

#DIRENHAMİLE: PREGNANCY, MORALITY, AND RESISTING DISCOURSES OF
SECLUSION AT THE GEZİ PARK PROTESTS

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ABSTRACT

Jim Kuras: *#DİRENHAMİLE*: PREGNANCY, MORALITY, AND RESISTING DISCOURSES OF SECLUSION AT THE GEZİ PARK PROTESTS (Under the direction of Banu Gökırsel)

Millions joined Turkey's 2013 Gezi Park protests, which were characterized by demonstrators' steady creation of visual materials dissenting against the government. A subsection of pregnant protesters, who in June began tagging social media posts with *#DİRENHAMİLE* (*#RESISTPREGNANT*), critiqued both the government's pronatalism and efforts of social conservatives to keep visibly-pregnant women secluded. This visual culture analysis draws upon semiology and discourse analysis methods to examine two paradoxes complicating *#DİRENHAMİLE* protest images: First, by leveraging pregnancy to critique pronatalism protesters risked reifying ideas about fertility being the primary source of women's value. Second, their performances in public spaces critiquing seclusion rhetoric relied not upon assertions of individuality but on traditional social codes honoring mothers as childbearers. I work to better understand the impact *#DİRENHAMİLE* imagery has on challenging discourses aimed at controlling women's bodies while accounting for the limitations of activism relying upon entrenched conceptualizations of pregnancy to illustrate its arguments.

To Mehraneh, Sue, Jean, Amelia, Zari, and Bahar.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AKP	Justice and Development Party
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party
CHP	Republican People's Party
DP	Democrat Party
HDP	People's Democratic Party
JP	Justice Party
MHP	National Movement Party
TRT	Turkish Radio and Television Corporation

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

A massive, countrywide uprising during the summer of 2013 disrupted life in nearly all of Turkey's cities, resulting in multiple deaths. The catalyst for the protests was the police's violent removal of a small group of peaceful environmentalists that had camped out in Gezi Park with the intentions of blocking its demolition. As the events escalated, the government led by then Prime Minister (current president) Recep Tayyip Erdoğan received international criticism for the oppressive tactics it used to contain the protesters and for its largely successful efforts to block much of the domestic media's coverage¹ of the demonstrations. Erdoğan repeatedly referred to the protesters as "*çapulcu*" ("looter" or "marauder") for the purpose of constructing a narrative that portrayed demonstrators as largely comprised of destructive, godless, unemployed, young, male hooligans (Calatayud 2013; Mercan and Özşeker 2015, 101; Yalçıntaş 2015, 20). Research has demonstrated that of all the actual participants at Gezi, 51% at were women, nearly half were over the age of 26, over 90% had completed at least a high school level of education, and only about 6% were unemployed ("Konda Gezi Raporu" 2014, 5-10). Images of women protesting were used to draw viewers away from Erdoğan's constructed *çapulcu*, inviting them to carefully consider the nature of the protests and their participants. Images of pregnant women complicated his rhetoric even further by portraying subjects that audiences were more likely to see as delicate and vulnerable than threatening and destructive.

¹ The traditional news media in Turkey was largely unsuccessful in exposing the disparity between official rhetoric and reality to its audience during the events. For protesters and their supporters, Twitter and other social media resources therefore became important tools for disseminating information about the uprising and for critiquing the government's actions (Tufekci 2014b). Still images – particularly photographs – were regularly presented (uncritically) as evidence of the government's crimes.

In this visual culture project, I use semiology and discourse analysis methods to examine a select sampling of images related to pregnancy and motherhood in Turkey that were produced during the Gezi Park protests (Rose 2012; Chandler 2007; Kress 2010; Tonkiss 2004). Semiology enables the interpretation of specific symbols, such as hashtags and pregnant bellies in order to understand their contextual relevance. Discourse analysis situates these images within a wider thematic field. I apply an intertextual approach to my discourse analysis (Rose 2012, 191) in that I consider how collections of images may convey nuanced meanings and fit together discursively. Through these methods, I attempt to learn more about the impact of representations of pregnant women during Gezi Park, and in the period that followed. I am particularly interested in how the circulation and interplay of images might have contributed to and possibly helped transform discourses on morality and gender roles in Turkey. I am referring collectively to the body of visual materials that I analyze in this thesis as *#direnhamile* (*#resistpregnant*) images. While sporadic performances of protest by pregnant women occurred from the earliest days of Gezi Park, the hashtag was used for the first time² on Twitter on June 26, 2013 by user @Ozge_Uzun (Uzun 2013). *#direnhamile* gained considerable momentum starting on July 26, 2013, accompanying the larger, organized protests of pregnant women which followed controversial comments made the day before by a religious authority on a Ramadan television program.

My analysis focuses on how the use of bodies in photographs, cartoons, and other still images³ contribute to discursive formations about nationality, morality, and access to public

² In full, this tweet reads "*#direnhamile 1 hafta kaldı...*" ("*#resistpregnant 1 week left...*"), referring to the author's own approaching due date (Uzun 2013). While @Ozge_Uzun was quite active on Twitter during Gezi Park, this particular tweet appears to have been more of a playful appropriation of *#diren*-based hashtags (for more on this, see page 61) than a serious political statement or a call for activist mobilization. Nevertheless, the hashtag did take on political meaning over the weeks that followed.

³ Gezi Park imagery also includes large amounts of video materials that were produced during the protests. While important parts of the broader archive of images related to the protests and great avenues for potential future research, they have not been included in the project in the interests of space.

space in Turkey. Specifically, I am interested in how visual materials support or critique constructions of model citizens through embodied performances that alternatively challenged or reinforced ideas about moral behavior in public. Often, these performances also made tacit or explicit statements about honor and nationalist citizens' duty to the state. Broadly speaking, Gezi Park protesters were making claims about participation in democratic processes by asserting their rights to demonstrate and express themselves publicly, even in the face of the state's violent denial of these rights. The *#direnhamile* protesters' performances made further claims about the ownership of the future, stressing that their demands for democratic freedoms would continue in future generations. The promotion of certain ideas and themes about identity today (as related to religion, ethnicity, democratic subjectivity, etc.) are part of a longer struggle to influence and dominate discourse over what the characteristics of the proper citizen are and what that citizen's rights and responsibilities should be (Gencer 2013). Efforts to influence discourse on national citizenship through images aimed to demonstrate certain "truths" about Turkey and its people. By contributing to this discourse, opposing actors hope to manipulate Turkey's social and political trajectories and to reshape the future. They alternatively struggle to rationalize, justify, critique, resist, or bolster formal and informal structures of oppression in Turkish public life. For the ruling government and social conservatives their efforts to characterize Gezi participants often translated to the dismissal of demonstrators as immoral or unpatriotic, with discourse from political or religious authorities reinforcing this position. For their opponents, notes Gruber (2013d, 14), protesters at Gezi Park "offered an alternative vision, generated in no small part thanks to an explosion of oppositional slogans and images." Indeed, the public questioning of different framings of "truths" about Turkish citizenship and moral behavior was an important part of the demonstrations with potentially game-changing effects for post-Gezi Park Turkey.

My argument is that visual materials created at and in support of the Gezi Park protests which depict pregnancy and motherhood demonstrate the potential of feminist geopolitical

activism for critiquing state-sponsored patriarchal oppression. Massive deployments of police at Gezi Park served to protect the security of the state, not the safety and well-being of the citizenry. The participation of pregnant women and *hamile* (pregnant) allies, both men and women, made important claims to space at Gezi Park and also helped reinforce spaces for similar feminist activism in Turkey in the future. These demonstrations took place during the tenure of a prime minister that actively worked to reduce women's access to safe abortions and Caesarian births (White 2013, 205). However, the production of these visual materials also created two paradoxes through the presentations of their messages which must be addressed. The first paradox is that although all of these images were used to critique the ruling party's pronatalism, they also depended upon visual symbols of reproduction in order to make their points, therefore reifying the party's reduction of the female citizen's value to the state to her fertility. In other words, while the image of a woman in a full or late term pregnancy may be useful for claiming autonomy over her reproductive agency (as well as her role in shaping the ideological future of the state), it also reinforces the idea that she is first and foremost a childbearer. The second paradox is that although these images critiqued social conservative discourse aimed at forcing visibly pregnant women to stay in seclusion on the grounds of a certain understanding of morality, the reclaiming of public space by pregnant women was made possible by cultural norms requiring that as pregnant women they be treated with honor and respect. While the subjects of some of these images may have tried to assert their identities as full, complex individuals and as sexual beings, the spaces that they actually created remained populated by a citizenry that viewed them simply as future mothers and reproducers of the nation; their individualities and sexualities were rendered secondary behind their roles as (re)producers. Any assessment of the political potential of such protest materials must therefore account for the work these images simultaneously do to support and uphold conservative, heteronormative, and nationalist conceptualizations of women and motherhood – even as they work to challenge and subvert these ideas. Despite these complications, however, the

performances of *#direnhamile* (*#resistpregnant*) activists made valuable contributions to Turkish feminism through the claims they made on public space and the increased visibility that this activism achieved. This increased visibility is important for complicating public discourse on pregnancy, morality, and gender in Turkey. It also helps to raise awareness about and potentially inspire future participation⁴ in feminist activism.

While the efforts of activist feminists during Gezi Park were tangible all over Turkey during the summer of 2013, this project focuses on events that took place in Turkey's largest city, Istanbul. Gezi Park, the epicenter of the uprising, was somewhat neglected and taken for granted prior to the events (Özel 2014, 18). Historically, the space housed the Halil Paşa Artillery Barracks, which was built between 1803 and 1806. Over time, it lost its original function and fell into disrepair. The dilapidated Ottoman structure was finally demolished in the 1940s, making room for the modern park (Harmanşah 2014, 126). Although it may have been underappreciated at times, the park serves as a rare and precious patch of green space in the middle of the dense city. It is bordered on its southern end with Taksim Square (Figure 1), the most important space for public protest within the Republic of Turkey. At its western end, there is a perpetual police presence not far from the Monument of the Republic, which features Mustafa Kemal Atatürk along with several other of the state's founders dressed as soldiers on one side and politicians on the other. Across the square, the eastern end is flanked by the *Atatürk Kültür Merkezi* (Atatürk Cultural Center), another symbolic site for the secular state which during Gezi was briefly occupied by protesters, who covered the building with banners and slogans.

The square has played an important role throughout republican history and has often been the site of dramatic clashes between various opposing groups. Notably, the

⁴ See pages 93-94 for a brief discussion of a feminist embodied protest which took place in early 2015.

demonstrations on May Day in 1977 resulted in a massacre that left dozens dead (Mango 2004, 76). Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has repeatedly stated that one of his goals is to build a large

Figure 1 – Map of Gezi Park and Taksim Square
Cartographer: Mehrafza Mirzazad Barijugh



mosque in Taksim Square to reflect the religious identity of his “New Turkey” (Mercan and Özşeker 2015, 100). On June 2, 2013, after dismissing accusations that his handling of the protests was making him appear dictatorial, he added that “We will build a mosque in Taksim and we do not need the permission of the CHP [Republican People's Party, the main opposition

party in Parliament] or of a few bums to do it" (Calatayud 2013). Realization of this highly controversial move would be a significant change for the square, which currently has no prominent religious buildings other than the Hagia Triada Greek Orthodox Church near its southwestern end. Within this politically charged location, *#direnhamile* activists demonstrated to critique the policies and discourse of the ruling government. Also included in this project are protests that these activists participated in in Kadıköy, a relatively liberal neighborhood on the southwestern end of Istanbul's Asian peninsula. The presence of *#direnhamile* activists in this historic and cosmopolitan part of the city shows that their performances adapted to different geographical contexts and attempted to achieve wide visibility.

Each of the eight images I analyze below have been made visible to a large audience in Turkey in either traditional print media, on social media, or both. Citizens of Turkey today have widespread access to the internet, with a 2009 estimate of more than 27 million users ("The CIA World Factbook: Turkey" 2015) who could have potentially accessed these and other images shared during the protests. Several books were also published during and after Gezi Park which archive many of these images (for example: Akkuş 2013; Aydın 2013; Tuncer 2013). I explore images that present the greatest opportunities for interrogating pregnancy and motherhood as symbols related to the state and citizenship. This approach draws on the examples of other social semiologists who "choose their images on the basis of how conceptually interesting they are; they select images that will make their point well" (Rose 2012, 109). It is important to also interrogate how the same images can be interpreted very differently by different viewers. In Vanderlippe and Batur's (2013) discussion of contemporary Turkish political cartoons, for example, the authors pay close attention to the multiple ways that identical symbols can be appropriated heterogeneously by opposing actors.

I perform a discourse analysis of my selected images in terms of the themes of citizenship and nationalism in Turkey. According to Tonkiss (2004, 380) "Discourse analysis involves a commitment to examining processes of meaning in social life, a certain modesty in

analytic claims, and an approach to knowledge which sees this as open rather than closed.”

This process requires a careful reading of the major themes and arguments that recur in a given discourse, and a situating of the studied images into this background. Thus, I begin my discussion with a brief historical look at how pregnancy, motherhood, national identity, religion, and Kemalism have all shaped Turkey’s evolution throughout the republican era.

While analyzing images, it is necessary to consider what truth claims are being advanced so as to understand different arguments presented by various groups and to consider any contextual absences that can be identified (Rose 2012, 209-20; Tonkiss 2004, 378). They must be examined while taking into account the intended meanings that they were produced with as well as the production choices that were made by the photographer or artist responsible for each image. Photographs, like paintings or drawings, are “interpretations of the world” rather than infallible representations of hard fact (Sontag 2001, 6-7). Among other things, photography can be understood to be aggressive, democratizing, constructive of social statuses, voyeuristic, addictive, or predatory. When understood in the right context and with the proper experience, the medium can have powerful effects on the general public, by spawning wider public debate, inspiring people to become involved with a social movement, and so on (Sontag 2001, 7-21). At Gezi Park, the continuous sharing of photographed images functioned in part as an alternative to traditional news media and as a method of mobilizing people to take part in demonstrations.

To fully understand the informative and communicative potential of these images, the majority of which are photographs, it is important to carefully situate them within the context of the protest and the ideologies that they are meant to represent or contest. Furthermore, the impact of using images of women’s bodies to advance certain political messages must also be considered. Regardless of the subjects’ intentions at the moments of being photographed, they are presented as objects before “a controlling and curious gaze” (Mulvey 2003, 46). In her study of cinematic representations of women, Mulvey (2003) draws on Freud to support the argument that “scopophilia” (pleasure derived from the act of looking) is an important element of sexuality

even if it operates independently from human sexual organs. “In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly” (Mulvey 2003, 47). The male gaze must be accounted for. This is of particular importance in the context of Turkey, where women’s bodies and dress remain highly charged political issues. Images which draw specific attention to women’s sexuality and fertility within such a social and political landscape demand careful analysis.

The unceasing creation of new visual materials throughout the Gezi Park uprising played an important role in the protests. These ranged from photographic representations of events – often shared while they were still unfolding – to political cartoons, music videos, and other more carefully constructed artistic contributions. The resulting vast archive of all of these materials warrants greater critical scrutiny. These images were at different times attention-grabbing, funny, playful, shocking, and cathartic responses to events as they unfolded, and at times substitutions for traditional journalism when the press was either not functioning properly or was not permitted to function properly (Gruber 2013b). This project is an attempt to contribute to the body of visual culture analyses of these images and to carefully explore some gendered aspects of contemporary politics and access to public space in contemporary Turkey.

The specific geographical locations of *#direnhamile* protests added nuance to the images they created. Not only were their performances in public, they often occupied the most highly contested spaces during the uprising. The large numbers of police present at Taksim Square, which were multiplied during the protests, are deployed in the interests of state security. Protesters, through embodied performances, raised questions about the nature of that security. In doing so, they made feminist geopolitical interventions by demonstrating that security for the state was being maintained at the cost of security for certain populations, including non-violent individuals (Massaro and Williams 2013, 574).

CHAPTER 2: GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY, FEMINIST GEOPOLITICS, AND THE GEZI PARK PROTESTS

A. A look at the Gezi Park Protests

In early summer 2013, the internet was flooded with images from an escalating protest movement in Istanbul. The initial protests had started as a movement intent on blocking the imminent destruction of Gezi Park by occupying the space. The park, a rare and important green space in the city center, was to be razed so that a luxury shopping mall could instead fill the space (Gruber 2013b; Kimmelman 2013). The project reflects the climate of enthusiastic development that has grown in recent decades in Turkey. Neoliberal policies and incentives for capitalist expansion beginning under Turgut Özal in the 1980s (Zürcher 2009, 282-88) and accelerating under the AKP (Justice and Development Party) paved the way for rapid urban development, swelling and transforming the country's cities at alarming rates. Broadly speaking, this growth is often haphazard, careless, and corrupt, exacerbating disparities between those who benefit economically and those who fail to fight eviction, who cannot earn a living wage, or who are dispossessed in some other way (White 2013, 36; Yalçıntaş 2015, 18). The state-supported decision to develop Gezi Park seemed greedy and belligerent to environmentalists, urban planners, and other activists who viewed the destruction of this rare green public space as an offensive proposition. The organizations *Taksim Gezi Parkı Koruma ve Güzelleştirme Derneği* (the Taksim Gezi Park Protection and Beautification Association) along with *Taksim Dayanışması* (Taksim Solidarity) coordinated with a tiny group of demonstrators who began camping out to save the park. On May 27th (Kural 2013). The group was decisively removed by excessive police force on the morning of May 31st (Gambetti 2013; Yalçıntaş 2015, 12-13). Images and videos of government violence spread rapidly on social media and people flooded

to Gezi Park and nearby Taksim Square to express their outrage (Gruber 2013b; 2013c; 2013d). Events escalated for several weeks and continued throughout the summer, resulting in eight deaths (Yalçıntaş 2015, 17), thousands of injuries, and serious questions about who had the authority to exploit public resources in Turkey as well as larger questions about the nature of democratic citizenship in the contemporary neoliberal state (Butler 2014, xi; Özel 2014, 9-11).

“For Istanbul citizens, the project of constructing a shopping mall in the middle of Gezi Park is nothing more than the confiscation of a public space by private capital” (Göle 2013, 9). The attempt to transform open, green public space into semi-public shopping space was driven by what Ribot and Peluso (2003, 170-71) call “access to authority”, which refers to the privileged advantage some people have over others to access “resources, capital, markets, and labor” through legal structures, sometimes including direct access to politicians or others with influence. Similarly, those eager to transform Istanbul’s urban landscape often have greater “access to capital”, which refers to the ability to maintain control over resources through the purchasing of rights to them (Ribot and Peluso 2003, 165-66). Yet, the uprising which prevented the park’s destruction, at least for the time being, provides an example of capability - as opposed to rights - determining access.

Among the circulating images from Gezi Park was an iconic photograph of a woman in a red dress named Ceyda Sungur⁵ standing calmly and holding a white canvass bag (Gruber 2013b; Harding 2013). Just a few feet away, a police officer wearing a gas mask and body armor shoots pepper spray directly into her face (Harding 2013). Sungur exhibits an interesting mix of qualities: she is feminine and non-threatening, she stands fearlessly at the front of a crowd of protesters before a wall of well-armed policemen, and she remains resolute while absorbing their violence. She would come to symbolize many elements of the Gezi Park protests, including the youthfulness of many of the demonstrators, the conspicuous visibility of

⁵ It was later revealed that Sungur is an Istanbul University scholar of Urban Planning (Gruber 2013b; Harding 2013).

women, and, with her dress and bag mirroring the colors of Turkey's flag, the country itself. Her pervasive image would be followed by many more during the course of an uprising supported by the rapid production of visual materials. Many of these subsequent images were also gendered, at times explicitly so. Importantly, Sungur's image, like the many others that followed, would become an invitation to those at home sympathizing with her to take action and go down to the street and join the growing crowds. Sungur's performance of resilience in her red dress is consistent with the argument of Koç (2013, 201) that Gezi Park clearly demonstrated that Turkish women have the strength and self-confidence to resist patriarchal rule. This was of course not a new idea but an important one to reinforce during a time when conservative leadership often worked actively to undermine the rights of women.

The demonstrations at Gezi Park spread like wildfire throughout many parts of Istanbul, Ankara, and all of Turkey's other major cities. What unfolded was to become the country's largest uprising since the events of 1980 when the government was overthrown in a military coup d'état (Navaro-Yashin 2002, 80). "According to a report by the Ministry of the Interior, a total of 3,545,000 citizens participated in 4,725 events in all but one of Turkey's 81 provinces" to support Gezi Park (Özel 2014, 8). While Turkish citizens relying on mainstream media outlets received only sanitized coverage of the uprising, those monitoring Twitter and Facebook were able to access more detailed information about the events (Özel 2014, 9; Tufekci 2014a, 2; Ünan 2015, 83). Minutes after being taken and uploaded, a photograph from Taksim Square shared on social media could help summarize part of a story that might take hours or days to make it into a newspaper, if it was reported on at all. This is problematic as many of these images would be received and interpreted uncritically as evidence of what was happening on the ground, however they often survived as the only reporting of certain events; the alternatives were often complete erasure. Indeed, throughout the summer pressure from Ankara meant in many cases that even events of great importance would never be reported upon by the Turkish press - throughout the summer many citizens regularly turned to the international media, which

they believed was providing superior coverage than that of their local sources⁶. Regardless of what the formal Turkish media was failing to report, or perhaps as a direct response to these failures, the informal media was successful in providing glimpses of the latest events on the ground and in sharing photographs and other political art pieces. The informal media also was responsible for much of the creation of iconic images and symbols which helped keep the popular uprising energized. The images were cathartic, humorous, touching, shocking, unexpected, infuriating, bold, polarizing, and/or telling of just how violently intense the situation had become (Gambetti 2013). "Humour in the Gezi movement was surely in continuity with Turkish political culture, which has developed mechanisms of making do with political authority and combined irony, mockery, and cynicism in a sharp political rhetoric" (Deren van het Hof 2015, 33). All sorts of displays of intellectual creativity characterized the protests. Yalçıntaş (2015, 19) writes that "Creativity was the bio-political survival strategy of intellectually disobedient protesters willing to engage in a new political discourse." This use of humor and creativity in protest has been used all over the world since the 1990s and, importantly, it has become "a strategy to call the masses to action without radicalizing them" (Deren van het Hof 2015, 33). The effectiveness of this strategy could be observed at Gezi as it was largely characterized by restraint on the part of the demonstrators, even when heavy force was being applied against them by police.

The government was initially caught off guard by the spontaneous eruption of dissent and responded carelessly with divisive language. Discourse from Ankara "profoundly offended the public," while demonstrators were more careful and patient in selecting their words (Göle 2013, 11-12). Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan labelled the demonstrators "*çapulcu*"

⁶ This was epitomized during the first week of the demonstrations when CNN International provided live coverage of clashes between protesters and police in Taksim square while CNN Türk simultaneously aired a documentary about penguins. Protesters immediately appropriated the penguin as a symbol of the failure of the functioning of liberal media in Turkey. Since this episode critics of the mainstream media have commonly referred to it as the "Penguin Media" (Tufekci 2014b; Yalçıntaş 2015, 14). Conversely, notes Tufekci (2014b) 'Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan called Twitter and other social media a "menace to society."'

(“looter” or “marauder”) during the first days of the protests in a (partially successful) attempt to simply dismiss them as a destructive and marginal group. The term *çapulcu* was subsequently embraced as a label of empowerment by the protesters, who found irony in Erdoğan’s choice of language; ‘the “marginals” came to denote the now vocal center, while “*çapulcu*” served as a descriptor for anyone resisting state oppression and corruption while concurrently demanding the rule of law, freedom of speech, and a truly participatory democracy’ (Gruber 2013c). The dark humor involved with referring to oneself as *çapulcu* was also useful for creating common ground among disparate participants. Deren van het Hof (2015, 38) states that “Humor functions to bring people together and thus erase alienation, thereby contributing to collective political thinking. This joyful bitterness, mocking irony, is the basis cynical political potency. Although it may not bring about dependable political change, it can create a new perspective beyond the current state of affairs and enable citizens to organize outside traditional political structures and institutions.” While the government would ultimately prove successful in suppressing the demonstrations, much of the Turkish citizenry would be introduced to new forms of collective public debate and open examination of politicized topics during the process.

The Gezi Park protests began as an impromptu burst of expression, an unexpected response to the heavy-handed policing of protesters. The ongoing demonstrations, however, were part of a longer struggle over rights to urban spaces in Istanbul and elsewhere in Turkey (Göle 2013). As Gezi evolved, the park itself became “an alternative communal space in which individuals were provided free access to food, emergency health care, and shelter” (Ünan 2015, 86). This would continue, with the mixing of and communication between diverse individuals including “the LGBT bloc, anti-capitalist Muslims, left factions, feminists, nationalists, and members of the Kurdish political movement” until a violent police operation cleared the park on June 15, 2013 (Ünan 2015, 86). The protests subsequently lost momentum and died out as the summer came to a close. The events raised questions about whether or not a democratic government should be allowed to drastically change and repurpose public urban spaces in the

face of popular disapproval (Butler 2014). Moreover, the embodied tactics employed by protesters were productive of cosmopolitan spaces that temporarily challenged the state's legitimacy through the exploration of alternative social possibilities. The specific efforts of *#direnhamile* protesters contributed to this process by refusing efforts to deny access to public spaces to pregnant bodies.

B. Feminist politics of pregnancy, motherhood, and the body

Feminist scholars have disrupted the way we understand motherhood. Hill Collins (1999, 120 – emphasis in original) writes that

The proliferation of reproductive technologies in the post-Second World War era fostered the splitting of motherhood into the three categories of genetic, gestational and social motherhood. Genetic mothers are those who contribute the genetic material to another human being. Gestational mothers are those who carry the developing foetus *in utero* until birth. Social mothers care for children actually born.

In Turkey, genetic mothers are subject to discourse on bloodline. This is tied to the ongoing project of defining Turkishness, a process that has important implications for the establishment of the new republic and the ongoing construction of a Turkish nation. And social mothers carry the burden of raising those who will shape the future of the nation. Their efforts are referenced in pronatalist campaigns, which are shaped by varying ideological interests.

The movement of gestational mothers in public spaces is subject to biopolitical regimes informed by socially conservative codes of behavior. Foucault (1978, 140) describes the rise of educational, military, and medical institutions during the 18th century as 'the beginning of an era of "bio-power".' Even with the absence of the threat of immediate punishment by the state, citizens self-police in the interests of maintaining order. In Turkey, this process is enforced by a gendered social regime nuanced by public discourse on Sunni Islam and morality. Under this system, bio-power encourages the seclusion of pregnant bodies even though their presence in public is not restricted by law. The performances of *#direnhamile* protesters resisted the societal pressure on pregnant bodies to remain secluded.

The messages delivered by images of pregnant protesters at Gezi Park rely upon prevalent discursive constructions of motherhood and pregnancy in Turkey. Although they made interesting contributions to this discursive formation, it would be premature to suggest that they helped produce a sea change in dominant public understandings of motherhood, pregnancy, and its location in society. Any changes that might have occurred were most likely temporary, not extending for long after the demonstrations subsided. Nevertheless, these images are imbricated with great political potential when examined from a feminist geopolitical perspective. Without ignoring the state and its significance, this type of analysis interrogates how experiences seen as everyday or of the average citizen can complicate and be complicated by political forces on a much larger scale (Massaro and Williams 2013). Thus, images of pregnancy, which is typically viewed as an inherently private state of being, are (especially in protest) imbued with strong feminist geopolitical meaning.

Images of pregnancy are important to understanding that the “upheaval” of Gezi “was fundamentally about Turkey’s future identity” (Özel 2014, 23). Discourse surrounding babies and children is intimately related to nationalist ideas about producing the future. Anagnost (2008, 52-55) writes of the early 20th century changes in Chinese understandings of childhood which began an emphasis on education and the conceptualization of children as full individuals, rather than as subjects who were small or otherwise lacking something. This process evolved in the age of child quotas, creating additional work for mothers who were charged with the task of grooming their children for university entrance exams, and basically producing quality citizens to ensure China’s bright future. While in Turkey, contemporary rhetoric is focused on maximizing rather than limiting fertility, similarities exist in relation to the preparing of children for university exams and their future roles as adult citizens. Beyond these efforts on the intimate scale of the family unit to improve children’s future employment prospects, are wider scale efforts to shape the ideological future, as evidenced by the discursive contributions about motherhood and pregnancy at Gezi Park.

a. Public space and pregnant bodies

Public spaces are necessarily diverse places, microcosms of society on a wider scale. While Taksim Square may or may not be a representative sampling of the Turkish population on any given day, it is a place where even small minority populations are consistently visible. Public spaces also become sites “where idealized notions of ‘the public interest’ are challenged” (McDowell 1999, 151). In theory, all people should have access to public space, but in reality mechanisms are enforced which create uneven access. McDowell (1999,150) writes that “citizenship is not an inclusive but an exclusive concept.” Turkey is not unique in that its exclusionary practices are related to race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, and gender. At Gezi Park these restrictive practices were challenged through embodied performances, including the powerful presence of pregnant bodies.

A feminist analysis of the body as a site of political activity opens doors to deeper geographical understanding of the nature of public spaces. Don Mitchell (2003, 149) has written that a social or political movement must create embodied disorder in order to claim public spaces and to create a revolutionary atmosphere. Swanson (2014, 5) discusses the symbolic importance that populating Tahrir Square had for the recent Egyptian revolutions and the productive work that embodiment did to create the square as a distinctly anti-Mubarak space. Considering this revolutionary potential of embodied occupation, it is important to examine the ability of pregnant bodies to threaten a disruption of *any* public space, a subject which has been carefully explored by Longhurst (2001). Pregnant bodies can inspire a fear of messiness. Fluids such as colostrum or water breaking are understood as belonging to private space. The chance that these fluids (or potentially the baby itself, the placenta, or blood) have of escaping the confines of the body is seen as dangerous; they remind us that the body is not just a site of impermeable non-fluid borders. Therefore, pregnant bodies helped to enhance the disorder in

an already chaotic Taksim Square, Beşiktaş, Kadıköy, or other key site of protest within Istanbul.

In her study of embodiment in New Zealand, Longhurst (2001) found that public discourse on pregnant bodies generally frames them as in need of being controlled by medical professionals, protected by society, and concealed in private. This process, whether aimed at preserving the baby's health or at saving the general public from the stress of a potential disruption, is disempowering for women. The state and the general public often believe they have the right to protect, legislate, rub a woman's belly, and so on, by claiming the unborn child for society and the state. They see themselves justified in their efforts to compromise the woman's sovereignty over her own body. Similarly, efforts to compel women to seclude themselves during pregnancy are presented in the interests of preserving the moral structure of society; they must remain hidden as their bodies themselves are deemed to be threatening. During Gezi, this attitude was most publicly articulated by a sufi thinker who stated that the very presence of pregnant women in public was an "immoral" act ("Pregnant Women Gather 13). Since Gezi, the official rhetoric has not suggested any reformed thinking on issues related to pregnancy. On the contrary, Erdoğan has perhaps assumed even more extreme positions on abortion (by reducing the period when they may be legally performed in public hospitals from 10 weeks of pregnancy to 6-8), contraceptives (they are not conducive to proper Islamic citizenship), and caesarian births (they will render women henceforth infertile and must be avoided at all costs; on June 12, 2012, they were outlawed outside of cases when they are deemed medically mandatory) (Beşpınar 2014, 131).

b. Motherhood and the nation

Turkey is a cogent example of how governments often use women to represent the nation, a practice in place since the dawning of the nation-state system (Altınay 2004, 79; McDowell 1999, 194-200; Yuval-Davis 1997, 39). White (2013, 161) notes that women "are

assigned the role of biologically and culturally reproducing the nation but are often thereby distanced from political participation as citizens.” Mothers are relegated to a “natural” role of nurturing the state whereas men assume patriarchal roles which are reinforced by their status as soldiers. Women, on the other hand, are made to symbolize vulnerability in addition to their branding as nurturers. “They embody both family and national honor, so their purity must be impeccable” (White 2013, 161). This system thus further reinforces ideas about a woman’s worth being tied to her domestic and reproductive responsibilities as a nurturer while assessing her purity (or failure to preserve it) in private as a direct reflection upon the nation.

‘In the early years of the Turkish Republic, state regulation of prostitution in Istanbul was constructed within a series of overlapping discourses that imagined women’s bodies as symbolic and biological reproducers of the state: the bodies of civilized, “liberated” women visually re-inscribed the state’s imagined break with its Ottoman past; “faithful wives” upheld discursive traditions of sexual honor; and, “mothers of the nation” reproduced a modernizing populace’ (Wyers 2012, 256). “The birth of a child contributes to territorial projects” by increasing the number of voters, soldiers, and other citizens available for performing the work of society and the state (Smith 2012, 1512). Mustafa Kemal Atatürk led efforts to construct a Turkish nationalism that made use of visual representations of women that were closely linked to redefining women’s roles in state and society.

It is important to consider who exactly these women were that Mustafa Kemal chose as representations of the nation. In the context of the United States, Hill Collins (1999, 119) notes that population policies, which may be generally understood to encompass institutionalized practices as well as socially-produced ideological regimes related to women’s fertility, are experienced differently by women with varying racial, socioeconomic, and citizenship statuses. In the interests of avoiding “race suicide,” wherein the dominant group is affected by a falling birthrate, white women “are encouraged to become genetic and gestational mothers” by the production of them as symbols of idealized family and the nation itself (Hill Collins 1999, 120-

21). Turkish examples of this principle would have population policies favoring (Sunni Muslim) Turks over Kurds, or in early Republican Turkey, secularized Turks over those who are publicly religious.

In the USA, policies to aid with maternity leave, day care, *in vitro* fertilization, and surrogacy are disproportionately available to affluent white women (Hill Collins 1999, 121-22). At the same time, efforts have been made through public policy and social practice to show Black women as “unfit” mothers. Hill Collins (1999, 125) states that

The ‘unfitness’ of working-class Black mothers as qualified to pass on national culture has been constructed in opposition to the ‘fitness’ of middle-class White women... If anything, working-class Black women have been constructed as the enemy within, the group producing the population that threatens the American national interest of maintaining itself as a ‘White’ nation-state.

While the ruling AKP’s (Justice and Development Party’s) discourse on women may often be understood as problematic for all Turkish women (Agence France-Presse in Istanbul 2014), the party’s pronatalism is not directed towards all Turkish citizens. Rather, members of the party’s base are the ones who should be having three or more children, which is why critiques of this policy at Gezi Park by *çapulcu* or other “enemies within” were so potent.

In addition to these different ideological perspectives, legal policy on reproduction must also be considered. Turkey’s 1972 Labor Law eroded the rights of pregnant women and mothers, with provisions that privileged only their maternal duties and language that imposed upon their agency. Arat writes that it:

failed to assist women or accommodate their needs as mothers. Many important issues, including the following, were unaddressed: equal pay for comparable work, job security in cases of pregnancy and childbirth, protection against sexual discrimination in hiring and firing and against sexual harassment, and provision of child care assistance and facilities. The law attempted to protect maternity and motherhood by banning women from work six weeks before and six weeks after giving birth (Art. 70). However, it presented the maternal leave as a “ban” rather than a “right.” It did not provide for a sufficient length of leave after birth in case of late delivery, and it allowed the employer to end the contract unilaterally at the end of the maternal leave (Art. 13/a), thereby undermining the protective effect of the law. (2009, 85)

The Labor Law’s failures did not help to produce a system supportive of women’s attempts to develop professional careers. Instead, it reinforced the idea that they were simply incubators of

future citizens for the state and that their own individuality could be relegated to a secondary position. This legal framework for women's status supports a system where family obligations including marriage, childbirth, and the care for sick relatives result in Turkish women having professional lives that last an average of only eight years (Arat 2009, 86).

Some hopeful improvements to women's legal protections were seen at the dawn of the 21st century. In 2001, a new Civil Code was implemented which "resulted in full legal equality in the family, the rising of the marriage age to 17 for both sexes and gender equality in the matrimonial property regime" (Beşpınar 2014, 128). In 2004, over 40 new amendments were added to the Penal Code, including provisions aimed at the reduction of "honor killings," the determining that rape within marriage is a crime, the reduction of workplace sexual harassment, and the elimination of any distinctions based on the victim's virginity or marital status being made during the sentencing of sexual criminals. Overall, these reforms were put forth to "establish a progressive law that regards women's autonomy over their bodies and sexualities rather than the previous understanding that these belonged to their families and society"; "Another important change is the elimination of traditionally value-loaded concepts such as honour, morality, chastity and decency from law" (Beşpınar 2014, 128). Despite all of these positive revisions to legal code, social behavior and the formal enforcing of these new policies have not kept pace with the changes. Unfortunately, violence against women in Turkey has actually increased so far in the 2000s (Beşpınar 2014, 129). While this recent legislation has armed politicians and government supporters with convenient talking points that suggest a wave of progress for women's rights, the material realities that women generally face continue to deteriorate.

c. Pronatalism

Here is what should be the last legacy to their children, of those who bid goodbye to the Turkish nation and depart from this World: “My duties towards the Turkish nation, the Turkish Republic and the future of Turks have not yet been fully fulfilled. You shall finish them. You too must repeat these words of mine to those who will succeed you.” These words are not the expression of an individual. Rather, they are the expression of the sentiment of Turkish nationhood. Every Turk shall expire only after repeating this as a password to those who will succeed him. The last breath of every Turk must be the proof that the Turkish nation will never quit breathing and that it will remain eternal. (1935) (Atatürk 1982, 58)

These words of Mustafa Kemal illustrate the emphasis the Turkish Republic has always placed on reproduction as a means for shaping the future. Pronatalist discourses reflect explicit attempts to control the trajectory of the nation. “The child represents an opening to the future, through which national culture can be remade” (Anagnost 2008, 50). In the early republic, pronatalist policies were most actively promoted between the years 1930 and 1960 (Beşpınar 2014, 131). As articulated by Mustafa Kemal, this remaking of the future through one’s descendants was framed as a national duty.

In contemporary Turkey, AKP pronatalism is driven by the desire to ideologically outpopulate the ruling government’s critics and to expand the supply of consumers for the neoliberal state. Throughout much of his prime ministership Erdoğan famously repeated that it was the patriotic duty of every Turkish woman to produce at least three children (Baran 2010, 96; Beşpınar 2014, 130-31; White 2013, 177); at a recent wedding he raised the ante, advising the newlyweds directly that they should have at least four children in order to “bring abundance” (Tremblay 2014). This language might be interpreted in varying ways, however the suggestion of material “abundance” certainly resonates with a government that has unproblematically combined the pious observance of Sunni Islam with the endless pursuit of capital. Often Erdoğan frames his pronatalist directives in terms of “responsibility” to the nation and the equating of large families with “strong families” (Beşpınar 2014, 130-31).

At the wedding, Erdoğan continued by stating that “For years, treason has been committed by means of the enforcement of birth control in this country. They aimed to dry up the bloodline of our nation” (quoted in Tremblay 2014). The oppositional “They” here may be

interpreted as the secularists and Kemalists, who serve as a perpetual existential threat, a continuation of the violent excesses of the early republic as well as the actions of the military in their ruthless efforts to preserve Kemalism at all costs throughout the second half of the 20th century. Erdoğan has also worked to demonize feminists on religious grounds. Speaking at a women's justice summit in Istanbul in November 2014, he stated that "Our religion [Islam] has defined a position for women: motherhood... You cannot explain this to feminists because they don't accept the concept of motherhood" (Agence France-Presse in Istanbul 2014). His daughter, Sümeyye, sat in the audience as he made this statement. The younger Erdoğan and deputy head of the Women and Democracy Association (KADEM) has herself attacked feminism and made statements defending Islamic arguments against equal treatment based on gender. While giving a lecture in Brussels in March 2015, she dismissed the value of women's domestic labor while stating that men were deserving of greater shares of inheritance due to their roles as "breadwinners." She also deflected any critiques that her position might have been supporting patriarchy by insisting that the West had a far worse historical record of gendered oppression than Islam (Anadolu Agency 2015). Echoing her father's rhetoric, Sümeyye Erdoğan dismisses issues of women's rights using language about a natural ordering of domestic roles and instead shifts the focus to an attack on the moral integrity of outsiders and foreigners, the implied enemies of the Turkish nation and of Islam.

Religious buttressing of arguments about a natural gendered ordering of duties does give strength to these arguments. Under a leadership that is willing to identify certain citizens as patriotic and others as enemies, pronatalist rhetoric is not trivial. Contraception becomes framed not as a women's health issue but rather as a battle tactic, a strategic attempt to limit the supply of pious citizens and soldiers for the nation. Israel has employed similar pronatalist language throughout its state history, going so far as outlawing contraceptives until the late 1950s, at which point it was determined that the policy was helping to increase its Muslim Arab population at a faster rate than its Jewish population (Kanaaneh 2002, 35). Rhetoric about "bloodline" is

also significant here as Turkey's leaders have actively participated in the construction of what it means to be Turkish throughout the country's history. Competing claims about the meanings of loyal nationalist identity were expressed throughout the events at Gezi. Thus, babies as the carriers of bloodlines become politicized in conflicts where efforts are made to paint the opposition as outsiders, blasphemers, foreigners, or others who do not share the same blood.

As stated above, neither a pronatalist stance nor an effort to redefine Turkishness are unique to Erdoğan and both can be traced back to comparable Kemalist campaigns during the early republican period (Altınay 2004, 51; Beşpınar 2014, 131). However, both are unfolding under the leadership of an extremely polarizing government which has enjoyed great success in revising the Turkish state and its political structures. Embodied performances of pregnant women at Gezi along with their photographs directly responded to this government's rhetoric. They contribute to discourses on family and national identity, which are heated, controversial, and contested political topics in Turkey. Kanaaneh (2002, 1) quotes Jamali, an Arab in the Galilee pregnant with her fourth child, who refers to the future child as "Another Arab baby for the [Jewish] state to contend with." Similarly, Erdoğan's supporters are encouraged to reproduce with the tacit agreement that their children will grow up to challenge the (secular, Kurdish, Alevi, non-Muslim, etc.) opposition.

Even in the absence of official policies driving this type of competition, such rhetoric can have significant effects on communities. Smith (2014) explores how communal practices surrounding reproduction in Ladakh have changed over the past few decades to restrict marriage between Buddhists and (majority Shia) Muslims. Despite the existence of formal protections for the freedom to marry whoever you want guaranteed by the Indian constitution, both communities produce a biopolitical regime that prevents interreligious marriage, although such partnerships were fairly common a few generations ago (Smith 2014, 48). Both communities also contribute to a social climate that condemns the use of birth control, though in differing ways. While the Buddhist communities cite demographic competition as the main

reason for discouraging birth control, Muslim study participants framed objections in terms of “sin” (Smith 2014, 50-51). In contemporary Turkey, both of these approaches exist: the AKP has employed Islamic justifications against birth control, though their discourse is also shaped by a tacit undercurrent of demographic competition. In Ladakh, these practices also clash with modernist discourses about family planning: “The result is knowledge held in tension, and irreconcilable ethical demands: economic concerns and the valorization of small families, and the religious and political injunctions to avoid contraception. The context for these demands is understood to be a rapid progression toward ‘modern’ life, with attendant economic requirements: education and consumption” (Smith 2014, 52). Thus, young people in Leh find themselves in a complicated environment where their personal concerns about love and planning for the future sometimes conflict with community expectations, religious interpretations of proper behavior, and political demands and strategies. AKP rhetoric on reproduction can similarly complicate the environment, especially in a country where legislation has regularly engaged with women’s health and safety on a family scale rather than from the perspective of supporting and protecting the individual’s rights.

d. Intimate scales: Feminist geopolitics and alter-geopolitics

Feminist geopolitics is useful for uncovering political interactions on the scale of the individual or community which have material results for those involved. This can provide a better understanding of reality on the ground than what might be able to be uncovered looking through only a traditional geopolitical lens. Massaro and Williams (2013, 567) explain that “feminist geopolitics unpacks geopolitical power and demonstrates such power’s exceptional role in the everyday lives of real people” and also that “it draws attention to individuals and communities that push back, challenge, and rewrite geopolitical relations.” For example, official narratives of security and development in parts of Turkey’s southeast that have large Kurdish populations contrast with actual embodied experiences of the women who are purportedly helped by such

the efforts described in such narratives. In recent years, an increase of social service and development programs has provided women in cities such as Urfa, Van, and Diyarbakır with opportunities for greater mobility (actually being able to cross town to visit various offices, etc.), but this has in turn changed dynamics at home. Often, women who participate in such programs are subjected to greater levels of domestic violence (Clark 2013, 836). Clark's work compliments the efforts of other scholars of feminist geopolitics that have advanced the idea of "human security" in order to "challenge realist definitions of security with particular attention to accountability, materiality, and marginality" (2013, 838). This focus destabilizes discussions of security that privilege borders, military installations, and other such infrastructure and pay little attention to the everyday concerns of life.

In the Turkish context, images of pregnant women actively dissenting against the government have incredible potency. When positioned at the protest, the images immediately challenge notions that (pregnant) women are inherently vulnerable, objects in need of (male) protecting. They also challenged Erdoğan's repeated assessments of the demonstrations as being peopled by (male) *çapulcu* (vandals); women were not only among the protesters (and by some counts made up a full 51% of the crowds), *all types* of women were there (Koç 2013, 201). Feminist geopolitics takes stock of the motivations of all of the protesters and the meanings of their varied performances.

Images at Gezi Park including partially or fully exposed pregnant bellies dramatically contrast with conservative values concerning modesty and women's dress, topics which are regularly the focus of discussions of Turkey's religious and political climates at any given point in time. These graphic images are also a bold celebration of reproductive activity, a reminder that pregnant women and mothers are sexual beings, in a country where motherhood is often celebrated mainly for the soldiers it produces. White (2013) notes that verbal insults which crudely re-sexualize mothers (e.g. among soldiers) have the secondary insulting effect of tacitly implying the penetration of Turkey's borders, the dishonoring of the nation's integrity. In this

way, female sexuality becomes something for men and the state to control. Subjects in such images therefore reclaim some control over their own bodies by asserting their sexual identities. More generally, through such visual communication, they also claim agency through their refusal to be concealed in private spaces or to conform to any idealized conceptualizations of the role of mothers.

Images of pregnant bodies are used to *other* women from men. Longhurst (2001, 55) notes that they are often thought of as being in some “condition.” Their presence at protests side-by-side with one another and with other protesters confronts and contests this othering and the attempts to distance pregnant women that it generates. Pregnant women assert their agency as democratic citizens through acts of protest and subvert hegemonic masculine power by populating Gezi Park and Taksim, which are among the most important public spaces in Turkey. These embodied performances had a powerful effect and contributed to the largest uprising the country had seen since the 1980 coup d’état. Importantly, they were also the distinct contributions of individuals and communities acting collectively, which is a topic of concern for feminist geopolitics. Therefore, Erdoğan’s attempts to dismiss the forces behind the Gezi protests as foreigners or outsiders (Özel 2014, 20-22), a geopolitical approach to assessing the events (whether disingenuous or sincere), failed to accurately account for what was going on and served only to inspire greater participation from the Turkish citizenry.

Koopman (2011) adds to the literature on rethinking approaches to geopolitics with the concept of alter-geopolitics. This involves direct engagement with grassroots organizations rather than academic writing that is disengaged from movements and activists themselves. Her alter-geopolitics is characterized as feminist work that addresses power struggles with embodied practice. It “weaves together various scales” and looks for interventions “from all sides,” rather than only through official mechanisms or subversive tactics (Koopman 2011, 280). Alter-geopolitics emphasizes collective rather than individual action, and ideally involves opposing sides working together. This collective approach, however short-lived, was one of the

defining elements of Gezi Park, summarized, for example, by images of the fans of famously opposed rival soccer teams marching hand-in-hand in their respective jerseys as a gesture of solidarity. The slippage of collective political action into soccer was evident in the government's failed attempt to ban the shouting of political slogans at football games, which over the summer had become the practice at the 34th minute⁷ of every game in Istanbul (Özel 2014, 10).

Alter-geopolitics is "actively non-violent" in that it focuses on creating and producing peace rather than just avoiding violence and war. This spirit of active nonviolence was also prevalent during Gezi, through the establishment of community libraries, teach-ins, and medical centers. The providing of food and water to protesters as well as the shared *iftar* meals on istiklal Caddesi during Ramadan (Ünan 2015, 87) are other examples of creating peace at Gezi. Alter-geopolitics also works to build a broader sense of security that includes the provision of basic necessities for everyone, and finally, it aims to "change the rules of the game" (Koopman 2011, 281).

Alter-geopolitics is presented as an alternative to other approaches to conceptualizing security, which Koopman examines one-by-one. Geopolitics, of course, refers to classic patriarchal struggles at the nation-state level, such as the US wars with Iraq. Critical geopolitics takes a wider look at what politics means, how discourse is factored in, what academics and other experts have to say, and how public opinion influences those in power. Without discounting the nation-state, it looks more broadly at the forces that influence its behavior. "Anti-geopolitics resists the material *and/or* discursive geopolitical practices of the ruling elite, through material and/or discursive forms of resistance" (Koopman 2011, 275). It is a challenge to hegemonic geopolitical forces by those who live under it. Feminist geopolitics (see also Massaro and Williams 2013) calls for a re-examination of how everyday, local experiences contribute to large-scale geopolitics. "This means not only writing women back in, but grounding geopolitics

⁷ Turkish license plates each bear a number designating in which of the country's 81 provinces the vehicle is registered. The number in Istanbul is 34 (Özel 2014, 10).

in practice and in place in a way that makes the experiences of the disenfranchised more visible” (Koopman 2011, 276).

Koopman (2011) uses the empirical example of her work with a group of international accompaniers in Colombia in her discussion of alter-geopolitics. This involves the physical presence of foreigners who are privileged in a way that makes them less likely to be hurt or killed than members of the local population that they are there to protect. They actively work to produce peace through explicit non-violent collaborations. Interestingly, they employ their positionality, “the fact that their lives ‘count’ more (because of passport/economic/racial privilege, which are hard to untangle), to build a world where everyone’s lives ‘count’” (Koopman 2011, 280). Although her example appears to have only had mixed success, it does demonstrate ways in which average citizens engage politically with far more powerful official (police/paramilitary) and unofficial (drug cartels) actors in complex ways. Similarly, the chain of mothers at Gezi may be explained as an alter-geopolitical performance aimed at protecting a wider group of demonstrators, which also was a mixed success. While it produced a temporary complication for riot police who were unsure of how to deal with the demonstrating mothers, the park and square were eventually cleared with violence. The performance of the chain of mothers was powerful as it was an unexpected disruption to a patriarchal bio-political regime that normally would have relegated them to domestic spaces.

Women’s subordinated existence outside the home is what Kandiyoti (1991, 430) refers to as “public patriarchy,” which is distinguished from “private patriarchy,” in which women are largely confined in a system of domestic labor and removed from social opportunities. The presence of women at the Gezi Park protests challenged the boundaries of both of these conceptualizations of patriarchy. Furthermore, the conspicuous presence of pregnant women directly critiqued explicit statements made by religious and government figures proclaiming that pregnant women should be confined to private spaces (“Pregnant Women” 2013). The location of pregnant women at protests therefore became a dramatic challenge to binary understandings

of which spaces pregnant women should be allowed to access. This challenge extends to Kemalist standards of conduct as well as to those of the ruling AKP, as neither condones public displays of female sexuality or fertility, both of which are clearly evinced by bulging bellies. The presence of these women at the protests therefore also functioned as the claiming of equal rights for women to participate directly in democratic society.

Women's expanded participation in society has long been celebrated as a key element of Kemalism although the effects have been unevenly distributed and developed, at best, with many shortcomings. A feminist reading of Kemalism shows how the ideology and its policies have been thoroughly oppressive to conservatives and religious Turkish citizens for many long decades, and that these effects have been particularly harsh for women. While Kemalism proudly advertises its glorification of the female liberal citizen, it reifies conservative ideas about her role in private spaces (Gürel 2009, 708); the material results have fallen far short of the celebrated improvements. As soon as she gets out of class, clocks out of her job, or wins the beauty pageant, she should run home, cook dinner, and be ready to create more republican citizens. She was to enjoy no relief from her domestic responsibilities, which were understood to be somehow natural. Her sexual honor was also still under the close watch of men, in some cases extending as far as forced virginity tests and the failure to enforce laws meant to protect women from violent husbands. Furthermore, under Kemalism, women could still never achieve the status of soldiers, a role for men in society for which there is no female equivalent. While men were the patriarchal fathers of the homeland, women would be relegated to the more passive role of mothers to those soldiers.

e. Kemalist Reification of Patriarchy

There is another path which we can follow more securely and straightforward: [sic] to let the great Turkish women participate in our work; to conduct our life jointly with them, to make the Turkish woman a partner, an associate, an assistant and supporter of the man in the scientific, moral, social and economic domains. (1923) (Atatürk 1982, 56)

This statement is an example of how Western-oriented Kemalism has always proudly promoted its efforts to emancipate the women of Turkey (Gürel 2009, 708). Yet, even here it is easy to overlook the subordinate roles of “assistant and supporter” that follow closely after the more hopeful “partner” and “associate.” The path for “conduct(ing)... life jointly” that Mustafa Kemal references here included the expanded opportunities in society, education, and government that were created when the state was founded in 1923. Legal reforms based on the Swiss Civil Code replaced the remnants of the Ottoman legal system on 17 February 1926 (Arat 2000, 276; Arat 2009, 82-83; Çağaptay 2006, 13-14; Çınar 2005, 17). The reform opened many new doors for women while allowing the state to proclaim to the outside world that it had emancipated women (Kinzer 2008, 160) as it had “outlawed all forms of polygamy, annulled religious marriages, and granted equal rights to men and women in matters of inheritance, marriage, and divorce” (Çınar 2005, 17). However, at the same time that the new state was working to create a system that would be more egalitarian in theory, it was guilty of a number of excessive moves to purge those it saw as enemies of Kemalism. Tuğal (2014, 51) describes the early Turkish Republican regime and its efforts to universalize secularism as an example of “democratic authoritarianism,” meaning that “authoritarianism outweighed democracy, even if the exact makeup depended on conjuncture and balance of forces.” Beyond the state’s own violent abuses of power, there were also plenty of shortcomings directly affecting women within the new Civil Code itself. The Code made the husband the head of the household, granted him legal authority to choose the family’s place of residence, and required the wife to take his surname upon marriage. Her subordinate role was highlighted in Article 153/II, which stated that “To the extent that she can, the wife serves as the assistant and consultant of her husband to pursue the happiness of the family” (Arat 2009, 83).

The new state worked to contain Islam under its own administration, including its establishment of the *Diyanet* (the Directorate of Religious Affairs), while at the same time depending on Islam as an important element of Turkish national identity (Tuğal 2014, 52-53). The government formally dismantled Shariat courts and on 10 April 1928 Islam fell under the government's watch as the state religion of Turkey (Çağaptay 2006, 13-14; Çınar 2005, 16). During this period, the citizenship of all people living within the country's borders was recognized, but the state made a formal distinction between Turkish nationals and “‘Kanun Türkü’ (Turks-by-law)”, including Jews, Christians, and other non-Muslims (Çağaptay 2006, 15). Thus, Kemalism evolved to include “nominal Islam” as part of its ideology while publicly emphasizing territory and language as unifying themes in the construction of Turkishness, in addition to the ostensible gender equality it proudly touted (Çağaptay 2006, 14-15). Arat (2009, 80) writes that “although the secularization goal of the Kemalist leadership made the state a counterforce of religion and allowed it to create some opportunities for women after the establishment of the republic, the policies followed gender norms that were not much different from the ones promulgated by conservative religious interpretations; in fact, the state and religion, together, supported a culture and family model that reinforced the power of men over women.”

Kemalism continued to offer incomplete liberation for Turkish women. In 1934, women gained the right to vote as well as the right to run for national office (Arat 2000, 276; Zürcher, Erik J. 2004, 177). Important as these advances were, they did not result in immediately balanced rights for all genders, as can be observed elsewhere. “Full suffrage was finally achieved by women in the US in 1920 and in Britain by 1928 but this did not bring with it equality with men in all ‘public’ arenas” (McDowell 1999, 174). In both of these examples, opportunities for employment and education remained heavily restricted for women long after access to the voting booth was granted. To this day, the presence of Turkish women in public office remains distressingly low.

A new penal code introduced the same year as women's suffrage determined that sexual crimes were to be punished less severely when the victims were unmarried and not virgins. Chastity thus became a public concern as the state set out to protect family honor (Arat 2009, 84). Annulments could be legally granted with a court decision stating that the bride was not a virgin prior to marriage. Arat (2009, 87) writes that "Family honor was invoked frequently in cases of rape. If the woman was married, the courts tended to grant the husbands request for divorce, and if she was not, the family could agree to drop the charges if the rapist agreed to marry the victim". The formal enforcing of chastity would contribute to the shaping of social views in favor of the state playing a greater role in the controlling of women's bodies.

The republic wanted to show that it encouraged women's participation in society as liberal citizens and, by doing so, that it conformed to Western policies on gender. In the new secular state, women were urged to shed their Islamic dress and in many official public spaces they were formally required to do so. They were to embrace new opportunities not realizable under some conservative interpretations of Islam, which had been shaping society for hundreds of years prior. The Turkish women were to be strong, confident individuals, eager to help build a powerful and modern (in a distinctly European conceptualization) state.

f. Gender and the state

Women in Turkey (and all over the world) have found themselves at the center of political struggles to define different versions of nationalist identities and to serve as justifications for state actions. Throughout the entirety of Turkey's Republican era, this has meant the objectification of women in order to support the state's interests. White (2013) demonstrates thoroughly that the future of the nation and the role of the citizen, based on either a 20th century construction of Turkishness or on a distinctly Turkish iteration of Sunni Islam, has always been driven by gendered discourse.

The authoritative role Turkish men often take over women is reinforced by compulsory military service. Altınay (2004, 80) writes that “In the family context, the men are guaranteed the position of the commander over their wives. Outside the family, they are invited to identify themselves with the state and are given the authority to exercise control over women’s bodies and sexuality, through such concepts as honor.” Military policies concerning gender and sexuality also have severe consequences for sexual minorities, with repercussions again spilling over into civilian life. Homosexuality remains ostensibly legal in Turkey, although members of LGBTQ communities who are out often face severe discrimination including ostracization from family members, difficulty in securing or maintaining employment, and many forms of harassment, including police violence. The military’s approach is to enforce heteronormativity, pathologizing any perceived deviance and denying the opportunity for mandatory service (for cisgender male citizens) that is important for securing one’s career and other opportunities in life; gay men are required to provide visual evidence to the military to prove their sexuality (Ünan 2015, 78-79). Within heterosexual relationships, the tendency to maintain a gendered system of hierarchy is certainly visible if not magnified among elected officials, though it is not immune to disruption. Butler (2014, xiii) suggests that Erdoğan’s “monopoly on masculinity,” or patriarchal claim to the authority of state power and the defining of Turkishness, was challenged during Gezi by the Çarşı⁸. She believes that this reveals a larger struggle over the role of symbolizing masculinity, from which it might be inferred “that masculinity’s relation to power is an internally contested issue.” Indeed, the events of Gezi contested the structures that the AKP had worked hard to reinforce, asking not simply for reforms but for a rethinking of those structures and the status quo.

⁸ The Çarşı is the fan club of the Beşiktaş soccer team. Its members were particularly active during the Gezi Park protests and they contributed to making the Beşiktaş neighborhood of Istanbul one of the city’s most important battlegrounds against the police during the events.

g. Women and Turkish Islamism

Centuries of Islamic tradition under the Ottoman Empire were not to be abruptly halted with the establishment of the republic, to the chagrin of several of the state's founders. Rather, attempts to relegate religion to private spaces were met with resistance and generated new divisions and resentments within government and society, sporadically leading to violence and instability. It was not until the 1980s that Turkey would see the beginnings of a significant relaxing of the strict enforcement of Kemalist policies on religion in public. Since that time, the expanding presence of Islam in public has been marked by increased public performances of religious identity. For Muslim women, these performances have developed under a system that has been shaped mostly by Muslim men. Through a series of interviews with veiled women and a close reading of new works of Turkish Islamic fiction, İlyasoğlu (2000) examines the significance of bodily presentation for identity construction as well as the symbolic use of the veil as a means of passage between public and private spaces.

The use of *tesettür* veiling styles in recent decades is associated with the city and a strict adherence to Turkish Islamist convention. It is distinguished from the more traditional veiling of Anatolia in which “women do not show a careful effort to hide the hair, and the edges of scarves are not long enough to cover the bosom” (İlyasoğlu 2000, 244). Where the latter style has long been associated with “low status” women from the countryside, those dressed in *tesettür* are often associated with “modern” behaviors: the pursuit of higher education, participation in the workforce, and greater presence in the public sphere (İlyasoğlu 2000, 245). İlyasoğlu's interviewees fall into this latter category of bodily presentation, and are all “elite” in that each woman “hold[s] a degree from a higher education institution” and was “engaged in gainful employment” (İlyasoğlu 2000, 246). By these two measures each woman was also in distinct contrast from her mother. Respondents reported that they generally have more loving relationships with their daughters than they had with their mothers, that they are married to men who also hold university degrees and stable jobs, and have distanced themselves from the

practice of arranged marriages (İlyasoğlu 2000, 246-47). Many of the women reported struggles at university or in the workplace that have arisen over the years due to their veiling practices conflicting with formal policies that forbid veiling.

i. Islam in 20th Century Turkish electoral politics

Islamist approaches to governance and shaping society contrast greatly with Kemalism and have been repeatedly thwarted throughout the history of the republic. The rise to power of the AKP (Justice and Development Party) in 2002 began an important new phase in Turkish history and has since started to reshape reality on the ground. Before examining the party's history, in this section I first provide some brief context on its predecessors.

Following the democratic opening which in 1950 put an end to the single-party rule of the CHP (the Republican People's Party), religious parties began to emerge. The DP (Democrat Party), lead by Adnan Menderes gained traction in the 1950s (Tuğal 2014, 52). The newly-elected prime minister left Mustafa Kemal's reforms intact, though began repealing some of the measures enacted by Mustafa Kemal's successor, İnönü. For example, the recent ban on saying the *ezan* (Muslim call to prayer) in Arabic was overturned in 1950 and muezzins⁹ promptly abandoned the short-lived use of Turkish for this purpose (Brockett 2011, 122-23; Mango 2004, 46). The DP also implemented mandatory religious education classes for primary school students later that same year. Parents would from now on have to officially notify the school if they did not want their children to be taught about Islam (Brockett 2011, 120-21). These reforms were generally well-received.

Not all were impressed with the reforms of Menderes, however, and other issues further complicated his time in office. During his tenure, he would be faced with a major crisis with

⁹ The muezzin calls out the *ezan* alerting practicing Muslims that the time for prayer is approaching. Traditionally, muezzins climbed to the top of their mosques' minarets to lead the call, but today the *ezan* is typically broadcast from minarets electronically.

Greece over Cyprus and economic strife at home. Dissatisfaction with Menderes' leadership, which was widely thought to be growing increasingly authoritarian, culminated in his removal on 27 May 1960 (Mango 2004, 50-52). This abrupt end to his time in office was the first of four military coups d'état Turkey would witness by the end of the century. The following day it was announced that General Cemal Gürsel would take the reins as "head of state, prime minister and minister of defence, in theory giving him more absolute powers than Atatürk had ever had" (Zürcher 2009, 242). A trial following the coup resulted in the subsequent hanging of Menderes and two other members of his government who were found guilty of violating the constitution; hundreds of other members of the Democrat Party were imprisoned (Mango 2004, 53-55). In this way, the military sent the harsh message to Islamists that they would defend Kemalist *laiklik* from any perceived threats at all costs, even at the expense of democratic process.

The JP (Justice Party), lead by Süleyman Demirel, dominated "the center-right tradition in Turkish politics" throughout the 1960s and 1970s (Tuğal 2014, 52). The JP had managed to garner support from former supporters of the DP, particularly in rural Anatolian regions of Turkey. "Demirel proved to be a first-rate vote catcher in the countryside, where people could identify with his background and see his career as the embodiment of their hopes" (Zürcher 2009, 250). Like Menderes, Demirel appealed to religious conservatives and was the enemy of socialists and intellectuals. Unlike Menderes, he ruled Turkey during a period of greater financial prosperity and was able to see legislation passed without accusations of constitutional violations (Zürcher 2009, 251-52). Still, his pursual of higher taxes to help finance the country's rapid industrialization made him unpopular eventually even with his base. He was forced to resign in February 1970, when members of the JP cast their votes in favor of his opposition (Zürcher 2009, 252). Tuğal (2014, 53) states that

Islamism sought to reorganize the whole society and state based on religious principles, whereas in Islamic conservatism, the emphasis was on the preservation of national culture through mobilizing Islam, rather than an Islamic purification of that culture. Islamists differentiated themselves from Islamic conservatives by arguing that existing

national culture had been corrupted by non-Islamic elements throughout the centuries - elements that had to be removed.

The period of time following the 12 September 1980 coup d'état was marked by neoliberalization and the suppression of activity for unions and leftist groups. "Nonetheless, the period following the coup was also a time when identity groups and accordingly LGBTs, who were not able to raise their voices, mobilised [*sic*] themselves and became visible," states Ünan (2015, 78).

ii. Cemaat

Nurcu refers to a number of groups that "claim to be the true followers of an early-to-mid-twentieth century Islamic scholar, Said-i Nursi" (Tuğal 2009, 267). Fethullah Gülen is the leader of the modernist branch of this movement and his followers are commonly referred to as the *cemaat* ("community" or "congregation"). Gülen has built a large international network of schools and universities which "seek to further the adoption of Western technology coupled with Islamic morals" (Zürcher 2009, 291). While publicly moderate and supportive of Turkey's secularist system, Gülen was accused of "inciting religious hatred" in the late 1990s and has since lived in exile in the United States (Zürcher 2009, 291).

Many women support Gülen and participate in his movement "motivated by a commitment to justice" and "a conscious choice to serve others" (White 2013, 167). However, the principles of the Gülen movement has created an organizational structure that is run only by men. "The movement's emphasis on conservative communal and gender values, backed by reference to patriarchal interpretations of Islam, have kept women out of positions of authority except in their own complementary female networks" (White 2013, 167).

The Gülenist newspaper *Zaman* expressed temporary support for the Gezi Park protests during the first few days, perhaps foreshadowing the more public break between Gülen and Erdoğan which would unfold during the winter that followed (Tuğal 2014, 55). However, this

support would quickly shift with *Zaman* and Gülen himself taking a harder line against the “marginal” participants in the events, echoing Erdoğan’s own rhetoric (Tuğal 2014, 56). Since Gezi, the relationship between Erdoğan and Gülen has grown increasingly icy. *Zaman* has also become more critical in its coverage of the AKP than it typically was during the first 11 years of the party’s rule. A shocking corruption scandal unfolded during the winter and spring immediately following Gezi, just months, interestingly, before Erdoğan would win the presidency by popular vote. During the scandal, a leaked recording of a telephone conversation revealed Erdoğan instructing his son, Bilal, to remove tens of millions of Euros from a family property out of fear that a police raid was imminent (Letsch 2014). The events subsequently saw the dismissals and relocations of hundreds of police officers involved in the raids and the defiant prime minister accused Gülen of orchestrating a plan to destabilize and overthrow the Turkish government (Letsch 2014; Yalçıntaş 2015, 17). Gülen remains exiled in the United States.

iii. The AKP (Justice and Development Party)

The governance of the AKP has characterized a dramatic shift in Turkish politics for the 21st century. The party’s reforms have opened doors for covered women as the Kemalist ban on the headscarf has slowly been repealed. Although the built geography and cultural climate of a space have strong determining factors about which public spaces remain welcoming or hostile towards Turkish citizens wearing religious clothing, the opportunity to participate on university campuses and in public buildings has significant effects for pious women in Turkey and young girls thinking about their futures. The emergence of the AKP at the turn of the millennium is the most successful chapter in the story of an increasingly influential Islamist movement that has been gaining momentum since the early 1980s.

The AKP embraces both a globalized, neoliberal understanding of modernity and a campaign to expand the reaches of Islam in society (Brockett 222, 2011). The republic is approaching its centennial, shifting steadily away from the Kemalist past that defined it for many

decades. As it was under Kemalism, under the AKP the symbolic burden to represent the nation is placed upon women, though with very different conceptualizations of who the ideal woman is. Women's Islamic dress is the most visible public manifestation of Islamism and has contributed to the production of symbolic borders in the nation-building project of the AKP, which conspicuously promotes images of headscarved women as ideal Turkish citizens (White 2013, 46). Kandiyoti argues that "Wherever women continue to serve as boundary markers between different national, ethnic and religious collectivities, their emergence as full-fledged citizens will be jeopardised, and whatever rights they may have achieved during one stage of nation-building may be sacrificed on the altar of identity politics during another" (Kandiyoti 1991, 435). Struggles to remove legal restrictions on the headscarf in government buildings, for example, have often driven polarizing debates with actors framing opponents as either oppressive of democratic freedoms or oppressive through religious expansion into public territory. Nuanced appraisals of women's varied positions often fail to complicate such struggles and women are instead relegated as evidence of the threatening nature of the opposition's politics, by both Kemalists and Islamists alike.

When the AKP rose to power it continued to rely upon nationalist discourse built upon an ethnic Turkish identity, though over time it has grown more religious in its conservatism. Importantly, "unlike its Islamist predecessor, the new party did not attempt to purify everyday life" in Turkey (Tuğal 2014, 54). The party thus created opportunities for democratic inclusivity. However, "this democratization was balanced with new and old forms of authoritarianism," such as the Ergenekon case and the suppression of protests at Gezi Park (Tuğal 2014, 54). In the case of the former, the widespread imprisonment of government opponents was conducted, often with the presence of little to no evidence that they had been conspiring with dangerous groups. "Throughout the Ergenekon case, the public has been enlightened about the murderous potentials of the state, but the whole process has also been used, ironically, to further silence and criminalize opposition in Turkey" (Tuğal 2014, 55). Thus, the AKP shares many

characteristics of “democratic authoritarianism” with republican governments dating back to the state’s founding.

Brockett (2011) argues that Turkish National Identity did not truly evolve until the period after 1945, despite the popular notion that it was established immediately and successfully along with the establishment of the republic. Furthermore, he argues that Islam had perhaps a greater impact on the development of this identity than did secularism. He cautions against overestimating the success that the Kemalist project had on reshaping Turkish society. For many citizens, the AKP does a better job of reflecting their identity than have previous governments.

The AKP has created new opportunities for political activity that covered women do not find in Kemalism. Covered women have played a heavier role in grassroots mobilizations around specific causes and in electoral political campaigns since the 1980s. However, as White (2002, 195) argues, actual occasions for women’s public political activity, as well as opportunities to study and work outside the home, are often mixed. While conservative parties often support such interactions for women in society, actors within those parties, for example, often oppose neighborhood programs that could train women with the necessary skill sets. Moreover, “At marriage even educated Islamist women activists are often asked to stop working by their husbands, particularly after the birth of a child” (White 2002, 195).

The *Diyanet* has also in recent years expanded its role beyond mosque administration and training of religious leaders to take a more active role in Turkish private life. In 2008, the organization’s president broke with the body’s long time position that the headscarf was a cultural practice but not a religious requirement, stating instead that it was “an obligation incumbent on all Muslim women” (Baran 2010, 90). Shortly after this statement was made, the *Diyanet*’s website began publishing writing warning women to avoid perfumes or form-fitting clothing. The organization has also started to circulate “pamphlets for women on marriage, sexuality, and duties as a proper housewife” (Baran 2010, 91). Göle (2000, 465) writes that

“Islamism brings forth women as markers of modesty and morality.” While the same can be said of Kemalism, the AKP has over the years grown increasingly explicit in its descriptions of exactly how women should display this morality. For example, Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç upset many by making a statement in August 2014 “suggesting women should not laugh loudly in public” (Agence France-Presse in Istanbul 2014). Still, heterogeneous opinions on piety and morality are held by AKP supporters and, to many people, an opinion such as Arınç’s seems extreme.

Whether or not women are obligated to seclude themselves away from men who are not close relations is another contested element of pious moral behavior. Differing ideas can be found in Sultanbeyli, among Islamic activists about the extent to which gender separation should be observed within private spaces. Some view the complete separation of men and women, during for example the visit of family friends, as a leftover Ottoman practice and not something derived from traditional interpretations of Islam. Others saw failures to segregate, for example when a female family member brings tea to a guest, to be evidence of sloppy moral behavior influenced by secularists (Tuğal 2009, 164=65).

In addition to embracing their enhanced roles as political subjects, many conservative Turkish women happily subscribe to identities less staunchly nationalist than those of many Kemalists in favor of more international and cosmopolitan Muslim identities, which potentially allow for more inclusive thinking. Both this strengthening of religious identities and the expanded opportunities now available for political participation have nurtured stronger ties to community among conservative Turkish women (compared to the individualism of Kemalism that can be experienced as more isolating). Göle (2000, 466) is concerned with variations in veiling practices in Turkey and with what they suggest about modernity. She believes that veiling since 1983 has evolved to challenge binary understandings that equate secular (Western) with modern and Islamic with traditional. Significantly, veiled women’s pursuits of higher education disrupt notions of Islam as oppressive for women. Veiling as a symbolic and political practice

are inextricably tangled up in modernity projects. Different types of veiling and expressions of identity cannot be thought of as ahistorical continuations of traditions (Göle 2000, 468). Along these lines, the Turkish media began referring to new styles of veiling with the politically-charged word, *türban* (Göle 2000, 470; Zürcher 2009, 289-90).

Islamic governance in an ostensibly secular system (a rapidly evolving process), has under the AKP been presented as the long-awaited liberation of the oppressed religious masses. Fraser (2015) writes that

The government's moves have included loosening the headscarf ban; dramatically increasing the number of religious schools; and ending the school ritual in which students pledged allegiance to secular principles. While it has cited student freedoms in allowing headscarves, it has at the same time banned tattoos, body piercing and dyed hair in schools.

As an indication of possible steps to come, the country's national education advisory council, dominated by a pro-government teacher's union, recommended a series of other controversial measures that included increasing the number of compulsory religious classes from one to two hours per week; lowering the starting age of these classes to 6 from 9; teaching religious values at pre-schools; and removing a class on the preparation of cocktails from vocational tourism schools' curriculum.

The material consequences of the government's reforms have been greatly mixed, with the quiet imposition of new oppressions as the removals of older forms are proudly celebrated. Many also believe that the government's enthusiastic embrace of neoliberal reforms is not compatible with Islam, and that it has produced wider socioeconomic inequality. The social policies of the AKP have been heavily scrutinized over the years.

Repeated again and again in Gezi Park protest materials were critiques of AKP pronatalism. The famous statements of Erdoğan and other high ranking officials that women should have at least three babies each highlights how the primary value of women is seen by many to mean that of reproducer and domestic servant. Women are still not offered much additional support while they see to these duties, as is evidenced by widespread failures to actually enforce new progressive laws aimed at securing their protection.

The greater openings for public displays of Islam have been celebrated as liberating, but have often come at the expense of freedoms enjoyed by others in society, such as stricter regulations on alcohol, which has been heavily taxed in recent years. The strengthened (Sunni) Muslim identity that the AKP has nurtured has reinforced the othering of Alevis, Jews, Christians, atheists, and other minorities. To some extent, this process has been comparable to Israeli privileging of Judaism over all other faiths (Kanaaneh 2002). The government's efforts to become more involved in the private lives of citizens has been a cause of great concern for many in Turkey. Critiques of this process were commonly found among the protest materials visible at Gezi Park.

h. Claims to modernity

Early republican era discourse in Turkey emphasized that Kemalism, through its *laiklik*, language reform, and generally Western revisionist approach, was the way to a modern and prosperous future. Religious conservatives have been challenging the Kemalists' alleged ownership of Turkish modernity since the reform period of the early 1980s. Under the AKP, they have enjoyed the most success with this process, demonstrating during a period of relative economic prosperity that modernity and religiosity are not mutually exclusive. Confusingly perhaps, this process has also been complicated by the AKP's self-Orientalizing neo-Ottomanism, which celebrates, often with loud visual displays, a constructed imperial golden age that many supporters identify with. The Topçu Kışlası shopping mall project which triggered the Gezi Park protests was itself an example of this. The outer shell of the structure was to be a replica of a historical Ottoman army barracks.

The government's plan to rebuild the military barracks can be interpreted in two ways. First of all, this was a message about re-establishing the past Ottoman self, as the neoconservative government is in many ways critical of the modern secular nation state and its practices. Secondly, than plan was that the barracks would serve as a shopping mall and/or hotel, which reflects the will to commodify a public space while erasing the collective memory of the protests (Ünan 2015, 81-82).

The protests Ünan refers to here were all of the many protests that have filled Taksim Square throughout the republican era, including several important May Day protests that have occurred over the years. Perhaps the government was indeed motivated in part by the desire to obscure this part of the space's history, but their efforts to do so instead set the stage for one of the most important uprisings Taksim has ever seen.

In any case, Gezi Park protesters did not shy away from using recycled tropes that dichotomized them as modern and the government as stagnant or out of touch. In Figures 1 and 2, for example, hashtags demonstrate a level of internet savviness connecting demonstrators with contemporary technologies and the zeitgeist of sharing information rapidly through social media. Similarly, protesters produced images of Erdoğan and of police attacks which parodied Ottoman era artwork, linking the government directly with the past and implying that it was outdated and incapable of providing adequate leadership in the present.

CHAPTER 3: VISUAL CULTURE OF PREGNANCY AND MOTHERHOOD AT GEZI PARK

In this analysis of Gezi Park protest imagery I find three major repeating themes. Firstly, critiques of AKP pronatalism: Pronatalism has been a recurring theme among Turkish governments since the republic's founding in 1923. During the reign of the AKP, the frequent proclamations from Erdoğan suggesting that women should have at least three children are understood by critics of his brand of social conservatism as inappropriate interferences with the private lives of citizens and as the reinforcing of conceptualizations of womanhood that measure the individual's value by her fertility. Secondly, critiques of social conservative seclusion rhetoric emerge as a prominent theme in the photographs I analyze. The AKP has taken some measures to ostensibly improve the quality of life for and expand the democratic freedoms of millions of Turkish women. These efforts include, for example, the lifting of the controversial headscarf ban for university students and civil servants in 2013 and for middle school students the following year ("Turkish Gov't Allows Headscarf..." 2014), as well as the passing of legislation to protect women from different forms of violence (White 2013, 176). Nevertheless, these official actions have also been paired with the rhetorical reinforcement of social conventions as well as the implementation of policies that limit women's mobility and access to public spaces, often bolstered by religious justifications. Finally, these protest images also provide general critiques of the state's violent responses to the Gezi Park protests: Although in some images this critique is more explicit than in others, the creation and distribution of these images *during* the summer of 2013 makes them inextricably part of the larger archive of protest materials generated for Gezi Park. The protesters were at times accused of not articulating a clear message or a list of their demands – a critique similar to those leveraged against participants in the Occupy Wall Street movement (Gitlin 2012, 143-44). The Gezi Park protests

included concerns about a diverse spectrum of issues, including freedom of the press, infringement on civil liberties, the destruction of natural resources, the tightening of restrictions on alcohol, and the ongoing failure to reach a solution to the Kurdish problem, just to name a few. Protest performances which specifically engaged with pronatalism and women's agency made important feminist interventions during the course of the summer.

In addition to contextually framing the performances of *#direnhamile* activists during the summer of 2013, my analysis also considers the various possible readings that might have been common among their potential target audiences. I also explore the context that gives weight to these images as well as their potential for discursive production. Several of the images may help to disrupt stereotypical ideas about (pregnant) women. Importantly, however, they also rely upon a discursive construction that privileges women's reproductive abilities as the source of their primary value. Thus, they fortify in some ways some of the patriarchal structures that they are intended to critique. This paradox is explored in greater detail in the analysis that follows the introductions to the images.

A. Methodology

In my sample set of images, which I collectively refer to as *#direnhamile* images, I examine several visual materials depicting or referencing pregnancy and/or motherhood. In my analysis, I pay close attention to intertextuality, which "refers to the way that the meanings of any one discursive image or text depend not only on that one text or image, but also on the meanings carried by other images and texts" (Rose 2012, 191). I employ this intertextual approach while conducting my discourse analysis; I consider each image in relation to the other images, while framing them all within the wider discursive context of morality as informed by traditions, customs, and Sunni Islam in a secular state. Additionally, I try to account for identity and the constructing of the nation as well as the revising or enforcing of gender roles in contemporary Turkey. I also draw upon semiology methods to examine symbols present within

my sample images. Some of these symbols are Turkey-specific and others possess more universally-understood meanings.

I consider the impact that photographic materials can have on advancing claims of certain truths while I perform my analyses. Sontag (2001, 18) argued that as a “privileged moment,” the still photograph can potentially reflect an intensity in a way that video images cannot: “Photographs like the one that made the front page of most newspapers in the world in 1972 - a naked South Vietnamese child just sprayed by American napalm, running down a highway toward the camera, her arms open, screaming with pain - probably did more to increase the public revulsion against the war than a hundred hours of televised barbarities.” She argues that photographs possess a degree of “authority” to provide evidence, expose truth, or explain reality (Sontag 2001, 154). Therefore, both the photographer’s intentions and the potential interpretations that different viewers might have each contribute to the production of the image’s meaning.

In what follows, I briefly introduce each of the eight images I have selected. I provide contextual background on subjects, spaces, and any necessary explanations of culturally-specific content, including translations of Turkish text. After these introductions, I continue with deeper thematic examinations that consider how the visual materials operate intertextually. Therefore, rather than examining each image individually in a strict order, my analysis will necessarily move between images, involve discussions of multiple images at once, and return repeatedly to ones that have been previously-discussed. I address the variety of messages that may be understood or inferred from the images individually as well as collectively while considering the contextual landscape that they both help produce and are themselves the products of.

This study is not intended to be a comprehensive treatment of all Gezi Park imagery related to pregnancy and motherhood, but rather a sampling of many of the themes that were the most important contributions to discourse on gender, direct democratic participation (Butler

2014, xi), morality, and Turkish identity during the protests of 2013 (White 2013, 208). The images that I have chosen all depict one or more of the following: pregnant women, mothers, babies or young children, and a group I am referring to as “pregnant allies.” I use this last term to refer to both male and female demonstrators who do not appear to have been *hamile* (pregnant) at the time of the protests, but who wore artificial bellies/pillows/balloons/etc. to simulate the appearance of pregnancies.

All of the study images feature critiques of AKP pronatalism, either implying or stating directly that it was not the government’s role to interfere with women’s health choices. Furthermore, the images also suggest that the subjects support reproduction as a form of demographic competition to be used against the AKP and the party’s ideological supporters. In the latter case, the party’s own language suggesting that women have at least “three children” was often appropriated. Directives on seclusion are usually advanced by social conservatives on religious grounds or in the name of “behaving morally.” Critiques of such directives were usually implied by the protestors’ presence in crowded public spaces, which can be seen in several of the images. These performances can also be read as larger critiques of patriarchal efforts to limit women’s mobility and agency.

The production of *#direnhamile* images during the Gezi Park protests is significant, indicating that they were created to condemn the state’s response to the protests in addition to their specific messages about pronatalism and women’s rights. They join the larger movement’s collectively voiced dissatisfaction with AKP leadership, particularly the regime of Erdoğan and its increasingly authoritarian tendencies (White 2013, 203). Additionally, all of the *#direnhamile* images were shaded with statements about the subjects’ identities as Turkish national citizens through their rejections of Erdoğan’s attempts to take ownership over the (re)defining of Turkishness. Erdoğan’s model citizen has an identity linked to the practice of a form of Sunni Islam that allows a simultaneous adherence to neoliberalism and the endless pursuit of capital. Through their refusals to conform to this particular construction of national identity and its

attendant demands, such as the performance of specific understandings of morality, protesters claimed their rights to dissent as participants in a democratic system (White 2013, 208).

Considering all of the above themes, I organize my analysis around two specific questions. My first question asks in what ways pregnant protesters were represented visually in protest images and how these representations might be interpreted in the context of contemporary Turkey. My second question examines how these images support or challenge dominant discourses on morality and gendered behavior as presented by various actors in society and government. With this study I aim to better understand how images of pregnancy and motherhood articulate discourses on gender, morality, and national identity in Turkey.

B. Introduction to images:

In this section, I provide an introduction to each of my eight *#direnhamile* images¹⁰ to explain briefly any symbols that are present and important contextual points for consideration. In the section that subsequently follows, I explore the images in greater depth and take an intertextual approach to examining their collective informative potential.

¹⁰ The names used here to label each image were in most cases not provided by the producers of the images. As they were usually published as unnamed visual materials that spoke for themselves, I have added names that I believe are useful for discursive purposes and that serve as concise summaries of each.

Figure 2 - “GELİYORUM!!!” (“I AM COMING!!!”)

Source: Aydın 2013, 12



This image is a photograph of a woman's belly in an advanced stage of pregnancy bearing the words “#DİRENGEZİPARKI GELİYORUM!!!” (“#RESISTGEZIPARK I AM COMING!!!”) along with a sketch of a computer progress bar at 95%. The image was shared widely on social media during the protests and was also published in several books on Gezi imagery (Akkuş 2013, 40; Aydın 2013, 12; Tuncer 2013, 6)¹¹. The powerful and playful image captures the immediacy of the historical moment with the implication that even an unborn child was eager to join the ranks of the protesters participating at Gezi. It also responds directly to the

¹¹ #direnhamile imagery travelled far and wide during the summer of 2013, in both print and social media. However, credits for the actual production of these images were not so readily available. It is my belief that, given the political climate during Gezi Park, the photographers and artists responsible for the creation of these images preferred to remain anonymous in the hopes of avoiding retribution from the state. Unfortunately, I have been unable to uncover the origins of any of the images that are examined in this study. In most if not all cases, I republish here images that had been republished at least once already. The sources that I use all anonymously lifted these visual materials from elsewhere the internet.

ongoing pronatalist messages issued by high-ranking members of the AKP. The disembodiment contributes to the anonymity¹² of the subject. The inclusion of a hashtag and progress bar suggest some degree of computer savviness on the part of the subject (and the wider social movement).

Figure 3 “Diren Erdem Bebek” (“Resist Baby Erdem”)

Source: “#direnhamile” 2013



¹² While the anonymity of the subject remains important for the image’s potency, the newborn baby along with both parents did surface on the internet by July 2013 (biryumakmutsuzluk 2013). The baby was named Atlas Diren. The parents had agreed upon Atlas before the events at Gezi Park began, but after weeks of protesting decided to add the second name, Diren (Resist).

Figure 3, "*Diren Erdem Bebek*" ("Resist Baby Erdem"), shares several characteristics with Figure 2 as both display pregnant bellies with handwritten protest messages. Located within the meaningful landscape of Kadıköy, the subject of Figure 3 bares her lower arms and legs in addition to her belly. Also, her hair is uncovered. She epitomizes the idea of a "Kadıköy woman," marked as politically liberal by her physical appearance. She appears relaxed in her act of protest, nonchalantly standing amid a crowd in a perpetually busy, central, and symbolic location. A placard is visible on the left side of the image marking the subject as protesting with other demonstrators. The writing on the belly of the woman reads "*Diren Hamile*" ("Resist Pregnant") and "*Diren Erdem Bebek*" ("Resist Baby Erdem"). The *Diren Hamile* part of this message appears here without the hashtag. The second part of the message suggests that the subject has already given a name to her expected son. Perhaps she wishes to highlight his prenatal subjectivity. Maybe she intends to provide him with a souvenir later in life: photographic proof that he was in the womb and at the protests. Or perhaps she was simply following the lead of other protesters who were in the habit of attaching the word *diren* to all sorts of things¹³ throughout the summer.

¹³ Over a public banner announcing the commencement of registration for local circumcision services, one anonymous protester playfully scribbled the words "*Diren Pipi*" ("Resist Penis") (Akkuş 2013, 73).

Figure 4 “#direnhamile indoor photo pair”

Source: “#direnhamile” 2013



This pairing of photographs displays two women, each indoors, posing in similar ways to accent their pregnant bellies. The hashtag *#direnhamile* is superimposed over both images at the bottom of the frame. The image was published on July 25th (“#direnhamile” 2013) as part of a larger collection of images from a protest of pregnant women and pregnant allies. The demonstrations were staged at multiple sites in Istanbul in response to statements made the day before by Sufi thinker Ömer Tuğrul İnancı¹⁴. His conservative politics are often in line with

¹⁴ Originally trained as a lawyer, İnancı has since the 1990s become an active public commentator on Turkish culture, a regular guest on numerous radio and television shows (Unofficial fan blog 2010). His conservative politics

those of the AKP. Many found his July 24th statements concerning the appearance of pregnant women on the street offensive. Another wave of *#direnhamile* protests followed in response.

In Figure 4, the feet of both subjects are cut out of the frame. The woman on the left stands sideways with her face looking at the camera, smiling slightly. She is wearing a mid-length printed dress, with her arms, shoulders, and legs (from just above the knees) visible. Her arm supports and accents her belly. She appears to be very young, perhaps in her early 20s. There is a china cabinet in the background, signaling that she is probably either at home or in another private residence. The woman on the right has both her face and body aimed at the camera. She wears glasses and a somewhat somber expression on her face. She wears a solid print dress with a mid-length neckline, her arms and legs (below the knee and out of the frame) exposed. She also accents her belly, resting one hand above and the other below her bulge. She appears to be considerably older than the woman on the left, perhaps nearing the temporal limits of her own fertility. In the background a window, table, and shelf are all visible, locating her in a private space as well. Only with the addition of the hashtag does the pairing of photographs become an obvious statement of protest.

are often in line with those of the AKP. Although his viewpoints are often extremely far to the right, he likely wields considerable influence with some audiences.

Figure 5 “Bizim gibi 3 çocuk istediğine emin misin?” (“Are you sure that you want 3 children like us?”)

Source: Aydın 2013, 63



This image, like that in Figure 2, was shared widely on social media during the protests and was also published repeatedly in book collections of Gezi Park visual imagery (Akkuş 2013, 12; Aydın 2013, 63). The image is a photograph of spray paint on a construction wall asking in huge lettering “*Bizim gibi 3 çocuk istediğine emin misin?*” (“Are you sure that you want 3 children like us?”). Graffiti was widely used during Gezi. This photograph highlights the urgency of the moment as well as the inventiveness of the protesters in their creation of powerful and concise messages.

Figure 6 “*Diren Hamile İstiklal*” (“Resist Pregnant on İstiklal Boulevard”)

Source: Türk 2013



This photograph shows a number of pregnant allies protesting alongside pregnant women on İstiklal Boulevard, displaying an array of creative placards. In addition to two “*Diren Hamile*” (“Resist Pregnant”) placards, another states “*Hamile Hamile Dolaşıyoruz*” (“We are walking around pregnant”). These messages directly challenge rhetoric directing pregnant women to not be visible in public and to remain secluded at home. The message *Diren Hamile* itself also complicates ideas about pregnant women being vulnerable.

The message on the green placard in the center of the frame reads “*elini dilini bedenimden çek*” (“get your hand and your tongue off my body”). Using strong and deliberately sexually suggestive language, this statement declares that it should not be the role of government to control family planning and other women’s health issues. The “tongue” here refers to the statements of public officials, while the “hand” refers to the formal implementation of policy that limits the rights of women and what women can do with their bodies. In recent years, Erdoğan has worked to limit access to safe abortions and Caesarian births (White 2013, 205).

Figure 7 “Kov Eylemci Tomayı” (“Demonstrators, kick out the TOMA [water cannon vehicle]”)

Source: Akkuş 2013, 116¹⁵



This illustration uses the powerful image of a mother in a gas mask singing a lullaby to her baby, who is also in a gas mask. Aside from the masks, the woman appears to be well-groomed, with her hair combed neatly in place. She stands proudly upright, focusing on her child, whose body language suggests that he/she is calm and relaxed. Cradling and rocking the infant in her arms, the mother sings sweetly that the “TOMAs¹⁶ have entered the garden...” The

¹⁵ This image is the only non-photograph that I examine in this study. While the illustration contains a signature that appears to read “Can,” I have not been able to uncover any more information about this person’s identity. Despite multiple attempts to contact Serkan Akkuş, editor of the volume that this illustration appeared in, I have received no replies.

¹⁶ TOMA, or “mass-intervention vehicles” (Gruber 2013b), became synonymous with excessive state force during Gezi. They are large trucks armed with powerful water cannons capable of forcing aside demonstrators. Early on in

image therefore presents the soft image of a quiet nurturing moment between mother and child juxtaposed with the alarming acknowledgement that *TOMAs* were approaching.

Figure 8 ‘En az “3 çocuk” yapacağım, söz!’ (‘I am going to have at least “3 children,” I promise!’)

Source: Aydın 2013, 63



This image displays the message ‘En az “3 çocuk” yapacağım, söz!’ (‘I am going to have at least “3 children,” I promise!’), thus directly appropriating Erdoğan’s pronatalist rhetoric, using quotation marks for grammatical emphasis. The three stick figures below clearly represent the “3 children” and are labeled respectively “ÇapulCan,” “ÇapulNaz,” and “ÇapulNur,” fusing Erdoğan’s “*çapulcu*” (“vandal”) label with the common Turkish names Can, Naz, and Nur. Interestingly, the remaining text on the placard is in English: “Everyday I’m chapulling” and “Our mum was chapulling everyday!” The anglicization¹⁷ of *çapul(cu)* occurred early on during the

the protests, the appearance of colored water coming out of *TOMAs* led to allegations that the police were adding chemicals to the water in order to maximize the damage they could do to protesters.

¹⁷ This use of “chapulling” in Figure 8 could demonstrate a few different things. The use of English may show an attempt to appeal to a wider, international audience. However, the more likely purpose was to demonstrate the protester’s education level through their ability to protest humorously in a foreign language. I believe this second interpretation is far more likely as the placard’s main statement is in Turkish and it demands specific knowledge of AKP pronatalism, which was only a peripheral issue during Gezi. It is unlikely that this photograph untranslated would carry much meaning for an international audience.

protests when protesters created a music video parodying “Everyday I’m Shufflin’” by the group LMFAO (Gruber 2013c); the new term also became a loan word in French as *chapulité* (Yalçıntaş 2015, 20). While the image speaks most directly to a domestic audience, the use of minimal English at the very least suggests that the protesters welcomed and encouraged international acknowledgement of their efforts.

Figure 9 “*En küçük çapulcu benim.*” (“I am the tiniest *çapulcu*”)

Source: Tuncer 2013, 25



This baby in a stroller image displays the statement “*En küçük çapulcu benim Anamı da aldım geldim*” (“I am the tiniest *çapulcu* I grabbed my mother and came [to the protest]”). While the mother gets a brief mention in this sign (which, it may be assumed, she did the work of making, hanging, photographing, and sharing), the emphasis here is on the baby. Thus, this image potentially can be read as a reification of the message that a woman’s primary worth is tied to her fertility, a theme which can be found to varying degrees in all of these images. Behind the camera or elsewhere outside of the frame, the mother of this child assumes the role of producer of the nation. The focus is not on her but instead on the tiniest *çapulcu*, who, the

viewer is told, is already the dissenting liberal citizen that is promised (either explicitly or tacitly) in all of the *hamile* protest images.

Figure 10 “*hepimiz hamileyiz hepimiz sokaktayız*” (“we are all pregnant we are all on the street”)

Source: Türk 2013



This photograph of a pregnant ally displaying a fake pregnant belly was taken on 25 July 2013 as part of the #direnamile protests reflected in Figures 2, 3, and 5. The sign reads “*hepimiz hamileyiz hepimiz sokaktayız*” (“we are all pregnant we are all on the street”). The two protesters posed for the photograph on İstiklal Boulevard, in Beyoğlu, not far from Taksim Square. The act of wearing a fake belly to produce a visual substitution for pregnancy is a powerful performance of solidarity. Non-pregnant protesters, particularly men, are not subject to the same rhetoric about seclusion and morality. Furthermore, their participation as pregnant allies suggests that anyone can be subjected to bodily interference at the hands of the government.

C. Place, subjectivity, and anonymity

All of the images in this project make statements about place and who has access to it. They also present conceptualizations of citizenship that differ from and critique those promoted

by the ruling government. The most striking element of Figure 2 is a disembodied pregnant torso filling nearly the entire frame of the photograph as it is cropped. The viewer is able to focus on little else. The subject's face, shoulders, hips, and limbs are all off-camera, placing the emphasis on the barely-hidden fetus and relegating the mother to a relative state of anonymity. Thus, the focus is placed more on the future child, creating an effect similar to that in the photograph of the baby in Figure 9, "I am the tiniest *çapulcu*". Combined with the dissenting nature of the written messages, these images also reinforce pronatalist messages which privilege women's reproductive capacities as their primary sources of value. Had the women not either been pregnant or recently given birth at the times of the photographs, they would not have been able to make these statements. Nevertheless, their performances do make important political statements claiming mobility rights in public spaces and asserting political agency.

Anonymity plays an important role in Figure 2. The baggy, black-and-grey-striped shirt pulled up above the mother-to-be's belly reveals no text, brand logo, or other image that might inform about her socioeconomic position in society, and the only remaining spaces in the frame are empty, ambiguous blackness in the bottom corners. It can be safely assumed that the subject is critical of the AKP government and its activities during Gezi Park, but the image provides nothing to suggest her specific political allegiances, age, ethnicity, nationality, or any religious affiliation. The effectiveness and appeal of the image are therefore maximized by the absence of any distinguishing details that could otherwise activate specific prejudices among Gezi's participants and observers. However, for many of the Turkish citizens who opposed the Gezi Park demonstrations, the very appearance of a pregnant belly would be considered immoral, regardless of who it belonged to.

The dominance of the pregnant belly in the frame also creates total ambiguity about the mother's geographic location. It is difficult, if not impossible, to determine if she is indoors or outdoors, or even within Turkey for that matter. The paired photographs in Figure 4 and the cartoon image in Figure 7 have similarly ambiguous locations. Don Mitchell (2003, 147-51) has

emphasized the importance of the physical presence of bodies in political struggles over urban spaces. He writes that

... there has never been a revolution conducted solely in cyberspace. Revolutions entail a taking to the streets and a taking of public space. They require the creation of disorder in places formally marked by order and control. Political movements must take space and create it anew as a space in which the participants *can* be represented. (2003, 149 – emphasis in original)

Although the subject in Figure 2 may or may not have actually been at Gezi during the moment of the image's capture, the message promises specifically that either she or the baby after birth (or probably both of them) is (are) heading to the protest. The equivocality of place in the photograph also exhibits how support for the protests was not limited to those protesting at Gezi Park itself, to Istanbul, or even just to Turkey. The ubiquity of cyberspace and the sharing of such messages in fact allowed for both supporters of the protests to share quickly and widely information about what was happening on the ground and for the government and other critics of the protests to advance theories suggesting that the real forces at play in Gezi were foreign actors intent on undermining Turkey's security and autonomy (Özel 2014, 22; Yalçıntaş 2015, 19).

The lack of a specific geographical reference point outside of the body in Figure 2 presents the torso itself as a political site. The woman's head and limbs are removed from the image, as is to some degree her individuality, which takes a secondary position behind that of the child. One reading of this disembodiment is that the resulting anonymity reinforces pronatalist conceptualizations of mothers as "containers" for future citizens (Longhurst 2001, 55-65), a process that attempts to limit their agency in service to the interests of the state. At the same time, her torso becomes a literal canvass for the displaying of messages and graphics. The corporeal act of applying ink (probably marker) directly to skin denotes the subject's complicity in the production of the message and therefore her assertion of agency as a political subject participating in a democratic act of protest. Whereas the digital superimposition of the words and graphic onto the photograph after capture and upload (as in the addition of

“#direnhamile” to Figure 4) would create distance between the subject and the message, the handwritten production of the image in Figures 1 and 2 secures a tactile connection between the woman’s body and the political statement. The ink has entered the skin of each subject just as, we are told, their babies will soon enter the protest site.

Both of these photographs are therefore charged with great political potential in the ways that they appropriate pronatalist discourse by announcing that their children will be raised to dissent against government oppression. Moreover, the proud displaying of uncovered torsos rejects the AKP’s socially conservative position on the morality of modest attire. In Figure 3, for example, the woman shows that in addition to leaving her hair, legs, arms and neck exposed, she will also reveal her very pregnant belly if she chooses to. Neither the state nor society can deny her this right.

At the same time, the images display a paradox in that they rely upon the same underlying premise of pronatalism: that women serve their most valuable role as citizens when they are productive mothers. They highlight their positions as producers. Both women remain anonymous while drawing attention to their future children – specifically to “Erdem” in Figure 3, “Resist Baby Erdem”. This theme of privileging future citizens in imagery is repeated in the rest of the images as well. This emphasis on unborn children can be understood as the use of pregnant women’s bodies to make competing claims about the nation’s future, both by the government and by the women themselves.

The subjects’ geographic locations in Figures 1 and 2 are distinct from one another in significant ways. Whereas Figure 2 lacks any geographical reference point to help us locate the subject, the subject of Figure 3 is clearly standing next to the famous bull statue¹⁸ that marks an

¹⁸ The bull statue’s detailed genitalia, visible in this image, marks it as a symbol of masculinity and fertility as it faces downhill toward the nearby Marmara Sea. The juxtaposition of the bull’s genitalia right next to the subject also presents a rather literal example of Mulvey’s argument that women are typically visually represented and understood “as castrated non-men” (quoted in Rose 2012, 159). Cultural meaning in this image is thereby informed by phallocentrism as it “is structured around masculine terms.” Importantly, from the location of the bull pedestrians can see (and hear, during games) the Fenerbahçe soccer stadium, which intensifies the hyper-

important 6-way intersection in the neighborhood of Kadıköy¹⁹, which (under ideal traffic conditions) is at least a half hour of travel away from Taksim Square and Gezi Park. The neighborhood itself is a microcosm of liberal and cosmopolitan Istanbul, its streets lined with Greek and Armenian churches, mosques (with Friday prayers regularly spilling outside of courtyards onto surrounding streets and sidewalks, even in the winter), movie theaters, opera houses, schools, three separate bar districts, tattoo parlors, Kurdish businesses, Romani street performers, antique vendors, pet shops, art galleries, bookstores, and a sizeable Western expat community. The tea garden of the Nâzım Hikmet *Kültür Merkezi* (Nâzım Hikmet Cultural Center), perhaps a hundred yards away from the statue and which the subject of Figure 3 is facing towards, remains a popular gathering spot for socialists and communists. Hikmet, a poet and political dissident, spent many years in Turkish prisons and exiled in the Soviet Union because of his ideas. Some pieces of his writing were taken up as slogans by protesters at Gezi, such as this excerpt from a poem:

"I am a walnut tree in Gulhane Park

neither you are aware of this, nor the police" (Kimmelman 2013).

Place also adds nuanced meaning to the pairing of images in Figure 4. Both women in these photographs are framed in similar ways and appear to be in domestic spaces, potentially suggesting to viewers, even without the presence of additional evidence, that the subjects are

masculinized nature of this specific space, even if Kadıköy overall is a more complicated part of the city, a relatively liberal neighborhood in many places.

¹⁹ Kadıköy is one of the most important centers on the Asian side of Istanbul. While Kadıköy itself has a very long history predating its absorption into greater Istanbul, the Asian side of the city began to develop rapidly on a wide scale following the construction of the Bosphorus Bridge and the Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge, completed in 1973 and 1988, respectively (Mango 2004, 193-94). As new neighborhoods sprout up and the city spreads ever eastward, the Asian side has long been associated with liberal thought and Kemalist nationalism, with many older neighborhoods on the European side still associated with Ottoman stagnation and conservatism. This conceptualization persists despite the presence of many conservative neighborhoods on the Asian side, and also the rapid westward expansion of the city into Thracian Turkey which has created many new neighborhoods as well.

housewives. Apart from the hashtag, there is nothing in the pairing that directly suggests that either subject is participating in an act of protest, that they are located within Turkey, or are even Turkish citizens. Unlike in Figure 2, the raw photographs do not explicitly demonstrate the subjects' participation in Gezi, although the edited hashtagged pairing does assume this meaning. In their presentation as participants in the protests, even during the late July *#direnhamile* demonstrations which occurred after the initial Gezi Park events had largely lost steam, they challenge AKP rhetoric that labeled the participants as destructive young men. Moreover, the apparent age difference between the two women also works to disrupt ideas about Gezi being driven exclusively by Turkey's youth (White 2013, 212), and to instead reinforce framings of it as a multi-generational movement (Özel 2014, 22).

This difference in age also affects the tone of the image in another way. The woman on the left, with her eyes wide open and observant, embodies Gezi Park as a movement of youthful and energetic people, which it was to a considerable extent. She is juxtaposed next to a woman whose face reveals years of experience. Perhaps the woman on the right is remembering the massacre of 34 protesters in Taksim during the 1977 May Day events (Mango 2004, 76) or the 1980 coup d'état, and hoping that Gezi Park will not end with much bloodshed. The women's facial expressions in these photographs, particularly the focus of their eyes on the camera/viewer, confront the masculine gaze directly, making each an active subject (Rose 2012, 167). This adds support to the perceived sincerity of the hashtag, helping the women appear to be legitimately participating in an act of protest, regardless of whether or not this was the case at the time their images were captured.

D. Critiques of AKP pronatalism

All of the images I examine in this study are responses to the discourse of the AKP's (and to Erdoğan's, more specifically) public stances on reproduction, women's health, and family planning in contemporary Turkey. Turkish leadership in the new millennium has been

characterized in part by rhetoric – and in some instances by formal policy revisions – aimed at controlling women’s bodies. Figure 6, “Resist Pregnant on İstiklal Boulevard”, responds to this directly, with the order (to Erdoğan) to “get your hand and your tongue off my body.” Justifications for policy typically invoke either allegiance to conservative interpretations of the Turkish nation or assessments of behaviors presented as moral and just according to the contemporary Turkish conceptualizations of Sunni Islam that Erdoğan endorses. Opponents insist that such words and actions demonstrate government interference with the private lives of citizens, behaviors unbecoming of leadership in a democratic state and in some cases undermining the individual liberties of Turkey’s citizens. Figure 4, “#direnhamile indoor photo pair” (and, more ambiguously, Figures 2 “I AM COMING!!!”, and 7, “Demonstrators, kick out the TOMA [water cannon vehicle]”) pair(s) the message *#direnhamile* with private residences or other indoor settings in ways that link dissenting political activity with private spaces. By making the private public subjects in these images participated as Gezi Park activists. Not only did they contest the government’s pronatalism publicly, they did so online, in front of a large, international audience.

Protesters’ responses to official rhetoric on pronatalism at Gezi were addressing an issue that had already been long debated within Turkey. Beginning a number of years prior to the events of 2013 and continuing today, Erdoğan has repeatedly proclaimed that Turkish women have an obligation to produce at least three (Baran 2010, 96; Beşpınar 2014, 130-31; White 2013, 177) or four (Tremblay 2014) babies, tying reproduction to nationalism by labeling it a duty. Figures 4 (“*Bizim gibi 3 çocuk istediğine emin misin?*”) and 7 (“*En az “3 çocuk” yapacağım, söz!*”) are examples of how this quantified pronatalist rhetoric was directly appropriated by protesters at Gezi. Gruber (2013d) has noted how some other messages at Gezi directly parodied Erdoğan’s language, such as graffiti suggesting that the reader respond to restrictive AKP laws on alcohol by drinking “at least three beers” or to the government’s environmentally destructive policies by protecting “at least three cats.” Other graffiti examples

engaged more directly with the idea of (re)producing the future, such as a message to observers advising “Don’t make three children, plant three trees” (Gruber 2013d).

All the images in my study imply that while Erdoğan may request that women have more babies, he may not be able to successfully impose upon future generations the particular ideological upbringing that he espouses. In early 2012, at a meeting of provincial party leaders, he stated that “*Dindar nesil yetiştireceğiz... Dindar bir gençlik yetiştirme var. Bunun arkasındayım. Muhafazakar demokrat partisi kimliğine sahip bir partiden ateist bir gençlik yetiştirmemizi mi bekliyorsun?... Biz muhafazakar, demokrat, tarihten gelen ilkelerine sahip çıkan bir nesil yetiştireceğiz. Bunun için varız*” (“We will raise a pious generation... There is a religious upbringing of youth. I support this. Are you [informal] expecting an atheist upbringing of youth from a conservative, democratic party?... We will raise a generation that is conservative, democratic, [and] takes ownership of principles that are based on our history. We are dedicated to this”) (Hürriyet 2012). Also in 2012, the controversial “4+4+4” education system was introduced in Turkey, which opened doors for students to enroll into *imam-hatip* schools after completing only four or eight years of elementary school. These institutions offer full-time Islamic instruction, traditionally practical only for those planning on becoming imams or memorizing the Quran (Cengiz 2014). Erdogan is himself a graduate of an *imam-hatip* school.

Critics of this type of education argue that it is largely irrelevant for students wishing to continue in higher education or pursue other careers and will likely have the effect of further Islamicizing mainstream Turkish society and weakening the secular foundations of the republic. The reforms represent a dramatic shift from the education system established under Kemalist leadership. Opponents are further concerned that the reforms also include the standardization of the high school entrance exam by the Education Ministry, which is now a prerequisite for admission to a “regular” high school. Cengiz (2014) writes that “Those who are unwilling to sit for the exam or fail to score the points required for the school of their choice will be left with only one option: the imam-hatip schools. That is, under the new system the government installed, the

religious schools are the only one to admit students without an exam.” Secretary-general of the Education and Science Laborer’s Union, Sakine Esen Yilmaz, stated that “Education is an ideological tool... It is (now) being used to raise an obedient generation that will serve the government” (Fraser 2015). The discursive contributions made by the mother activists at Gezi suggest that they were wary of these efforts to produce a “pious generation,” one that would be obedient towards a government such as that of the AKP.

Slogans and written messages promising that opponents of the AKP would indeed help produce the future by raising their children to be critical of politics similar to Erdoğan’s, messages which are strongly articulated in Figures 1, 4, and 7, echo corporeal practices in places as diverse as Ladakh (Smith 2012) and the Galilee (Kanaaneh 2002). Unlike these other examples, however, discussions of pronatalism at Gezi were not shaped by ethnic rivalries or competing religions under parallel contexts, or at least not in such explicit terms. In Turkey, government discourse is shaded by the framing of Sunni Islam as normative for the nation. A tacit implication that Erdoğan’s base should reproduce faster than non-Sunnis exists, but it does not translate to the denial of public services (the Galilee) or the strict policing of interreligious marriage (Ladakh).

The underlying theme, rather, is more a contest for ownership of the ideological future of Turkey. Ongoing struggles to define Turkishness can be observed here. Rhetoric on the family is combined with sentiments about the pious observance of Sunni Islam being the defining feature of model citizenship. In contemporary Turkey, opponents of Kemalist *laiklik* (secularism) often present it as mutually exclusive from religiosity. As may be inferred by the great efforts made to hide the presence of Anti-capitalist Muslims at Gezi Park (see below), it is likely that Erdoğan understood very well that many of the “*çapulcu*” he so casually dismissed also self-identified as pious Sunni Muslims. Admitting that many of his critics may have shared a religious affiliation with him would have complicated Erdoğan’s narrative and shown his efforts to be disingenuous. Indeed, Figure 8, ‘I am going to have at least “3 children,” I promise!’, features a

headscarved woman who, it may be inferred, has raised *çapulcu* children, the uncovered woman in the middle perhaps being one of them. Meanwhile, Figures 5, “Are you sure that you want 3 children like us?”; 9, “I am the tiniest *çapulcu*”; and 10, “we are all pregnant we are all on the street”, do not show any mothers in front of the camera, though the latter references her as having been brought to the protest by the *çapulcu* baby. One possible interpretation might be that her own beliefs about moral behavior would dissuade her from using a photographed image of herself as something to be shared publicly. She could therefore potentially be a devout Sunni Muslim herself.

A major disruption to Erdoğan’s framing of the protesters as not pious Muslims was the nightly *iftar* meals shared throughout Ramadan by the Anti-capitalist Muslims (Ünan 2015, 87). Observers held their meals in the middle of İstiklal Boulevard and were blocked from reaching into Taksim Square by an impenetrable wall of riot police; these performances were similarly blocked from reaching the mainstream media by a corresponding wall of intimidation, firings, arrests, and violence targeting journalists. In this climate of severe media oppression, images distributed via social media have great political potential to portray alternatives to official rhetoric about piety and citizenship. It becomes clear that Erdoğan wishes not to be the champion of *all* practicing Sunni Muslims, but rather of those who support him unconditionally. When he speaks about the merits of fertility, it can be inferred that he is speaking only to his reliably cooperative base and expecting them to produce the greatest number of babies. This is why promises made by protesters (which Erdoğan saw as the wrong kind of Turkish citizens) that they will observe his decrees on procreation have such powerful, resistant, and perhaps even threatening effects. Although their performances were typically anonymous, the protesters in this context are understood to potentially be liberals, environmentalists, Kurds, Jews, Christians, other non-Muslims, atheists, or any others who do not comprise his loyal base.

Because they could potentially share so many other characteristics with Erdoğan’s ideal conceptualized citizens, the anti-capitalist critics at Gezi comprised an important symbolic part

of the protests. As everyday citizens themselves, they drew attention to the prime minister's branded charm, which he has leveraged so successfully throughout his political career: this is based upon the idea that he is a man of the people as well as a devout and humble Muslim, an everyday Turk that the population can comfortably relate to. The protests helped expose him as someone who, at the same time that he was working to challenge and rein in Turkey's secular elite, was creating his own elite Sunni Muslim class and directly benefiting from its patronage. An inherent dilemma emerges for a leader so invested in a religion that places great value on charity and modesty. Tuğal (2014, 61) writes that:

The government's recourse to anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist discourse seems to echo the Islamist themes of earlier decades. However, back then anti-capitalism was the discourse of upwardly mobile sectors in coalition with marginalized and defensive classes. By contrast, now it is a discourse of an established pious upper class. In that sense, it is openly manipulative and dishonest... According to the government's conspiracy theories, the main actor behind the Gezi protests is the financial "interest lobby". Ironically, as the rump Islamist party (which the AKP had split from into 2001) points out, the government is the offspring of the so-called interest lobby: finance capital actively contributed to the formation of the AKP government and immensely benefited from it.

Popular awareness of this direct contrast between rhetoric and action poses an uncomfortable challenge for Erdoğan. It also further nuances his rhetoric on pronatalism. The three or four new citizens that he advocates in the interests of producing a strong and prosperous future for Turkey can be understood as the fervent consumers of the future. They may eventually gather to pray in the impressive new mosques that are being built with the government's blessings. But, more importantly to the investors that benefit from AKP policies, these new citizens will also be the next generation of capitalist subjects who will populate the massive housing projects and shop in the countless malls that are being constructed on Erdoğan's watch.

The *hamile* protesters' critiques of pronatalism were often sarcastic (Figures 4-8), and always assertive of agency through their implied promises to reject Erdoğan's ideology during their children's upbringings. The woman in Figure 3, for example, effectively engages official pronatalism by implying that she will raise "Erdem" on her own terms. However, with the subjects overtly embracing their reproductive roles, their images did not serve in the interests of

disrupting the trope of women mothering the nation. This trope portrays and celebrates women as producers and nurturers of the nation, which often results in their status as citizens and their positions as individuals being relegated to secondary positions. Under such conceptualizations they serve as “vessels” for future citizens and the safety and wellbeing of those future citizens becomes viewed as a public concern (Longhurst 2001, 58-59). Mothering becomes a national duty, while the mother herself is denied some of her subjectivity, including that which makes her a sexual being. White (2013, 158) argues that mothers of men (soldiers) in Turkey belong to

a powerful category in part because it is constructed as asexual and thus neither threatening nor threatened, unlike the vulnerable position of young wife and daughter. The threat to “fuck your mother” is thus the most dire not only because it soils a mother’s sexual honor (and thus the man’s *namus*) but because it denies the asexual status that gives motherhood such emblematic force. In contrast, pregnancy is a condition of heightened vulnerability and an outward sign of sexual activity (the dishonor of sexual penetration) that may occasion embarrassment if mentioned in mixed company.

An interesting paradox emerges in images of pregnant women actively dissenting against the government which immediately challenge this notion of “vulnerability” while boldly celebrating reproductive activity (Figures 2, 5, and 7). The woman in Figure 3 stands in the center of Kadıköy, with her purse casually flung over one shoulder. Society recognizes that she is pregnant and, as such, she is largely viewed as being vulnerable. However, through her performance she denies this condition of vulnerability, even while it is considered the concern of society and the state. Codes of honor dictate that she – or, more specifically, “Erdem” – must be protected. She attempts to join the protest as an individual, though she is provided with access in ways that specifically acknowledge her pregnancy. This nuanced provision of space affected all of the subjects that asserted agency through their refusals to remain concealed behind closed doors or to conform to idealized conceptualizations of the roles of mothers. And just as codes of honor affected these public spaces, private spaces were affected by the protests as well. In cases where the subjects are portrayed indoors (such as in Figure 4, and to varying degrees in Figures 1 and 6 as well), the private spaces that they occupy appear to be secluded (i.e. safe for pregnant women). However, as Figure 7 explicitly suggests, tear gas and other

police tactics of crowd control were regularly able to penetrate private spaces, therefore bringing the violence of the square into people's living rooms.

The question posed in Figure 5, "Are you sure that you want 3 children like us?", directly and mischievously draws upon Erdoğan's pronatalist rhetoric. "*Bizim gibi*" ("like us") at the very minimum refers to dissenting people who would be willing to write defiant messages on walls during protests. Beyond that, the message is charged with supportive potential for anyone able to see herself as being "like [them]." In the context of this anonymously authored message, being "like [them]" most closely translates to being "unlike Erdoğan [and other leaders of the AKP]." Photographs of the same graffiti can be found online with smiling protesters posing next to it, suggesting that at least some people were able to connect ideologically with the message.

Figure 5 is a simple, but potent image. The lighting in this particular photograph helped to produce saturated, high value yellow and orange colors that add urgency to the image; Rose (2012, 60 - emphasis in original) states that "Colour can be used to *stress* certain elements of an image." Indeed, the words seem to be glowing or burning right out of the particleboard. While the painted message is written on what is clearly only a temporary wall, it is preserved both in cyberspace and in traditional print. It is a permanent archiving of a powerful but fleeting moment during the events. The power in this image is not only derived from its unifying potential for protesters, but also in the statements it makes about the future. Once again, the clear implication is that Erdoğan cannot control the ideological fate of the country. Rather, future generations will be "like us" and "unlike him."

Even though this image lacks an animate subject, it is important as the message's immediate referent beyond the frame includes at least one mother. While the first person plural pronoun in the question could refer generally to protesters and critics of the government, it could also potentially be understood as a reference to one specific and reproductive couple. In either case, it could potentially be inferred that the subjects are absent from the photograph *because* they are currently elsewhere, busy reproducing. By drawing attention to carnal behavior, the

image critiques the government's tendency to provide commentary on morality. Furthermore, the bold emphasis on the "3" in this image draws attention to the absurdity of the pronatalist fixation on production output. There is no direct mention of the mother here, only to the minimum recommended number of babies that the government requests she make.

Like other visual materials created at Gezi Park, *#direnhamile* imagery critiques the leadership of Erdogan and the AKP while asserting that democratic citizenship requires more participation than electoral politics alone. The materials that I examine here specifically address the government's pronatalism, expressing both individually and collectively that the state could not, nor should it try to, police women's bodies. Furthermore, the political subjectivity of future citizens was also beyond the government's reach.

E. Critiques of seclusion rhetoric

The tendency of pregnant women to decrease their time spent in public as their pregnancies advance (Longhurst 2001, 36--41) is exaggerated in Turkey, where women are subject to social pressure to remain at home even when they are not pregnant, particularly in more socially conservative areas (White 2013, 122-23). Directives from politicians, religious leaders, or other public figures reinforce this biopolitical regime, hence reducing further pregnant women's visibility on the street and making the social climate even more troublesome for those who resist seclusion. Therefore, Figures 2 and 5, which show pregnant women and pregnant allies on the streets protesting, have particularly empowering potential. The image of multiple pregnant bodies not only collecting in public, but also voicing dissenting opinions, is a disruptive image in a country where gestation is something to be sequestered away in private space.

Many of the images in this study challenge socially conservative discourse on morality through embodied performance. Perhaps the most striking aspects of Figures 1 and 2 are the partially nude female bodies and along with their appropriation of AKP discourse on reproduction. Although wide variations in style exist for Turkish women who cover, including

contemporary *tesettür* fashion, more traditional Anatolian methods, and other styles, none would permit the exposure of a woman's midriff. The bulging bellies of the subjects in advanced stages of pregnancy only adds to the shocking nature of the images, as pregnant women "are thought to threaten and disrupt a social system that requires them to remain largely confined to private space during pregnancy" (Longhurst 2001, 33). This is particularly true for many religious Turks. The production of these images during Gezi engages directly with rhetoric condemning the participation of pregnant women in the events, including, for example, controversial statements made by television and radio commentator and Sufi thinker Ömer Tuğrul İnançer that women should completely refrain from appearing in public at all during their final months of pregnancy as doing so would be "immorality" (Hürriyet 2013). The placard on the right in Figure 6 reads "*Sensin Estetik!*" ("You are the aesthetic[cally unpleasing one]!"), which is a direct response to the statements made on July 24, 2013 by İnançer (*Ömer Tuğrul İnançer: Hamile Kadının Dışarıda Dolaşması Terbiyesizliktir* 2013) on a program titled *Ramazan Sevinci* that had inspired this particular protest:

"Announcing pregnancy with a flourish of trumpets is against our civility. [They] should not stroll in the streets with such bellies. First of all, it is not aesthetic[ally pleasing]," İnançer had said during a daily special iftar program on TRT. "After seven or eight months of pregnancy, future mothers [used to] go out with their husbands by car to get some fresh air. And they [used to] go out in the evening hours. But now, they are all on television. It's disgraceful. It is not realism, it is immorality," he added. ("Pregnant Women" 2013)

Following İnançer's statements on TRT (state television), officials from the channel emphasized that the sentiments belonged only to the guest and did not represent the views of the channel itself. Deputies from the CHP and MHP quickly issued statements condemning İnançer's comments, using the opportunity to draw connections between his rigid conservative viewpoint and the ruling party (Hürriyet 2013). Eager to avoid such an association, the party itself released a statement. It was noted in Hürriyet (2013) that "Justice and Development Party (AKP) deputy and former minister Nimet Baş said no one could limit women according to men's aesthetic understanding." The fact that the statements had been made during an *iftar* program was

important as the majority of tuned-in viewers were watching while waiting to break their daily Ramadan fast, and many would consider İnançer to be an authoritative voice on religious matters. A mosque icon on the screen showing the minute-by-minute movement of the sunset westward displays that the comments were made five minutes prior to sunset in Istanbul that day, meaning that many viewers were not yet distracted by their meals and probably quite attentive to the programming (Ramazan Sevinci 2013). İnançer²⁰ dug his heels in the following day, adding that ‘companies gave maternity leave not so that women could “wander” the streets, but to stay in their homes.’

Activists then called on protesters to take to the streets the evening of July 25th (Figures 2, 5 and 9 are photographs from this demonstration) and to use pillows to offer support to pregnant women as pregnant allies (*Hürriyet* 2013). By this point in the summer, the Gezi Park protests were diminishing in scale and demonstrations were taking place mostly during evenings and weekends. In context, the “*Sensin Estetik!*” placard in Figure 6 is a humorous and direct response that underscores the absurdity of İnançer’s original statement as well as a valuable refutation of the idea that pregnant women are somehow “ugly” or “abject” (Longhurst 2001, 49-55). In her study of pregnant women in New Zealand, Longhurst (2001, 50) found that language used to describe pregnant women, including that used by the women themselves,

²⁰ Additionally, half a year later İnançer stumbled again into the spotlight over the position he had taken that working women disturb “the nest.” It was revealed at that time that his own daughter had just accepted a high level position at a large company (“Kadınların çalışmasına karşı” 2014). İnançer refused to comment on this point but expressed more of his views on family and gender roles: “*Ben eş demem. Eş yoktur, eşitlik yoktur. Ben karımla, çocuğumla eşit değilim. Eşim değil, zevcem olur. Karı da kurumsallığı anlatmak için kullanılır*” (“I don’t say ‘spouse.’ There is no spouse, equality does not exist. My wife and my children are not my equals. She’s not my spouse, she’s my wife. And ‘wife’ is just used as an institutional term”) (“Kadınların çalışmasına karşı” 2014). The vocabulary choices here are notable as İnançer uses three distinct terms for wife, each with different nuanced meanings. First, he adamantly rejects “*eş*,” a gender-neutral word similar to “spouse” in English and the root of the word “equal.” Next, he uses the more-charged “*karı*,” a gendered term for “wife.” Although this word does function sometimes as a formal distinction of a relationship (on legal documents, etc.), as İnançer does mention at the end of his quote, in daily speech it has evolved over the years to be viewed as rather uncouth (similar to referring to one’s wife as “my old lady” in English). Finally, the emphasized term in “She’s not my spouse, she’s my wife” is *zevce*, a loan word from Arabic which underscores the wife as an object capable of reproducing, not as a person to be loved or viewed as an equal. Thus, he promotes an extremely patriarchal understanding of gender relations and he does so as a figure considered to be a religious authority.

often emphasized ideas of “fatness, disability, incapacity, discomfort, and ugliness.” She also notes that despite the health benefits of swimming during pregnancy, her study subjects generally avoided doing so in public or wearing bikinis, even if they had not refrained from doing so prior to pregnancy (2001, 51-52). This particular demonstration is thus an important challenge to ideas about ugliness or abjectivity and an empowering celebration of the pregnant body. Moreover, the demonstration defiantly took place in spite of social conservatives’ efforts to erase the presence of pregnant bodies from public spaces.

Salime (2014) examines how the nude performances of “microrebellious bodies” in Egypt’s recent revolutions were used to protest patriarchal standards of morality. She writes that

The nude portraits of Sboui... convert the shame associated with the naked body... into shame associated with gazing and touching. When inserted into the paradoxical spaces of revolution, disruptive nudes and sexually scripted bodies create an immediate temporality in which women’s bodies and sexuality are not suspended (as is usually the case) but are remembered as part of the entangled sensibilities of the revolution and as part of its visual archive. (2014, 15)

Although the subjects in Figures 1 and 2 are not completely nude, they pose similar challenges to the viewer. They reject governmental attempts to control their bodies and refuse to submit to arguments about honor or moral behavior. They also contrast drastically with Emine Erdoğan and Hayrünnisa Gül, wives, respectively, of President Erdoğan and his predecessor Abdullah Gül. Both women wear the headscarf and through their dress have served as symbolic representations of pious Turkish Muslim womanhood, and motherhood, in the early 21st century.

In Turkey and around the world, there is a tendency to frame pregnant women as vulnerable or being in some sort of impaired condition (Longhurst 2001). Efforts to portray women as weak serve in the interest of denying them access to public spaces. The outdoor spaces featured in Figures 2, 5, and 7 resist this denial and challenge ideas about vulnerability and pregnancy. McDowell (1999, 150) writes that “women’s construction as dependent on men, both economically and morally, or as lesser beings - as fragile or in need of protection - reduces

their rights to freedom.” Discourse which rationalizes the seclusion of women only adds potency to images of pregnant women protesting or engaged in some other form of direct resistance. Figure 7 references how the knowledge that tear gas, rubber bullets, and other forms of violence used excessively against protesting crowds at Gezi Park multiplied the effects of *hamile* activism, by showing that the individuals involved were always potentially in harm’s way.

Miller (2009) examines a number of images of mothers that were used in the anti-Apartheid struggle between the years 1968-86, and their ability to drive major and sustained social change. Images of the “good” mother, brandishing a weapon while carrying an infant on her back, present women as focused on protecting their children while at the same time pursuing larger political goals. “Prepared for sacrifice in a much more literal sense than usual, this maternal image affirms women’s life-giving potential while concurrently displaying the mother’s ability, if not willingness, to take it away” (Miller 2009, 68). Gezi imagery involving mothers employed non-violent forms of resistance rather than the use of weapons. The tone was typically sarcastic or critical rather than explicitly aggressive or directly threatening. However the stated pursuit of political goals and the assertion of the mother’s agency can be found in both examples.

“Mother-activism” does have some shortcomings, states Miller (2009, 70 - emphasis in original), including its potential to “reinforce patriarchal appeals to women’s maternity (as actual or potential mothers) as the *primary* basis for their worth.” Indeed, all of the images of pregnant women in this study are dependent upon the display of their reproductive potentials in order to advance certain messages. Any other individualizing characteristics that the subjects have, even including their positions as dissenting democratic citizens, are relegated to a secondary position subsumed below the knowledge of their fertility. Thus, these images have the side effect of privileging one-dimensional notions of women as reproducers, potentially reifying the very patriarchal systems they aim to critique. However, they still have great potential for

disrupting space and critiquing oppressive structures, particularly under a conservative regime that concerns itself more and more with the policing of citizens' behaviors.

Miller (2009) argues that mother-centered movements also often run the risk of being too narrow in scope and/or too short-lived. Coverage of *hamile* activists at Gezi did tend to emphasize feminist readings of their performances as critiques of pronatalism and/or efforts to limit women's access to public spaces (*Hürriyet* 2013; Türk 2013). However, the chaotic nature of Gezi and the heterogeneity of the grievances voiced there were overall defining characteristics of the summer's events. Thus, while the efforts of *hamile* activists may have been narrow in scope, the majority of activist work performed at Gezi was also narrow in scope. These efforts were collectively gathered under an umbrella of discontent with the rhetoric and leadership of Erdoğan and the AKP. The lifespan of all of Gezi activism was relatively short-lived and it would be difficult to argue that the efforts of pregnant women and mothers were comparatively shorter than those of any other participating groups. However, considering the performances of *#direnhamile* demonstrators as feminist activism, their efforts may have helped to encourage the continuation of similar feminist work in the future, in Turkey.

The majority of the images in this study depend upon images of women's bodies in order to convey certain messages. Employing the body as a site of protest can be an inherently problematic prospect for feminist activists. It is therefore important to account for the male gaze. Wolff (2003, 415) offers the example of Forty Foot pool, a male-dominated nude swimming area in an artificial harbor in Dublin where a group of women staged a protest on July 17, 1989. The group attempted to reclaim the area by disrobing and swimming in this space that remained socially off limits to them. Newspaper coverage the following day, including that of the Guardian displayed a "tabloid"-style spectacle of nudity.

Their political gesture of occupying the swimming area with nude bodies is neutralized and doubly canceled - first by the look of those at the scene, and second by its representation in the press for the reader's gaze. The lesson (or one of them) is that there are problems with using female body for feminist ends. Its pre-existing meanings –

as sex object, as object of the male gaze – can prevail and reappropriate the body, despite intentions of the woman herself. (Wolff 2003, 415)

So, while demonstrators might understand their participation as embracing empowering opportunities for contributing to political discourse, observers may see only skin and “immoral” behavior. Viewers make heterogeneous interpretations of the meanings of *#direnhamile* imagery.

F. Employing the language of Gezi and critiquing the state’s actions

Gezi Park began as a small environmental movement with the very specific and immediate goals of protecting the park. It quickly grew to critique the widespread use of state violence, the censoring of the media, and the ethical problems that arise when a government’s leaders are so heavily invested in capitalist pursuits. The interests of mothers and feminists eager to critique Turkey’s pronatalism and approaches to other women’s health issues may not seem immediately relevant to the casual observer. Nevertheless, *#direnhamile* visual protest materials in many cases presented compelling fusions of feminist pronatalist critiques with Gezi Park discourse.

The hashtag “#DİRENGEZİPARKI” used in Figure 2 references the larger movement directly and also the importance of social media to the strength of the movement, with the implication that the unborn child is the messenger, the one who “(is) coming” to the demonstration. The unwritten critique is also clear: that Erdoğan cannot shape Turkey’s future via his attempts to control women’s bodies and his reforming of the education system. Figure 7 also invokes the vocabulary of Gezi, with a mother singing a lullaby about “TOMAs” to her baby. The gentle innocence of the two subjects contrasts with the violence of the state, highlighted by their gas masks, which serve as a reminder that during the events billowing clouds of chemicals did indeed blow through thousands of homes, causing health problems even for those who were not on the streets participating. The production of graffiti in Figure 5 also demonstrated that the

protesters, while largely committed to advancing their causes nonviolently, would not be constrained by the laws of a state that was behaving in ways they understood to be illegitimate. While marker ink on pregnant bellies (in Figures 1 and 2) responds to efforts to influence social behavior, spray paint on walls – particularly when written in a sarcastic and aggressive tone – responds to police violence.

Figures 7 and 8 appropriate Erdoğan's labeling of protesters as *çapulcu*, both in reference to children. The images of stick figure children and a baby, respectively, highlight the absurdity of the former prime minister's language by associating harmless subjects with *çapulcu*. These images also suggest that the implications of Figures 1-5 have been brought to fruition: Turkey's next generation has arrived and it is being educated to oppose governments like that of the AKP.

The next generation is also present in Figure 7, with baby and mother both in gasmasks. The mother's calm resignation to the fact of an impending threat suggests that the government's violence had become accepted as an expected part of life in Turkey during the protests. The image sends the powerful message that protesters, as well as the general population, would refuse to let the state's oppressive measures crush their spirits, even if they now understood this oppression to be an inevitable part of life.

An older generation also makes an appearance in the form of embodied protest in what appears to be a park, in Figure 8. While in other images pregnant bellies and babies make statements about the future, the older couple holding the placard here disrupt Erdoğan's narrative about the present and that the protests were driven by young, godless vandals. The older woman on the left wears her headscarf tied tightly under her chin in a traditional Anatolian veiling style. Her forehead is bare up to her hairline showing that she does not wear the cap associated with turban veiling. The woman in the middle is uncovered and wears a shirt with an open neckline that reveals a little bit of her chest. She appears to be holding a poster or a flag - perhaps some sort of protest material. The man on the right is largely obscured by the placard

he appears pleased to holding up. It is unclear what relationship they have with one another. However, the differences in comportment between the two women in particular is worth mentioning. The pair could be mother and daughter, neighbors, friends, or even newly acquainted. Regular interactions between people with different religious presentations or beliefs are quite common in Turkey (Gökarıksel and Secor 2015, 24). As a Gezi Park protest image, however, this juxtaposition importantly suggests that the protests were not driven solely by young, male “*çapulcu*” as Erdoğan repeatedly stated.

Just as the demographics of Gezi Park were dynamic, so was the range of materials created by protesters. Throughout the Gezi Park events, producers of visual imagery made use of universal or international symbols, including pop culture references to films, musicians, mainstream websites, and ecological preservation imagery. A number of still images as well as videos with subtitles included English-language messages, with the intentions of raising awareness and educating a global audience about the events taking place in Turkey.

Many of the images in this study reference symbols that are widely understood, if not universal: gasmasks (Figure 7), protest placards (Figures 5, 7, and 8), and, for computer-savvy hashtags (Figures 1 and 3). Public squares and the interiors of private homes are also arguably universal in a sense, though they are too closely tied to specific Turkish geographical contexts to be discussed as such. Likewise, pregnancy and motherhood are themselves ubiquitous experiences, but Turkish understandings of gender, morality, citizenship, and social status complicate all of these images in ways that demand consideration of geographical context. Importantly, the vast majority of the *#direnhamile* imagery using text used only the Turkish language. The language used, though, often drew upon international protest messaging. In Figure 10, for example, the statement “*hepimiz hamileyiz hepimiz sokaktayız*” (“we are all pregnant we are all on the street”) is reminiscent of similar statements of solidarity presented with the intention of uniting disparate groups.

a. Pregnant allies.

Conspicuous among some of the *#direnhamile* demonstrations were images of non-pregnant men and women protesting with pillows, balls, or balloons stuffed under their shirts to simulate the appearance of advanced pregnancy, such as the male protester in Figure 10. I refer to these demonstrators as “pregnant allies.” I believe these specific performances demonstrated support for pregnant protesters by highlighting a common humanity. In response to religious conservatives who argue that pregnant women are unfit to be out in public, the performances of pregnant allies exposed the absurdity of such arguments by demonstrating that pregnant women are normal citizens and that pregnancy cannot be used as a valid excuse to try to restrict their mobility or any other aspects of their agency. The pregnant allies also helped make the presence of actual nearby pregnant women more conspicuous by increasing their collective numbers, therefore blatantly refusing calls for seclusion in the name of modesty or morality.

The presence of pregnant allies at protests also functions as a critique of the strict gendering of roles that the AKP and its supporters often present as an important factor in the nurturing of pious Muslim Turkish families. While male protesters may not be biologically able to carry and give birth to their children, they can assume identities not normally supported by heteronormative conceptualizations of fatherhood, the military, religion, etc.

Thus, the effect of pregnant allies is at least threefold. Firstly, their presence serves as an immediate critique of efforts made to limit or condemn the mobility and activities of pregnant women. Like the images of anti-apartheid mother activists (Miller 2009) directly engaged in or prepared for armed struggle, neither neglecting nor being limited by their motherly duties, pregnant allies underscore both the ability of pregnant women to participate fully in society and the absurdity of arguments suggesting that they can or should not do so. Their embodied performances make the important statement that public space must be open to *all* members of the public.

Secondly, pregnant allies' denial of strict gender roles is a powerful response to the government's discourse on gender. It critiques the state's interference with Turkish private life that politicians, religious figures, and other public conservatives were regularly accused of during Gezi. Their performances also make the tacit suggestion that the distribution of domestic responsibilities is open to revision. While the ruling government concerns itself regularly with the promotion of a biopolitical regime that enforces the relegation of women to domestic servitude, pregnant allies critique this strict gendering of labor. Viewers of Figure 10 may implicitly understand that if a man can don the appearance of a pregnant woman, he can also participate actively in the maintenance of the household. The point is expressed by protesters that these decisions are to be made by individuals and families, not by the state. Moreover, these performances challenge binary conceptualizations of gender and sex through visual disruptions of the cultural constructions of the appearances of male and female bodies.

Thirdly, by partially assuming the appearance of pregnant women, pregnant allies declare that all citizens may be subjected to violence and bodily control at the hands of the state. Their performances combine the visual simulation of pregnancy, a state which is regularly associated with vulnerability, with the viewer's recognition that it is just a simulation. The ally's *humanity* is underscored rather than his or her fragility, with the intention that this connection to humanity also be made about women who actually are pregnant. They make an appeal to a more universal understanding of humanity, to the recognition that pregnant women are just like everyone else in society. The logical continuation to this universal conceptualization is that efforts to police pregnant women and limit their mobility should be read as attacks on the agency of *all* citizens. By appearing at protests with bulging bellies, pregnant allies reject discourse supporting isolation and work towards the creation of more inclusive public spaces.

Similar performances to those of the (especially male) pregnant allies at Gezi captured the world's attention in early 2015. Following the attempted rape and subsequent murder of a 20-year-old woman named Özgecan Aslan, in February 2015, men in Turkey and in neighboring

Azerbaijan took to the streets to demonstrate while wearing miniskirts (Buchanan 2015; Stampler 2015). The performances were a response to conservatives' suggestions that Aslan was in some way responsible for her own gruesome murder due to her choice of attire. Erdoğan responded to the protesters, stating "You claim to be a man. Why you wear [sic] a skirt! What kind of a man are you? You are not a man, you are a terrorist" (Dearden 2015). The logical foundation for the president's equating of cross-dressing with terrorism is unclear. Perhaps he was being hyperbolic or simply careless with this statement, or perhaps he does genuinely view disruptions to Turkish heteronormativity as dangerous threats to the very integrity of the state. Either way, the performances of a handful of men in miniskirts were powerful enough as to elicit a statement from Erdoğan himself. This suggests that there may be room for male feminists in Turkey to continue exploring similar types of activism. In a largely conservative society, these types of performances are quite attention-grabbing.

The efforts of male pregnant allies at Gezi Park may or may not have lead directly to the miniskirt demonstrations following Aslan's murder. Either way, both of these performances drew men onto the streets to support and to place themselves on equal grounding with women. Both events help pave the way for similar types of feminist activism in the future. They also demonstrate a growing feminism in Turkey inclusive of cisgender men which is already quite sophisticated. Bulut Arslan, a miniskirt-clad protestor on İstiklal Boulevard, cited the inherent violence of victim-blaming statements that attempt to justify the raping of women dressed a certain way. Arslan

...held a sign that read, "Not fooled by your patriarchy, I'm a human!" and said: "The important thing we need to address is the issue that the oppressive, anti-women's-rights and patriarchal people are not just a problem for women, *but for all of society*. Just as one doesn't have to be an Alevi or a Kurd to support Alevi and Kurdish rights, just as we don't have to be an animal to take up animal rights, in the same sense we do not have to be a woman to support women's rights. We all know that liberation can only be achieved in a joint effort. We all need to act together; we all need to stand against [violence against women] together." (Karataş 2015 – emphasis added)

The acknowledgement that patriarchal oppression has negative effects "for all of society" is important, particularly under a political regime that continues to reinforce this oppression.

Through the creation of visually potent protest materials – images powerful enough to capture the attention of Turkey’s highest officials – men in miniskirts and pregnant allies do important work to advance debates about gender and civil rights in Turkey.

The production of a vast amount of visual materials at Gezi Park should be celebrated among the activist’s key political successes. Creativity and humor were employed skillfully to critique the government and its supports, to document events as they unfolded, to elicit greater support from both the Turkish public and international observers, and to voice political arguments that are often suppressed and silenced. Embodied performances demonstrated the potential of feminist geopolitical activism for questioning oppressive conservative social norms and challenging the authority of the state itself. The efforts of *#direnhamile* protesters drew attention to the robust and sophisticated feminist activism that continues to grow and evolve in Turkey.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSION

Conservative efforts to enforce the seclusion of pregnant bodies through statements about morality and discourse shaming women who enter public spaces have material consequences for Turkish society. The production and reinforcing of public spaces as off-limits for certain citizens stigmatizes those who try to resist these efforts to render them invisible. The authority of the politicians and religious leaders calling for seclusion continues to command the respect of social conservatives in Turkey, thus strengthening the effects of their rhetoric on denying access to spaces to those who are pregnant, who are not dressed according to certain conservative standards, or who are non-conformists in some other way. The embodied performances of *#direnhamile* activists therefore make the powerful subversive statements that access to public space cannot be denied to any citizens, that the dignity of all citizens must be respected, and that those employing specific religious interpretations do not have a monopoly on defining what moral behavior is.

While the political potential of these performances is significant, two interesting paradoxes also characterize the images of *hamile* activists at the Gezi Park protests. The first is that in the very act of protesting the ruling party's pronatalist agenda, pregnant women creatively deploy their positions as visibly-marked soon-to-be-mothers in order to give weight to their critiques. While their performances may imply that they will resist allowing their children's inscription into Erdoğan's "pious generation," their displaying of their status as childbearers potentially reinforces this category as being the main source of their value. Their efforts make an intervention concerning ownership of Turkey's future: just as Kemalism was an attempt to impose a new social order based on *laiklik* which has had mixed results, the same top-down imposition of AKP ideology will not be quietly accepted by all citizens. Moreover, these critiques

emphasize that many people reject the state's interference with private life. Protesters view such agendas, whether justified on religious grounds, through neoliberal development narratives, or otherwise, as inappropriate and invalid within a democratic system.

The second paradox involves a critique of the socially conservative idea that pregnant women should be secluded at home. By joining the protests these women defiantly reject this principle. The backlash condemning their visibility during the protests evinces the effectiveness of their performances and the conservatives' disappointment over their inability to police and deny the *hamile* activists of mobility and access to public spaces through language describing their appearances as immoral and shameful. These demonstrators confronted rhetoric that had labeled them as ugly, immoral, in a condition, or in some other way unfit to be seen in public. Some asserted their identities as sexual beings – or at the very least demonstrated that they did not accept that their bodies were sources of shame – by refusing to wear baggy clothing. In some cases, they even exposed their pregnant bellies and other body parts. Their performances stated confidently that the female body, pregnant or otherwise, was an ordinary, everyday element in public spaces; it was not something to be embarrassed by nor was it immoral for it to be seen outside of the house. Nevertheless, at the same time that they took to the streets to engage in such embodied activism, they relied upon social codes of honor and respect for motherhood that allowed them to safely navigate the public spaces of the protests. First and foremost they entered these spaces as mothers-to-be. By doing so, they reinforced their status as nurturers and reproducers of the nation.

Therefore, they did not succeed in demonstrating that they remained sexual beings when pregnant. Instead they were viewed as asexualized mothers. Their performances did not make any full feminist interventions that would disturb conventional understandings of pregnant women and their bodies within Turkish social systems. They asserted their agency and made political statements about pronatalism and seclusion, but did so without escaping the traditional categories reserved for mothers.

Pregnant allies, at the same time, called these categories into question through visual simulations of pregnancy. While they were not viewed by the public as actually pregnant, they (particularly cisgender men) disrupted gendered stereotypes through their performances, which called for the production of more inclusive public spaces. They also highlighted the individuality of pregnant women, rejecting conceptualizations of them as mere containers for future citizens.

So, while the paradoxes of *#direnhamile* activism complicated the imagery, some progress was still made in addressing structural oppressions and advancing feminist discourses during the summer of 2013. In the broader movement there were some steps made in positive directions, including some which directly supported liberal understandings of gender and sexuality, suggesting perhaps that further opportunities could present themselves for women too. Since Gezi – and as a direct result of it – members of the LGBTQ community have received greater support from the Republican's Party (CHP) and the People's Democratic Party (HDP) (Ünan 2015, 89). The latter party, which also is known as an important political party linked to Kurdish and other minority issues, publicly articulated support for LGBTQ rights and subsequently received public endorsements from several LGBTQ activist groups. The Gezi Park protests even lead to the establishment of "AK LGBT, the first LGBT group that supports a conservative political party" (Ünan 2015, 89). The expansion of political opportunities, including those directly related to electoral politics, for disenfranchised groups is an important outcome for the country.

Another outcome is that Erdoğan "is now less respected in world politics as a direct result of the Gezi demonstrations" (Yalçıntaş 2015, 21). This fact is not lost upon many people in Turkey. While he remains a remarkably resilient politician on a domestic scale, winning the 2014 presidential race with a comfortable margin, his brutal handling of Gezi will not be forgotten anytime soon by the international community. The repercussions are significant for a country that has deep economic ties with Europe, Asia, and the Middle East and which strives to be a regional leader.

Gezi Park has also demonstrated that openings may exist for exploring new ways of life for the citizens of Turkey, despite the rigid and oppressive ways that both Kemalist and Islamist ideologies have helped shaped Turkish society to date. During Gezi, society began to experiment in creative ways. The creation of public forums in parks all over Turkey as the protests evolved were a positive result of the events. These forums presented citizens from diverse backgrounds with opportunities to share their experiences with one another and to “discuss ways to access political decision-making processes” (Ünan 2015, 83). White (2013) argues that Turkish youth today have far more complicated identities than they did in years past, largely due to greater global connectedness. Although many of these new freedoms are realized only in the sense of greater consumer choices, more opportunities also present themselves in cyberspace. As Erdoğan’s repeated failed attempts to silence the users of Twitter, Youtube, and other social media sites demonstrate, it is today impossible to keep a technologically-savvy population sealed away in a bubble. As the “Penguin Media”²¹ also remains distrusted by many in Turkey, it would be difficult to argue that the AKP has been successful in asserting control over the dissemination of information.

Political activism will continue as the struggles to reform Turkey and redefine Turkishness remain hotly debated issues. While the efforts of *hamile* protesters may not have contributed to a complete rethinking of gender roles and gendered access to space in Turkey, they did serve as potent critiques of the ruling government and drew much attention to feminist activism separate from electoral politics.

The efforts of *#direnhamile* protesters have the potential to inspire and inform outside of the Turkish context. The climate of an expanding social conservatism that limits women’s mobility and access to proper health care is not unique to Turkey. And, just as demonstrators at Gezi Park employed a common contemporary protest tool kit, drawing inspiration from

²¹ See footnote on page 13.

demonstrations as diverse as Occupy Wall Street and the many uprisings commonly referred to as the Arab Spring, future protesters may follow the lead of pregnant protesters and pregnant allies at Gezi Park. The willingness of pregnant women to participate and be made visible is valuable feminist activism, and may open doors for greater participation by other women and allies.

From an academic perspective, the *#direnhamile* protests suggest that embodied performances of pregnant women can make powerful statements critiquing a government intent on controlling women's bodies. The presence of these protesters on the streets (and in harm's way) heightens the intensity of these performances, making bold statements that the subjects refuse to let the state and society strip away their democratic freedoms to access public spaces. While the reinforcing of their status as mothers (producers) complicates this process, their efforts make important political statements. The efforts of the pregnant allies disrupt conservative ideas about gender roles and help generate spaces for men to participate as feminist activists and to join conversations about cultivating greater gender equality.

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