

## CHP AND THE GEZI MOVEMENT

### Introduction

The Gezi Movement was a large-scale social movement, demonstrating to the entire world that large parts of society in Turkey have adopted a democratic culture. The Gezi Movement developed spontaneously, was not orchestrated from a domestic or international centre, and lacked any hierarchy, as scientific studies and all relevant reviews have shown. Unfortunately, as is the case for nearly everything, the AKP government has attempted to discredit this civil movement, which is built on just grounds and legitimate demands. To the AKP, democracy is solely a matter of getting the majority of votes, and therefore the AKP has yet again ignored the principle that the ruling party needs to listen to the demands of different social segments and adopt a participatory administration style, indispensable for a pluralistic democracy. Moreover, the AKP has filed the 'Gezi Case', in an effort to make the Gezi Movement look like an international plot and legally punish citizens, whose only aim is to enjoy their constitutional rights. This attempt is an extension of the AKP's conspirator mindset, one that takes even the slightest criticism from citizens as part of an international conspiracy and labels people as *putschists* without delay. To the CHP, the Gezi Movement is a historic struggle for democracy, aiming to defend the freedoms that are being restricted and suppressed daily in Turkey. To the CHP, the Gezi Movement is also a historic step taken towards the struggle for a liberal, participatory and pluralistic democracy in Turkey. Backed by its founding philosophy, and throughout its political history of 90 years, the CHP has stood by and, in most cases, been at the centre of all progressive social movements in Turkey.

The CHP's Gezi Review aims to address this large-scaled social movement from a comprehensive perspective and establish its importance from the party's standpoint.

### I. Participation in the Gezi Movement

One of the most discussed issues related to the Gezi Movement is about who took part in or which social segments were involved in the protests. Different observers have made different assessments about this, underlining the various dimensions of participation in the Gezi Movement. Nonetheless, it is possible to draw some basic conclusions regarding the components of the movement from studies conducted

during the course of the protests, without disregarding their margin of error. Data from studies make it possible to outline the demographic composition of the activists including their age and gender, as well as their socio-economic status and political/ideological tendencies. Above all, it must be underscored that the Gezi Movement was a social movement made up of multiple components and structures. Students, white-collar employees, Alevis, workers, women, shopkeepers, Kurds, the LGBT community, housewives supported the protests even if not directly involved in the protests, and people from several other walks of life took part in the process. These individuals and groups participated in the Gezi Movement in different ways, as well. Some took to the squares, some resisted in the streets, some offered medical and legal support, while others banged pots and pans in their neighbourhoods, attended the park forums, went on social media, provided logistical support such as food and shelter, or offered indirect support and assistance. To summarise, with its different components and types of protests, the Gezi Movement was a big, multi-layered urban protest movement, which took place across several locations.

### **Gender and Generations**

Most of the assessments about the Gezi Movement focus on the youth, as they were the ones physically at the frontline of the protests. On the other hand, women and men taking part in the protests were nearly equal in number. In other words, the participation of women is just as important as the youth's participation. Women, who are at the centre of the mounting social and cultural clashes in Turkey, took part in the protests and the political stage body and soul. During the Gezi Movement, women became the leading political actors in Turkey. In particular, the strong participation of young women led to the Gezi Movement being perceived across the world as a modern political movement, therefore garnering a lot of sympathy. The Gezi Movement's pluralistic and egalitarian character, emphasis on living according to rules, openness to innovation, and non-violent manner of protesting drew the whole world's attention. That is, people all over the world saw that there is an outward-oriented, large and active social segment in Turkey that has adopted a democratic culture and modern lifestyle. The Gezi Movement projected Turkey to the whole world as a modern country with a new and creative culture. Several international writers expressed that this aspect gave Turkey the impression of being a modern country. From politicians to journalists, columnists and think-tankers, the first and

most common question that anyone travelling abroad is asked is often related to the Gezi Park events.

Citizens of all ages, from young to middle-aged and elderly people, took part in the Gezi Movement. When the events occurring inside Gezi Park are individually evaluated, it is seen that the vast majority of activists in the areas where police heavily used compressed water and tear gas were young. The average age was higher in demonstrations taking place very close to them or on a neighbourhood scale as well as in the protests in other cities. The whole world's attention turned to the driving force of the process, namely, the youth who were at the centre of the protests. It was the youth that was mostly exposed to tear gas, compressed water and police violence. Indeed, studies show that the average age of participants ranges between 20 to 30 years, with the highest level of participation coming from the 20-24 year age group. That is why one can call the Gezi Movement primarily a youth movement.

Like students, employees were also among the younger generations. Working young people joined the protests and demonstrations after work and, on some occasions, returned to work after spending the whole night out on the streets or in the square. In particular, '*digital generation*', '*Internet generation*', '*Gen Y*', '*Gen 90's*' were some of the terms used to define the youngest group among the activists. The individual and social characteristics of these young people will be determined in detail with the contribution of new studies. However, at this stage, it seems possible to draw some conclusions based on the main characteristics underlined by experts from different disciplines.

The youth generally come from families with few children. They are the children of child-centred nuclear families. While most of these families have educational levels higher than the average in Turkey, they read books about children and child rearing before their children were born. These children have had their own rooms, watched TV in their rooms and used their own PC. Their families have cared a lot about their education, using all of their financial and non-financial means to ensure the best education for their children. The importance attached to individual freedom is another reflection of how much children are valued in Turkish society. Parents have made a special effort to ensure that their children are not exposed to family and social pressure as they themselves once were. These young people put individualism first, do not like being bossed around, react against any excess supervision, and

immediately object to authoritarian tendencies. All these are a result of their families, peers and the media, primarily television. Behaviours more common among previous generations such as formality, obedience, discipline and loyalty to authority are much rarer among the young generation. Experts highlight that these youngsters are self-confident, apt in taking initiative, entrepreneurial and creative.

The generation clash between the youth and their families stood out during the '68 Movement in developed countries, whereas, the youth taking part in the Gezi Movement have close relationships with their parents. These young people are clashing with the patriarchal, bossy and conservative notion of culture and politics rather than with their parents. They are not used to getting a "no" as an answer and are opposed to high-handedness and restrictions. They react strongly and firmly against intervening in other people's lives. Observers primarily underscore that their attitude of "*don't intervene in my lifestyle, don't decry my values*" is what underlies the youth's revolt.

The lives of youngsters who use the Internet and social media extensively are heavily built around the Internet and mobile phones. Young people live both in the online and offline worlds. Their ability to use new communication technologies well has enabled them to easily access information and connect to the world.

### **Social Segments Which Participated in the Gezi Movement**

The Gezi Movement started out as an urban protest movement in Istanbul, growing and spreading to other cities, although not to rural settlements. The movement grew by encompassing other communities and social segments, in addition to the youth that were its driving force, especially in large cities. Behind and around the core group of activists standing in the frontline of the Gezi Movement were bigger crowds supporting them, some of which never abandoned the squares. While people in this circle were not in the frontline, they did frequently confront security forces or were affected by the tear gas. The third circle consisted of movements at district or neighbourhood level, the participation of which included millions across the whole of Turkey. It was the millions of activists in the second and third circles that turned the Gezi Movement into a popular and large social protest movement. The participation of different parts of society as well as large communities resulted in hundreds of thousands of people attending the rallies. Worker unions supported the process by going on a general strike. Scores of employers, showing their discontent with the way

the AKP conservatised the socio-cultural domain, also supported the process in indirect ways.

Studies conducted in areas around Gezi Park and Ankara regarding the professional composition of the activists showed similar results. Slightly more than half of the activists worked in paid or salaried jobs. The Gezi Movement predominantly saw the participation of paid workers, mainly white-collar employees, and students. Formally employed urban white-collar professionals with high educational levels and specialised professions, and students formed the main body of the participants. This data shows that the social segment heading the protests was not comprised of the poor sections of society that have migrated to the cities in recent years and work in low-income and informal sectors with no security. On the other hand, the strong participation of the Alevis spread the Gezi Movement to the poor suburbs of large cities, influencing larger segments of society.

Studies show that the educational level of the activists was far higher than the average in Istanbul. While one out of ten activists had a master's or doctoral degree, slightly more than half of them had a college degree. The majority of activists counted as high school graduates were currently attending university. One out of four activists, or three according to some studies, was a university student. While the rate of individuals who had not completed high school stands at ten per cent, that of those who only had a primary school diploma stands at less than five per cent. A more striking finding is that the fathers of more than one third of the activists had a university degree and nearly one-fourth a high school diploma. High educational levels combined with paid and salaried work reveal that the main body of the activists consisted of well-educated white-collar professionals.

The main group represented at Gezi Park consisted of white-collar employees, in other words, the '*new middle class*'. In recent years, some writers have used the middle class concept to define the conservative entrepreneurs of Anatolian origin that have emerged solely during AKP rule. The new middle class mentioned here is a different concept that was coined while taking into account income levels, education and professions, in sociological terms. The new middle class includes individuals that work in paid or salaried jobs and have reached their current status by way of education and expert experience. The descriptor 'new' is used to differentiate this class from the 'former' or traditional urban middle class consisting of tradesmen and craftsmen or, in other words, shopkeepers. The concept that fits best with the new

middle class is white-collar professionals. The new middle class is the fastest growing social segment in the world, in particular in developing societies. When talking about a skilled or qualified workforce, mainly white-collar employees from the new middle class come to mind. In Turkey, while the rate of college graduates is 15 per cent, high school graduates stand at almost 25 per cent. Today, one out of every three individuals has at least a high school diploma. Moreover, there are over four million college students. Data from studies demonstrate that this young and urban middle class, growing rapidly by day, forms the backbone of the participation in the Gezi Movement.

The participation of a specific part of this segment, which can be referred to as *cosmopolitan urbanites*, is particularly striking. Cosmopolitan urbanites are individuals with a high degree of cultural capital and intellectual and professional knowledge. Their interest in Istanbul holds a special place in their lives: they not only live in or near Istanbul, they virtually live with Istanbul. Cosmopolitan urbanites are the top consumers of Istanbul's growing number of cultural products. They keep close track of biennials, music and film festivals, theatres and art galleries. They are just as much interested in Istanbul's nature as in its historical legacy. Cosmopolitan urbanites love Istanbul's street culture and care deeply about protecting its public spaces. They are very sensitive towards Istanbul's extreme commoditisation, destruction of its public spaces, proliferation of the city's concrete structures and destruction of its natural areas. They firmly oppose the remodelling of Istanbul against their will as well as the increasingly political regulation of their private lives.

Certain factors and processes have played an important role in getting the new middle class to be active. Unemployment among the educated population is very high in Turkey and the educated youth see it as the country's most important problem. A considerable number of high school graduates who find employment work for minimum wage. It can be seen that the youth, white-collar workers and Alevites, in particular, are increasingly disgruntled that both public and economic resources are distributed according to political criteria, namely, crony capitalism. On the other hand, white-collar professionals find the excess workload arising from organisational competition and performance pressures as well as the resulting stress overwhelming. To the Gezi resistance participants, the government's intensified restrictions on

political freedoms and interventions into private life are unacceptable. The activists oppose the government's attitude, which favours authority and excessive pressure. As a result, with its students, youth, women and people of different statuses, the new middle class has left a mark on the Gezi Movement and therefore on a massive democracy movement.

### **Political Groups**

Assessments that characterize the Gezi Movement as one limited to protests of young people who have never been involved in politics ignore certain important aspects of the process. The Taksim Platform that initiated the Gezi protests was created ahead of the incidents and was supported by several political organisations and NGOs. The organisations that started the protests are those that advocate environmental awareness and public interest. The vast majority of these groups have leftist tendencies. The Beşiktaş Çarşısı Group, which took the lead role as the events gained momentum, also positioned itself as a group sensitive towards social matters.

The Gezi Movement quickly spread across Istanbul and several other cities in Turkey. People marched in hundreds of neighbourhoods, beeped their horns as they would after a match and banged pots and pans. The most common image seen at neighbourhood meetings was the flag with Atatürk on it, characterised as the new symbol of freedom. Two thirds, even three quarters in some places, of the people attending these festival-like meetings that were free from any police intervention consisted of CHP electorates.

Studies conducted in Istanbul and Ankara point out that the person most admired by the protestors was Atatürk. The interest in leftist youth leaders, primarily Deniz Gezmiş, was also noteworthy. The vast majority of participants defined themselves first and foremost as a republican. At the same time, the vast majority of the activists defined their political identity as a social democrat, democrat, secular, revolutionist, and socialist. Studies also establish the presence of a group of individual participants that stress their Kurdish identity. While the rate of individuals that defined themselves as nationalists was only two to three per cent, individuals with a rightist identity were virtually non-existent. Other groups, the anti-capitalist Muslims for instance, were not

statistically significant in terms of representation although they added a lot of colour to the social movement.

Studies reveal that around two thirds of the activists have voted before. According to these studies, the percentage of people that voted for the CHP in the past elections ranged from two out of every three to three out of every four people. Only one study found that support for the CHP was lower than 50 per cent, namely, 41 per cent. Half of the participants belong primarily to the middle class and come from districts where the municipalities are under the CHP's administration. As the distance to Taksim grows and the district's average income drops so does the level of participation. The CHP is followed by the BDP, with a support base of around ten per cent, and leftist parties with a total vote rate slightly under ten per cent. On the other hand, one of out five people either did not vote or casted a blank vote, and one out of every ten people voted for an independent candidate.

Young people who individually participated in the movement fit in quickly with activists from socialist left parties in the protest zone and the Çarşı Group, and were influenced by their demonstration and rally experiences. They were able to stay in the protest zone thanks to the strength of groups that have past protest experience. Sympathy and new connections developed between the youth and the organised groups. However, it would be incorrect to conclude from this assessment that these young people will join these groups and engage in politics with them in the future. Not all, but only a specific group among these young people, who stand against the ruling party's oppressive and monotypic policies and authoritarianism, might immediately grow interest in socialist left parties and, in general terms, the networks and practices of institutional politics and join these organisations and operate like their members.

### **The Gezi Movement: Uniqueness and Continuity**

The Gezi Movement brought about several new dynamics and behaviours that were not common in the world of politics. Indeed, many researchers and writers characterised the Gezi Movement as a unique political power beyond, and exceeding the limits and potential of, institutional politics, creating new values and relationships. As an extension of the emphasis on the movement's uniqueness, some have expressed

that it was not marked or influenced by past political and social movements. In short, the Gezi Movement is considered to be different than and distant to all current political structures and processes, and fundamentally disengaged itself from them.

Having said that, viewing the Gezi Movement as totally detached from the political and social opposition that has accumulated in Turkey's recent political history does not fully reflect the facts. Despite all of its differences, certain similarities between past protest movements and the Gezi Movement should not be disregarded and past experiences need to be taken into account when evaluating the Gezi Movement. Governments have nearly always quelled student and worker-led protest movements by using disproportionate force. The youth, in particular, were discontented that the freedom of assembly and demonstration was continuously violated and security forces used intense force against the activists. The awareness and reaction that resulted from the chain of events played an important role in thousands of young people spontaneously rushing to Taksim Square when security forces burned down the tents during a dawn raid. Activists also protested the oppression under the AKP rule during the May Day celebrations. The 'one minute of darkness' protest was staged after the *Susurluk* case to voice demands for a clean society but then spread to masses as it turned into a protest against the *Refahyol* government. Despite the controversy about the Republic Rallies, which saw the participation of millions of citizens, its main goal was to advocate a modern lifestyle against the conservative-authoritarian political reality. The common aspect of these demonstrations is that they all protested the conservative-authoritarian political style. In the end, the majority of people who were directly involved in these protests either directly participated in the Gezi Movement or supported it in various ways or supported children and loved ones who took part in the movement.

Several individuals, groups and organisations took part in the Gezi Movement and staged collective protests. New partnerships that emerged in the protest zone contributed to the creation of new networks and new social capital. On the other hand, organisations and networks that already existed, along with their collective past experiences, kicked off the Gezi Movement and added dynamism to the movement throughout the process. We can evaluate the role that various political parties, leftist organisations and NGOs played in the movement in this context. That is why when

highlighting the new and creative aspects of the process, it is important to put emphasis on the political build-up present before the movement.

Political parties have different opinions about the Gezi Movement. While some political parties objected to the movement's essence, some preferred to keep a distance even if they did not directly disagree with it. The AKP tried to subdue and quell the Gezi Movement by coercing security forces to use disproportionate force. In addition, the AKP attempted to present the Gezi Movement as a massive plot staged by internal and external powers that wanted to disrupt Turkey's stability. The AKP continues to make these claims. Since the beginning of the movement and throughout the ensuing process, activists wanting to observe the protest zone have constantly had to confront government forces. Activists protested the AKP's rule relentlessly and in different ways on the streets and squares. The Gezi Movement was and is a protest movement and a warning for democracy, advocating political and social freedoms against the government's oppression in all domains. However, government officials have tried to present this social protest movement as a guided attempt to overthrow the ruling party, without any concrete proof of this whatsoever. Instead of trying to understand the Gezi Movement and capitalise on its positive aspects or, at least, reduce tensions, the government preferred to blame, smear and repress the activists. As all studies demonstrate, the AKP's approach led to increased reaction and tension.

Since the beginning of the Gezi Movement, the CHP viewed it as the movement of free and self-confident citizens who acted independently. The CHP put emphasis on the movement's autonomous dynamics and intentionally refrained from making any attempts or guiding interventions that would harm its autonomy. The CHP also insistently stressed that the Gezi Movement had no central command centre and that its organisational structure was not built on a command hierarchy.

The CHP's Istanbul Provincial Organisation and MPs have listened to the Taksim Platform's opinions and demands related to this matter for over a year. The CHP's leader visited Gezi Park before the dawn raid that led to the escalation of events. Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu cancelled the rally scheduled to take place in Istanbul on the day the barricades were removed from Gezi Park and joined, as an ordinary citizen, the thousands of CHP members marching to Taksim. The CHP MPs talked to both the

security forces and the youth and made every effort to prevent the use of gas canisters and compressed water as well as violence, irrespective of whoever resorted to it. Day in and day out, the CHP MPs tried to provide legal assistance to activists under detention and medical aid to those who were injured. As tensions escalated, the CHP Central Executive Board's extraordinary meeting continued into the late hours of the day and the Board suggested that the President call a meeting with the political parties in order to reach an agreement. CHP organisations strived to reach out to the families of those who lost their lives, the injured, people whose homes were raided or whose scholarships were revoked, as well as to all other victims needing assistance. Elsewhere, CHP electorates supported the Gezi Movement by beeping horns, clanging pots and pans, and joining neighbourhood festivals far into the night in several cities.

## **II. Reasons Behind the Reaction Arising from the Gezi Movement**

People who joined and supported the Gezi Movement brought the government's cultural, economic and political oppression of citizens and social segments, primarily the restriction of individual freedoms, to the table and showed their reaction against the increasingly authoritarian regime.

### **Culture and Lifestyle**

Authoritarian regimes try to control political freedoms, fundamental rights of citizens, civil partnerships and autonomous organisations. Conversely, many authoritarian regimes that restrict political freedoms refrain from intervening in individual freedoms and private life. In Turkey, there is a total intervention in people's lives, coupled with restrictions imposed on political freedoms. Conservative and patriarchal pressures work hand in hand with authoritarian administrative practices. The government is continuously narrowing people's room for personal preferences. In other words, the government is not only limiting rights and freedoms but is also imposing a social order, lifestyle and cultural identity on society in line with its own values, using the power it derives from the state. The prime minister presents himself to the public as the person who best knows what is good for everyone and what people should or should not do.

While the government is trying to control people's free time, it is also attempting to organise families and determine how people should live. To those who state, "I want to lead my own life", the government responds with: "You are on the wrong track, I will show you the right way." This is an insult to historic figures and their core values, both of which numerous people respect.

The prime minister does not see women as individuals. However, he structures his politics on many issues related to the bodies of women by chanting that "Women should not have an abortion or C-section", and that they should have a certain number of children. He uses sexist remarks about women such as: "You cannot tell if she's a girl or a woman", and "Girls who sit on laps." The prime minister wants everyone to accept his model of large families with many children, which is his ideal. The AKP mentality decides on and wants to influence how people should dress, behave, eat, drink, think and what they should do. Young people are polarised either as pious individuals or glue-sniffers and differentiated as 'Fatih's descendants' or 'the drunkard's descendants'.

The government bans TV series that have become part of people's daily lives or decides on their content. In one particular TV show, it dictated how long the Sultan's expedition should last, and in another, it forced the characters to get married and divorced. Hugely popular TV programs get taken off the air upon the government's intervention.

The AKP is attempting to re-organise society around traditional and religious values, according to its own definition of them. The social order that the AKP is trying to impose is presented as a virtually divine order. The prime minister is essentially turning his political mission into a divine one, projecting himself as the sole person who fights against anti-religious evil powers, represents justice, truth and the *ummah* (Muslim community). He alone knows what the people want.

Those who disagree with the prime minister's opinions and impositions have started to see themselves in an increasingly restrictive and suffocating atmosphere. The opposition leading up to the Gezi Movement was primarily centered on the restriction and oppression of people's personal space. The unproductive neighbourhood watch

spirit encompassing the whole of Turkey was most overwhelming to the youth. In the end, the Gezi Movement transformed itself into an uprising against the AKP's bossy conservatism. Activists rejected the state's all-around intervention in the lifestyles of its citizens.

### **Economy: Neo-liberal Policies**

Studies conducted during the course of the events show that economic reasons were not among the top reasons for joining the protests. Nevertheless, later studies and assessments about the Gezi Movement demonstrate that economic conditions played an important role in spreading and popularising the movement. The lead factor was the failure to produce job opportunities, especially for the youth, in an economy with low and poor-quality growth. Unemployment and lack of security were among the top problems voiced by the youth during this period. A considerable number of high school graduates work for the minimum wage. The future of university students is unclear and graduates are unable to find a job for long periods. Young people are disgruntled with the increased domination of cronyism in the labour market. Finding a job is dependent on the government's preferences, not only in the public domain but also in the private sector. The second point of criticism was that the rise of flexible work and sub-contracting practices and bad working conditions in the labour market are making daily living conditions increasingly difficult for the vast majority of the population. Members of the middle class, who are at the heart of the Gezi Movement, have insecure and low-paying jobs and most of them complain about the stress created by performance pressures, excess competition and extremely long working hours. The third economic aspect is related to the urban regeneration practices that the Gezi Movement overtly reacted against.

### **The Rent-Seeking Order and Urbanisation**

Big cities are places where the fundamental contrasts and tensions of the political and economic regime are laid bare in the most striking manner. The problems created by neo-liberal policies in today's world and the conflicts arising from these problems are often seen in big cities.

The AKP accumulated enormous resources from privatisation during its first term in power. As these began to run out, the government turned to urban areas, natural assets

and other public properties to find new resources. The AKP has put rent seeking at the core of its political existence, by transferring these resources at low costs to the capital owners in the government's close circle. For this purpose, the government has assigned the powers to plan, buy, sell and lease public land to the central government. The zoning plans for cities have been constantly modified to create new rent opportunities. A striking example comes from Istanbul, where more than four thousand zoning plans were changed in a relatively short period of time.

Underlying the plans to re-design Taksim was the government's effort to hand over public spaces to private companies. The Gezi Movement began by questioning the re-designing of the square. Taksim is a place that represents an abundance of historical and cultural wealth, the Republic, and the struggles of the working class. The ruling party wanted to replace Taksim's historical, social and cultural identity for a commercial building. The Taksim Resistance, organised by the Taksim Solidarity organisation, comprised of nearly 130 NGOs and platforms, saw immense support from the public and aimed to stop the plans to place Taksim Square under the power of commercial capitalism.

The park and the shopping mall that was planned to replace it became symbols of the clashes. Parks are public areas that people use jointly; whereas a shopping mall is a private, commoditised and commercial area. While shopping malls have several functions, they are mainly profit-generating places that operate under the supervision of private security guards. It goes without saying that shopping malls are multi-functional places. Many people spend time with their families in shopping malls. Their children have fun there, families get used to eating out, they go to the movies and they attend cultural events. However, razing both the park and the historical space in a place like Taksim, which possesses unique symbols of history and society, was deemed inappropriate by a large part of the population. Istanbulites who opposed the plans showed that they wanted to have a larger say in plans to transform the city. They chanted: "We too own the city." The government had a tough time challenging these demands in a city like Istanbul, where the level of culture, development and intellect is so high.

The city's economy is the heart of the AKP's capital accumulation model. The Gezi Movement targeted the very heart of the AKP's Istanbul-based rent-seeking economy, from where it derives its economic and political power. The concern that similar

protests could spread to other rent-seeking cities struck fear into AKP executives. The increasing disparity between the rent-seeking economy and quality of life is becoming evident to more people day by day. The AKP is following an urban development model that values the economic gains of its inner circle rather than the needs of the urban residents. The Gezi Movement stood against these impositions. It firmly objected the unilateral decisions made about the city without asking its stakeholders.

Similar acts of resistance and opposition were seen before the Gezi Park events against the AKP's and its municipalities' efforts to plunder symbolic landmarks like *Atatürk Kültür Merkezi* (Atatürk Cultural Centre), *Emek Sineması* (Emek Movie Theatre), *İnci Pastanesi* (Inci Pastry Shop), and *Atatürk Orman Çiftliği* (Atatürk Forest Farm) in order to seek funds from rent. Under the principle of having the right to the city, scores of individuals and unions reacted against the arbitrary closure of Taksim Square on May Day. The Gezi Movement also laid the foundation for a large opposition base against the Disaster Law, providing the legal grounds for rent-seeking politics, and projects such as the 'third bridge', *Kanal İstanbul* (Canal Istanbul) and the new airport, which will have a substantial impact on nature.

### **Gezi and the Authoritarian Regime**

The prime minister's statements about the Gezi Movement and the style he used when giving those statements offended a good part of the society. The prime minister's discourse went as far as to despise, belittle and discredit those who joined the protests. The prime minister attacked the symbols and concepts that the activists value. He tried to marginalise the Gezi protesters by dismissing them as 'riff-raff' (*çapulcu*) and 'extremes'. At one point when tensions peaked, he threatened the demonstrators by stating that he would gather a million people in an effort to pit the people against the people.

Studies clearly demonstrate an important fact. The movement started, grew and became popular mainly because of the reaction against the prime minister's speeches and behaviour. That is why the Gezi Movement's main criticism targeted the prime minister's authoritarian style of administration and oppressive one-man government. Social segments, political groups and individuals of different views came together primarily to protest the AKP's increasingly authoritarian regime. The prime minister's

desire to keep all parts of society under control, the way he speaks in a vindictive, hateful, disdainful and reprimanding manner towards some segments of the society, and his 'what I say goes' attitude has been found to be derogatory, in particular by the youth. Indeed, the prime minister and his statements became the subject matter of much of Gezi's humour.

A second important fact established by studies is that the reactions stemmed just as much from the excessive force used by security forces as they did from the prime minister's statements. Since the beginning of the Gezi Movement, the government has approached it as a criminal event and tried to quell it, as a police state would do. The attachment and solidarity between protestors increased as the police resorted to methods such as spraying tear gas at close range, assaulting unarmed people, raiding tents at dawn as well as arbitrarily taking people into detention and harassing lawyers and doctors providing aid to those in need. Indeed, the majority of the participants in the movement expressed that they went to Taksim Square to stand by the people against police violence. Most of them expressed that they perceived the police violence as a continuation of the May Day, ODTÜ (Middle East Technical University) and HPP (hydroelectric power plant) events.

In broader terms, the Gezi protests are, not surprisingly, a result of the political, cultural and social polarisation evident in all aspects of life in recent years. Today, as the government tries to consolidate its electorate base, it dismisses everyone else as others and enemies. Indeed, during the Gezi resistance the prime minister maintained his policy of segregating society and addressed 'his people' directly. Polarising society has become the AKP's main strategic tool. The prime minister is adding fuel to segregation in society, while trying to create an environment for further segregation and clashes. He is continually provoking one part of society against the other. He is reinforcing existing prejudices to infuriate and provoke people against one another. In the end, people close ranks, create opposing fronts and enemy camps. The prime minister inflames the social segments that he believes are true and close to him and pits them against those that he sees as adversaries. He tries to scare the people, something which the police state failed to do. However, those that are excluded, marginalised and oppressed become even more discontented, angry and ready to stand against violence. Tensions and clashes are inevitable when people are not given the

opportunity to voice their democratic beliefs. Even at this point in time, polarisation is continuously creating instability.

Conflict is inevitable in modern democracies where different interests exist. However, democracy requires striking a balance between conflict and agreement. The Gezi Movement explicitly demonstrated that the AKP is a political party unable to strike such a balance. It is constantly sowing the polarisation wind and ultimately reaping the instability whirlwind. That is exactly why the perception of a liberal and democratic government, which the AKP has been trying to create abroad for years in order to gain political support and legitimacy, virtually disappeared overnight. The world's leading newspapers and magazines began to cite the prime minister's name along with those of various dictators.

As can be seen, the reaction of the Gezi Movement protestors and their friends and families is the result of a long-term build-up. The AKP's oppressive regime revealed itself as it began to oppress institutions, organisations and a large number of social segments one after the other. Many people are being alienated, denied employment or laid off because they do not support the AKP. Some of the most common examples of injustice include attacks against NGOs, the continuous belittlement of bar associations and lawyers, lawsuits filed against the media, self-censorship, the firing of journalists, and the arrest of scores of journalists and students. Freedom of expression, assembly and even enterprise are becoming more and more restricted as each day passes.

The legislature, namely, the parliament, has become the approving authority of the executive body. The AKP has taken the judiciary under its political control. In Turkey, no one talks about fair trials anymore. Thousands of people are under arrest, even convicted, without any evidence or grounds. All public institutions and universities that are constitutionally autonomous are forced to operate under political pressure. The leading market players are fined arbitrarily. The government is phone tapping citizens, primarily members of the opposition, and subjecting them to detention, tax audits and layoffs. Smear campaigns are launched against companies that do not fully succumb to the government, their products are boycotted and they are punished with astronomical fines.

In Turkey, power is in the hands of the executive body and only one person in the executive body wields this power – the prime minister. Turkey is gradually drifting towards a one-man government. The party is demolishing everything in the government and state that gets in the way of the prime minister's power. The lack of any democratic restrictions imposed on the ruling party has become the main regime problem in the country.

The restriction of fundamental rights and freedoms, primarily the freedom of expression, assembly and enterprise, is what lies at the core of the Gezi Movement. Hate speeches, fines and the rage against police violence are what lie at its core. The discomfort with the all-around restriction of private spaces and private lives is what lies at its core.

### **Demands of the Gezi Movement**

The Gezi Movement brought forward various demands and expectations through collective organisations such as the components of the Taksim Platform, most importantly, NGOs, local initiatives, park forums and political parties. The demands, most of which overlap with the programme and policies of CHP, were closely monitored and steps were taken both in terms of carrying out legislative work and pressuring the government through the political agenda so that the people's expectations could be met. While these demands can be listed in detail, they focus on three main aspects.

The 'right to the city' concept, which laid the groundwork for the Gezi Movement, is one of the common demands we see across all social segments. The demand to halt all projects that damage urban living and the environment for the sake of rent seeking is at the top of the list. The people's demand to actively take part in decision-making mechanisms, especially on a local level, stands out as the second common theme. Among the main expectations are creating a modern 'governance model', where decision-making mechanisms are transparent and stakeholders are asked for their opinion on matters that directly impact the lives of citizens.

Despite the fact that the first two themes constitute the Gezi Movement's initial demands, as the movement has grown, the reaction against authoritarian practices that have spread and intensified in recent years has become the common denominator of all participating segments. The movement revealed the people's annoyance with the government's oppression and intimidation. The demonstrators came together to protest the government's all-around authoritarianism in every aspect of life. People with many different ideas and opinions took a common stance for the first time ever against an issue that concerned them all. In the end, a massive and silent group showed that it could unite in the fight for democracy against authoritarianism.

The Gezi Movement emerged as a free and independent civil society movement against the ruling party. Its main demand was and still is to ensure the security of political freedoms. It demands that the power laid in the hands of the government, which is limiting freedom in every way, be limited through democratic means. The Gezi Movement made a historic call to put a stop to and audit the government's power by way of democratic means. It called on the government to communicate regularly with the people, take into account the preferences of citizens and respect the individual's private life.

### **III. The Gezi Process and its Consequences**

A multitude of reviews, articles and books about the Gezi Movement have been published since the initial events. Several master's and doctoral theses about the movement are being written in Turkey and around the world. In the coming years, the Gezi Movement will be analysed in detail by local and international researchers and will become the theme of countless movies and novels.

One of the main questions that studies seek an answer to is what the lasting results of the movement will be. Will protestors continue to act together? Will there be a leadership to guide the movement? Will the movement be able to bring forward an ambitious target or a new social vision for the future?

After July, when the protests were at its peak, the demonstrations continued in various cities across Turkey, primarily in Istanbul. However, attempts to frequently repeat the protests, nearly every day, did not yield the expected results. If we put aside the

slogan “Everywhere is Taksim, Everywhere is Resistance” chanted at the 34<sup>th</sup> minute of football matches as well as the short-lived, creative and passive protests such as the Standing Man, participation in the protests have dropped over time. Moreover, political identities have begun to stand out during the protests. The concern that assembling and confronting the police on a continual basis would lead to monotony and alienation and that it would overshadow the movement held sway. Furthermore, the Gezi Movement has not evolved into a common political platform, movement or institutional partnership between different political groups and individuals, unlike what was anticipated in its first days. Assessments about the movement made by different groups do not put emphasis on the common objectives and unity but rather highlight the differences and opinions that alienate other groups. When analysing the movement and giving an account of the events, individuals and groups have attempted to associate the Gezi Movement with their own opinions and perspectives. For instance, attempts have been made to exclude certain groups on the grounds that they are ‘neo-nationalists’, ‘secularists’ or were ‘associated with *putschists*’ in the past. Some are characterised as yesterday’s ‘not enough, but yes’ people, taking a last minute detour from supporting the AKP.

Lastly, it is not possible to talk about an organisation, programme or leadership encompassing the whole movement. The potential disappointment in case of failure to meet raised expectations and hopes is also frequently mentioned. The uncertainty as to the future steps that need to be taken remains. Different strategic options for the continuation of the movement are on the table. These options include broadening and radicalising the movement’s base by frequently repeating the protests, establishing a new political organisation, supporting institutional politics and existing political parties, creating new ways of involvement and new policies through continuous debate platforms, or implementing all or some of the above.

Having said this, there is widespread belief that the optimistic climate and synergy created by the Gezi Movement among various social segments remains in place. One of the gains of the movement is that there is strong focus on how the youth defeated their culture of fear and despair. The Gezi Movement boosted the social opposition’s awareness, tenacity and determination for a democratic fight. The reference made to the young people who lost their lives in the Gezi resistance as ‘Gezi martyrs’ and both the solidarity with their families and assistance provided to follow up on their lawsuits

have contributed as important symbols in the continuation of the process. In addition, the meaning of a ‘Gezi Martyr’ has been broadened to include anyone who has lost his or her life due to any kind of social opposition. At the same time, there is strong belief that the rich human resources that emerged with Gezi will encourage the development of new oppositional methods, new policies and new partnerships. The experience of acting in unity has raised hopes in a good part of the population and strengthened the belief that a modern and democratic regime can be established in Turkey. Ultimately, the Gezi Movement has forced all political parties and players to rethink politics in a more comprehensive and ambitious manner.

In order to put any ideas forward about the gains of the movement and its future impact, one must truly understand the core values, norms and behavioural patterns that emerged during the protests. Projections about the lasting effects of the Gezi Movement are dependent on accurately identifying these aspects.

### **Understanding Gezi: Subjective Experiences**

The aspect of the Gezi Movement that deserves the most attention is its meaning for individuals who joined the protests; in other words, the subjective feelings and thoughts related to individual experiences. When asked about Gezi, protestors that were interviewed during and after the movement first and foremost talked about an extraordinary, colourful and thrilling life experience. Individual experiences share some common themes. Firstly, protestors expressed that they felt better and more important while taking part in the Gezi resistance. Some characteristics giving way to this feeling are frequently voiced: lying on the grass and sleeping in tents without being disturbed; waking up to songs in the morning; the pleasure of spending time together and supporting one another; the street plays, concerts, meetings and sports events; collecting garbage in the morning; writing slogans on walls; drawing pictures on paper; the evening forums where different opinions were voiced; masks, goggles, compressed water, tear gas and protestors being thrown in police vehicles; people who lost an eye; and the thousands of injured.

The protestors depict the atmosphere experienced as *enchanted*. It was described as an atmosphere full of surprises, shocking, fun, frightening but with continuous thrill. It was an atmosphere turning into a festival or ‘tear gas hell’ at any moment. In the protestor’s words, it was a dream world full of fun and danger, where feelings like

none before were experienced, and which protestors wished would never end. It was an extraordinary thrill breaking the monotony of life, away from daily problems and the world of competition that starts at school and continues well into work life. It was an experience that turned the ‘graduate, find a job, get married, have kids’ cycle upside down. The protestors expressed that the Gezi experience was one that they will never forget. Understanding the Gezi Movement requires first an understanding of the importance of these perceptions, emotions and experiences for the individual. In order to bring any ideas forward about the Gezi Movement’s future political and social impact, one must follow up and understand the conclusions that individuals draw from their own subjective experiences.

### **The Gains of Gezi**

The most highlighted aspect of the Gezi Movement is its pluralistic structure, bringing together individuals, groups, NGOs and political organisations with different identities, political opinions and lifestyles. Pluralistic values and behavioural patterns in line with these values, which were at the forefront of the movement, are cited among the most important experiences and gains of the movement. Not only those who personally joined the protests but also people who watched the protests were positively affected by the respect and tolerance to diversity during the movement and drew lessons from this. Concurrently, the squares and streets, as public spaces, facilitated the gathering of different individuals and groups. In this manner, apart from the restrictions imposed by security forces, nothing stood in the way of people who wanted to voluntarily take part in the Gezi Movement. The importance of public spaces, Gezi Park to be precise, for which protestors fought, was laid bare yet again for a liberal and participatory democracy. People who had never seen each other before came together and met one another in public spaces. This gathering laid the grounds for new partnerships. Individuals and groups in opposition or even in conflict with one another demonstrated common behaviours. The prejudices between groups that had been clashing with each other because of different opinions diminished and, in some cases, totally disappeared. In short, the Gezi Movement played a transformative role over individuals and groups. The emphasis on pluralism was a core value advocated in scientific papers, in the arts, in schools and in politics before the Gezi Movement. The Gezi Movement transformed this core value into a mass

experience. The popularisation of the pluralistic notion is seen as a huge contribution of the Gezi Movement to our political culture.

Another important gain is the emphasis on living by the rules. There was no central authority maintaining order at Gezi. Despite this, the protestors did not let any fights or chaos occur at the square or on the streets. There were no incidents of looting or theft. Aggression was prevented through the self-control mechanisms established in the area. People refrained from disturbing others in bilateral and mutual relationships, as well as from harming and offending one another. In short, they showed respect to each other. With these characteristics, the Gezi Movement proved that individuals and communities could effectively establish public order without any oppression or imposition. As can clearly be seen, it is possible to create a new public order that values respect towards others and demonstrates this understanding by laying down the rules in detail. People have become concerned that power in Turkey is concentrated in one person's hand and is used arbitrarily. Citizens are yearning for a state governed by the rule of law, where the limits of power are defined through rules and the fundamental freedoms of individuals are secure. The emphasis on an order drawn together by rules has been the most striking manifestation of this yearning.

Another important value and relationship style at the forefront of the Gezi Movement was solidarity. The most striking examples of this mutual support and solidarity include wealthy people donating money to buy anti-tear gas materials, doctors treating the injured, protestors risking their lives to help others in difficult situations, ointment and stomach medication suppliers providing goods, women taking homemade *dolma* (stuffed vine leaves) and *börek* (pastry) to protestors, musicians giving concerts, lawyers providing legal assistance and drivers beeping their horns. The feeling of solidarity and its manifestation gave way to the creation of social capital applicable to various aspects of social and political life.

Another frequently highlighted characteristic of the Gezi Movement is that it is a bottom-up, grassroots movement that developed spontaneously. There was no political organisation or central will that organised the movement. The protestors were not assigned or guided by a decision-making centre. The decisions were not

made top-down in a command hierarchy. The relationship networks developed horizontally, most of them during the process. The thoughts and feelings voiced during the movement mainly derived from daily life and popular culture. The free and voluntary participation of individuals or close groups of friends surpassed any organised participation in the movement. That is why individuals saw themselves as subjects steering and shaping the movement. Because of these dynamics, the Gezi Movement has been characterised as an egalitarian and inclusive social and political movement open to new participation.

The Gezi Movement was the first large-scale social movement where women were the principal subjects. The presence of women abolished the male-dominant culture in the area, reduced tensions in interpersonal relationships and contributed significantly to running daily life in a smooth and proper manner. Mothers, even though they were mostly in the background, were also important players in the movement as they supported the protestors by staying connected with them on mobile phones and meeting their various needs. Mothers, the majority of whom had taken part in the Republic Rallies, distributed lemon and vinegar to protestors, hosted people that were in difficult situations in their homes and marched in their neighbourhoods carrying flags of Atatürk. In the end, the Gezi Movement managed to involve scores of empowered women that could take on important political roles in Turkey's politics.

The youth's enthusiasm, vigour, vitality, humour and wit characterized the Gezi Movement. To most observers, the most striking aspect of the movement was its fascinating sense of humour. Young people teased everyone, including themselves, and even turned their resistance against violence into a game full of fun. The prime minister's negative words about Gezi gave leverage to the youth. The word 'riff-raff', used to belittle the protestors, became a new status of superiority in the youth's jargon. Each and every verbal attack from the prime minister was caricaturised, rendered meaningless and frequently teased. Infuriated with the teasing, the government continued to hurl threats and use heavy-handed force, all of which were once again fought off with humour, giving moral superiority to wit over brute force. What infuriated the government most was that it was making a fool of itself in front of the protestors as a result of its own actions. Humour showed that a new and different style in Turkish politics was in the works.

The *Park Forums* initiated after the Gezi Movement demonstrate just how strongly people want to be involved in politics. The participants demand that local policies be developed in consultation with the people, NGOs and all social stakeholders. Citizens want to have a say in the decisions and decide for themselves the kind of environment they are going to live in and the type of social relationships that should exist where they live. These demands indicate that the quest for an alternative vision for local and urban development will intensify in the coming months. They indicate that demands for social, innovative, green and sustainable development and participatory democracy in urban governance will grow against a rent-seeking, non-green and unfair growth model. They indicate that claims about a restricted political and economic circle holding on to power in Turkey to shape cities according to their own interests will be further questioned. They show that the concept of participatory government, where local stakeholders become stronger players in local politics, will come to the forefront.

One of the aspects of the Gezi Movement that was most striking to people inside and outside of Turkey was the heavy use of the Internet and social media. Communication technologies create new domains for people to establish new connections and express themselves better. These technologies facilitate the spread of messages to get people to join social movements. Mobile phones and the Internet were the main communication tools used for protesting during the Gezi Movement. For example, protestors frequently used amateur cameras, electronic messages, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. In addition to existing social media instruments, the protestors created online TV and radio channels such as Çapul TV and Gezi Radio. Every stage of the movement and details of the events were broadcast globally through social media and other online applications, enhancing the importance of the events as the whole world watched them.

Communication technologies lifted several barriers in front of the protestors such as time, money, physical power and distance. The result of this was that the elderly, handicapped, poor and millions of silent citizens were able to take part in the movement, as well. New technologies did not eliminate but lessened the risk of joining the movement for many. Numerous people were able to join the movement by

sending messages from distant places. The online support that turned millions of people into 'digital protestors' gave unparalleled morale to the movement.

The Gezi Movement managed to create its own media, undermining the domination of print and visual media on news and commentary. The collaboration between the people in the square and people on social media was the key to the movement's success. The events and developments were put on social media instantaneously and the streets were fed and supported with the messages coming from social media. The expansion of the virtual world gave way to the creation of new organisation models. Several websites and their followers did what would normally be paid work for free. Connections, friendships and even a new common language and culture were created in the virtual world.

The government tried to stop social media through oppression. They did this by monitoring the messages sent, even arresting some individuals. However, the government's pressures and blackouts were unable to slow down or stop the Gezi Movement. Protests went ahead despite all pressures, proving that in a world where information spreads so easily stopping freedom movements through pressure is not an easy task.

#### **IV. The Gezi Movement and CHP**

The CHP presented its outlook on social movements and civil society activism in its *Youth Report* and *Civil Society Report*. First and foremost, the Gezi Movement is a social movement. However, the movement is closely linked to civil society in many aspects. In order to better understand the Gezi Movement, one must dwell on these two concepts in detail. Theoretical studies underscore that social movements and civil society tend to voice similar problems and share common social objectives. Social movements are supported by civil society as they emerge and grow and, in return, social movements become institutionalised over time and take their place among civil society.

The ideal of a modern civil society anticipates the creation of an autonomous power against both the state and the market. Civil society, as a domain for solidarity, cooperation and partnership, directly contributes to ensuring social attachment and strengthening democracy. The Gezi Movement strengthened civil society in Turkey by creating new partnerships and methods of solidarity. The debates and answer-seeking platforms that continued after the movement in parks, closed areas and homes can be considered in this scope. If the Gezi process manages to create civil society dynamics, this will significantly contribute to enhancing freedoms and consolidating democracy in Turkey. In modern democracies, political parties renew themselves and keep abreast of the changing society by feeding on both social movements and civil society. Along these lines, the CHP is determined to capitalise to the highest degree on the rich human resources and partnerships that the Gezi Movement created.

A second important matter regarding social movements is related to content and scope. New social movements that have spread in developed countries since the 1980s have generally focused on individual issues such as nuclear energy, peace, women, human rights and the environment in order to advocate public interest. These movements have become institutionalised over time by creating new links with the political system and have gained widespread legitimacy in society. Non-governmental organisations that are the product of these movements in today's world have enriched their resources with the support of public institutions and have started to operate on an international scale. In contrast, the scope and content of social movements have changed considerably over the past decade. The new generation of social movements

are built on protests against neo-liberal economic globalisation. Social movements that have left a mark in the past decade focus on social issues, most importantly on class-related issues. In this way, these social movements are similar to the worker movements of the past. However, unlike those movements, they bring forward issues like civil society development, environmental sustainability and gender inequalities to the political agenda.

Setting off from social movements and civil society, two points can be established regarding the Gezi Movement. Firstly, while it started off as a protest to protect the environment, it distinguishes itself from other social movements that focus on just a single issue. Gezi is a multi-dimensional protest movement that questions the economic and social order as well as the government, whose oppressive character is becoming more and more evident. However, despite on-going meetings and debate platforms, it is not possible to talk about a far-reaching and comprehensive institutionalisation of the Gezi Movement. First of all, it is not similar to the 'new social movements' that focus on a single issue and institutionalise rapidly. Secondly, during the Gezi Movement, harsh reactions were seen vis-à-vis neo-liberal economic policies. In addition, the empowerment of disadvantaged social groups was voiced. The environment and women's rights also took an important place in the movement's agenda. While these are common to new social movements, the Gezi Movement predominantly advocated individual freedoms and rights against the AKP's authoritarian political oppression and interventions on people's lifestyles. In other words, the political agenda concentrated on freedoms.

Another important aspect that deserves attention is the relationship between social movements and institutionalised politics or, to be more precise, political parties. Until recently, there was widespread belief that social movements would ally with existing political parties. Currently, however, work sharing between political parties and social movements has been the overarching attitude. An important reason behind this is that social movements and civil society organisations have become organic and powerful autonomous domains that have grown rapidly. In Europe, leftist parties in particular consider it incumbent upon them to convey the demands and claims of social movements and the civil society to political institutions. The relationships between **political parties, civil society and political parties** are built on the notion of work

sharing. While political parties promote the strengthening of representative democracy, social movements try to bring depth to participatory democracy. With increased participation, individuals joining social movements can become the direct subjects and actors in politics. This has been one of the important benefits of the Gezi Movement. Still, non-governmental organisations and social movements do not have the power of direct representation in formal institutions, most importantly in parliament. Political parties close this gap. Ultimately, political parties, social movements and non-governmental organisations complement one another and strengthen both representation and democracy.

### **Institutional Politics and Participatory Politics**

The most important link between the CHP and the Gezi Movement comes from the common values that they advocate. These values include, most importantly, freedom, human rights, gender equality, pluralism, tolerance and democracy. Both the Gezi Movement and the CHP are against intervening in people's private lives. The CHP's future political mission is built on achieving its objective for 'freedom and democracy'. The Gezi Movement and the CHP should be associated with each other taking into account these common values, demands and objectives. The more determined the CHP is to advocate these common values, the more faith young generations will have in the CHP.

The CHP is keeping track of all publications about the Gezi Movement in a systematic manner and creating a Gezi archive in the party's library. The CHP is capitalising to the fullest degree on the Gezi Movement's experiences and practices related to the use of social media. Currently, the CHP's MPs, party executives, members and Youth and Women's Branches are following the park forums and debates and conveying the ideas and demands voiced to the party. During the Socialist International Meeting held in Istanbul in November, the CHP explained the Gezi Movement to participants from all over the world using visual materials as well as inviting Gezi representatives to speak about their thoughts and opinions. This gave a good opportunity for the Gezi Movement to explain and express itself to the international community, which it took full advantage of. Efforts were also made to ensure that the platforms voicing the Gezi Movement's views and demands were

represented in the best and most comprehensive manner in the local elections, as well. The CHP will resort to a participatory process when drafting its new party programme by seeking the opinions of both NGOs and the Gezi platforms. Individuals who took part in the forums will be encouraged to participate in the CHP's working groups, even if they are not members of the party, and will be given the opportunity to speak, without voting rights. Ultimately, the relationship between the CHP and the Gezi Movement should be addressed in the context of its contact with the youth. Along these lines, the CHP's views about young generations laid down in the *Youth Report* will be explained as effectively as possible to the youth. Establishing a close political connection with the Gezi Movement is not only dependent on the efforts of the CHP youth but also on making the party organisation younger. The Gezi Movement offers a rich human resource base to get younger people on board. The CHP stands resolutely behind its claim as the party that best capitalises on this opportunity.

To the CHP, the Gezi Movement is a historic struggle for democracy, aiming to defend the freedoms that are restricted and suppressed daily in Turkey. To the CHP, the Gezi Movement is a historic step taken towards the struggle for a liberal, participatory and pluralistic democracy. Backed by the CHP's founding philosophy, throughout its political history of 90 years the CHP has stood by and, in most cases, been at the centre of all progressive social movements in Turkey. The CHP itself emerged from a massive social and political movement – Turkey's independence movement – and the Republican values, which constitute one of the party's two main ideological pillars. The CHP's other key ideological pillar – social democracy – is the product of the rising worker's movement in Turkey as well as the Centre-Left Movement, which advocates the superiority of labour. Throughout its history, the CHP has supported all progressive movements, primarily youth and women's movements, and has always been the lead advocator of these movements. The CHP is a party with a wealth of experience in connecting and working with social movements and advocating common values. Backed by the strength and confidence of its history, the CHP is the most important political party aspiring to create a new and better society built on common values shared with the Gezi Movement such as solidarity, equality, peace and democracy.