

Political Struggle for the Aesthetics of the Urban Commons in Turkey

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1. Introduction

The common features of the protests sweeping the world since 1994 are their anti-austerity stance, the denunciation of corruption, the critique of mainstream institutions and the media, and increasing social inequality in deeply segregated urban landscapes. Across the world, people of different nations, operating in highly diverse cultural, social and historical contexts, have discovered who they are as citizens and what constituent power they have in relation to their governments. Many accounts have argued that in these recent urban social movements, the protestors have had diverse identities, interests and critical capacities, and yet they have collectively engaged in an aesthetic and sensory experience and discovered it to be a valid political instrument to undermine dominant political styles, challenge authoritarian rigidity and subvert the aesthetico-political language of officialdom (Bruff 2012, Della Porta and Mattoni 2014). The creation of political spaces of experience where imagination, creativity and pleasure are embraced and celebrated as integral to political engagement in order to “permit actors to live according to their own principles, to knit different social relations and to express their subjectivity (Pleyers 2010, p. 39).” The question this paper asks is, how this relates to empowering civil society?

A piece of graffiti created during the Chilean uprising in October 2019 proclaims ‘We are proletarians! not citizens!’ and emphasizes that the protests are about class struggle. It is also a rejection of the fallacies of neoliberalism in determining what citizenship and citizen participation should be. The slogan in Santiago de Chile is poignant in putting the issue

of class struggle back into the “virtues” of citizenship. Yet, it is also alarming in that it points out how “citizenship” is becoming an empty signifier imbued with meaning by the ruling elite in the process of designing its ideal citizens (Temelkuran, 2019, p.169–212). The graffiti makes us think about how our agency as political subjects is already framed according to an ambiguous definition of *citizenship* by the nation-state, one that has the potential to empty out the political content of civil society. For Purcell, a common agenda of the protests that occupy the urban public space for the last three decades has been to reinsert politics into urban citizenship that has been diminished by neoliberalism’s reduction of the power of ordinary citizens and enhancement of the power of corporations (Purcell, 2004, p.564).

The article argues that the recent urban social movements paved the way for a renewed understanding of democratic political participation and redefining the meaning of being a citizen and a *citadin* (urban dweller). The aesthetic participation, creation and experience in those struggles have built and demonstrated a shift from the illustration of nationhood with respect to the retrospective homogeneous nationhood to creating a conglomeration of emancipated subjects that thrive on a diverse and egalitarian collectivity. Such understanding of citizen participation proliferated among the protestors who struggled for democratic and polytonal political participation. This arguably also empowered ordinary urban citizens to navigate and negotiate their positions in power systems that markup the urban public space. The article will demonstrate the efforts of the municipalities in Turkey to command the aesthetic reconfiguration of the public space in an attempt to create a “desired citizen”. It will then analyze



Figure 1. Image of graffiti in Santiago de Chile. The text reads: “Somos Proletarixs, no ciudadanxs.”

a burst of urban creativity shortly after the Gezi movement where citizens take the initiative to occupy the public spaces spontaneously and reclaim not only their “right to the city” but also their right to “democratic citizenship.”

2. The Right to Democratic Citizenship

While our cities are designed by neoliberal actors in order to maximize profit, our aesthetic perception of our urban environment and thus our everyday life is also designed, monitored and controlled by political and economic mechanisms. Henri Lefebvre identified this as mastering over the representational space, imagined, lived, and experienced by urban dwellers (Lefebvre, 2003). Such strategic principles of urban organization, structures, and symbolic economies are made of a fragmented sprawl of communicative signs and symbols reproducing the dominant socio-political premises and preferable images of the city. As with the proliferation of urban social movements in their quest for a society based on non-violent relations, political freedom and equal rights for all, Lefebvre’s concept of “right to the city” has spread all over the world and become a key phrase in the urban agenda of different actors and urban social movements. For Lefebvre,

“the right to the city, complemented by the right to difference and the right to information, should modify, concretize and make more practical the rights of the citizen as an urban dweller (*ciudadin*) and user of multiple services” (Lefebvre, 1996, p.34). In another sense “the right to the city” is like a cry and a demand to surpass current inequalities and fulfill basic needs cultivated as an aspiration for change (Lefebvre 1996, 158). This is the right to full and equal enjoyment of the resources and services concentrated in cities, something that would only be fully possible in another, non-capitalist society (Souza, 2012). According to Venturini “Today state policies are intervening in the building of a city shaped on citizenship (Venturini, 2019, p 87).” Against the hegemonic construction of citizenship, both the right to social justice and the right to the city movements embraced the struggle to empower themselves as “being citizens who bear the rights to rights (Holston, 2009, p.241).”

David Harvey’s take on “the right to the city” precisely points to “the freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves (Harvey 2008, 23).” The possibility for people to shape their own city is fundamentally a social, political, historical, and an

aesthetic one. In Harvey's discussion neoliberal policies commodify and enclose "commons", e.g. common property, common knowledge and common resources (Harvey 2008). The recent urban social movements suggest that the reversal of this process can be achieved to a degree through occupation and re-appropriation of streets, squares or state buildings. In his much-celebrated book by activists, *Rebel Cities: From Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* Harvey states that in the heart of the multitude of diverse urban struggles, there is one collective aim: "...their right to change the world, to change life and to reinvent the city more after their heart's desire (Harvey, 2012, p.25)." As much a romantic political idea as it seems, what Harvey means is claiming the power of self-determination over life and the social relations in the city. In another publication, Harvey and Potter write that "the right to the city" is a continuous process shaped by our desire to create a different sociality:

The inalienable right to the city rests upon the capacity to force open spaces of the city to protest and contention, to create unmediated public spaces so that the cauldron of urban life can become a catalytic site from which new conceptions and configurations of urban living can be devised and out of which new and less damaging conceptions of rights can be constructed (Harvey and Potter 2009: 49)

This argument calls for the emphasis on the aesthetic experience in the struggle for creating our sensible environment while creating ourselves as free and powerful and active political subjects, which is what democratic citizenship entails. Theorists of urban modernity Walter Benjamin, Jane Jacobs, Lewis Mumford, Steven Jacobs, and Henri Lefebvre and contemporary scholars such as Richard Sennett, Leonie Sandercock, David Harvey and Sharon Zukin, and others establish a strong link between the urban commons and plural and democratic city. One of the fundamental propositions of Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's theory of radical and plural democracy that art historian Rosalyn Deutsche also joins later of that democratic public space is not where consensus is found, but rather where consensus breaks down and new alliances are rearticulated again and again (Deutsche, 1996, Laclau, 1996, Mouffe, 1993, Spivak, 1988). Those philosophers seek to incorporate pluralism within a radical

understanding of democratic citizenship in practice, in which the many different struggles could find a space of inscription under a common political identity. This identity is citizenship, but it is not apolitical nor undifferentiated. In 1988, when Gayatri Spivak asked if the subaltern voices can speak and be heard, she exposed the power relationships involved in political participation, locked in the irons of legitimate and illegitimate subjects. Similarly, Jacques Rancière questions the partition of the sensible—that is the ways in which bodies form a community—and calls for a participatory practice built through aesthetics that he refers to as the very essence of democracy (Rancière, 2004). The struggle for the "right to the city" is then an aesthetic struggle, in the expansive understanding of aesthetics that Jacques Rancière offers us.

According to Rancière, aesthetics involves making visible and audible what we have in common, and politics is the way in which the organization of this sensory configuration of the common takes place (Rancière, 2006, 2009).. Aesthetics and politics simultaneously define the subjectivities that articulate a sense of the common world. It is with this meaning of aesthetics that we understand political struggle not as a struggle for power but as a struggle for true political agency, which is connected to aesthetic struggle. For Rancière, aesthetics is a way of collectivity that forges the entire sensorium of a community by the way of producing a world of audible, visible, exchangeable, communicable, transformable objects, things and experiences. In the configuration of that common social world, "the police (order)" organizes and commands the distribution of spaces and times, occupations and capacities as a way to create consensus and social hierarchies that make up our perceived social realities (Rancière, 2010). Rancière calls this "distribution of the sensible."

Rancière's theory of "distribution of the sensible" helps us to understand the ordering of the sensuous productions as the "aesthetic regime" that creates the conditions to perceive, think and act in a given socio-historical situation (Rancière, 2004, 2009a, 2009b). Subversive aesthetic experience can affect the rational perception of social practices and norms and makes us aware of the obscured conditions and modalities of the social order (Rancière, 2006, 2009; Armstrong, 2000). Therefore, aesthetics has also the capacity to be an

irresolvable force of disruption to the existing politico-aesthetic order. In the urban social movements what comes forth is their aesthetical struggle not only for visibility and audibility but also against the normalization of the “distribution of the sensible” as Rancière articulates. and thus, the normalization of our collective sense-making mechanism about our surroundings and our place in society.

Such disagreement or “dissensus” with what is normalised by the “police order” is a struggle about what is included, who is included and how they are included in our common world. Rancière explains that class war should also be understood in terms of dissensus: “...And this is also what class war means: not the conflict between groups which have opposite economic interests, but the conflict about what an ‘interest’ is, the struggle between those who set themselves as able to manage social interests and those who are supposed to be only able to reproduce their life (Rancière 2011, 2).” In the following pages, being indebted to Rancière’s concept of the “distribution of the sensible”, I will examine how aesthetics and politics met on the rebel streets of Turkey as interconnected forms of dissensus against the aestheticization of the urban space by the efforts of the ruling elite. For, Rancière politics is the configuration of the common world in which everybody is in his/her place performing his/her role in society. And this is how “the police order” passes itself off as “the real.” True politics starts then with dissensus. When this sense-making mechanism is broken, the distribution of the sensible can be reconfigured. As he writes: ‘It [dissensus] is a conflict about who speaks and who does not speak, about what has to be heard as the voice of pain and what has to be heard as the argument on justice (Rancière, 2011, p. 2).

3. Top-down Aestheticization of the Public Space

The urban aesthetics is locus of antagonism between the politics of urbanity that utilizes art as a property in the service of power capital and politics of subaltern culture that instrumentalizes it to make visible and audible those who are excluded by this power. While the aesthetic reconstruction on the urban space has an essential role in producing and reinforcing socio-political divides, the governmental control of urban appearance could be for economic benefits related to gentrification, tourism and real estate development. It could

also be used to reconstruct a certain aesthetic sensibility and thus certain ideological attitudes. Who has the aesthetic authority in the urban space is as important as who is re-developing that city.

Authoritarian governments have been using urban interventionism not only for economic but also for ideological gains. The power to dictate the aesthetic order does not fall away from the power to dictate the political order. Slavoj Žižek claims that “the notion of ‘totalitarianism,’ far from being an effective theoretical concept, is a kind of *stopgap*: instead of enabling us to think, forcing us to acquire new insight into the historical reality it describes, it relieves us of the duty to think, or even actively *prevents* us from thinking. While the ruling elite continues their efforts to manipulate and transform society, in line with their desire to use art and the artist as an effective tool in this way, they can mobilize all kinds of possibilities in their relations with them to influence and evolve artists in the desired direction, or at least, to pacify their creativity. While many artists offer their creativity and abilities to the service of those in power, some of the artists do not set an attitude in any way, taking shelter behind the natural consequences of the dialectical flow. They continue their existence with the thought that they fulfill their artistic activities. This kind of sectarianism serves to alienate society from itself, by obscuring, mystifying, and transforming reality into a false reality. It causes humans to move away from the nature of being human, to transform the self-alienated individual of the capitalist system into selfish beings who are insensitive and self-isolating from everything environmental. These attitudes, which are constantly reproduced and reinforced, are naturally the most important obstacles to human plurality, democracy and living together as a society.

In Turkey, after the conservative Islamist Welfare Party (Refah Partisi) took the most important metropolitan municipalities such as Ankara and Istanbul in the 1994 elections, the people in major cities witnessed a new aesthetic transformation in the public spaces in the forms of replacing public sculptures. In this period, there was an important ideological split in which the secular-anti-secular polarization started to escalate. Thanks to the September 12 Coup in 1980, the Turkish-Islamic ideology was already embedded in the back-

bone of education and social life.

The changes were more prominent in Ankara under Major Melih Gökçek. The landmark of Ankara, the capital of Turkey since 1923, was known for its massive modernist, gray buildings. As Welfare Party was reenacting itself as the antidote of the previously long-time ruling class—the Kemalist and social-democratic Republican People's Party (CHP) Gökçek wished to aestheticize the city with kitsch sculptures. He and his colleagues chose to enact plastic rapidly produced and colorfully painted objects, looking like children's toys, at the city entrances and squares. This proposed a radical process of transformation of the capital as the city of the new order with a new understanding of social life radiating from the public sculptures the Mayor was enacting on all corners of the city. Meanwhile, when the mayors of the Welfare Party displayed reactionary approaches such as not laying wreaths in front of Atatürk statues or not participating in official ceremonies in front of Atatürk statues, Gökçek started to remove the statues that he found obscene.

The first one of that was Mehmet Aksoy's modernist piece

called *In the Land of the Fairies* in Altınpark (figure 2). For Gökçek the sculpture looked like an orgy and he infamously declared: "I spit to that kind of thing called art." The removal of this statute in 1994 was his first move before he replaced many public sculptures. This reflected the anti-intellectualism of the new wave of rightwing politics in Turkey that regarded public arts of the "previous era of CHP as degenerate Western aesthetics and create polarization in society by their encouragement to condemn modern and contemporary art in the public space. In fact, some internalized such condemnation so much so that they would find it acceptable to see banal and kitsch objects as "public art" in public spaces and approved them to show that they are different from the secular educated voters of the opposition party-CHP.

Another early example before he started to fill Ankara with sculptures looking like children's toys, was the removal of the sculptural fountain called Water Elves in Tandoğan Square (figure 3). One morning, instead of the bronze square fountain belonging to the first years of the Republic, which can be found in many cities of Europe, the citizens around Tandoğan Square came across an ugly cup and tea jug, far from the



Figure 2. Mehmet Aksoy, sculpture, *In the Land of the Fairies*, public domain.

competence of Turkey's tile aesthetic, with the inscription "Kütahya Porcelain" on it. About this unfortunate faith of the "Water Elves" Uğur Duyan writes:

All the creative destruction processes that Ankara has undergone since the early years of the Republic preach a new and modern urban identity. Although the Water Fairy Sculptures were brought to Ankara in order to create a Western city image and to carry the daily life practices of the West, they could not fully realize their mission. Since the 1920s, Ankara has been equipped with structures built according to a neo-classical Turkish-Islamic architecture, which is reminiscent of 19th century Istanbul (Duyan, 2011, p.142).

Such transition from an aesthetic pool composed of classical sculptures to a rough tile-covered jug with water flowing from its pitcher was the start of Gökçek's aesthetic education of Ankara's dwellers. Especially with the AKP's coming to power, Gökçek lived his "golden age" and during his tenure he inspired his colleagues in other municipalities to re-

new the public space with inspirational sculptures (figure 4). Duyan remarks "Almost all of the statues disappeared from people's memories shortly after they are displaced (Duyan, 2011, p. 141)." At that time, many criticisms of this transformation came to the fore but unfortunately, all the criticisms could not prevent the grotesque aesthetics that Gökçek had imposed on the city and society for a quarter of a century until he lost elections in 2018. AKP has equipped public space with tasteless readymade-like sculptures in almost every city. This reproduced a shallow mentality about urban commons and dictated a very different aesthetic order than what previous political make-up in Turkey did.

4. After the Gezi Uprising in Turkey

On May 31, 2013, the people of Turkey, cowed by a history of coup d'état and civil authoritarianism, woke up to a nationwide revolt without knowing that it would be the biggest civil mass revolt in its history. The resistance started on May 27 with a few dozen protestors occupying the Gezi Park in the center of Istanbul to protect the last piece of green space



Figure 3. The photo of *Water Elves* on the left and *Kütahya Porselen* on the right. Public domain.



Figure 4. The inflatable sculpture known as “Dinocan.” Public domain.

from turning into another superfluous shopping complex in the city, this time in the form of an Ottoman barracks, replicating the original building built two centuries ago. The following day at dawn the police set protesters’ tents on fire while people were sleeping in them and started to evict the park using excessive tear gas and water cannons. Nobody predicted then that an unprecedented chain reaction would trigger a massive civil uprising.

Gezi uprising in Turkey was not only a contested territory but also an aesthetic practice of the dissensus—the reclamation of the urban space as the visual and discursive space—that devised the imaginary for politicians and intellectuals alike who have embraced an idealized notion of a nation and citizenry befitting their political objectives. The aesthetic language of the Gezi was one that mimicked the collective aesthetics and its dialogical premises visible since the 1968 uprisings and carried over to anti-globalization movement and Occupy and anti-austerity movements thereafter (Çolak, 2014, Tunali 2018). The deployment of similar forms of aesthetics—from the costumes to civil disobedient acts, from street art to social media memes, from spontaneous performances to hand

signals during the assemblies—expressed both a global circulation of techniques of protest and at the same time an awareness of comparable political mobilization.

Do we have the right to change ourselves by changing the city or do we have the right to change the city by changing ourselves? What happened after the violent eviction of the Gezi Park and the demolition of the tent village, seemed like the *citadins* were searching for an answer to this question. A month later, a completely different dynamic took over the streets. An image of a man standing still in the middle of Taksim Square, once again made eyes turn to the center of Istanbul. Erdem Gündüz, stood for eleven hours until AKP and Erdoğan alarmed the mayor, Hüseyin Avni Mutlu who until then had said the police would not intervene in such a peaceful protest (figure 5). His body, fragile and vulnerable, stood in front of the Ataturk Cultural Centre—the most significant architectural symbol of the modernization of Turkey by the Kemalist elites. A performance of standing motionless disturbed the normal ways of behaving in a square —walking, crossing, moving.



Figure 5. The standing protest by (then) art student Erdem Gündüz in Taksim Square.

This unplanned silence and inactivity become unusual disturbances to the established flow of urban life and traffic in one of the busiest squares in Europe. After the arrest of Gündüz for standing still, his action was picked up all over Turkey. People would suddenly stop and stand still while crossing a busy road, in a square, at a park, on a pavement. Sometimes people spontaneously organized a collective “standing” act in their neighborhood at a spot culturally or politically significant to them. They made up a landscape of dispersed but connected bodies, intensified and accumulated, being where they are not supposed to be, doing what they are not supposed to be doing. This collective act became a tactical disturbance challenging the routine of the neoliberal urban landscape. It complemented the Gezi Uprising that took its political shape by the occupation of Gezi Park, disrupted the normal use of the park, the Taksim square and the traffic and turned the space into a political agora for reclaiming urban commons. Dissensus, in Rancière’s theory is about blocking the normal relationship between sense perception and sense-making (Rancière 2016). In other words, dissensus is the discordance between what is given to the perception and

the established meaning of it. This motionless performance disrupted that relationship and created a kind of perceptive trouble that got repeated in other times and places, creating dissensus.

A few days later another spontaneous civil disobedience began when a 64-year-old retired engineer, Hüseyin Çetinel, living in the Taksim-Beyoğlu district, started the most colorful protest in the city. One night, Çetinel decided to paint a large staircase in front of his house to give the citizens something colorful to look at instead of gray, crumbling concrete (figure 6). After images of the rainbow-colored stairs circulated on social media, the historic staircase immediately became the site of contestations between the government and the Istanbulites. When municipal officials sent workers after nightfall to repaint the stairs gray, quiet aesthetic warfare broke loose. When everyone is sleeping at night, the stairs were transforming into vibrant rainbow colors again. Their goal was to take back their walls which have been filled with a lot of commercial images that do not reflect their values, voices and tastes.



Figure 6. A view of the public enjoying the first rainbow stairs painted by Hüseyin Çetinel in Istanbul. Public domain.

After thousands of calls on Twitter to repaint the stairs again, Istanbulites of all colors united against the gray state not only in Istanbul but also in many cities all over the country. The repainting of the rainbow stairs seemed to be yet another sign of a lack of respect for their right to claim public space. Within three days, proud people posted hundreds of photographs on social networks of the colorful stairs, walls, pavements, and cobblestone pathways in their neighborhoods all over Turkey. This common space was produced as an ephemeral and contingent space. The *citadin* as a subject appeared in and through this space and was constituting the aesthetic acting. With this surprising and unexpected act, the routinized ordering of things in the city is disrupted and a colorful dissent is staged. Urban inhabitants seized to be passive and re-imagined and re-invented their role in the urban space and in their everyday living. In the battle between painting and repainting the staircase, for *citadins* citizenship was conceived as an expressive exercise of their rights to the city in their daily life.

This battle made visible the continuous struggle for recognizing and exercising the rights of everyone in the city. By the end of the week, some people took their children to see the newfound colors of the city's streets; some took bridal pictures in front of the staircase and some just hung out there with friends. With that, not only big squares and parks but also narrow streets and alleys became a space for public gatherings and a colorful unification of those who are tired of authoritarian consensus building of the state authorities, especially that of the President. At this time, the rainbow was still not recognized as the symbol of LGBT activism in Turkey and it worked as an attempt for the unification of people of all backgrounds who expressed their right to the city by means happy coloring the common urban space.

Another civic protest initiated by a random citizen came from an 85-year-old woman living alone in the city of Elazığ, in Eastern Turkey. Nadire Kaya protested the police barricades in front of her house in both humorous and practical way: she hung her vegetables to dry on the iron bars of the police barricade. Her brilliant answer to the alternative media



Figure 7. An image of Nadire Kaya's display of discontent with the excessive police force in front of her house in Elazığ, Turkey, 2013. Public domain.

personnel who came to interview her was this: "I am poor. I live in a small house without a balcony. Where would I dry my peppers?" Kaya then added, "But, I made the police barricade beautiful, didn't I?" (figure 7). Drying vegetables at the end of the summer to be used later in the winter is a well-known cultural practice in Turkey. An 85-year-old woman made her poverty visible by aestheticizing what she thought was hideous in front of her house. Through this simple act of occupying the police barricades in front of her house, Kaya turned upside down the symbolic and practical existence of these ugly iron barriers that aggressively occupy public spaces all over Turkey. Her disagreement with the forceful existence of the barricades made her recognize her rights to that space as a citizen, and she exercised this right in a simple aesthetic act.

Breaking up the totalizing notion of those dominated by power as passive sensors of the urban space, such creative action is an engagement with the city as a *citadin*. Michel De Certeau articulates this in his book *The Practice of Everyday life* (2002) as the tactical way ordinary urban citizens navigate and negotiate their positions in power systems that

markup the city space. De Certeau explains that the everyday man uses tactics such as urban nomadism, poaching or bricolage to subvert the state power imposed upon him: "It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers... It creates surprises in them... In short, a tactic is an art of the weak (De Certeau, 1988, p. 35)." If the state tries to control the people whenever and wherever, people have the capacity to create their own micro possibilities of resistance (Klanten, R. and Huebner, M. 2010).

Kaya's act was a good example of how ordinary people could intentionally "misuse" the streets against the regime's construction of the urban space in the form of the distribution of the sensible. Kaya, like Çetinel, wanted to determine what she would see in front of her house and created personal urban interventions. the demonstration of power, they aesthetically reclaimed their immediate surroundings. Kaya's act showed that the commonly established meanings and significance of things in public spaces could be questioned and undermined through a small act of subversion, which is

a new poetics of urban dwelling that is usually left to artists of street art. This kind of re-aestheticization of public spaces as seen in the example of bell peppers on police barricades could act as an antidote to the ruggedness of our collective thinking about being political subjects. It brings forth a liberating potential and public opportunities for humor and playfulness. This gives citizens the opportunity to express themselves while opening up the political space towards self-realization as a citizen. Gezi left its mark as the collective creative demand of citizens who were realizing themselves as active actors in the city's public spaces and redefining the concept of citizenship as direct action in the service of democracy against the surge of authoritarianism.

5. Concluding Remarks

Gezi uprising in Turkey was a challenge to the new regime of social domination exerted as authoritative incentives and consolidated reasoning of the ruling power. It was an important example, which showed that in the re-appropriated urban space, the sensibilities of the common life could be re-configured through unusual ways of aesthetic refiguration of the public space. What remained in the aftermath of the Gezi is not only a new political discourse but an aesthetic practice that defied the politico-aesthetic consensus hitherto enacted by the ruling elites. The spontaneous aesthetic occupation of public spaces by the citizens enacted a political demand about to how we constitute and share our encounters with the urban environment.

The paper also argued about the aesthetic strategies of contestation to the configuration of "a social order" that defines citizenship as an empty signifier to be filled by those in power. Thus, citizenship needs to be affirmed as a praxis of citizens' aesthetic and political expression toward self-realization. The constitution of the community and the expression of the community is crucial for such self-realization. According to Murray Bookchin, "an authentic community is not merely a structural constellation of human beings but rather the practice of communizing (Bookchin 2005, p. 349)." The aesthetics of the urban resistances invites us to think about active citizenship as the expression of freedom. This imagined form of citizenship can be conceived as a direct action towards urban commons thus creating the possibility to make decisions for

one's own community. The aesthetic practices of political action in the recent urban movements have not only been more and more visible but also significant in empowering ordinary citizens by enabling them to claim their rights to change the environment.

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