucrats, and the army in order to preserve his ideology and the Kemalist way of life for the future (Levy-Aksu 2014).

Many of Atatürk’s reforms were aimed to strengthen the central government, build institutions to support the new republic, change the economic system, increase public participation in the political sphere, and create a new idea of Turkish citizenship (Kili, 384). The goal of Atatürk’s reforms was to make Turkey an international player, and to break with the Ottoman way of life. The transformation from the expansive Ottoman Empire, which in many ways used religion to legitimate its rule (Levy-Aksu 2014), to the Turkish Republic was drastic.
Religion was stripped from governmental affairs, and religious institutions were closely monitored and controlled by the state.

Atatürk’s notion of secularization was not created with religious freedom and tolerance in mind, but rather with the idea that religion was a barrier to westernization and reformism. Kemalism attempted to privatize and control religion and religious practice. Atatürk and his followers used the Turkish word “laisizm” for their version of secularization, an adaptation of the French word laicisme, “a term steeped in the French Revolution’s anticlericalism and hostility to religion” (Çandar 2000, 95). Through secularization, Atatürk sought to take power away from religious elites, quell possible religious resistance against the Republic, and most of all, westernize Turkey. This secularization can be clearly seen through many of the cultural reforms enacted during the period of Turkish nation-building. Through reforms, Atatürk and his party secularized governmental institutions, education, and even the Turkish alphabet. In 1928, a clause declaring Islam as the state religion of Turkey was removed from the constitution. In 1925, Turkey instituted the Gregorian calendar, and the fez, a religious hat, was prohibited (BBC 2014).

Some of Atatürk’s most impactful reforms occurred in the late 1920s, when the Turkish language and alphabet were transformed. Atatürk’s language reforms were implemented for the purposes of “linguistic engineering” which is used in many nations “for nationalistic reasons, to purge their languages of foreign words and substitute native words for them” (Lewis 1999, 2). Atatürk’s language reforms were meant to create a unique Turkish language without foreign infiltration. By changing the script of the alphabet from Arabic to Latin, these reforms made a statement against Ottomanism, and the religious nature of Ottoman Turkish. Other secularizing
reforms included separation of religion from public education, and the introduction of the Muslim call to prayer in Turkish rather than Arabic (Levy-Aksu 2014).

Kemalism created an entirely new Turkish identity, which included the secularization of the public sphere. Today, Atatürk is seen as the most important figure in Turkish history. Most Turkish establishments have photos of Atatürk, and most public spaces have some sort of Atatürk statue. Atatürk’s legacy and ideology still live within Turkish textbooks, and his importance is taught in schools all over Turkey. By creating a structure in which secular urban elites, bureaucrats, and the army held the most power, Atatürk ensured that his legacy would continue through many generations.

**Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and the AKP**

With time, the Turkish State’s attitude towards religion changed. While Atatürk’s ideology remained strong within the Turkish population and state, the state’s position towards religion was changed, and religion had “a much more active role in its administration and teaching” (Shankland 2007, 360). This gradual shift in attitude towards religion was manifested in the construction of mosques, and the addition of the ceremonial Ramadan break-fast into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Ibid, 361). While this gradual shift allowed for flexibility in terms of Turkish religious practice, the foundations of Atatürk’s secularism remained strong. When various Islamic political movements appeared, they were met with hostility from dominant powers such as the army and secular elites that had enjoyed status and power since the Turkish state’s inception. In February 1997, the Turkish National Security Council “announced a series of measures to protect the continued secular basis of the state,” (Ibid, 361), and the Welfare Party, an Islamic party led by Necmettin Erbakan, was banned.
With its eyes on membership into the European Union, Turkish politics kept with much of the Kemalist westernization agenda in the late twentieth century. New generations of secular, urban Turkish citizens maintained the Western-oriented Turkish way of life. However, with the migration of poor, religious, rural Turkish citizens into the periphery of urban centers in the mid to late twentieth century, more religious practices became prevalent in Turkey’s cities.

Islamic parties capitalized on the migration of rural populations. While the secular urban elites maintained much of their power, new constituencies began to challenge it, and in 2002 the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power (Thumann 2010, 30). The AKP is the product of a rift between members of Erbakan’s Welfare Party; leaders of the AKP represent the moderate strain of the Welfare Party (Shankland, 362). By breaking away from Erbakan’s more extreme views, the AKP was able to distance itself slightly from the stigma of Erbakan’s Islamic parties, and create its own conservative agenda. In many ways, the AKP developed its power by catering to the poor urban migrants. By sympathizing and understanding their religious conviction, while providing them with services, conservative parties gained the support of rural migrants (Levy-Aksu 2014).

Former Istanbul mayor Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, became Prime Minister of Turkey in 2003 with the AKP electoral victory. In his early years as Prime Minister, Erdoğan was seen as a positive reformer. He reduced inflation, increased the value of the Turkish lira, and accepted the 2004 UN referendum in Cyprus, which increased the reputation of Turkey in the international community (Ibid.). Within this context, certain actions taken by Erdoğan such as transferring imams and religious leaders into ministerial positions in his government were largely ignored. In the beginning of the twenty-first century, a time of economic growth within Turkey, Erdoğan’s conservative policies generally went unchallenged or unnoticed (Ibid.).
In 2007, the AKP won a landslide victory, gaining 47% of the national vote (Hurriyet Daily News), and a parliamentary majority (Thumann, 30). As Erdoğan and the AKP felt secure in their political support, they began to push a more conservative agenda, and they gave power to religious elites. The tension rose between the secular urban elites, and the increasingly powerful religious Muslims, as the old elite felt threatened by their religious counterparts. In an interview, a member of a secular urban elite family explained to scholar, Michael Thumann, that “now the religious people have money. They drive mercedes, expand in our neighborhood, and show no respect….In all institutions, people of religious background move up...We feel that things are sliding from our hands, and we live with the dear that our children will see a darker future” (Thumann, 30). Changes in the social class system in Turkey have led to tension between the secular and religious groups, especially in urban centers such as Istanbul.

In addition to this religious/secular tension, the exposure of possible corruption in the AKP government has led to discontent among much of the Turkish public. In December 2013 a corruption scandal broke out involving high ranking members of the AKP (Arango 2013). This corruption as well as the authoritarian crackdown against the Gezi Park protests (detailed below) in 2013 have led to criticisms and an anti-democratic reputation for Erdoğan and his party. In 2012 and 2013, Turkey was identified by the Committee to Protect Journalists as the number one jailer of journalists in the world (Arango 2013).

Erdoğan has enacted conservative-religious policies, such as restrictions and taxes on alcohol sales (Demirezin 2013), and the promotion of religious public schooling (Yeginsu 2014). He has also been pushing Ottoman-language instruction in Turkey’s schools (Pamuk 2013). This willingness to strengthen the Ottoman roots of Turkey is in opposition to many of Atatürk’s reforms and his ideology; many secular Turkish citizens view Erdoğan’s policies as a destruction
of the Kemalist foundations of the Turkish republic. While Erdoğan is viewed this way by many pro-democratic, secular Turkish citizens, his support from the religious Turkish population remains, and the AKP once again saw political victory in the 2014 elections.

Erdoğan’s conservative policies have also led to an increase in privatization of Turkish services; for example, in 2014, Turkey privatized its lottery (Today’s Zaman 2014). Many important industries in Turkey have also been privatized in recent years. Erdoğan came under attack in 2014 when a tragic mining accident killed over 200 miners in a recently privatized mine in the town of Soma, Turkey. Critics of Erdoğan’s privatization policies claimed that since the privatization of the mining industry, the safety standards have decreased dramatically. NBC News reported that major unions called for nationwide strikes in response to the incident in May 2014. The unions stated that, "hundreds of our worker brothers in Soma have been left to die from the very start by being forced to work in brutal production processes in order to achieve maximum profits...We call on the working class, laborers and friends of laborers to stand up for our brothers in Soma" (NBC 2014). Erdoğan’s conservative tendencies have not only attracted criticisms from wealthy secular elites, but also from left-wing unions and organizations. With the AKP government in charge, and oppositional forces pushing for an alternative, the struggle over Turkish identity has taken on new forms in the twenty-first century. This struggle has been manifested in events such as the Gezi Park protests in 2013.

**Gezi Park and its History**

In the early days of the Turkish Republic, in an attempt to break with the Ottoman past, Atatürk and the Kemalists shifted attention towards the new capital city, Ankara. Istanbul, which had symbolized the Sultan and the control of the Ottoman Empire, was neglected during the early years of the state. However, in the 1930s Istanbul was given more attention, and Atatürk’s
goals to modernize and westernize Turkey materialized in the form of Istanbul’s layout. Henri Prost, a French urban planner, was invited to create a “master plan” for Istanbul in 1935 (Bilsel 2011). In 1939, with the mayoral election of Lutfi Kirdar in Istanbul, this master plan was put into action, and large transformations occurred in the infrastructure and layout of Istanbul (Yildirim 1993). Kirdar and Prost worked together to create large scale changes in Istanbul, and to modernize, in a Western sense, the former Ottoman capital.

In transforming public spaces, Prost kept with the Kemalist arrow of secularization. Prost created parks, promenades, boulevards, and other open public spaces to “simulate a modern urban way of life” (Bilsel, 108). In keeping with the idea of simulating a modern way of life, Prost planned to build a park on the site of old Ottoman military barracks, and this park came to be known as Gezi Park. The historical fabric of the city was dramatically changed as Prost planned to create new public spaces, and change the layout of Istanbul to fit with the goals and ideology of the new Turkish Republic.

Today, Gezi Park is situated near Taksim Square and Istiklal Avenue in the Beyoglu district in Istanbul, together these sites make up an important cultural and commercial center in the city. Shops, restaurants, and international chains line the pedestrian zone of Istiklal Avenue, making it a popular tourist destination. Taksim Square is also used as a transportation hub, with many bus lines, a metro, and a tram line stopping through. Gezi Park’s tree-lined walks, benches, and fountains serve as a natural escape from the hustle and bustle of Taksim and Istiklal, just a few short steps away. Taksim Square has historically been a gathering place for leftist protests. May Day protests have occurred annually in Taksim Square, and in 1977 a gunman killed May Day protesters in the square (Dewey 2013).
Gezi Park is one of the few green spaces in the city, and this is why its possible destruction initiated outcry from environmental organizations in Turkey in 2013.

As they moved to more conservative policies, Erdoğan and the AKP sought to control and regulate a growing number of spaces in Istanbul. In 2012, the government announced its plan to renovate the area around Gezi Park with the “Taksim Pedestrianization Project” (Hurriyet Daily News 2014). This project included the reconstruction of the 19th century Ottoman military barracks that once stood on the site of Gezi Park, and within this replica of the barracks would be a shopping mall (Amnesty International 2013) The demolition of trees in Gezi Park to make way for this new commercial structure angered environmentalists, who began to sit in the park and protest its demolition at the end of May, 2013.

Events of June 2013

In June 2013, the growing tensions between Prime Minister Erdoğan and oppositional forces erupted into large-scale protests in and around Gezi Park. This protest was sparked by a
struggle over space, and turned into a protest where large numbers of citizens took to the streets to air their grievances against Prime Minister Erdoğan and the AKP.

In the last week of May 2013, a small group of environmentalists occupied Gezi Park to nonviolently protest the government’s plan to destroy one of the few public green spaces in Istanbul. To the protesters, the destruction of the park not only represented destruction of the environment, but also, “a government unwilling to respect or listen to opposing opinion” (Amnesty International 2013, 6). On May 31st, Police responded to this demonstration with intense force; protesters were beaten, tear gassed, and their tents were burned (Amnesty International 2013). This response by the police sparked large-scale anti-government protests. According to the newsouerce, Jadaliyya, the protests started as a peaceful environmental demonstration against the demolition of Gezi Park, but after the excessive use of force by the police under Erdoğan’s orders, the demonstrations became larger.

…this was a movement against the authoritarian rule of the PM Erdoğan, his neoliberal policies, attempts to intervene in all aspects of social life along an imagined Sunni-Islamic morality (including limitations on the sale and consumption of alcohol; attempts to limit abortion rights; and a generally patronizing attitude towards women and those with secular lifestyles), and insistence on the utilization of extreme repressive measures and massive amounts of tear gas even at the most modest, peaceful protest. (Karaman 2013)

On the afternoon of May 31st, there was an estimated 100,000 protesters in the Beyoğlu district of Istanbul, where Gezi Park lies (Hurriyet Daily News June 2013). By the middle of June, hundreds of thousands of people had taken to the streets all over Turkey to protest the use of force by police on the peaceful demonstrations, and to protest their overall frustrations with Prime Minister Erdoğan and the policies of the AKP, which were seen as anti-democratic and increasingly authoritarian.

While protests occurred in many regions in Turkey, the epicenter of the Gezi Park protest movement was in and around Gezi Park and Taksim Square. Protests and clashes with the police occurred throughout the first week of June. As the events in Gezi unfolded, Prime Minister
Erdoğan gave speeches to large crowds of AKP supporters about the protests; on June 10th he was quoted saying, “We will not only terminate these incidents, we will be on these terrorists’ back in the frame of law. No one will get away with what they did” (Hurriyet Daily News June 2013). On June 11, Riot police responded to protesters in Taksim in the “harshest crackdown since the movement started” (Ibid).

Amnesty International reported that: protesters and others were severely beaten, resulting in one death and scores of injuries; police frequently fired plastic bullets directly at protesters' heads and upper bodies; tear gas canisters were fired directly at protesters and bystanders, and sometimes into residential buildings and medical facilities; chemical irritants were added to water cannon supply tanks; women protesters were sexually abused by law enforcement officials; and live ammunition was used, killing one protester (BBC News, Feb. 2013).

Social media, especially Twitter, played a large role in mobilizing protesters during the events at Gezi Park. While much of mainstream Turkish media remained silent about the protests, Twitter became a hotbed of information about the protests. The Atlantic reported that on June 12, “15,000 users sent at least one tweet from Gezi Park, and at one point, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan even blamed Twitter for the unrest, calling it a "curse," a "menace," and a "scourge”” (Khazan 2013). Twitter became a catalyst for organizers to dissipate information, and for protesters to document their experiences. The international community became aware of the daily experience of Gezi Park protesters through tweets with popular hashtags such as #direngeziparki (Occupy Gezi Park). The silence of the Turkish media in the case of the Gezi Protests caused the protestors to take their cause to new forms of media and social networks.
Protestors posted about violence and brutality, but also about the collective experience of the encampment in Gezi Park. Within the encampment was a free library, infirmary, and scores of protesters with their tents, chants, and music. Kurdish, Kemalist, feminist, LGBT and leftist protesters came together to show their dissent in the protests. A reporter at TIME stated that, “The atmosphere is free-spirited and festive — on Thursday night, a German pianist set up his grand piano in the center of the Square as thousands of people sang along to the Beatles’ “Let it Be.”” (TIME 2013).

Protestors “occupied” Gezi Park for two weeks in June. While daily clashes occurred with protesters and police, Prime Minister Erdoğan became increasingly antagonistic towards the demonstrators, calling them “terrorists,” and “looters” (The Guardian 2013). The Turkish term for looters, “çapulcu” was adopted and appropriated by the protestors in Gezi to mean “fighting for your rights” (AFP 2013). The protestors were organized under an umbrella group known as “Taksim Solidarity”, consisting of, in their own words, “124 trade unions, political parties, community groups, sports club fan groups, and initiatives embracing diversity and expressing demands in a peaceful, democratic way.” In a press release on July 19, 2013, Taksim Solidarity stated that Taksim Solidarity, “voices a yearning for a greener, more livable and democratic city and country and is adamant about continuing the struggle for the preservation of Gezi Park and Taksim Square and ensuring that those responsible for police violence are held accountable.” (Jadaliyya 2013).

On June 13, 2013, The BBC reported that leaders of Taksim Solidarity had entered into negotiations with Prime Minister Erdoğan. Erdoğan’s party later announced that construction on the park would be suspended until a court ruled its legality. Erdoğan also told the group of negotiators that if the court ruled the planned construction legal, he would introduce an
“Istanbul-wide referendum” before demolition of the park began (Time 2013). With this announcement, Erdoğan told protesters to clear the park once and for all, and on June 15th police used tear gas and water cannons to clear protesters out of Gezi Park (Hurriyet Daily News 2013). Subsequent small scale protests have occurred since Gezi Park, but none of them have gained as much momentum or numbers as the events of June 2013. While construction on Gezi Park was halted as a result of the protests, many protesters agree that there is still more work to be done in terms of changing the policies and actions of Erdoğan and the AKP.

Conclusion

The Gezi Park demonstrations were a public revelation of political tensions that surfaced in the twenty-first century. Kutlug Ataman, a Turkish artist and filmmaker said, “Gezi has been a turning point for Turks...It has created a shift in public consciousness” (TIME 2013). The protests started as a struggle over space, and evolved into an event in which grievances against the Turkish government could be aired. Gezi Park as a symbolic place has become ingrained in the twenty-first century Turkish experience. The protests represent larger tensions between religious and secular elites, and leftists and conservatives. They were a manifestation of growing tensions over Turkish identity and citizenship. The following chapters will explore spatial aspects of the Gezi Park protests, such as the importance of place-based identities, the role of “free spaces” in protest, and spatial dimensions of policing.
Chapter 3: The Production of Space Before, During, and After The Gezi Park Protests

Revisiting Lefebvre: Perceived, Conceived, and Lived Space in Gezi Park

The production and control of space in Istanbul is an issue that was at the heart of the Gezi Park Protests, as AKP policies before the June 2013 protests were in many ways spatially motivated. Through infrastructure development, and “urban renewal projects,” Prime Minister Erdoğan’s assertion of spatial control created a tense climate in Istanbul well before June 2013. This tension can be clearly seen in the eviction of marginalized families from low-income areas to make room for large developments. Because Erdoğan asserted control spatially, the dissatisfaction experienced by many Turkish citizens emerged around spatial issues. Turkish citizens could see Erdoğan’s control in the forms of new housing developments, shopping complexes, and eviction notices at their doors. The protests that erupted in June 2013 occurred as a result of these spatial policies; in particular, the possible destruction of a beloved space, Gezi Park, sparked the protests and also served as the venue to show discontent. Protestors used space to claim their democratic rights and display their discontent with the AKP government.

Given the many complex spatial dimensions in play throughout the Gezi Park protests, Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space can help to contextualize protesters’ motivations, the actual events of 2013, and the aftermath of the protests. In particular, Lefebvre’s conceptions of perceived space, conceived space, and lived space are central to the events of the Gezi Park protests, and spatially analyzing the demonstrations begins with the ways in which Gezi Park and Istanbul have been socially produced as spaces.

Lefebvre’s first category, perceived space, refers to the tangible space that people experience on a daily basis. Perceived space is material. It is the space that can be seen, heard, felt, and experienced firsthand. In this definition, Gezi Park is a green space with trees, fountains,
benches, and people. These physical characteristics create and perpetuate social relations when meaning is attached to them through conceived space. This category refers to mental representations of space. When people think of, speak of, and hear of a space, they are creating social and mental conceptions of that space in their mind. Through language, images, and symbols, people create conceived space, as do urban planners, architects, and others, who seek to create and control social representations of space. Conceptions of space imbue meaning and social structure within physical (perceived) space. In this way, perceived and conceived space come together to create Lefebvre’s third category of social space, lived space.

Lived space is a mix of the tangible experience of a space and its social symbolic meanings. Lived space is “directly lived through its associated images and symbols” (Lefebvre 1991, 39). It is a mixture of the physical space and conceptual mental space that people experience. When meaning is attached to a space, and a person directly experiences the physicality of that space, that person is encountering this third category of social space. For Lefebvre, in short, perceived space is tangible, conceived space is mental and representational, and lived space is experienced.

Lefebvre’s three categories can give meaning to the social production of spaces in Istanbul over time. For example, before the protests, Gezi Park as a perceived space was a simple park with trees and benches. During the protests, the tangible experience of Gezi Park was changed through clashes with police, and the occupation of the park by protesters. This change in physical space impacted the social conceptions of Gezi Park, or the park’s conceived space. In the minds of many Turkish citizens, Gezi Park became a space associated with anti-government resistance, and police presence.
The changes in *perceived and conceived space* also influenced the *lived space* of Gezi Park. The types of social interactions that occurred in the park were altered, which in turn impacted the types of people that visited Gezi Park in June 2013. Because the physical space of Gezi Park and the meanings attached to it changed, the protests in 2013 had an impact on the *lived space* of Gezi Park. This chapter develops an analysis of the social production of spaces related to the Gezi Park Protests, and a discussion of the transformations of *perceived, conceived,* and *lived* spaces as they relate to the Gezi Park Protests. This discussion will include (a) spatial policies exhibited by the AKP before the protests; (b) possible changes in daily spatial routines as a catalyst for contention; (c) scalar strategies used during the protests to socially produce spaces; and (d) the conceptualization of Gezi as a space of resistance and opposition after the June 2013 protests.

**Pre-June 2013: Using Space to Produce Social Relations**

*AKP Neoliberal Policies Before the June 2013 Protests: Controlling Space to Produce Social Relations*

Control of place and spatial routines by governments can often become a point of contention (Tilly 2000), and in the case of the Gezi Park protests, numerous neoliberal, conservative urban policies created by the AKP before 2013 led to discontent among masses of people. As the AKP gained power in 2007, they began to assert their control through “urban regeneration projects” in Istanbul (Amnesty International July 2011). Under the AKP’s reign economic production more than doubled between 2004 and 2014 (Lepeska 2014). As a result of this economic boom, Erdoğan encouraged the creation of over $100 billion worth of construction projects in Istanbul. These projects have included a multi billion-dollar airport, and a $3 billion bridge (Hurriyet Daily News, May 2014). Luxury hotels, and billion-dollar infrastructure have changed the face of Istanbul, putting it in competition with many international destinations.
Erdoğan’s vision for Istanbul has been one of international prestige, and high-class, expensive infrastructure.

This trend, however, has proven problematic for the people living in marginalized parts of Istanbul. The AKP has created many “centrally designed, top-down urban policies [that] are imposed on society with no attention to social demand” (Elicin 2013). Erdoğan’s eagerness to impose a neoliberal and modernized urban planning policy on Istanbul has left little room for input from affected populations.

One of the most striking examples of the impact of Erdoğan’s building policies can be seen in the Istanbul neighborhood of Tarlabası, where forced evictions in preparation for new building projects have left many poor residents homeless. Located in the heart of the city, just across a highway from the high-end shops of Istiklal and Taksim Square, Tarlabası is one of Istanbul’s poorest neighborhoods. Tarlabası previously had been home to Turkey’s Greek, Armenian, and Jewish populations. However, pogroms and deportations drove many of these minorities out of Istanbul in the 1950s and 60s. Now, it is home to “a mix of marginalised groups” such as Roma, Kurdish people, migrants from Southeastern Turkey, and transsexuals (Today’s Zaman 2011).

While crime and poverty are part of life for residents of Tarlabası, the connections between people who live in Tarlabası are strong. One resident told a New York Times reporter, “‘My neighbors and I, we are like a big family...If anyone is sick, I know I can call on my neighbor to come help. We are very close” (Bourque 2012). David Joshua Jennings, a writer for the online magazine Time Out Istanbul described scenes of Tarlabasi, explaining that not much Turkish is spoken in the neighborhood, and the reality of Tarlabası is quite different from the reality of many other neighborhoods in Istanbul:
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Arab and Kurdish women with their noses chandeliered in aril and oyster-coloured rings all sit outside on their doorsteps, gossiping in their village costumes, jewellery rattling as they wave commands at their children. Each Sunday, the market transforms these streets into a singsong tent village. Merchants yodel songs back and forth to one another as light harpoons down onto them through the rent tarp flaps overhead (Jennings 2012)

In Tarlabası, rural life and urban life come together to create a unique culture. Accounts of life in Tarlabası show this reality:

In the weekly outdoor bazaar in Tarlabası, rural life raucously collides with the modern urban world. Here, less than a mile from Istanbul’s five-star hotels, child shepherds herd flocks of sheep through the streets as Kurdish women in bright floral headscarves shop for fruit and cheap Chinese-made cosmetics alongside trembling, teenage glue-sniffers and illegal African immigrants (Watson 2007).

Tarlabaşı, while only separated from the busy urban center of Taksim Square by a highway, is culturally worlds away from the high end shops and restaurants of Taksim and Istiklal Avenue.

In 2006, the Housing Development Administration of Istanbul (TOKI) declared the Tarlabası neighborhood an “urban renewal area” (Bourque 2012). This declaration meant the demolition of 278 buildings in Tarlabası (Letsch 2012), many dating back to Ottoman times. The GAP Construction Company, managed by Prime Minister Erdoğan’s son-in-law, was the company in charge of the renewal project (Songün 2010). According to the TOKI website, the urban renewal project would include “identifying the illegally settled households to be evicted” and clearing the land so it can be “regenerated through urban renewal projects” (Bourque 2012). The urban renewal plan called for the creation of shopping malls, high end apartments, and recreation areas on the site of these old buildings (Bourque 2012).

While TOKI legitimized their actions by characterizing houses as illegally settled, property owners in Tarlabası challenged this characterization. As part of the “Association for Solidarity with Tarlabası Property Owners and Renters,” residents filed a case in the European Court of Human Rights, stating that the renewal project “was a violation of the right to own property” (Songün 2010). Ahmet Gün, head of the Association for Solidarity with Tarlabası Property Owners and Renters, stated that not many property owners agreed to the renewal
project, while the mayor of the Beyoğlu municipality (where Tarlabası is located), said that over half of the property owners “agreed to turn over their deeds” to the GAP company (Ibid).

It is clear that the residents of Tarlabası and the AKP government had different ideas about the legality of housing developments in Tarlabası. Even with these differences, the power of the government to evict residents in Tarlabası has been increased through legislation such as Law No. 6306 in 2012, or the Transformation of Areas Under Disaster Risk Law. This law, known as the “disaster law,” gave “enormous powers to the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning to destroy any obstacle standing in the way of a construction company that has a major development project” (Altintaş 2013). While externally, the law was meant to deal with disaster risk, a group called the “Chamber of City Planners” explained to reporters that, in their view, this law is meant to give more power to the government for urban projects. The group noted that this law penalizes residents who oppose the urban transformation plans, and even gives the government the right to demolish “disaster-proof” buildings for the “integrity” of urban projects. The Chamber of City Planners explained that the law “gives power to the central government, crippling local participation” (Ibid).

This difference in understanding of legality also uncovers broader tensions between the Turkish government and ethnic minorities (such as Kurds) that have existed in Turkish society for generations. Most of the Kurdish families in Tarlabası migrated to Istanbul from the East of Turkey, where ethnic tensions have historically led to violence and displacement. Atiye Sülüm, a woman who migrated to Tarlabası from the East of Turkey in the 1990s explained that the “urban renewal” projects in Istanbul target migrants from the East. “‘They want to remove ‘Doğulu’ [which means eastern, but is also a euphemism for Kurds] people from here...’ Sülüm said a municipal official had once told her that ‘they [the residents] came from their villages and
occupied the abandoned buildings in Tarlabası...This is how they see us. They say we are occupying villagers. But I am paying 500 Turkish Liras a month rent here,”” (Songün 2010).

These changes were not only experienced in Tarlabası; urban transformation projects impacted other neighborhoods across Istanbul. In the first three months of 2014, 43 million building permits were issued in Turkey’s cities. This was more than double the amount spent in 2013 (Ibid). Sulukule, a primarily Roma neighborhood in Istanbul, was the focus of TOKI’s urban renewal projects in 2013, where houses were replaced with “modern settlement blocks” (Hurriyet Daily News, March 2013). The working-class, predominantly Alevi neighborhood of Okmeydani has experienced similar reconstruction plans (Lepeska 2013). Like Tarlabası, these neighborhoods have historically been home to religious and ethnic minorities, and other socioeconomically and socially marginalized groups.

In a report from July 18, 2011, Amnesty International stated that “vulnerable families” in Istanbul’s central district of Tarlabası were facing intimidation and forced evictions by municipal authorities. Andrew Gardner, Amnesty International’s researcher on Turkey, stated:

Most of those facing eviction have not been given adequate notice. They have not been consulted, provided with legal remedies, or offered adequate alternative housing or compensation. This is a violation of their human rights (Amnesty International 2011).

Residents of Tarlabası told Amnesty International that the only “alternative housing” offered to them was expensive, and on the outskirts of the city, a difficult commute for those who held jobs in the center of Istanbul.

The case of Tarlabası shows the AKP’s willingness to control and recreate space and everyday spatial routines within Istanbul. By evicting poor residents of Tarlabası, Erdoğan and the AKP drastically transformed the spaces in which residents of Istanbul experienced everyday life. In Lefebvre’s terms, the intent of these projects was to change social representations of Tarlabası, and other neighborhoods affected by urban renewal in Istanbul. By changing the
physical *perceived* space (knocking down buildings to make new ones) associated with neighborhoods like Tarlabası, the urban renewal policies of the AKP also had an impact on *conceived* space. Through this effect on both *perceived* and *conceived* space, the urban regeneration project in turn intensely changed the *lived* space of Tarlabası.

By asserting its power spatially, and changing everyday spatial patterns for many of Istanbul’s residents, the AKP government’s urban policies created a situation ripe for contention. Erdoğan’s attitude toward the residents of Tarlabası were manifested through his assertion of spatial control. In many ways, these policies of urban renewal and spatial control were the kinds of policies that created the Gezi Park protest movement; they were manifested spatially, and therefore public discontent was experienced spatially. This discontent can be seen in the creation of the Association for Solidarity with Tarlabası Property Owners and Renters, and the testimonies of Tarlabası residents such as Atiye Sülüm. The experience of discontent in Tarlabası and other neighborhoods around Istanbul created the basis for an anti-government movement that was fighting for spatial justice, and a corresponding mode of organization that used public space to do so.

The threat of the destruction of Gezi Park was yet another attack on the everyday life of Istanbul’s residents, and it was a catalyst for the large-scale demonstrations that took place in June 2013. In a blog post, Ph.D student, Basak Durgun, explained that, in her view, the urban renewal projects in Istanbul “do not only intend to create particular centers of capital accumulation displacing the urban poor, they intend to transform the everyday life of Istanbul as we know it” (Durgun 2013). The demolition plan of Gezi Park came after evictions in Tarlabası, and other urban renewal projects such as the demolition of an historical theater, Emek Cinema (Ibid). These projects exhibited the top-down policies of the AKP government, and Gezi Park
was seen as the final straw by many of the demonstrators. The proposed demolition of Gezi Park was a policy at the end of a long line of urban renewal projects that were viewed by protesters as neoliberal, authoritarian, and anti-democratic. People were not taken into account, and private companies were given opportunities to build and make money. Erdoğan’s spatial policies reflected his conservative agenda.

While these urban renewal projects have existed for years, it was not the evictions in Tarlabası that sparked the large scale demonstrations of 2013, but the threatened demolition of Gezi Park. Because Gezi Park was a space used by residents from all over Istanbul, its possible destruction impacted the daily routines of large numbers of people. While urban renewal projects in areas such as Tarlabası were manifestations of Erdoğan’s conservative policies, they only affected the daily lives of people living in those areas (many of them marginalized groups with little social capital). Gezi Park, a public space and transportation hub used daily by many residents of Istanbul, became the catalyst for large-scale demonstrations. Erdoğan’s conservative policies threatened the daily life of Turkish citizens, and this threat led to mobilization and protest in June 2013.

Contention in Relation to Everyday Spaces: A Catalyst for Large-Scale Demonstrations

The AKP’s development projects attempted to change the everyday spatial routines of Istanbul’s citizens. In the case of Gezi Park, the “Taksim Pedestrianization Project” would have drastically changed the spatial layout of Gezi Park, and the everyday spatial practices of many Istanbul residents. A comparison of the space can be seen in Figures 1.1 and 1.2.
Figure 1.1: Image released by the Istanbul municipality showing plans for the Taksim Pedestrianization Project (BBC, June 2013)

(Figure 1.2) Gezi Park as it is without the Taksim Pedestrianization Project (BBC, June 2013)

Figure 1.2 shows Gezi Park and Taksim Square as they stand today. The space includes a transportation hub, a large open square, and a public park. In Figure 1.1, the proposed redevelopment project, the bus station is transformed into a pedestrian zone, and a shopping mall development takes the place of Gezi Park. These transformations would have significant impacts on transportation for Istanbul residents, as Taksim Square is a popular bus and metro transfer
station. In addition, the park itself, as one of the few green spaces in Istanbul, is a quiet source of leisure activity for many people, therefore its destruction would alter the experiences and practices of many Istanbul residents. The proposed project would turn a transportation hub into a pedestrian zone, and it would turn Gezi Park, a quiet escape from city life, into a commercial center. These kinds of changes in patterns of everyday spatial practices can lead to contention.

The threat of the demolition of Gezi Park, its *perceived* space, and the creation of a pedestrian zone became a catalyst for larger protests. The impetus for anti-government demonstration was the possibility of changes in everyday spatial patterns. The possible destruction of Gezi Park meant a drastic change in the physical space of Gezi, in the representation of the Park (*conceived* space), and in turn the directly lived experience of Gezi. The Gezi Park protests were sparked by changes in everyday spatial characteristics of Istanbul. In addition, the protest movement that came out of the Gezi Park demolition attempts used many spatial and scalar strategies to call for changes in government policies.

**June 2013: Socially Produced Space and Scalar Strategies During the Gezi Park Protests**

*Producing Space and Scalar Strategies: “Free Spaces”*

During the Gezi Park protests, Gezi Park and Taksim Square were socially produced by protesters and the government as sites of anti-government resistance. With the social production of Gezi Park and Taksim Square as a space of resistance came the production of “free spaces,” and changes in the *lived* space of Gezi Park. Free spaces, spaces away from the surveillance of dominant forces, are important in forming connections between demonstrators, and they play a large role in the organization of demonstrations. Within these spaces, a culture of resistance is formed, and personal relationships are created. In the case of the Occupy Gezi Park movement, two types of free spaces were created--the Gezi Park encampment, and smaller neighborhood
forums. These two free spaces were important in the propagation of the movement, and sustained protestors throughout the demonstrations.

In the Gezi Park movement, the park itself was seen as a free space. While sights of violence and chaos could be experienced near Gezi and Taksim throughout June (and, as I will describe in Chapter 5, the park itself was policed in various ways), a different atmosphere existed generally within the Gezi Park encampment, where protesters lived in tents and makeshift shelters. BBC reporter, Mark Lowen, described the atmosphere inside Gezi Park as having a “community feeling,” and as “festive” and “carnival-like.” Lowen, who reported from Gezi Park, described the existence of music concerts, food stands, and poetry readings in addition to the political protest that was occurring (BBC June 2013).

The encampment in Gezi Park held a community of activists, and it created infrastructure to sustain itself. Michael Kimmelman of the New York Times described the scene as

an economy as well, street vendors hawking Turkish meatballs, vinegar (for the tear gas) and Guy Fawkes masks. (Kimmelman 2013)

The atmosphere within the encampment had an air of revolution and collectivism. A young woman, interviewed by Mark Lowen, explained, “what we have here is collectivist, we share our food, we have a library, we have a cafeteria, we are living here all together and it’s a peaceful movement” (BBC June 2013). The encampment also served as a platform for political thought, and discussion of the movement’s demands. Within the park there were six small forums where demonstrators strategized ways to defend Gezi Park, and to reduce police violence (İnceoğlu 2013). Gezi Park served as a space through which cultures of dissent were created, and political strategies were planned.
During the protest, Gezi Park was a space for dissenters from countless backgrounds to come together in solidarity. Leftists, Kemalists, feminists, homosexuals, Kurdish people, anti-capitalist Muslims, unionists, and people from all over Turkey came to occupy Gezi Park; the encampment attracted “a diverse array of people disenchanted by the government's Muslim conservatism, its free-market policies, or both” (Azizleri, BBC 2013). In this context, Francesca Polletta’s discussion of free spaces can be a useful analytical tool in understanding mobilization during Gezi Park, and the creation of a culture of resistance within the park’s encampment. Polletta argues that, while free spaces are important in creating an alternative culture within a broader regulated structure, it is in fact the associational ties that are created within the free space that contribute most to social movement mobilization.

Physical gathering places may build on those ties by demonstrating the co-presence of others, thus showing people that issues they thought taboo can be discussed, and strengthening collective identity by providing tangible evidence of the existence of a group. However, it is the character of the ties that are established or reinforced in those settings, rather than the physical space itself, that the free space concept has sometimes successfully captured. (Polletta 1999: 25)

As Polletta suggests, the physical space of Gezi spurred mobilization and sustained the movement as a free space by fostering ties between individuals within the park. The existence of the Gezi Park encampment helped people with weak ties create connections and build new networks of allies. This helped people from many different backgrounds unite against the AKP government, and mobilized different networks to join and create a culture of resistance.

Because of the convergence of so many different types of people, this new culture of resistance was known as the “Gezi Spirit” (Inceoğlu 2013). This phrase has been invoked in many ways to describe the unique culture of the Gezi Park protests. This culture was made up of “protesters of all colours – leftists, nationalists, feminists, anarchists, religious groups, secularists, students, bankers” (Letsch 2013). United in their desire to resist Prime Minister Erdoğan and his AKP government, these “protestors of all colors” created important ties with
each other through dialogue. Ahmet Metin, a leader of the Nationalist Association for Kemalist Thought in Istanbul, explained to reporters that he had “‘some wholesome discussions’ with Kurdish protesters, LGBT activists and liberals, for the first time. ‘We don't share the same political views, and we don't agree on everything,’” he explained, “‘But we're all here to defend democratic rights. It's a point of departure’” (Ibid). During the protests in June 2013, groups from differing backgrounds came together in an unprecedented way, and created ties with each other.

The significance of Gezi as a free space for alliances to be formed, and a culture to be nurtured, cannot be overlooked. This spirit lived on after June 15, 2013, when police invaded Gezi Park and removed protestors from the site. After June 15th, leaders of organizations such as Taksim Solidarity, having understood the importance of public space in a democratic system, created neighborhood forums, much like the forums that existed in Gezi Park.

The Gezi Park neighborhood forums have called into question representation in the Turkish parliament, and have continued the legacy of the larger Gezi Park demonstrations in smaller spaces. The neighborhood forums are an example of a scalar strategy, as leaders in the Gezi Park movement created small scale spaces of resistance within the neighborhood forums, which led to new forms and scales of protest. This strategy has proven successful in continuing the culture and goals of the Gezi Park protest movement, without its central location. In an article on the importance of the Gezi Park forums, Professor Irem Inceoglu (2013) wrote, “Forums, as extensions of Gezi Park occupation, are becoming sites of radical democracy. That is to say, acknowledgement and acceptance of differences with respect and acting together in various ways to increase the visibility of certain disadvantaged groups and identity positions.” The small scale public forums that spread across Istanbul and Turkey shortly after the Gezi Park protests show
the importance of the “Gezi Spirit,” and the unique culture of political dissent that was created within the Gezi Park encampment.

The “Gezi Spirit” is directly connected to associational ties that were created within the free space of the Gezi Park encampment, and the existence of both the Gezi Park camp and the neighborhood forums were essential in mobilizing protestors and creating a strategy for the movement. People from a variety of backgrounds came together in Gezi Park and created new social networks. The legacy of these ties can be seen in greater support for the Turkish LGBT community, and unprecedented collaboration between various activist groups discussed above. Professor Inceoglu (2013) explained, “This is more than one-off solidarity – this is a process of radical democracy where everyone changes at least a bit. As one of the main slogans of the Gezi Spirit puts it: “Kurtuluş yok, tek başına Ya hep beraber, ya hiçbirimiz” (No liberation alone, either altogether or none of us).” The Gezi Park encampment and subsequent neighborhood forums created personal ties between people that formed vibrant networks of allies. These free spaces also used scalar strategies to create plans of action and goals for the Gezi Park protest movement.
(Figure 2) A Map of the Gezi Park encampment, drawn by a blogger whose purpose was to, “leave a map of this place, for the historical record” (PostVirtural, June 2013)
Producing Space and Scalar Strategies: “Occupying” Space and Spatial Claim Making

While the production of small scale, free spaces was an important aspect of the events in Istanbul in June 2013, the utilization of larger-scale strategies was an equally important aspect within the movement. The act of “occupying” a space, and laying a claim to that space, is an act of spatial claim making. This idea takes the organization and strategy that often occurs in free spaces, and translates it into large, public actions. In the case of the Gezi Park movement, the act of spatial claim making occurred in two ways-- public demonstrations and the act of occupying Gezi Park itself.

During the demonstrations in Gezi Park/Taksim Square and in other parts of Turkey, hundreds of thousands of protesters took to the streets to make public demands of their government. The umbrella group, “Taksim Solidarity,” which consisted of 124 organizations that supported and participated in the Gezi Park movement, released demands about the destruction of Gezi Park to the public:

Gezi Park should remain a park with no construction within, this decision should be officially announced and the Atatürk Culture Center should not be demolished; law enforcement officers and bureaucrats who led to rising violence that resulted in the killings of three citizens and wounding of thousands should be investigated and removed from office – in particular the governors and police chiefs of Istanbul, Ankara and Hatay – use of tear gas and similar materials should be banned; all protesters in custody should be immediately and unconditionally released; it should be announced that none of those protesters will be prosecuted; and all de facto obstacles and bans against use of the freedom of assembly in all squares and public zones of Turkey – particularly Taksim Square and Kızılay Square, which are the venue for May 1 gatherings – as well as barriers to freedom of expression should be removed (Hurriyet Daily News June 2013)

The group met with Prime Minister Erdoğan on June 13th to negotiate these demands, and the negotiations ended in the suspension of Gezi Park construction plans. While the group experienced success in the termination of these construction plans, Taksim Solidarity’s original demands were not solely related to the demolition of Gezi Park, but also about larger tensions that existed in Turkish society. Many of Taksim Solidarity’s demands included issues relating to the overall actions and ideology of the AKP government:
the government should be well aware of “the stance against the war policy for our country and the demands for peace, the sensitivity of our Alevi citizens, the rightful demands of victims of urban transformation, the voices rising against conservative male politicians controlling women’s bodies, the resistance against the requirements on universities, judiciary and artists, the demands vis-à-vis seizure of rights of all the working class including Turkish Airlines (THY) workers, the struggle against all sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination, and requests for removal of obstacles to citizens’ access to education and health services” (Ibid).

Demands against conservative politicians and in favor of access to education and workers’ rights, while not spatially motivated, were nonetheless transmitted to authorities through spatial claim making. Massive demonstrations in the streets of Istanbul used space to make claims about larger societal issues, and this scalar strategy helped protesters to make both spatial and non-spatial demands of their government.

Another act of spatial claim making in the Gezi Park protests existed in the “occupation” of Gezi Park. The Gezi Park encampment had two purposes; it was used as a free space as well as a space through which public demonstrations and spatial claims were made. This multi-dimensional space took on characteristics of other 21st century protest movements; Gezi Park protesters situated their strategy within the framework of similar movements, such as “Occupy Wall Street” and “Tahrir Square.” This context impacted the collective action repertoire (Tilly 1978) of the Gezi Park protest movement. The term repertoire refers to the recognized strategies available for potential utilization by a social movement in its particular historical, social, and political context. For example, Americans in the twentieth century knew “how to carry on several different forms of demonstration: the massed march, the assembly with speechmaking, the temporary occupation of premises...Americans who have not learned this complicated set of actions through personal participation have nonetheless witnessed demonstrations directly, read about them, watched them on television” (Tilly 1978, 5-14). Actions of twentieth century American social movements, such as strikes, petitions, and mass marches, became part of the twentieth century American social movement repertoire. Movements in this context drew from this repertoire to create their strategies.
The repertoire of twenty-first century social movements – which due to rapid diffusion and visibility of protest techniques enabled by technology and other means, has standardized significantly across the globe – had an impact on the actions and strategies of the protesters in Gezi Park. The act of laying claim to spaces, or “occupying” a space in order to air grievances became a trend through movements such as Occupy Wall Street in 2011, where protesters occupied Zuccotti Park in New York City to protest the unequal distribution of wealth in the United States. In 2011, anti-government protests erupted in Egypt’s Tahrir Square. These movements created a repertoire of collective action that involved airing grievances in public space, and making claims to public spaces that represent negative government control. The occupation of Gezi Park existed within the collective action repertoire of the early twenty-first century, in which public space symbolized government corruption, and was claimed “for the people” in episodes of collective action.

By occupying the park, demonstrators made a statement to Erdoğan and the AKP. They claimed the park for “the people”, and used it as a way to publically display their discontent with Erdoğan’s policies. The unprecedented size of the Gezi Park protests was a result of scalar strategies of public claim making. Because the park was central space that symbolized the government’s authoritarian control of spaces in Turkey generally, large numbers of people flocked to Gezi in an act of spatial claim making. People from across Istanbul and Turkey came to Gezi Park to occupy it, and to take part in the movement to reclaim public space in the name of democracy. The act of occupying a space in the name of a movement is a scalar and spatial strategy that was very important to the Gezi Park protests; space was at the center of its strategy.

*Producing Space: AKP Redefinitions of Space during the Gezi Park Protests*
While protesters were refashioning the political meanings associated with Gezi Park through spatial claim making and free spaces, Erdoğan and the AKP were also producing social conceptions of the park. As the events were unfolding in Gezi Park, Erdoğan made speeches calling for the protesters to leave Gezi and referring to them as looters. The AKP organized “counter-rallies” in parts of Istanbul and Ankara (Hurriyet Daily News, June 2013). On June 7th, 2013, Erdoğan returned from a trip to a crowd of AKP supporters at Istanbul’s Atatürk Airport. At the airport, Erdoğan made a speech to his supporters calling on the protests to end immediately (Ibid). In another speech, on June 9th, Erdoğan focused on spatial dimensions of the tension between his government and protesters.

Many of Erdoğan’s words attempted to delegitimize protester claims to collective identity. In the anti-AKP protest movement, protesters connected claims to collective identity within the space of Gezi Park--those who came to protest in Gezi Park were “the people.” A protester explained this sentiment clearly and concisely, “it is a public space, it should belong to the people” (Azizleri 2013). This small quote shows how protesters conceptualized the space of Gezi Park during the protests; it was a park for “the people,” it was a park for anybody who took part in the Occupy Gezi movement. In Prime Minister Erdoğan’s June 9th speech, these connections between space, and claims to collective identity are clear: “Are the people only those at Gezi Park? Aren't those who came to meet us at the Istanbul airport the people too? Those who are gathered now in Ankara; aren't they the people, too?” (Hurriyet Daily News, June 2013). In his speech, Erdoğan appropriated the term “the people,” and challenged the spatial claim to collective identity of the protesters. In addition, by creating distinctions between spaces of AKP support (Erdoğan’s rallies) and spaces of AKP opposition (Gezi Park), Erdoğan played a role in the social production of Gezi Park.
Erdoğan’s speeches changed the representation of Gezi Park as a space, or in Lefebvre’s terms, the *conceived space* of Gezi Park was transformed. Although much of the population at Erdoğan’s AKP rallies had not physically witnessed the protests at Gezi Park, they saw the space as one of AKP opposition. The conceived symbolism of Gezi Park was produced by Erdoğan, and by creating this conception, Erdoğan socially produced certain spaces as “AKP friendly.” By understanding the ways in which protesters, Erdoğan, and the AKP produced the space of Gezi Park, a strong spatial analysis can be created, and can lend to greater understandings of the Gezi Park protests and its legacy.

Both of the scalar strategies used in the Gezi Park protests--free spaces and spatial claim making--changed the social production of Gezi Park as a space. In addition, Erdoğan’s speeches and rallies had an impact on the social production of the park. The *perceived* space of Gezi Park was transformed into an encampment, and into a space of contention with the police. The *conceived* space of Gezi Park was transformed into a space of communal resistance by the protestors. On the other hand, Erdoğan changed the *conceived* space of Gezi into a space of looters and criminals. With changes in the perceived and conceived aspects of Gezi Park came changes in the direct lived experience of Gezi as a socially produced space. This change can be seen in the legacy of Gezi Park that is still felt today.

**Post-June 2013: Social Conceptualizations of Gezi Park as a Space of Protest**

“Contention itself transforms the political significance of particular sites and spatial routines, as when locations of massacres become objects of pilgrimage or when funerals become major occasions for expressions of political preference” (Tilly 2000)

The events of June 2013 had a lasting impact on the social production of Gezi Park as a space. In the hearts and minds of the protestors and their supporters, Gezi Park remains a symbol of resistance to the AKP, and a symbol of public space for the masses. For Erdoğan, the space still signifies his threats and enemies. Gezi Park itself was transformed during the protest, and
this transformation has played a significant role in the conceptualization and symbolism of the park itself. Since the protests, Gezi Park has played a central role in resistance, and this can be seen in the “Berkin Elvan” protests in March 2014. Gezi Park has also become a space through which the AKP government has attempted to control and quell possible protests and acts of resistance. This attempted control surfaced in May 2014 on the anniversary of the Gezi Park protests.

Berkin Elvan Protests: March 2014

Since June 2013 Gezi Park and Taksim Square have been viewed as central spaces for protests and demonstrations. While the biggest protests ended after June 2013, subsequent (much smaller) anti-government demonstrations have taken place sporadically in Taksim Square and Gezi Park in 2014. Gezi Park has remained a meeting space for protesters to air their grievances against issues such as corruption scandals. Gezi Park has been socially produced to be at the center of discontent in Istanbul. This social production can be seen in March 2014, when large-scale demonstrations broke out after the death of fifteen-year-old, Berkin Elvan. During the original Gezi Park protests in 2013, Elvan was caught between police and protesters while trying to buy bread for his family. He was struck in the head with a tear gas cannister, and spent 269 days in a coma before succumbing to his wounds on March 11 (Hurriyet Daily News, March 2014). He was the eighth death linked to the police violence in the Gezi Park protest movement (BBC March 2014).

Elvan became a symbol of the state-sponsored violence in Gezi Park, and his death remobilized protesters to demonstrate against Erdoğan and the AKP. Berkin Elvan’s mother, Gülsüm Elvan, stated, “It is not Allah who has taken my son away. It is [Prime Minister Recep] Tayyip Erdoğan,” (Hurriyet Daily News, March 2014). Phrases such as “Berkin Elvan is
“immortal,” “the AKP and Erdoğan are murderers,” “the police are murderers,” and “stand against fascism” were spraypainted on buildings, and chanted by protesters across Turkey; Elvan’s face was plastered onto posters, flyers, and buttons. On İstiklal Avenue, the bustling pedestrian street near Taksim square, demonstrators sat silently with loaves of bread in hand to remember Elvan.

On March 11 small clashes between police and protesters occurred outside of the hospital where Elvan died (BBC March 2014). Elvan’s funeral brought tens of thousands of people to the streets to carry his coffin in solidarity with his family. Crowds flooded streets in many cities across Turkey to show their support for the Elvan family. Shortly after the funeral, protests erupted near Elvan’s burial site, and the protestors naturally migrated towards Taksim Square and Gezi Park, as this area still symbolized resistance and protest. This natural migration was a product of the collective-action repertoire (Tilly 1978) that was created during the Gezi Park movement in 2013. Because Berkin Elvan’s death was so closely tied to the Occupy Gezi Park movement, it followed many of the patterns of the June 2013 movement. By using Gezi Park as a central protest location (even though Berkin Elvan’s death, and funeral happened in a different area), protesters drew on the existing repertoire of collective action that existed in the social, historical, and political context of Berkin Elvan’s death.

At Gezi Park, protesters were yet again met with tear gas and water cannons (The Guardian, March 2014). Elvan’s death sparked anti-government demonstrations across Istanbul and Turkey, and many of these demonstrations occurred in Gezi Park. This instance shows that even after 2013, Gezi Park has remained a space dedicated to protest and resistance, and because of the 2013 protests the social meaning of the space has changed.

*The Anniversary of the Gezi Park Protests*
The transformation of Gezi Park’s meaning can also be seen through government repression and control of the space itself. In May 2014, on the anniversary of the original Gezi Park demonstrations, artists in support of the movement, unions, and other groups such as Taksim Solidarity called on protesters to return to Gezi Park and Taksim square to demonstrate. In a statement, the Confederation of Public Sector Trade Unions said, “Our rightful and legitimate struggle has been continuing despite brutal police violence, arrests, all kinds of oppression and unlawful practices for one year… We are taking to the squares for an equal, free and peaceful Turkey. We will be in the squares across Turkey on May 31,” (Today’s Zaman, May 2014).

As a response, Erdoğan ordered protesters not to gather, and deployed 25,000 police officers and 50 water cannon trucks in the neighborhoods around Taksim Square, an “unprecedented level of police deployment” (Today’s Zaman). In a statement, Erdoğan said that police were under “strict orders,” (Al Jazeera 2014) and warned protesters, “you will not be able to come to those places like you did last year,” (Hurriyet Daily News, May 2014). Erdoğan used space to stop his opposition from demonstrating. Public transportation to Taksim Square and Gezi Park was suspended, and roads leading to the area were blocked. Tear-gas and water cannons were used as protesters clashed with police on Istiklal street, near Taksim Square, but the square itself was blocked (Al Jazeera 2014). By blocking off access to Taksim Square and Gezi Park on the anniversary of the protests, Erdoğan’s actions displayed the importance of space in Turkish protest. In Erdoğan’s mind, Gezi Park was still a place of protest.

The Gezi Park protests of 2013 have left a lasting impact on the conceptualization of spaces of resistance for both protestors and the AKP government. Through the events surrounding Berkin Elvan’s death, it is clear that Gezi Park is seen as a central meeting point for
political struggle; through the police presence in Gezi during the anniversary of demonstrations, it is clear that Erdoğan sees the space itself as threatening. Space is currently an essential part of the relationship between state and people in contemporary Turkish society.

Conclusion

Lefebvre’s theory of the production of space is an important and unique framework through which to discuss contention, especially in the twenty-first century. In the case of the Gezi Park protests, space was the epicenter of contention. The control of space to produce social relations before the protests, in the form of AKP development plans, manifested power relations in the form of spatial assertion of control. Spatial actions on the part of the AKP government became a catalyst for the demonstrations of June 2013, which were both spatially motivated and spatially situated. The social production of Gezi Park as a space was transformed during the protests, and the legacy of Gezi Park as a place of resistance still held after June 2013.
Chapter 4: The Significance of Place: Geography, Symbolism and Identity in Gezi Park

The Situatedness of Space: Gezi Park as a Material Place

Adding place into the spatial analysis of Gezi Park leads to a greater understanding of mobilization in the movement, and the symbolic meanings attached to Gezi Park as a place. In this discussion of the Gezi Park Movement, place is considered important because it is the physical site where space is produced and social relations are fixed. Place is “space filled up by people, practice, objects and representations” (Gieryn 2000, 465); the fixed, material site in which spatial-social relations are situated. This fixity and materiality are important in social movement analysis because they invest meaning and identity within spaces. In addition, place is the site where political and social dynamics occur, and it is often the site where these dynamics are challenged. Because of its connection to identity, and the experience and airing of grievances, place played a large role in the mobilization and processes of the Gezi Park protests.

Important components of place that are useful in the discussion of the Gezi Park protests include 1) geographic location, 2) material form, and 3) investment with meaning and value (Gieryn 2000). While the previously discussed socially produced and producing aspects of space are important in understanding the production of Gezi Park as a social space of resistance, the geography, material form, and symbolism of place adds an equally important dimension to a proper analysis of the Gezi Park protests. The geographic location of certain demographic groups of people lend to distinct place-based identities, which affect social movement mobilization. Further, because of the material form and meaningful political construction (Martin & Miller 2001) of place, place can be the site in which grievances are experienced and aired. The investment of a place with meaning, value, and symbolism can also emplace contentious politics within a certain location. The material and lived site of place is important in the Gezi Park
protests; place-based identities, symbolic meaning, and the meaningful construction of place are core components in the mobilization and context of the Gezi Park protests.

Place-based identities and attachments, symbolism, and the meaningful construction of place are concepts that, in many cases, are at the core of social movement mobilization and acts of contention. In Istanbul, the social layout of the city allowed for mobilization in some areas, and anti-protest/pro-AKP sentiments in others. In addition, the strong association between Gezi Park and various grievances at the core of the movement has given the park itself special symbolic meaning in the minds of Turkish citizens, and residents of Istanbul. Place impacted the Gezi Park protests in three main ways: (a) Gezi Park was a site where grievances were experienced and aired; (b) Gezi Park was given special symbolic meaning as a result of the protests, further situating the protest movement within the geographic location of Gezi; and (c) previously formed place-based identities in Istanbul and Turkey impacted mobilization patterns, and vice versa.

**Place as a Site in Which Grievances are Experienced and Aired: Gezi Park**

In June 2013, Gezi Park became a material place where anti-AKP citizens both experienced and aired their grievances. In this discussion is useful to return to Martin & Miller’s (2001) categorization of place as *meaningfully constructed* by power-holders. Given this definition, place is representative of political and social dynamics. As the imposition of political control and dissatisfaction is experienced in place, associated resistance is in turn often expressed in place as well. Gieryn’s (2000) writings on place show that the experience of grievances in a physical place stem from larger social issues such as “inequality, difference, power, politics, interaction, community, social movements, deviance, crime, life course, science, identity, memory, history.” These issues are situated, or *emplaced* in physical places, and therefore social
discontent becomes experienced in physical places. As discussed earlier, this emplacement of discontent can be seen in the demolition of housing structures in Tarlabası, as well as the possible destruction of Gezi Park itself. These actions geographically situated power, politics, inequality, and issues of identity in Istanbul; discontent towards the government was experienced in material geographic locations.

The threat of the destruction of Gezi Park gave physicality to grievances experienced by anti-AKP populations, thus the park’s possible destruction was a source of political discontent itself. Grievances were *experienced* in Gezi Park before and during the protests. Police violence, which included tear gas, water cannons, and more, additionally situated the experience of grievances within Gezi Park and its surrounding area (Taksim Square and İstiklal Avenue). As protesters clashed with police, their frustration with the political power structures in their world was increased. Through the threat of Gezi Park’s destruction, grievances by the protestors were both associated with, and subsequently experienced in, Gezi Park. Those experiences were intensified during protests through clashes with police officers.

While certain grievances were experienced at Gezi Park in June 2013, other grievances were aired there, geographically situating Gezi Park as a space to show discontent with the AKP and Erdoğan. The possible destruction of the park, and dissatisfaction with police forces were only two facets of the massive movement of Gezi Park. While populations experienced discontent with the demolition of Gezi Park, the park also became a place where protesters could *air* their overall frustration with the AKP and Erdoğan’s policies. The Gezi Park protests emplaced other grievances such as strict alcohol laws, AKP assertion of spatial control, changes in power dynamics between secular elites and new religious elites, and changes in everyday spatial practices. Originally, protesters congregated at Gezi Park because of the grievances they
experienced with its possible demolition. When the state responded to these original protesters with forceful repression, additional grievances against AKP policies emerged. While these grievances were about state repression and larger political dynamics, they were deeply connected to the park itself. As Gezi Park became the epicenter of resistance to Erdoğan and the AKP, it became the geographic location through which populations both experienced and aired their grievances. The Gezi Park protest movement was then emplaced further by symbolism and icons associated with Gezi Park and its movement.

The Role of Place and Symbolism in Gezi Park

Emplacing the Gezi Park Movement: Symbolic Visual Art

The symbolism of place is another important aspect of contention, especially in the case of Gezi Park. The Gezi Park movement attempted to occupy and recreate the meaning of the park itself as well as overall public space in Istanbul. It intertwined ideas of freedom, democracy, and anti-authoritarianism with the physicality of public space. The act of occupying Gezi Park, and the emblematic images (such as graffiti and pictures) that came along with this occupation attached new symbolic meanings to Gezi Park, and physically emplaced the anti-AKP movement within the park. In contentious politics, many movements create symbolism in place to “defend places that stand for their priorities and imaginaries; and to produce new spaces where such visions can be practised, within that place and beyond” (Leitner et al. 2008, 162). The Gezi Park movement attempted to create an alternative reality in Istanbul, and the physical place of Gezi Park became the symbol of this alternative reality. This can be seen in images and graffiti that imbued the park with symbolism, and in symbolic actions that took place in the park itself such as artistic performances.

The expression of art in the form of graffiti, and other visual mediums, helped to emplace the meaning of the Gezi Park movement. By connecting art of resistance with the physical space
of Gezi Park, artists in the Gezi Park movement situated, or *emplaced*, anti-government resistance within the geographic location of Gezi Park. An example of this can be seen in Figure 2.1

![Figure 2.1: Gezi Park Graffiti (Amnesty International, June 2013)](image)

In this image, the raised fist, a universal symbol of resistance and solidarity, is the trunk of a tree that is planted in Gezi Park. The symbolism of this image is important for the Gezi movement, it depicts Gezi Park as a space of revolution, and the tree imagery self-consciously roots the anti-Erdoğan movement in Gezi Park, and – by extension – emplaces the movement itself in the site. The tree in the drawing also depicts the environmental symbolism of the movement. This symbolism connects social resistance with the preservation of Gezi Park and its trees. It creates Gezi Park as a space of environmentalism, and of public resistance and demonstrations of social discontent. By emplacing these concepts within Gezi Park itself, the image is linked to the physical place of Gezi Park, the discontent experienced by protesters, and the associated grievances they aired.
Throughout the protests, imagery of police brutality also came to symbolize the Gezi Park resistance movement. As a reaction to the AKP government’s response to the movement, images of police brutality in Gezi Park further emplaced power struggles within the park itself. The most famous of these images is the “Lady in Red” photo, which can be seen in Figure 3.1. This picture was also printed and spraypainted in many places (Figures 3.2 and 3.3), it was used widely as a symbol of the Gezi Park clashes, and the use of tear-gas on the protesters.

The Lady in Red was named Ceyda Sungur, a member of the faculty at Istanbul Technical University, specializing in urban planning (Gruber 2013). The “Lady in Red” pictures and
illustrations created Gezi Park as a space where injustices against protesters were occurring. The photo itself shows a police officer spraying tear gas directly in the face of a seemingly innocent woman in Gezi Park. This image came to symbolize the police crackdown in Gezi Park, and “as her image gained traction, so did public criticism of the police’s use of tear gas against increasing numbers of demonstrators. The excessive amount of gas led graphic designers and stencil-makers to ominously warn: ‘The more you press, the bigger it gets’” (Ibd.). This graphic shows how the protesters saw the growth of their movement—the more repression they faced, the more resistant to the government they became. The Lady in Red’s photo became an iconic symbol of the police violence that occurred in Gezi Park, reinforcing Gezi as a geographic location in which police violence occurred and transforming protestors’ and citizens’ orientation to the space in the process.

Emplacing Gezi Park Through Art and Social Media:

Many more visually artistic expressions of the anti- Erdoğan movement evoked images of tear gas and gas masks. These expressions, like the “Lady in Red,” situated police brutality in Gezi Park as a place. Artists added gas masks to the Twitter logo with the caption “#occupygezi” (Figure 4.1), and even put a gas mask on a penguin (Figure 4.2) to mock the fact that during the beginning of the Gezi Park protests, CNN Turk aired a documentary about penguins (The Guardian, June 2013). This act was viewed by many protesters as a way to mask the police brutality in Gezi Park, and delegitimize the protests. It was viewed as an act of “Turkish ‘self-censorship’” (Akarçeşme 2013).
Media censorship in the Gezi Park Protests has received a large amount of attention by the international community. Many journalists were beaten by police during the protests, and many were arrested as a result of their reporting (Amnesty International, October 2013). In reaction to this form of repression, many of the protesters mocked the obvious media censorship with drawings, such as Figure 4.2.

Censorship in the Turkish media in 2013 occurred as a result of the larger structure of the media in Turkey. In contemporary Turkey, mainstream media companies are part of larger corporations, all with a variety of interests. These corporations are also contingent on government contracts, giving the government control to pressure media outlets (Oktem 2013). The extent to which Erdoğan has looked to the media to assert power and control through the media can be seen in his attempt to take media coverage away from President Abdullah Gül.

A high-profile case of this is a non-written request on part of the prime minister's office to keep President Abdullah Gül's state visits and public appearances in low profile in newspapers and on TV programmes. This is a clear indicator of the power struggle, which has been unfolding between the president and the prime minister; but it is also a worrying sign of the extent to which editorial independence in all mainstream media outlets has been eroded (Oktem, 2013)

Given the government’s control over many media outlets, it is easy to see why, at the beginning of June, the Gezi Park protests did not receive much media coverage within Turkey. While news agencies eventually apologized for their failure to cover the initial protests, and continued to
cover them throughout the next few weeks, the impact of the media on mobilization in the protests is important. In large part because of this lack of media coverage, social media became an important part of the movement’s mobilization. Thus, the symbols of the Twitter bird and a penguin in gas masks depicted in Figures 4.1 and 4.2 are visual representations of the Gezi Park protester’s frustration with the Turkish media. The depiction of the penguin in figure 4.2 represents the control of the media by the government, and the repression of information that it leads to. The Twitter bird represents the power of people to subvert state repression. Through Twitter, protesters showed the world their experiences, and resisted the silence of Turkish media.

The protesters used social media to show the experiences they were having in Gezi Park, and to call others to come join them, which helped to emplace their movement within the park itself. By June 1st, at least 2 million tweets with hashtags about Gezi Park (such as #direngeziparki, #geziparki, and #occupygezi) were posted (Barberá & Metzger 2013). Protestors used their own forms of social media to connect with people and mobilize their movement. At the center of this social media campaign was the physical location of Gezi Park. The sheer number of #occupygezipark tweets further emplaced the movement within Gezi Park. Symbolic hashtags, such as #occupygezi, and artistic symbols of the suppression of information, such as the penguin in a gas mask, helped to situate the anti-Erdoğan movement within Gezi Park.

Emplacing the Gezi Park Movement: Symbols in Wordplay and Performance Art

Comical phrases and clever wordplay were also part of graffiti trends that situated the anti-government movement and police brutality in the physical space of Gezi Park. Examples of such wordplay can be seen in Figures 5.1-5.3, where the Turkish word for tear gas, biber (direct English translation: pepper) is used in witty phrases such as-- “Just-In-Biber,” a play on the
popular teenage musician, or references to the AKP government as a, “pepper-sauced
democracy” (in Turkish: *biber soslu demokrasi*). Graffiti artists also replaced the word for Jazz
(in Turkish spelled *caz*) with “gas” (in Turkish spelled *gaz*) in phrases that read “welcome to the
first traditional gas festival of Istanbul.”

Figures 5.1 (left), and 5.2 (right) depict the term *biber* in wordplay associated with Gezi Park. Figure 5.2
reads, “Pepper Spray Beautifies the Skin.” It was sprayed on a MAC cosmetic store on Istiklal avenue, very close to
Gezi Park and the sight of clashes with police officers. (Gruber 2013)

Figure 5.3 (left) reads “Welcome to the First Traditional Gas Festival.”
It was sprayed on the police quarters in Gezi Park on June, 1, 2013
(Gruber 2013), situating the prevalence of tear-gas within Gezi Park.
In addition to visually artistic images and phrases in the form of graffiti, throughout the occupation of Gezi Park, many artists used other mediums, such as performance art and music, to show support for the Gezi movement; these artistic expressions also had a role in situating the anti-AKP movement within the confines of Gezi Park itself. An example of such an expression is depicted in Figures 5.4 and 5.5, with the iconic “Whirling Dervish Gas Mask” photo. The dance of Whirling Dervishes is a mystical expression of spirituality that is found in Sufism (Islamic Mysticism). Many Sufi orders exist in Turkey, and whirling dervish performances have even become a Turkish tourist attraction, where audiences buy tickets for shows. The whirling dervish gasmask photo became symbolic of the Gezi Park protests, and spray paint stencils were even made out of this image (Figure 5.4). Many of these spraypainted images included the phrase *sen de gel*, or “you, too, come.” This phrase was taken from a poem by a popular 13th century Islamic poet, Rumi, and his poem *Sen De Gel* is carved on a shrine in Konya, Turkey (Tufecki 2013).

Figure 5.4 (Left): Stencil cutout of Gas Masked Whirling Dervish with the phrase “you, too, come” (Tufecki 2013). Figure 5.5 (above) actual photo of Gas Masked Whirling Dervish performance art during the Gezi Protests (Gruber 2013)
The Whirling Dervish performance piece in Gezi Park created a paradoxical symbolism, it juxtaposed spirituality and tear gas. The image of the whirling dervish, a spiritual and religious symbol, paired with the gas mask, a symbol of Gezi violence as well as resistance, created an “eerie theatricality” (Gruber 2013). The phrase from the Rumi poem also evokes mysticism and religion, while concretely emplacing the Gezi Park movement. The phrase “sen de gel” is a call to action, a call for people to physically come to Gezi Park and show their support.

Symbolic artistic expressions and images helped to emplace the anti-government protest movement in Turkey within the material geographic location of Gezi Park. This can be seen through graffiti stencils, phrases, and performance art pieces. These expressions of art created symbolic meanings for the Gezi Park protest movement, and also imbued the park itself with meaning. Gezi Park became a place where resistance movements came together, and its symbolic meaning affected the mobilization, and outcomes of the movement.

Place-Based Identities and the Gezi Park Protests

Discussing place-based identities can help contextualize patterns of mobilization in the Gezi Park protest movement. Place-based attachments and identities “constitute a form of collective identity that can promote or, if negative, hinder further activism” (Miller, 2000: 117). Political leanings as a result of place-based identities, such as the urban nature of Kemalist secular elites, have deep historical roots in Turkey. Political conflicts in Turkey, such as the tensions between urban and rural citizens, religious and secular citizens, liberal and conservative citizens, are deeply connected to place. Place based identities structure mobilization and contention, but are also structured by mobilization and contention. For example, the experience of repression in Gezi Park and other neighborhoods in Istanbul further increased social solidarity
among anti-Erdogan groups. Place-based identities influenced the events of the Gezi Park through political dynamics of place, and identities were also shaped during the protests.

*Turkish Identities Historically Rooted in Place*

Even during Ottoman times, before the inception of the Turkish state, place-based identity distinctions in Turkey were very strong. The experience and culture of Ottomans living in Istanbul was very different from Ottomans living in rural Anatolia. This distinction continued through the period of Kemalist nation-building, when Mustafa Kemal Ataturk empowered urban secular elites, and built up urban centers of Turkey. While Ataturk’s ideas of modernization through nationalism, secularization, and westernization helped to empower his bureaucratic urban ruling class, rural Turkish citizens of various ethnic background were increasingly alienated. The cultural practices of urban and rural Turkish residents differed extremely, and they rarely came into contact with one another. This rare contact became much more prevalent in the 1940s and 50s when rural Turkish citizens began to move into urban centers to find work.

Identity in Turkey has been historically rooted in place. Ataturk’s urban secular elites and religious rural citizens led very different lifestyles, affected by their geographic location. These distinctions even continued when rural migrants moved to urban centers during the Turkish industrialization era. The geography of thickly settled urban centers, such as Istanbul, has led to strong place-based identity creation. The identity of residents of the gecekondu radically differ from the identity of secular elites in Istanbul. Even today, these identity differences play a large part in political dynamics in Istanbul. When New York Times reporter Tim Arango spoke with a secular resident of Istanbul, professor Ersin Kalaycioglu, who said that Istanbul has, “been invaded by Anatolian peasants” who were “uncultured” (Arango 2013), Arango describes this sentiment as a “sense of elitism.” This elitism and difference in identity has created tension.
between groups in Turkey. The historically rooted place-based distinctions that are prevalent in Turkey and its major cities also had a significant impact on the nature of mobilization during the Gezi Park protest movement.

*Okmeydani, Besiktas, and Fatih: Different Neighborhoods, Different Responses*

Within the city of Istanbul itself, place-based identities were important in mobilization and participation in the Gezi Park protests. Political leanings in Istanbul are situated in place, which can be clearly seen when comparing the three neighborhoods of Beşiktas, Okmeydani, and Fatih. Beşiktas, home to Istanbul’s leftist soccer fan club, Çarşı, was a hotbed of anti-government activism during, and after the Gezi Park protests. Okmeydani, a predominantly Alevi neighborhood, and home to Berkin Elvan, was also a sight of anti-government activity and police clashes during and after the Gezi Park protests. Fatih, a religious, conservative neighborhood in Istanbul’s Golden Horn stayed quiet. These neighborhoods were affected by the identities of their residents, and these identities are strongly rooted in place.

In Beşiktas, a district situated near the water of the Bosphorus Strait, not far from Taksim Square, clashes erupted with police in June 2013. The narrow streets of Beşiktas are home to many restaurants, cafes, and stores, and it is a popular hangout spot for visitors and residents of Istanbul alike. Beşiktas is also home to the leftist soccer fan club, Çarşı. Members of Çarşı are staunch supporters of the Beşiktas soccer team, and they are very vocal about their politics; the “A” in the Çarşı logo is replaced with the anarchist symbol. Fans of the Beşiktas team are seen as “halk takim, the people's team.” Çarşı also participates in Labor Day marches, discusses anarchism and socialism, and has been part of protests against the government even before June 2013 (BBC Sport, 2009).

Çarşı was at the forefront of the resistance movement in Gezi Park. The place-based identity of Beşiktas soccer fans allowed for mobilization of Çarşı members in Gezi Park, but also
in the district of Beşiktaş itself. On June 3rd, 2013, several thousand people protested and clashed with police in the streets of Beşiktaş. Mosques, shops, and a university in the area were transformed into makeshift hospitals to help injured protesters (BBC, June 2013). Because the identity of Çarşı fans was rooted in Beşiktaş, the neighborhood became a site of protest and resistance during the contention in June 2013.

Even after the Gezi Park encampment was evacuated on June 15th, Beşiktaş became a center of resistance--Çarşı members helped to organize small-scale neighborhood forums after June 15th. The Çarşı group declared Abbasağa Park, in the Beşiktaş neighborhood, a new site of protest after Gezi Park was evacuated, and held neighborhood forums there (İnceoğlu 2013). Neighborhood forums became the new strategy of the Gezi resistance, after the evacuation of the park. In Beşiktaş, place-based identities created mobilization opportunities outside of the epicenter of the movement in Gezi Park. In addition to place-based identities impacting mobilization, contentious events in Beşiktaş also helped to foster social solidarity between people in Beşiktaş. Large-scale clashes between police and protesters in Beşiktaş created a sense of community between people in the area.

In the predominantly Alevi neighborhood of Okmeydanı in central Istanbul, place-based identities contributed to social movement mobilization, and protests contributed to the formation of social solidarity and stronger place-based identities. The Alevi sect of Islam is a minority in Turkey, and constitutes about one fifth of population (Çandar, 2014). Historically rooted tensions have given rise to serious discontent by the Alevi population towards the Sunni religious character of Erdoğan and the AKP government.

Urban regeneration projects initiated by Erdoğan have targeted Okmeydanı, and municipal services in the neighborhood are lacking, creating spatial tension within the
neighborhood (Dana 2014). Armed resistance groups, such as the Revolutionary People’s Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C), which is considered a terrorist organization by the United States, has received support from residents in Okmeydani. Ahmet Yabuz, a resident of Okmeydani, told reporters, “The government doesn’t help this neighborhood...There are weapons on the street. There are drug dealers. There are clashes between the armed groups and the police. We, the residents, are essentially stuck in the middle” (Dana 2014). Place-based identities have led to tension between the population of Okmeydani, and the AKP government, which in turn led to clashes and protests in Okmeydani during and after June 2013.

During the Gezi Park protests, Okmeydani became another space of protest and violence, mostly between the DHKP/C and Turkish police forces. Turkish security forces, afraid that the DHKP/C would create a violent, armed movement, came to Okmeydani with armored jeeps (Dana, 2014). Excessive force, including tear gas and rubber bullets were used on protesters in Okmeydani, and many innocent bystanders, such as Berkin Elvan, were fatally caught in the violence. During the Berkin Elvan protests of 2014, and in May 2014 during the Soma Mine protests, protesters clashed with police; many were injured, and some were killed. Because of the Alevi identity of many of the Okmeydani residents, the neighborhood became a flashpoint for anti-government resistance throughout 2013 and 2014.

In addition, clashes with police have also created a larger sense of social solidarity between the members of the neighborhood, Alevis as a group, and anti-government activists. Events, such as vigils in memory of Elvan occurred shortly after his death, and the masses of people that attended his funeral demonstrate this social solidarity; these events were created as a result of violence between people in Okmeydani and Turkish police forces. In Okmeydani, place-based identities created tension between residents and the AKP government, in June 2013
this tension resulted in intense, violent clashes between protesters and police, and as a result, larger social solidarity between residents of Okmeydanı occurred.

In the religious-conservative district of Fatih, place-based identities created a different reality during the protests of June 2013. The contentious issues of religious expression and identity in Turkey are physically experienced in the distinct realities of people living in different parts of Istanbul. The daily experience of Fatih residents stands in stark contrast to the nightclubs and bars of young secular life that can be seen in Taksim Square and Beşiktaş on any given day. The district of Fatih, especially the religious neighborhood of Çarşamba, physically looks and feels different from Okmeydanı and Beşiktaş.

Fatih is located in the Golden Horn, home to numerous historically and religiously significant structures such as the Blue Mosque, and the Hagia Sophia. These sites attract tourists from many parts of the globe, but these tourists rarely venture deep into Fatih, into religious neighborhoods such as Çarşamba. Women in headscarves and men in pious dress are much more common in areas like Çarşamba. Instead of drinks and music, the attractions of Fatih are mosques and markets. While many religious Muslims did join in the Gezi Protests (such as an organization entitled “Anti-Capitalist Muslims”), the place-based identities of many conservative-religious Turkish citizens impacted mobilization in the demonstrations. While areas such as Okmeydanı and Beşiktaş became satellite hotbeds of political activism against the AKP government, areas like Fatih remained quiet, and even became home to pro-AKP forces (Krajeski 2013).

Residents did not mobilize in Fatih like their counterparts in other parts of Istanbul. The reluctance of many residents of Fatih to join in the Gezi Park protest stems from place-based identities, and historical tensions that involve these identities. A 27-year-old resident of Fatih
told a journalist that “What was at stake was not the trees...The government has planted three billion trees! We are a democratic unity of Alevis, Sunnis, and Kurds...but the Gezi protesters provoked the Alevi community and caused clashes” (Krajeski 2013). This view of the protests surfaces larger identity tensions in Turkey, such as the Sunni-Alevi rift that caused clashes in Okmeydani. Other identity issues are at the forefront of differences in mobilization in the Gezi Protests. Journalist, Jenna Krajeski explained a facet of the secular-religious rift in Turkish society while interviewing a Fatih resident named Emre,

The Gezi protesters are "white Turks," Emre said, referring to a derogatory formula which classifies secular Turks as "white" and religious Turks as "black." With Erdoğan in power, and calling himself a "black Turk," that title has been reclaimed with pride. "They don't have a lot of struggles," Emre said of the protesters. "They are children of resentment." (Krajeski 2013)

In Istanbul, spatial patterns strongly influence identity, and vice versa. The historical religious and ethnic compositions of neighborhoods in Istanbul created social solidarity and political affiliations. Istanbul residents are segregated by religious practice, religious sect, wealth, and many more factors that influence identity. These place-based identities influenced the mobilization patterns in the Gezi Park movement, and the progression of the movement. Strong religious and ethnic affiliations helped mobilize populations in certain areas, but also helped create opposition to the Gezi Park movement in other areas. Place-based identities in neighborhoods such as Okmeydani and Beşiktaş created moments of contention outside of Gezi Park, while Fatih stayed quiet.

In addition, the events that these place-based identities created also affected the place-based identities themselves. Violent clashes with police in Okmeydani, and communal public forums in Beşiktaş further enhanced the identities of resistance in these areas. The relative quiet in Fatih strengthened the notion that, for Fatih residents, Gezi Park was not an event to be participated in. The collective identity and social solidarity of residents in Okmeydani, Beşiktaş,
and Fatih influenced events in June 2013, and events in June 2013 influenced the collective, place-based identities of these residents.

**Conclusion**

In the Gezi Park Protests, place, or the situatedness of space in particular geographic locations, affected mobilization, symbolism, and the site at which grievances were experienced and aired. As a place, Gezi Park was at the center of the movement. While grievances (demolition and police violence) were experienced in the park, larger grievances were also aired there. The movement to save a park became a movement against the conservative policies of the AKP government. The movement was emplaced within the geographic location of Gezi Park, and the symbolism attached to the movement further emplaced it within the park. In addition, place had a large impact on mobilization patterns in the Gezi Park protest movement. Place-based identities, deeply rooted in the history of Turkey, affected whether or not certain groups took part in the Gezi Park Protests. While certain neighborhoods in Istanbul, such as Beşiktaş and Okmeydani, became hotbeds for political activity in support of Gezi Park, other neighborhoods such as Fatih remained quiet. Discussion of place in the Gezi Park protests is necessary when exploring mobilization patterns, symbolism, and demonstrations in the movement.
Chapter 5: Policing, Repression, and the Regulation of Space in Gezi Park

Protest Policing

The actions and force used by police against protesters in Gezi Park remains at the center of discourse around the incidents of June 2013. According to a report from Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), in July 2013, there were over 8,000 injuries due to tear gas, rubber bullets, water cannons, beatings, and live ammunition; fifty-nine protesters were seriously wounded; eleven protesters lost their eyes, and five civilians died due to the “unnecessary and/or excessive use of force against protesters and other related injuries” (PHR 2013). The number of deaths linked to the protests has risen since the PHR report in July 2013, due to cases such as the death of Berkin Elvan, who was struck by a tear gas canister in the head during the June 2013 protests, and was put into a coma before succumbing to his injuries in March 2014. The use of tear gas, water canons, rubber bullets, and live ammunition, and arrests against the demonstrators in Gezi Park was widely documented by protesters and journalists alike.

The repression in Gezi was described in several testimonies from protesters an Amnesty International report (2013). One participant, Hülya Arslan, told Amnesty International that she and her mother had camped in the park for several days, but on this occasion they had just gone for the day. She joined her mother after her first day at work at the finance company Koç Finans at around 7pm. Two hours later, she explained:

The lights suddenly went out. Tear gas was being shot into the park from left and right and we could hear shots all around us. There was no warning. My mother has a heart condition. She thought she was having a heart attack. There was a large crowd at the centre of the park. We went there. My mother thought it would be safer. My two brothers were in another part of the park.”

Hülya then described being shot:
There was a rubbish container behind me. I felt bad because of the tear gas, so I went behind the container. I think about two shots were fired from about 10-15 metres away. It was dark so I only saw the sparks that came out of the gun. My friend who was with me said that three people in civilian clothes were shooting around. I was shot in the right eye with a plastic bullet which also broke my nose. I lost a lot of blood. I was taken to the makeshift health clinic in the park. I tried not to lose consciousness by repeating my mother’s name and phone number. An ambulance was called and I was taken to Şişli Etfal Hospital.

At the time Hülya Arslan spoke to Amnesty International on 28 June, she was still receiving treatment and was due to have a prosthetic eye fitted (Amnesty International 2013, 24).

Another account of forceful repression in Gezi comes from Hakan Yaman, a 37-year-old father who was beaten near his home in Istanbul on June 3rd:

I saw some riot police a few hundred meters away. I was first sprayed by water cannon. Then I was hit in the stomach with a tear gas canister but I didn’t fall down. Around five police officers came over and began hitting me repeatedly on around the head. One of them put a hard object into my eye and gouged the eye out. By then I was lying down, without moving. I heard one of them say ‘this one is finished, let’s completely finish him off’. They dragged me about 10 to 20 meters and threw me onto a fire. They left and I dragged myself out of the fire. I was taken by some of the protestors to the hospital. (Amnesty International 2013, 28)

Such accounts demonstrate the severity of police violence. Other protestors’ experiences underscored how repression in Gezi Park took on various spatial dimensions, such as methods of crowd dispersion, with these dimensions were especially prevalent given the spatial nature of the movement itself. The often violent assertion of spatial control was at the core of policing strategies in Gezi Park and Taksim Square, as Devran Demircioğlu’s protestor testimony demonstrates. Demircioğlu went to the protests on June 3 with his brother, and Abdullah Cömert. Cömert was hit in the head with a tear gas canister that day, and eventually died from the injuries he sustained at Gezi Park. Demircioğlu explained his experience to Amnesty International:

The police had built a barricade at the bottom of the street, the police stationed there started to throw gas bombs in our direction. We started running quickly to the road that leads from the back door of the Armutlu Mosque towards Mumcu Avenue. From there we arrived at the street where the events took place. We waited there and watched the street from the corner. A TOMA [water cannon vehicle] was coming up and down the street, at one point it stopped and sprayed water in our direction but we were not affected.

The armoured vehicles that were cruising around fired gas bombs on every street they passed. After a short period a dark coloured armoured vehicle stopped at the beginning of the street, Abdullah and I were watching it out of curiosity.

I heard something similar to the sound of a gun and the sounds of tear gas being fired, but I could not be sure if it came from the armoured vehicle. After a tear gas canister missed my head by about 20 or 25
centimetres, I turned around to run away. At that point I saw my friend Abdullah fall to the ground, all of a sudden there were pools of blood everywhere. While tear gas continued to be fired at us, and without waiting even for a moment I tried to bandage his head and asked the people around me for help (Amnesty International 2013, 21).

Demircioglu’s description of barricades, water cannons, and tear gas as means to control crowds shows the spatial characteristics of police repression in the Gezi Park Protests.

Protest policing is one of the bluntest spatial manifestations of the assertion of control, power dynamics, and struggles over space. As a form of repression, protest policing refers to the “the social control of public protest by police” (Earl et al. 2003, 582). Police orientations to protestors can be driven by two distinct strategies: “escalated force,” and “negotiated management” (McPhail et al. 1998). The escalated force strategy involves the use of force by the police or military to disperse demonstrators, even peaceful ones. This strategy of policing was prevalent in the United States in the 1960s in incidents such as the 1968 Chicago democratic convention, and the protests at Kent State University in 1970 (McPhail et al. 2003, 50). Protest policing in the United States changed in the 1980s and 1990s, as departments increasingly focused on negotiated management. This strategy centers on police efforts to negotiate with demonstrators before the demonstration, in order to enable police to regulate and routinize protest with “minimal conflict” (McPhail et al. 2003, 51). Although the political structure and dynamics in Turkey are very different from those in the United States, it is helpful to use these categories when discussing protest policing in Gezi Park. Gezi Park can be categorized as “escalated force,” Turkish riot police made arrests and used violent force to control and repress the Gezi Park protests. This strategy was supported by Erdogan and the AKP government.

In Gezi Park, police were the physical exhibition of Erdogan’s government; the clashes between protesters and police contributed to the production of space, the symbolism of place, and the spatial strategies of Gezi Park protesters. The overall strategies of police involved the control of space, from tear gas to water cannons, crowd dispersal was at the forefront of Gezi
Park policing strategy. These strategies also impacted the strategies of the protesters, and vice versa. As police asserted their power, protesters resisted; as protesters resisted, police officers changed their strategies. This constant interaction between police and protesters constitutes the “repression-dissent nexus.” In the social science literature on repression, this nexus provides a framework for explaining the effects of repression on social movements. While findings associated with the repression-dissent nexus vary (Earl 2011, 137), in all cases they serve to highlight the dilemma that police face: whether repression will deter protesters, or in fact mobilize them against what they view as unjust police action. The actions and geography of policing in the Gezi Park demonstrations had significant short-term and long-term consequences (detailed below) and impacts on the movement itself. In many instances, repression of protests at Gezi Park led to an escalation of tactics by the protesters.

In its discussion of spatial impacts of policing on the Gezi Park protests, this chapter will (a) categorize policing in Gezi Park under two theoretical models of repression, (b) explore spatial strategies of police and protesters in Gezi Park, and (c) discuss short term and long term consequences of policing on the Gezi Park movement.

**Key Elements of Repression and Policing in Gezi Park**

In episodes of contention, the character of police repression can be broken down into three key aspects; the identity of the repressive agents, the character of the repressive action, and whether the repressive action is observable (Earl 2003). Characterizing the Gezi Park protests in this framework can contextualize the spatial patterns of repression and resistance that occurred in June 2013. By identifying these three elements within the context of Gezi Park, the repressive actions of the Turkish police can be categorized within certain theoretical frameworks, such as the “threat” and “law enforcement” models of repression. In the “threat” model, there is a strong
connection between the threat of protest to the political elites and levels of repression--if the threat of dissent is substantial, the repression will be greater. In the “law enforcement” model, the extent of repression varies based on characteristics of law enforcement agencies themselves. The law enforcement model places emphasis on the organization and character of the law enforcement in an episode of contention to explain repression (Earl 2003). Placing the repression of Gezi Park within these models contextualizes the nature and spatial strategies of repressive actions during the protests.

The first key element of repression is the identity of the repressive agents. In the Gezi Park protests, the police served as repressive agents, working on behalf of the central government. According to Amnesty International (2013), “Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan rejected international calls urging police restraint. Instead, he defiantly stated that police would use still greater force, and later described the response by the police as ‘legendary.’” While in many cases, police can be categorized as state agents that are loosely connected to the national political elites (Earl 2003, 47), in this case it is clear that the Turkish riot police were acting on behalf of Erdoğan and his government, and were in fact tightly connected to the national political elites. Based on this connectivity, the Gezi Park protests can be categorized under the “threat” model of repression, in which threats to political elites are directly connected to levels of repression.

The second key element of repression is the character of the repressive action. The character of the repressive action is broken down into two categories: coercion and channeling (Earl, 2003: 47). Coercion displays the use of force publicly, and includes police and military action. Channeling includes “indirect repression,” such as tax restrictions on non-profit groups that can influence the tactics used by social movement organizations (Earl 2003, 48). In the case
of Gezi Park, the repressive action was characterized by *coercion*--the use of tear gas, rubber bullets, and water cannons (detailed below) show this characterization. The third key element of repression is whether or not the repressive action was observable or unobservable. Unobservable repression is covert, “the agents of repression, their actions, and the purpose of their actions are intended to be unknown to the general public” (Ibid). Observable, or overt repression, is intended to be known to the public and the protesters themselves. In the case of Gezi Park, the repressive action was observable--clashes between police and protesters occurred in public spaces, and these repressive incidents were widely documented.

Characterizing the repressive nature of the Gezi Park police clashes in this typology can help to categorize Gezi Park within literature on policing and repressive actions. Repression in the Gezi Park protests was (1) *observable*, (2) *tightly connected* to the central state, and (3) utilized *coercion*. Observable, tightly connected, coercion can be categorized largely into the theoretical frameworks of “threat” model of repression, and the “law enforcement” model of repression (Earl 2003, 53).

The “threat” model of repression revolves around the idea that there is a correlation between the threat of the social movement to power holders and political elites, and the level of repression (Earl, 2003: 52); the larger the threat to those in power, the more intense the repressive actions will be. Because of the sheer size of the Gezi Park protests, along with the international media attention, and spatial strategies of protesters, the Gezi Park protests can be categorized under this “threat” model. The movement threatened Erdoğan, and the political elites in power, therefore the repressive acts that occurred in the protests were strong and forceful.

The “law enforcement” model of repression is connected to the characteristics of the police force itself. For instance, police forces that have patterns of brutality and forceful
repression are more likely to use force on social movements and protests (Earl 2003). In the case of Gezi Park, the characteristics exhibited by the police force in June 2013 followed an earlier historical precedent for policing of social movements in Istanbul. An example of this can be seen in Kurdish protests in 2011, where tear gas was widely used against protesters. In the events of June 2013, forceful repression and the use of tear gas was also common. Through these historical patterns, methods of force and crowd dispersal became characteristics of Erdoğan’s law enforcement. In addition to this historical pattern, historical characteristics of the police force in Gezi Park impacted policing strategies, as detailed in the upcoming discussion on tear gas and pepper spray.

The three key elements of repression (the identity of the repressive agents, the character of the repressive action, and whether the repressive action is observable) situate repressive actions in larger theoretical frameworks of repression. Categorizing repression in Gezi Park can also help to understand the Gezi Park movement, and the relationship between the movement and repression it engenders. By classifying the repression of Gezi Park protests as *observable*, *tightly connected coercion*, the repressive actions in June 2013 can be further categorized into the “threat,” and “law enforcement” theoretical models of repression. Understanding the processes and mechanisms behind the repressive acts that took place in the Gezi Park protests can help to contextualize the spatial strategies and spatial aspects of protest policing in this episode of contention.

**Spatial Policing Strategies in Gezi Park**

Because riot police in Turkey are the manifestation of the central government’s power within a place, their sheer presence in a protest takes on spatial characteristics. In addition to acting as an extension of Erdoğan’s government, the police in Gezi Park also utilized spatial
strategies and methods. The spatial organization of repression and political control varies by location; in urban centers, police are the main agents of repression and surveillance, while in rural areas, police rely on bystanders and observers to report complaints (Tilly 2000, 142). Because police officers in urban areas act as direct repressive agents, social movements that are centered in urban spaces, such as the Gezi Park movement, tend to come into immediate contact with law enforcement agents. This direct contact has spatial influences on the trajectory of social movements and demonstrations, “the spatial organization of repressive activities and their evasion significantly affects viability for different forms of contentious politics” (Tilly 2000, 143).

In many instances of contention, as police use forceful repression, protesters respond and change their strategies. In cases such as the 1993 Santiagazo riots in Santiago, Argentina, “rioters were not only facilitated by city geography but also by the geography of policing” (Auyero 2003, 56). In the Santiagazo riots, protesters burned and looted government spaces, including official government buildings and residences of government workers. The geography of the city allowed protesters to move with ease from one symbolic government building to the next. However, it was not only Santiago’s geography that facilitated the spatial strategies of the protesters, but also the strategies of the police themselves. In one instance, a protester in Santiago described the dispersal of crowds because of tear gas. On the other hand, in another instance, police officers were weakened by the number of protesters, and physically left the protest; this abandonment of space enabled the looting of a government worker’s house (Auyero, 2003: 56-57). As the spatial strategies of repressive agents evolve, protesters must evolve their spatial strategies, and vice versa. In this way, policing and its geography have large impacts on outcomes of social
movements, and this can be clearly seen through the spatial strategies of police officers in Gezi Park and Taksim Square in June 2013.

Police in Gezi Park used forceful tactics; from tear gas to water cannons and rubber bullets, the main objective of policing in Gezi Park was the dispersal of crowds and the reassertion of spatial control. According to an Amnesty International report (2013), police officers utilized water cannons, tear gas, pepper spray, plastic bullets, live ammunition, and physically beat and sexually assault protesters. This use of force, deployed in reaction to spatial claims of protesters, was an attempt to control the spaces in which protesters could safely access, and an attempt to exhibit control over the protesters through the control of spaces. Through the use of water cannon vehicles, police created spatial distinctions between law enforcement and protesters--water cannon vehicles created a space where police officers were protected from the force of water cannons, and protesters were vulnerable. In addition, through the use of tear gas and pepper spray, police demonstrated the institutional characteristics of Turkish law enforcement. Police used these repressive spatial strategies to control and disperse crowds in the Gezi Park protests.

*Water Cannons--Crowd Dispersal and Spatial Separation between Police and Protesters*

The utilization of water cannons to control and disperse protesters occurred throughout the Gezi Park protests. According to Amnesty International’s report on police abuses in Gezi Park, “pressurized water was used repeatedly and unnecessarily against peaceful demonstrators over a number of hours. Other abusive use of water cannons...[was used] arbitrarily against demonstrators and bystanders alike at or close to the scene of demonstrations” (Amnesty International 2013, 19). Amnesty also stated that water cannons were used through windows and doors in buildings. In addition, they reported that many demonstrators suffered burns from
contact with water cannons, and that led to possible evidence that chemical irritants were used in the water cannons. The force and power of the water cannons used in Gezi Park is depicted in Figure 6.1.

The use of water cannons in Gezi Park has two major spatial characteristics: the dispersal of crowds in certain spaces, and spatial distinctions between protesters and police through the use of water cannon vehicles. The use of water cannons to disperse crowds was a way to change the geographic strategies of the protesters in Gezi Park, and police used water cannons to create control over certain spaces. In addition to the control of space that came with water cannons, a unique spatial distinction between police and protesters also occurred. Police fired water from vehicles, creating a buffer, and therefore a separation in the spatial positioning of police officers and protesters. While police officers were firing from the relative safety of their vehicles, protesters were unprotected and vulnerable to the force of the water cannons. This distinction can be seen in footage from clashes in Gezi Park (Ruptly TV, 2013), and is clearly demonstrated in Figure 6.2 where the separation between the police vehicle and the protestors can be seen.

Figure 6.1 (left) , protester hit by water cannon  (Kerim Okten /European Pressphoto Agency, LAtimes.com June 2013).  Figure 6.2 (right) police use water cannon vehicles in Taksim Square to disperse crowds and spatially separate themselves from demonstrators. (BBC.com June 2013)
Tear Gas and Pepper Spray: Dispersing Crowds, Claiming Control Over Spaces, and Characterizing the Turkish Police Force

The widespread use of tear gas and pepper spray to disperse crowds and control spaces became a symbol of the police brutality in Gezi Park. The previous chapter’s discussion of the symbolism of tear gas in the protests showed the ways in which the use of tear gas symbolized police brutality within Gezi Park and Taksim Square. This discussion of the use of tear gas will focus on the spatial strategies of repressive agents, and the patterns of repression in Turkey that have led to the widespread use of tear-gas.

According to Amnesty International’s report, in the first twenty days of the Gezi Park protests, an unprecedented 130,000 tear gas canisters were used (Amnesty International 2013, 19). Amnesty International reported the use of tear gas, “in a manner that was manifestly inappropriate, abusive and in violation of their rights” (19). There were also reports of police officers using tear gas in enclosed spaces, and shooting canisters “horizontally” to use as a weapon. This horizontal firing of tear gas injured many protesters, and even killed a handful of demonstrators and bystanders, such as Berkin Elvan. The Human Rights Foundation of Turkey reported that “of the applications for rehabilitation made to their foundation, 60% were due to injuries caused by gas canisters, a far higher proportion than they are accustomed to dealing with after other protests” (Amnesty International 2013, 19). Tear gas and pepper spray were used to disperse crowds, and to assert control over spaces. Because police officers were equipped with gas masks and proper protection, they were able to control spaces and break up protests quite easily with these chemical weapons.

Analyzing the use of tear gas within the framework of the “law enforcement” theory of repression can lead to a broader understanding of the nature of repression in the Gezi Park protests. While many theories of repression revolve around the interests of political elites, such
as the “threat” approach, the law enforcement model of repression (or the “blue approach”), focuses on the realities of police forces. “The blue approach argues that while elites may be concerned about more *diffuse* threats, such as the articulation of revolutionary goals by a protest group or movement, the police are more concerned with *situational* threats that indicate that they may lose control of a community or a crowd (or have already begun to do so)” (Earl & Soule 2006, 149). While the riot police in Gezi were deployed because of *diffuse* threats (Erdoğan’s fears), in many cases, the use of tear gas was used in response to *situational* threats. Tear gas was used to assert control over spaces, and had been historically used in Turkey to do so.

While the police in the Gezi Park protests used an unmatched amount of tear gas and pepper spray on protesters, it was not the first time demonstrations in Turkey were suppressed using these weapons. In 2011 and 2012, historical tensions involving the Kurdish minority in Turkey led to a large number of protests in Istanbul and Southeastern Turkey. Protests were organized by the pro-Kurdish “Peace and Democracy Party” (BDP). On June 27th, 2011, pro-Kurdish protesters marched in Istanbul to protest a “Turkish election board ruling that has stripped a pro-Kurdish politician, Hatip Dicle, from his newly won seat in parliament” (Al-Jazeera 2011). Police officers in Istanbul utilized tear gas to disperse these protests. On April 8th, 2011, police used pepper spray to break up another BDP demonstration in Southeastern Turkey (Hurriyet Daily News, 2011). The use of tear gas and pepper spray in these smaller incidents created a precedent in the practice of Turkish law enforcement. The pattern of using tear gas to disperse crowds in Turkey contributed to the nature of repressive acts in the Gezi Park protests.

Institutional elements of the Turkish police force are demonstrated through their use of tear gas. For the Turkish police force, the dispersal of crowds and assertion of spatial control became one of the main goals of repression in Gezi Park; this shows that institutionally, the
The purpose of police repression is to maintain public order and control, by any means necessary. The Gezi Park protests demonstrated an important historical pattern of Turkish law enforcement—the use of tear gas to disperse protesters, and retain spatial control over large crowds of demonstrators. The use of tear gas is, at its core, a spatial claim of control, and the historical precedent of previous protests in Turkey allowed for the widespread use of tear gas in Gezi Park and Taksim Square in June 2013.

Spatial Strategies of Protesters in Gezi Park

While previous chapters have discussed spatial strategies of protesters in terms of the production of space, free spaces, symbolism and place, and place-based identities, this discussion of spatial strategies will focus on responses to repressive actions in the Gezi Park protests. Because police utilized crowd dispersal mechanisms such as tear gas and water cannons, protesters had to develop ways to respond to the spatial strategies of the police. Protesters created new spatial strategies, and responded to police brutality by evading, satirizing, and blocking (Edwards & Gillham, 2013: 16) designated zones of spatial constraint.

Spatial Strategies of Protesters: Evading and Satirizing

Gezi Park protesters responded to forceful police repression by evading designated “no-go” zones (Edwards & Gillham 2013) created by law enforcement. The most striking example of this evasion occurred at the end of the large-scale protests, on June 15th, 2013. According to Hurriyet Daily News, on June 15th, police used high levels of tear gas and water cannons to clear Gezi Park and Taksim Square of protesters, ending the occupation of Gezi Park, and creating a “no-go zone” within the park. Law enforcement officials stood guard to make sure no protesters would return. The protesters responded to this spatial strategy of intense force by evading Gezi
Park. They set up neighborhood forums, effectively decentralizing the movement, and creating alternative spaces for Gezi Park resistance to occur.

In addition to spatial strategy of evading, protesters also responded to spatial constraint by *satirizing*. The symbolic creations of protesters in Gezi Park can be compared to the satirizing efforts of the Occupy Wall Street movement, where “activists resisted the physical control of space around the statue by taking ownership of it symbolically through satire” (Edwards & Gillham, 2013: 17). Protesters emplaced anti-AKP resistance within Gezi Park, and created satirical wordplay and phrases to take ownership over the space of Gezi Park. Images and phrases that satirized specific spatial constraints created by police can be seen in Figures 7.1 and 7.2. In Figure 7.1, a photo of a “Gas-manian Devil” is ripping through Gezi Park. In Figure 7.2, a protesters has placed tree branches in an empty tear gas cannister. According to reporters from the BBC, “Protesters also placed an ad, in which a water cannon is for sale, poking fun at the police: ‘The water cannon we took from our dear state two days ago is for sale. Hardly used. It has a capacity of spraying 1,000 police officers in one hour’” (Sabral & Erdim 2013).

These satires directly relate to the repressive force used by police to assert spatial control, and by making a joke out of repression, they undermined the legitimacy of policing action. The satire used by protesters in Gezi Park was both a way of challenging the policing of the Gezi Park protests, and of challenging Erdoğan and the AKP. Because the police were seen as an extension of the state, diminishing the legitimacy of police actions also diminished the legitimacy of the government.
Another form of satire utilized by the Gezi Park protesters centered around the phrase, “çapulcu.” In June 2013, Prime Minister Erdoğan referred to the Gezi Park protesters as çapulcu, “a term meaning “marauder, low-life, riffraff, or bum” (Jadiliyya, 2013). This phrase was re-appropriated by the Gezi Park protesters, who used it satirically to take ownership of their movement and delegitimize Erdoğan’s claims. Phrases such as “I çapul, therefore I am,” and “çapul out man!” were written in various locations. By redefining çapulcu, protesters transformed Erdoğan’s insult into a humorous and appropriate term to use. This undermined Erdoğan’s seriousness and legitimacy in the eyes of the protesters. These satirical symbols allowed demonstrators to resist the spatial constraints that existed in the Gezi Park movement.

**Spatial Strategies of Protesters on June 11th: “Blocking” Strategies**

Protesters utilized the strategy of blocking to resist the repression and constraint created by Turkish riot police. During the protests in early June, protesters created makeshift barricades to block the movement of police officers. On June 11th, 2013, police officers fired tear gas and water cannons, broke through the barricades, and dispersed all crowds from Taksim Square.
through a day of intense clashes; on June 11th, Taksim Square was described as “under a thick cloud of tear gas” (Hurriyet Daily News June 11, 2013). Protesters fled to the adjacent space of Gezi Park, and set up new barricades around the park. The spatial strategies of both protesters and police officers impacted the events of June 11th. Police officers used methods of crowd dispersion (such as water cannons and tear gas), to clear Taksim Square of protesters, and assert control over the space. While police officers dispersed crowds from Taksim Square, demonstrators placed homemade barricades around Gezi Park to block police officers from entering.

On June 12th, BBC reporter, James Reynolds, reported on the incident from Istanbul. He explained that while the protesters had lost control over Taksim Square, “the protesters still have next door Gezi Park. This is really the symbolic and the practical heart of their protest movement,” pointing to a makeshift barricade, he continued, “just look at what they’ve done here, they’ve set up their own barricade, and they want to try to use this to make sure that the police do not get in. Beyond these cars, beyond these barricades, lies the protesters’ own heartland in Gezi Park” (BBC June 2013).

By evading, satirizing, and blocking spatial constraint created by law enforcement in Gezi Park, protesters challenged policing strategies, while also adapting their own spatial strategies in response to repressive tactics. The spatial moves of protesters impacted police officers, and vice versa. The dynamics between police officers and protesters in Gezi Park were tangible manifestations of larger political dynamics between the AKP and their opposition. The physicality of these dynamics occurred in space, and helped to socially produce Gezi Park and Taksim Square as sites of civilian clashes with authority.

Outcomes and Consequences of Policing Strategies in Gezi Park
Literature on repression has focused not only on models such as the “threat” and “law enforcement” approaches, but also the “repression-dissent nexus,” which focuses on the consequences and outcomes of repression in relation to social movements. In Gezi Park, police officers used the “Calling All Cars” strategy of repression multiple times. This strategy is “the most expansive” strategy of police repression in that it involves police “using violence to control and/or repress a protest event” (Earl & Soule 2010, 82). Jennifer Earl and Sarah Soule’s (2010) research found that protest is negatively impacted in the short term with the Calling All Cars method, but “when two or more events are policed using Calling All Cars, protest is actually stimulated” (100). In the case of Gezi Park, the short term effect of the Calling All Cars strategy had positive impacts on the movement. In the long run, the police repression in Gezi Park caused more types of mobilization, but the movements could not sustain themselves because of the high levels of repression utilized by the riot police force.

**Short-Term Outcomes--Positive Effects of Repression on the Gezi Park Movement**

While in most cases, the Calling All Cars method leads to negative short-term impacts on social movements, in the Gezi Park protests it actually led to stimulation and mobilization of the movement. This is due to the unique nature of the Gezi Park movement, and the fact that police used Calling All Cars multiple times. When the Calling All Cars approach is used multiple times in one week, it has a “radicalizing effect...because protesters may see this as a severe shift in policing strategy that must be resisted” (Earl and Soule 2010, 100). This radicalizing effect mobilized demonstrators in the Gezi Park movement.

The original use of Calling All Cars had positive effects on the Gezi Park protests because of the unique nature of the Gezi Park protests. On May 31st, 2013, police officers repressed a small group of peaceful demonstrators in Gezi Park. This forceful repression did not
stop the protests, it mobilized hundreds of thousands of protesters to occupy Gezi Park, and demonstrate in Taksim Square. Throughout the protests, police brutality was used as a symbol of state authoritarianism, and actually fueled the demonstrations further.

The Gezi Park protests evolved from environmentalist demonstrations to overall anti-government demonstrations. Because of this evolution, Calling All Cars, a strategy that would normally negatively impact a social movement, was actually part of the catalyst to create the Gezi Park movement. As police brutality increased, public discontent for the AKP also increased, having a positive effect on the trajectory of the movement. Ugur Tanyeli, an architecture historian, explained that “The real problem is not Taksim, and not the park, but the lack of any form of democratic decision-making process and the utter lack of consensus. We now have a PM who does whatever he wants.” For the protesters, police repression demonstrated Erdoğan’s anti-democratic tendencies, and therefore it fuelled their movement.

Long-Term Outcomes, June 15th: Negative Effects of Repression on the Gezi Park Movements

On June 15th, 2013 the Turkish riot police changed their spatial strategies. According to a report by the New York Times, “Recep Tayyip Erdoğan ordered the riot police to storm the center of the protest movement in Gezi Park on Saturday evening, setting off a night of chaos in downtown Istanbul” (Arango et al. 2013). Police used high levels of tear gas and water cannons to evacuate Gezi Park, ending the two week-long occupation of the park. A protester explained, “They fired sound bombs first, and then the tear gas came, and we were caught totally off guard. It was as if they were trying to kill us, not evacuate the park” (Ibid). The violent clashes that occurred on June 15th ended with the evacuation of protesters from Gezi Park. Protesters were
not allowed back into the park in the days after June 15th (Hurriyet Daily News June 2013), and the movement lost its momentum.

Why did this specific incident have negative effects on the movement when previous repression fuelled it? In this incident, an even higher level of the Calling All Cars strategy was employed. According to Earl and Soule (2010), an isolated “Calling All Cars” strategy has negative short-term effects on activism. But multiple uses of force and violence can spur intensified grievances among protesters, producing a positive impact on social movement activism. While in the short run, repression was effective in Gezi Park, because the June 15th incident was so much larger than other incidents (1,000 police officers were flown in from other regions of Turkey (BBC 2013)), it in effect served as an isolated Calling All Cars strategy. Consistent with Earl and Soule’s expectations, such police action had negative short- and long-term impacts on social movement activism.

While the police repression strategies helped mobilize the Gezi Park movement throughout the first two weeks of June 2013 (multiple Calling All Cars strategies were used), on June 15th, the spatial strategy change of the police force had negative impacts on the movement. Because the police used such high levels of repression with tear gas and water cannons on June 15th, the protesters were unable to stay in the Gezi encampment. The movement was never able to return to Gezi Park in such large numbers. While the Gezi Spirit remained in neighborhood forums, the large-scale public claim making ceased to exist in Gezi Park--the park was no longer occupied. In addition, future protests of resistance, such as the Berkin Elvan protests, the Gezi Park anniversary protests, and the May Day 2014 protests were met with intense repression from the beginning, and were not able to mobilize in the same way as the protests of June 2013.

Conclusion
In Gezi Park, the riot police and the repressive tactics they used were spatial demonstrations of larger political dynamics. Because the policing of Gezi Park was *tightly connected, observable, coercion*, it can be categorized under the “threat” and “law enforcement models.” These models can give insight into the motives behind spatial strategies of police officers. The use of water cannons, tear gas, pepper spray, beatings, and sexual assault by police officers is connected to the perceived threat of the protests to the AKP, and the characteristics of Turkish law enforcement.

The spatial strategies of police officers also impacted the spatial strategies of protesters. Protesters utilized strategies such as *evading, blocking, and satirizing* to resist the spatial constraint placed on them by repressive actors. Because of the relationship between spatial strategies of police and protesters, the repression in Gezi Park had immense short-term and long-term impacts on the movement itself. Originally, the Calling All Cars policing strategy had a positive effect on the movement; demonstrators saw police brutality as a symptom of Erdoğan’s authoritarianism, and therefore they were mobilized to fight harder for their rights. In the end, the Calling All Cars strategy proved too strong for the movement, and had negative long-term effects. When Gezi Park was no longer the center of AKP resistance, the movement lost much of its power. In the end, the construction of Gezi Park was halted, which was a win for the movement. However, Erdoğan and the AKP remained strong, and future protests were forcefully quelled. No other anti-government movement was able to maintain itself for over two weeks, and the long-term consequences of police repression have contributed to this reality.
Chapter 6: Summary and Implications

The goal of this research was to explore the role of space in contentious politics through the case of the Gezi Park protests in June 2013. As such, this project not only has implications for understanding Gezi Park and Turkish politics, but also for social movements as a whole. Space and social relations are deeply connected, and social movement literature should integrate space as a central aspect of contentious politics. Through the Gezi Park protests, my research shows that space can deepen social movement analysis through concepts such as (a) the social production of space; (b) scalar strategies in contentious politics; (c) place and place-based identities; and (d) policing and spatial practices of repression. Through my research, I found that spatial perspectives of contentious politics further enhance understandings of social movements and episodes of contention.

Summary

This project explored the role of social space in the Gezi Park protests through the concepts of space, scale, place, and policing, drawing on theoretical frameworks associated with the social production of space, the physicality and identity of place, the significance of scalar tactics in contentious politics, and the spatiality of protest policing. These are significant concepts that played a central role in the Gezi Park protests, and they exemplify the connection between space, social relations, and contention.

Henri Lefebvre’s (1991) theory of the social production of space is a useful foundation for creating a spatial analysis of social movements. Lefebvre sees space as both socially produced and socially producing—space is created by social relations, and it helps inform them as well. Lefebvre shows this constitutive relationship between space and social relations through his three categories of space, perceived, conceived, and lived space. Perceived, or tangible space,
refers to physical characteristics of space that have an impact on social relations. *Conceived* space, or mental representations of space inject social meaning within tangible space. The intersection of these two categories of space creates *lived* space, or space that is directly experienced through its mental representations. These three categories connect the social with the spatial, and were used in this project as a theoretical scaffolding to create a spatial analysis of contentious politics. Lefebvre’s notions of space show that when space is altered, it impacts social relations. When protesters occupied Gezi Park, they changed the tangible space, the social representation of the space, and in turn the lived experience of people in that space.

The social production of space in Istanbul affected the social relations and political dynamics that led to the Gezi Park protests. Before the protests in 2013, political tensions between Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his opposition manifested themselves through space in the AKP’s “urban renewal projects.” These efforts displaced marginalized communities and allowed private companies to build in their place. Members of marginalized communities experienced discontent with Erdoğan’s assertion of spatial control, and this discontent was experienced by a larger percentage of the Istanbul population through the possible destruction of Gezi Park.

Indeed, while Erdoğan created spatial changes to assert his control all over Istanbul, it was the possible demolition of Gezi Park that sparked the protests. As a transportation hub and green space in a busy part of town, Gezi Park was frequented daily by many different types of residents of Istanbul. Because of its central location and its role as a transportation hub, residents from a variety of neighborhoods and classes used Gezi Park daily. The threat of its destruction changed the everyday spatial practices, *and* represented the conservative political platform of the AKP party. This led to the large-scale anti-government demonstrations in 2013. While these
demonstrations were about political tensions and democratic rights, the catalyst for the demonstrations was the destruction of the everyday space of Gezi Park.

Socially produced space is also important in understanding the strategies of protesters during Gezi Park. Protesters utilized different scales, such as the creation of free spaces on a smaller scale and public claim making on a larger one, to create a dynamic movement. Within the Gezi Park encampment, protesters created a free space, or a space without the surveillance of dominant forces. This free space was an important small scale strategy because it allowed for a culture of resistance to exist, and networks of protesters to meet each other. In addition, after the Gezi Park encampment had been evacuated by police forces, protesters created small scale neighborhood forums where issues of the Gezi Park protests could still be discussed. These small scalar strategies allowed for the continuation of the movement by creating and maintaining a culture of resistance among protesters. The demonstrations and occupation of Gezi Park in June 2013 represented an important larger-scale tactic. By occupying Gezi Park, and demonstrating in the area around it, protesters publically claimed the space for themselves. Through public claim making, the protesters used large scale strategies to move their agenda forward.

Finally, the social production of space impacted contention in Istanbul by creating social conceptions of Gezi Park as a space of resistance. This change in conceived space of Gezi Park became clear in the spring of 2014 when the Berkin Elvan protests broke out. Berkin Elvan, a teenager who was injured and fell into a coma during the June 2013 protests, eventually succumbed to his injuries and died in March 2014. His death remobilized protesters to demonstrate against the AKP government, and Elvan became a symbol of the police brutality and state repression that existed during the Gezi Park protests. After his funeral, clashes broke out between protesters, and many of them gravitated towards Gezi Park. As prior protest
campaigns had occurred in the park, the space had become part of the repertoire of collective action, which defines the spectrum of established available strategies for collective action in a given historical, social, and political context. As a result, protesters in March 2014 congregated in Taksim and Gezi Park. After the June 2013 protests, Gezi Park was socially produced as a space of anti-government resistance, and this is demonstrated in the March 2014 Berkin Elvan Protests.

When applied to the Gezi Park protests, place – or the fixed site of socio-spatial relations – provides a basis for interpreting grievances in contentious politics, mobilization patterns, and symbolism in social movement strategy. Because of its possible destruction, and because of the forceful police repression that occurred in the Gezi Park Protests, Gezi Park emerged as a place where grievances were experienced. It was also a place where larger grievances were aired, creating a movement that was situated in a bounded place but representing larger political dynamics. Gezi Park became a site that symbolized all of these grievances, which can be seen through the symbolism of the movement. Graffiti, photos, and phrases created by the movement situated, or emplaced, anti-government resistance within Gezi Park itself. Through visual representations, artists connected anti-AKP sentiment with the place of Gezi Park itself, further creating a movement centered on place.

Place is also deeply connected with identity, which is clear in the differences between the Istanbul neighborhoods of Beşiktaş, Okmeydanı and Fatih. Beşiktaş, home to the left-wing soccer fan club, Çarşı, mobilized against Erdoğan and joined in the Gezi Park protests. Okmeydanı, a largely Alevi population, also mobilized its own demonstrations in solidarity with Gezi Park. Residents of Fatih, a more religious, conservative neighborhood did not demonstrate in their neighborhood or show significant public support for the protests. Because many of
Istanbul’s neighborhoods are centered on place-based identities, place had a large impact on mobilization patterns in the Gezi Park protests.

Spatial dynamics and struggles over space also manifested themselves in the police repression of Gezi Park. Police, acting on behalf of Erdoğan, used forceful tactics such as tear gas, water cannons, and abuse, to control protests and assert their power. Spatial strategies of police also changed the strategies of protesters, and vice versa. Protesters evaded repression by creating their own neighborhood forums after Gezi Park was evacuated. They satirized repression through satirical phrases and photos, and finally they used blocking strategies by creating physical barriers to block police from their encampment. Protest policing in Gezi Park had short-term and long-term consequences for the Gezi Park Movement. In the short-term, the intense repression strengthened the movement, as the police became the physical manifestation of Prime Minister Erdoğan’s politics and authoritarianism. In the long-term, the police power led to the evacuation of Gezi Park, and the loss of momentum for the protesters. Spatial strategies of protesters and police officers were core to the events in Gezi Park, and provide a basis to understand how such political and spatial dynamics interact through contention as experienced within the park.

The spatial concepts explored in this research show the depth of analysis that spatial perspectives of contentious politics can enable. Studying the connection between space and social relations in Istanbul, and in the Gezi Park protests can help contextualize mobilization patterns, spatial strategies of protesters and police, and symbolic meanings of Gezi Park as a place. These concepts can also be translated into a better understanding of social movements as a whole, and should be taken into account for scholars of contentious politics.

Implications
Geography is not a separate force; neither is it the outcome of aspatial social forces. It is, rather, a fundamental dimension through which all social processes are constituted, much like time...Attention to the geographic structuring of social movements may seem to introduce an unwanted degree of complexity for those accustomed to explaining collective action in terms of context-free factors. But real world processes are complex. Attention to geographic structuring helps us understand the complexity and identify the geographically variable causes of social movement success and failure. Such an understanding is likely to reward to social movement analyst and activist alike (Miller 2001, 172)

Creating a Spatial analysis of social movements enriches and broadens the theoretical frameworks through which social movements are studied. Geographical concepts such as space, place, and scale demonstrate important aspects of social movements and contentious politics. The introduction of these concepts positively impacts social movement theory and analysis, and opens up unique lenses through which the study of social movements can take place. In his writings on the spatial aspects of the 1993 Santiago Riots in Argentina, Javier Auyero (2003) wrote: “That ‘space matters’ is hardly news. The question is how does it matter? That is, what difference does spatiality make in the development of protests?” (64). In my research, I have used the example of Gezi Park to show the impact of spatiality on mobilization, trajectories, and the aftermath of social movements.

Introducing space into the analysis of Gezi Park has demonstrated the crucial role of spatial perspectives on broader social movement analysis. Lefebvre’s ideas of the social production of space highlight the connection between the social and the spatial. Because space is socially produced and producing, it is an integral part of social relations. This relationship between the spatial and the social further highlights the depth that a spatial analysis of contention can bring. Changes in everyday spaces can represent larger social dynamics, and can lead to contentious episodes. In this way, discussions of space in contention help to contextualize grievances of social movements.
The concept of scale in social movements, such as small-scale “free spaces” and large-scale claims to public space, also leads to a fuller understanding of protest patterns and strategies. Free spaces have a role in creating a culture of resistance among movement participants, and in creating networks between protesters, away from the surveillance of dominant forces. From a spatial perspective, free spaces are a form of scalar strategy—they are small scale spaces used by protesters to mobilize populations, create strategies, and form connections across weak ties. Because free spaces are small, and separate from dominant forces, they have a unique role in social movement strategy. Another form of scalar strategy is public claim making. When demonstrators flood the streets in large numbers, or “occupy” a space, they are claiming public spaces for themselves, this large-scale strategy helps in creating visibility for social movements. In Gezi Park, protesters both created free spaces, and laid claim to public spaces. Different scalar strategies would not have produced the same type of protest. The Gezi Park case demonstrates the significance of scalar strategies in understanding actions of protesters in episodes of contention.

Including place in social movement analysis also shows the impact of spatial perspectives on social movement mobilization and progress. Identity, in many cases strongly rooted in place, impacts social solidarity, and mobilization in contention. The importance of place-based identity distinctions is clear in the Gezi Park case, in which place-based identities accounted for many of the movement’s mobilization patterns. In addition, symbolism attached to place can help protest movement gain support, and increase unity amongst protesters. It is also important to note that place can become a site where grievances were both aired and experienced, further situating and connecting movements to specific places. These aspects of place in the analysis of social movements, show the complexities of social movement mobilization and identity in contention.
Finally, protest policing and acts of repression are physical manifestations of political dynamics in space. Repression can take on spatial characteristics as police officers spatially distinguish themselves from protesters with tools such as water-cannon vehicles, and spatially disperse crowds with tear gas. Police officers often use these methods as a response to the spatial claim making of protesters, and in turn protesters respond to the strategies of police officers. The trajectory of the Gezi Park protests was largely impacted by these geographical strategies on the part of protesters and repressive agents. An aspatial analysis of protest policing (especially escalated force) is almost impossible; in protests police use repression to assert spatial control and disperse crowds. The eventual evacuation of Gezi Park by police using tear gas is a clear example of this.

Through space, scale, place, and policing, I attempted to demonstrate the importance of spatial perspectives in social movement analysis. Gezi Park started as a struggle over space, and geography was at the center of the movement and its repression. While a number of scholars include space in their analysis of contention, it is still quite rare. Byron Miller describes the inclusion of geographical processes in the field of social movement analysis as “spotty at best” (Miller 2001, xii). This has to do with the lack of contact between disciplines such as sociology and geography, what Martin & Miller (2001) call the “institutional forces maintaining disciplinary boundaries within academia” (7). With these boundaries in place, geographical concepts can be misunderstood and trivialized by social scientists, and vice versa. These boundaries need to be blurred. In order to achieve a full understanding of social movement processes, it is necessary to integrate geographical concepts into the analysis of contentious politics.
My research on the Gezi Park protests shows that space plays an important role in mobilization and strategies in contentious politics. While this analysis is not fully exhaustive, it does show that space is strongly connected to social relations, daily life, and contention as a whole. “Spatial perspectives illuminate the connections between daily life experiences and broader social, political, and economic processes. They also demonstrate how the spatial constitution and context of such processes shape collective action” (Martin & Miller 2001, 143). Given the clear connection between space and social dynamics, and the impact of spatial dynamics on collective action and contentious politics, the field of social movement theory would greatly benefit from adding spatial perspectives to social movement analysis. Connecting the spatial with the social leads to a deeper understanding of the many complexities of social movements, repression, and social dynamics as a whole.
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