Disrupting the Spectacle: The Case of *Capul TV* During and After Turkey's Gezi Uprising

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1. Introduction

A series of massive protests across diverse geographies from MENA (Egypt, Libya, Morocco, Turkey, Syria) region to Europe and the US has dramatically shaken up global politics for the last five years. Despite the undeniable differences regarding the causes and respective historical contexts of these events, the uprisings also had commonalities such as the occupation of physical space, deployment of digital media for protest and forming transnational alliances, spontaneity, and horizontality. Western media and mainstream scholarship mostly framed these uprisings as technological revolutions against oriental dictatorships. However they ignored the fact that a significant portion of popular demands revolved around the commons (housing, education, and employment) that were privatized under neoliberal governments. What also emerged as a point of convergence was the use of powerful images to subvert existing regimes and attack what Guy Debord theorized as 'the society of spectacle.' In this chapter, we examine Gezi Uprising's *Capul TV,* which we consider in

relation to the work of Debord and his theorization of the spectacle, specifically focusing on issues of labour and sustainability, as well as strategy and leadership.

Capul TV[1] emerged during the protests at Gezi, which put the final nail in the Turkish media's coffin precisely because its corporatized and censored structure had suffocated the public sphere for some time. Gezi Park Protests initially began at the end of May 2013 as a result of the government's attempt to demolish Gezi Park, located in Taksim Square in İstanbul, and re-construct Taksim Military Barracks (*Topçu Kışlası*), an Ottoman-era military barracks, which was supposed to serve as a shopping mall and residences in place of the park (Hürriyet 2013). Protests, which began as small-scale environmentalist sit-ins in the park, turned into a nationwide series of uprisings when the sit-in was met with severe police response involving tear gas and water cannons (Yardımcı-Geyikçi 2014; Gürcan & Peker 2014). Moreover, mainstream media turned a blind eye to the protests and clashes in Taksim Square, while images and videos of the protests were circulated throughout social media (Smith, Men & Al-Sinan 2015). Consequently, activists and protestors turned towards alternative and citizen-oriented ways of gathering and disseminating information.

Beginning its coverage of events on 6 June 2013, *Capul TV* used Ustream for nine days for its operations straight from the heart of Gezi Park until June 15. Ten days after it started its life, *Capul*'s founders would find out that 1.5 million IPs were following their broadcast. More importantly, eight TV channels relayed *Capul TV*'s Internet broadcast onto their own screens, multiplying the impact and outreach of *Capul TV*. On 24 October 2014, it relocated to its Istanbul studios and opened another office in Ankara. From its inception, *Capul TV* operated online and preferred live streaming as its main broadcasting service. While using Ustream due to urgency within the park during the peak of the protests, they later established http://capul.tv/ as their website using their own servers. *Capul TV* has since used Twitter to disseminate content and communicate with the protestors, reaching 145,000 followers within one year (it has 180,000 followers today) (Sendika.org 2014). At present, *Capul TV* uses Periscope for livestreaming, YouTube to archive their videos and continue to use Twitter for dissemination, albeit with a different title within the context of a constitutional referendum.

Currently, *Capul TV* Twitter account uses the name *Hayır TV* ('No TV') due to the recent constitutional referendum, which changed Turkey's parliamentary democracy into a presidential one on 16 April 2017.[2] In accordance with the outlet's commitment to resistance and social movements, *Capul TV* activists have called for a no vote in the referendum and declared that they will 'raise the voice of those who resist lies, censorship and dictatorship in the period of referendum' (Sendika.org 2017). As the activist group and the structure is essentially the same and the change in the title appears to be temporary, we will refer to the outlet as *Capul TV* for convenience.

Today, *Capul TV* has a network of activists across the country who volunteer to keep alive what its founders call a 'guerilla media'. This loose network of 'guerilla media' is enabled, *but not led*, by members of *Halkevleri*, a leftist organization with considerable media activism experience through sendika.org – a central source of information for labouring classes and the broader coalition of oppositional forces – and Sendika.TV – a mobile TV studio that broadcast right from the tents of the 78-day-long Tekel Resistance (Tobacco Workers' Resistance). With its conscious rejection of professional news language, adherence to an amateur spirit, and endorsement of the Internet as a venue for challenging the system (Basaran 2010), Sendika.TV experience was crucial – but not quite the same as far as political imagination is concerned – for the future operations of *Capul TV*. Therefore, *Capul TV* relies on existing political organizations and the experience of former media activisms but deploys a different language and draws on a different political imagination.

An analysis of *Capul TV* is important not just because of Gezi's nation-wide scale. Gezi was an extraordinary event in terms of its class composition and its use of digital media to disrupt the spectacle. First, despite varying interests, people across different social classes including the industrial proletariat and the contemporary precariat employed in the knowledge sector became unified during the protests. What mainstream media named the 'Y Generation' and the new middle classes – or the new urban proletariat? – experienced the joy of social protest – 'secretion of serotonin' in the words of an activist – for the first time in their lives. Undoubtedly, Gezi had its precursors and we therefore acknowledge the importance of major social protests prior to Gezi. *Tekel* resistance of tobacco workers, protests of ODTU students, closure of Taksim Square to all May Day Parades, police brutality against soccer fans on a weekly basis, the government's intervention regarding alcohol consumption and abortion, pro-secularism protests, and the urban resistance movements against gentrification, primarily that of Emek Movie Theatre, all yielded serious signs as to how oppositional sections of the society were beginning to pose challenges to AKP's (Justice and Development Party) hegemony. Yet, as the hybrid accumulation of oppositional energies it was Gezi that smashed the fear barrier established by the AKP regime where a major national uprising was no more than a dream. Secondly, the protest served as an emotional bridge between the West and the Kurdish East in that some people in the Western parts of the country for the first time experienced police brutality and understood what it means to be silenced by the mainstream media. While this bridge has already collapsed since the peace process with the Kurds came to a halt, Gezi did herald the formation of a new intersectional politics that does take ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, and the environment seriously. And ultimately, examining *Capul TV* in terms of politics, leadership, and labour matters since technologically deterministic accounts of social movements still abound and imagine every citizen with a smart phone to be a reporter that can challenge the system.

Drawing on interviews with the founders of *Capul TV* and its activists,[3] we argue that *Capul TV* intervenes in the spectacle society in major ways. First, especially during the peak of the protests, *Capul TV* emerged as a vital source of information on which even more established oppositional channels such as *Halk TV* or *Hayat TV* relied. Second, it relayed street politics highly valued by the Situationists to the general public in a context structured both by spectacle and increasing state control over media. More importantly, *Capul TV* transformed citizens from being passive audience into producers of media.

Therefore, Capul experience has gone beyond just practicing subversive humour, which was glamorized by corporate mainstream media during Gezi, thereby erasing the political demands of the protestors and creating yet another spectacle for consumption. By broadcasting programmes that deployed the subversive language of Gezi, *Capul TV* emerged as an open venue enabling any volunteering citizen to make their own shows. Ultimately, *Capul TV* has provided a hive for media activists, teaching crucial lessons as far as the dialectical relationship between technology and political organization is concerned. Regarding the question of organization and sustainability within new social movements, the reality, we contend, does not lie only within horizontality and is not restricted to the vanguard party. This dichotomy has already been overtaken by events on the ground. The reality, we argue, is to be found precisely in the interaction between street organizing and networked politics. In this respect, *Capul TV* has demonstrated the importance of existing political organizations to sustain emerging practices of media activism. At the same time, it revealed how novel ways of media activism find a way out under more liquid forms of leadership that become more visible depending on the momentum of the resistance.

2. Spectacle, Strategy and Digital Capitalism

Guy Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* is a scathing critique of a media-saturated consumer society that functions through the immense accumulation of images, subjecting all institutions to the logic of image circulation. For Debord, the spectacle's primary effect is to stupefy subjects by separating the society from the conditions of creatively producing one's own life. Everydayness is at the centre of Debord's critique of the spectacle in that once immersed in the dizzying spectacle, human subjects are no longer able to challenge the passivity promoted by the ever-moving images of the corporate brands. The extent of this separation is such that Debord speaks of a subjectivity that is 'absolutely separated from the productive forces operating as a whole' (Debord 1977/2006, 117, 121). Extending Marx's critique of the commodity form to the realm of leisure and consumption, Debord and the Situationists' contributions to understanding the consumer society cannot be limited to the analysis of consumption, though. Relevant to our present discussion of *Capul TV* is how Debord and the

Situationists approached the question of strategy. Stevphen Shukaitis (2014) has discussed how Debord's thinking owes as much to military history and can be understood as 'a form of strategizing that is based around re-articulating a relation between aesthetics, politics and labour' (Shukaitis 2014, 252). Specifically, Debord and the Situationists' approach to strategy is 'to enact conditions under which this strategizing will emerge' (Shukaitis 2014, 253).

Among the Situationist International's (SI) approaches in subverting the spectacle, for example, psychogeography and dérive, (Trier 2007; Shukaitis 2014), détournement is of particular interest regarding alternative media. Détournement refers to 'the rearrangement of preexisting aesthetic elements (or ideas) in new contexts in a way that changes their meaning' in order to produce 'more subversive or antagonistic' meanings (Shukaitis, 258). In other words, détournement aims to 'expose and counter alienation' by reversing the spectacle's attempts of 'naturalizing existing reality' (Elias 2010, 824). Indeed, Debord and Wolman refer to 'ultra-détournement,' which they define as:

> the tendencies for détournement to operate in everyday social life. Gestures and words can be given other meanings, and have been throughout history for various practical reasons… The need for a secret language, for passwords, is inseparable from a tendency toward play. Ultimately, any sign or word is susceptible to being converted into something else, even into its opposite. (Debord & Wolman 1956/2006, n.p.)

Capul TV demonstrates practices of détournement especially in its visuals and in the programme titles which play with the words employed within the dominant discourses that aim to marginalize oppositional figures. For instance, some of the titles of *Capul TV* programmes are *Kızlı Oğlanlı Felsefe* ('philosophy with girls and boys') and *Hadi Ateistler Bunu da Açıklayın* ('come on atheists, explain this, too').

Alternative media, as content 'produced outside mainstream media institutions and networks' (Atton 2011, 15), is a venue in which the legacy of Debord continues to echo. While alternative media are often assumed to be 'small-scale, non-profit organizations' run by volunteers (Pickard 2007, 13), Sandoval and Fuchs argue that 'participatory organization' and 'non-commercial financing' should not be understood as necessary requirements and that the basic criterion must be critical content (2010, 148). In addition, Downing points to the close relationship between social movements and alternative media (2010; 2011). Therefore, while it is possible to come up with more or less expansive definitions, the main pillars of alternative media include a) contrast with and/or opposition to mainstream media through critical content, b) participatory and voluntary media practices and organizational forms c) non-commercial financing, and d) interaction with social movements. As also stated by Yılmaz and Ataman (2015), *Capul TV* embraces alternative media in each dimension. Teoman, a *Capul TV* activist, underlines that '*Capul TV* is alternative not just

in terms of its content but also form… This is the TV of Gezi commune and people should be agents of it.'

As Downing (2007, 8) emphasizes, social movements 'are not constant,' they 'ebb and flow;' so do their media. Accordingly, we understand *Capul TV* as a strategic media hive that rises and goes down depending on the level of political mobilization in Turkey. While Gezi Uprising has withered, *Capul TV* remains as an operating hive from which what Hardt and Negri (2004) call the 'swarms' which can operate in ways reminiscent of Debord's theorization of strategy. Specifically, *Capul TV* emerged as a domain of 'détournement' where existing media forms have subversively been re-appropriated. However, détournement as practised by *Capul TV* is not simply a race to create cleverer messages or images. Rather, we argue that it is more appropriate to define *Capul TV*'s détournement as a practice of 'guerilla media' in that Capul's way of doing journalism, for instance, aimed not only to create alternative messages but also produce propaganda against the regime and therefore agitate both its supporters and enemies to escalate conflict.

Capul TV emerged as the appropriate space and praxis to provide a hive for what Hardt and Negri (2012) call the 'mediatized', the populations whose consciousness is not separated or divided but rather 'subsumed or absorbed in the web.' In a way reminiscent of Debord's spectacle society, Bennett (2012) similarly argues that new media technologies lead to 'personalization of politics.' What perhaps distinguishes the digital moment from Debord's spectacle is that we are constantly interpellated by today's technologies to be active, share, like, and post on the web. Without sounding celebratory and agreeing with the political economic critique of Web 2.0 utopianism (Fuchs, 2014; Andrejevic 2012; Jarett 2016), it is a fact that the infrastructure of digital media does potentially enable – not automatically achieve – passive consumers to become active producers. What *Capul TV* accomplished, then, was to construct the affective network space through which the mediatized were able to exert political and communicative action without disturbing the singularities of the activists who were united to disrupt the spectacle through collaborative media production.

3. Gezi and *Capul TV*: Resistance and the Aesthetics of the Mediatized

Understanding *Capul TV* requires us first to investigate the context and the aesthetics of Gezi as a 'situation'. Except for the Kurdish movement's decades-long organized struggle for political autonomy, Gezi has been the most influential political event that has put a major mark in the nation's memory. Its significance can be better appreciated when one considers how Gezi has haunted the political elite in that the President recently called citizens 'little Gezi people' who were protesting the attempts to extract copper and gold in Artvin, Cerattepe (Hürriyet 2016).

The strategy of insulting protestors, however, started mid-2013. 'I am sorry but we will not let a few looters (capulcu) to go there [Taksim Square] and misinform and provoke our people' were the words President Tayyip Erdogan [PM then] used when he gave a speech (2 June, 2013) at the inaugural event of the new building of the Ottoman Archives (İnternethaber 2013). Erdogan's way of addressing protesters as 'capulcular' was appropriated by the people, who renamed themselves on Facebook with this phrase (capulcu/looter) and immediately opened a Wikipedia entry for 'chappuller.' This was but one major tactic of Gezi movement. The larger pool of tactics ranged from using subversive images of popular culture to reappropriation of the political elite's statements through humorous language and street performances.

In addition, one citizen simply stood in Taksim Square doing nothing to challenge accusations that protests were violent and therefore to criticize the state's criminalization of every collective activity. Dubbed as 'the standing man' this citizen's act simply paralyzed the police who was bewildered by the immobility of the protestor and therefore could not do anything but attract even more attention to the act itself.

Occupation of the physical space itself undoubtedly was crucial to Gezi's aesthetics. One memorable moment of this particular act was when citizens crossed the Bosphorus Bridge on foot, where the fans of Turkey's 'big 3' football teams (Besiktas, Galatasaray and Fenerbahce) walked in solidarity. Added to

Fig. 1: The standing man protest was much emulated. This mannequin has a white shirt and rucksack like the original figure. *Koraysa / Shutterstock.com*.

occupations were workshops organized regarding issues of gender and sexuality and reappropriating the public space as commons through such practices as plant cultivation.

Capul TV itself has deployed similar aesthetics, which represents Gezi's multitudinal aspects. First, *Capul TV*'s name itself is already a reappropriation of

Fig. 2: Supporter with Galatasaray shirt lifts up a Besiktas scarf. The Istanbul United protest united fans of opposing teams. *EvrenKalinbacak / Shutterstock.com.*

Fig. 3: The 'red women' image became a symbol of the movement. *Osman Orsal/Reuters.*
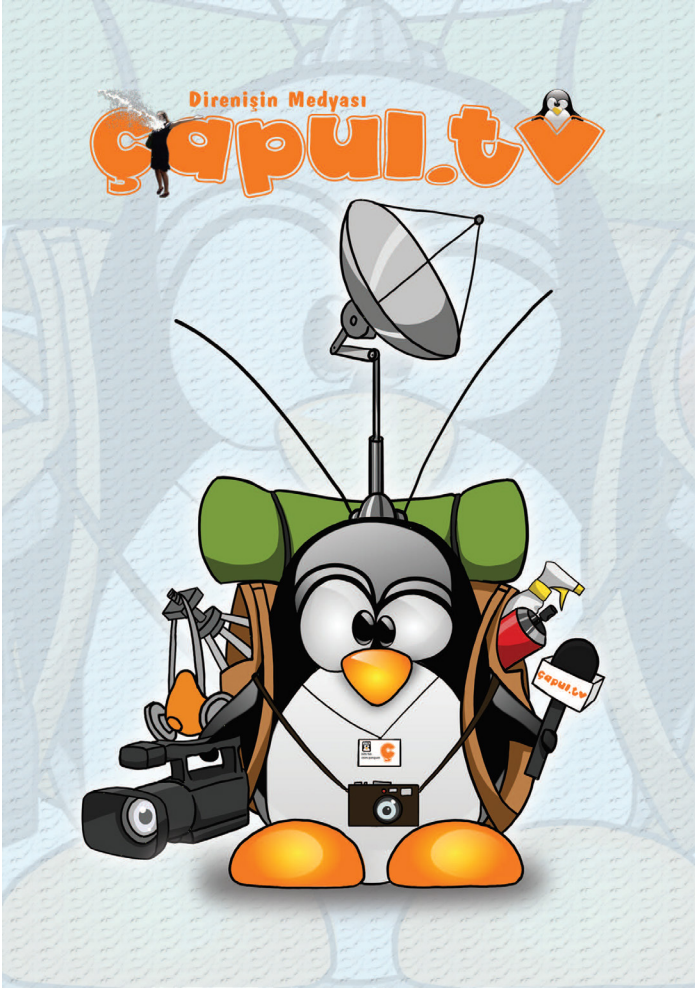
Fig. 4: *Capul TV* logo.

President Erdogan's insult against the protestors. Second, Capul's logo makes two references to Gezi: the red woman, and the penguin. While the 'red woman' – Ceyda Sungur – subjected to intense tear gas from a very close distance became one of the symbols of the movement, the penguin signified the intense censorship of mainstream media that refused to cover the events for three days and instead broadcast a documentary about penguins.

Capul's aesthetics referred to the humorous language of Gezi, as well. A widely watched soap opera (*Öyle Bir Geçer Zaman Ki*), for instance, would be named 'Öyle bir geçer TOMA[4] ki.' A documentary would be named 'Those who

live with tear gas.' Weather forecast would be renamed as 'Tear Gas Situation in the Country', whereas a soccer game would be titled 'FC Police vs. Resistance United.' 'Who wants to be a millionaire' would be renamed as 'Who wants to be a revolutionary.' The scope of programmes broadcast on Capul TV would cover diverse issues such as precarity of white collar workforce, art and theatre, philosophy, children, and humour.

While these aesthetic aspects of Capul's resistance are important, its emergent politics and novel strategies to turn citizens into media producers and produce hybrid collectivites under 'reluctant leaders' (Gerbaudo 2012) are of primary concern since they enable us to think about questions of labour and sustainability with respect to new social movements. As activist/founder Elif underlined, what foregrounded the logic of these shows was that they were produced voluntarily and with the spirit that the activists owned the studio and *Capul TV*:

> Elif: People came and made their shows, just saying that they had an idea. We haven't asked anyone to do anything. That would be against the nature of *Capul TV*, anyway. Our call was that 'this is your TV, this is our TV.'

Similarly, Teoman would underline *Capul TV*'s amateur and spontaneous aesthetics:

> Teoman: In professional TV, you do not speak but read from the prompter. Both the presenter and the audience are passive. Here, we do not read from the prompter. We want it to be natural like tongue slips or you get angry at something coming from Twitter.

It is this naturalness intertwined with the culture of voluntary labour and its transformative aspects which taught Merve, for instance, to learn Internet broadcasting after 'only the second time she saw a MacBook' during Gezi. This is what we focus in the following section.

4. 'With Our Own Words, With Our Own Media': Voluntary Labour and the Sustainability of the 'Guerilla Media' as Counter-Spectacle

One of the memorable criticisms against police brutality and the mainstream media during Gezi focussed on the fetish for wage labour and our attachment to social status. Specifically, the protestors would invite the police to resign and live with their honour by selling *simit,* a traditional kind of bakery resembling bagel. Similarly, protestors would attack media vans or reporters live on TV and

target them for sticking to their jobs rather than pursuing professional ethics. Since Gezi, many reporters and journalists have been fired. Some quit their jobs not to be part of the system. Ultimately, Gezi gave birth to or promoted different outlets (diken.com.tr, medyascope, 140journos) practicising alternative media. What makes *Capul TV* different from other alternative media outlets is its persistent emphasis on voluntary labour in its struggle to enable the spaces through which situations can be enacted.

When *Capul TV* celebrated its first birthday, one of its prominent figures wrote an article and defined Capul TV as 'guerilla media.' Defining major news outlets such as CNN International as an organized army, Ali Ergin Demirhan considers *Capul TV* to be 'a guerilla work force.' 'Guerilla does not compete or strive to be like an army. On the contrary, the nature of the relationship is one of struggle', he said. We believe that this analogy regarding 'army vs guerilla' is important. Indeed, guerilla-type formations necessitate the existence of something like 'labour of love.' Labour of love refers to the ways in which one's labour is resistant to commodification and simultaneously quite commodifiable precisely because it is affective and produces 'a sense of community, esteem and/or belonging for those who share a common interest' (Gregg 2009, 209). 'Labour of love' with respect to activism is obviously precarious. However, it does present some advantages as well.

For Duygu, relying on the free labour of activist networks makes one 'free' and the lack of a strict hierarchy terminates the pressure of 'doing a job.' For Teoman, it is about 'realizing yourself through the work you perform.' Özgür adds:

> … people to some extent confuse being alternative with being oppositional. Yes, you can be oppositional but there is still wage labour, which structures your position and how you make news. When you are paid, you don't question if your words really have a function. You don't question the work hierarchy.

Activists do not ignore the disadvantages of unpaid labour associated with precarity, either. However, the disadvantages of free labour are not just restricted to economic survival. Özgür and Kerem agree that 'defining tasks' for the volunteers and including them within the 'core group' was challenging in building a 'permanent relationship.'

Despite these disadvantages, Teoman thinks that prioritizing finance or advertising revenues is not the spirit of how one disrupts the spectacle. Rather, donations to Alternative Media Association, which also provides membership fees and a platform for education counselling services (Yılmaz & Ataman 2015, 163), constitute a major financial resource. They also created indiegogo campaigns in the earlier phases of the outlet. Yet, the sustainability of *Capul TV*, the activists collectively emphasized, is based on the continuation of resistance.

That is, *Capul TV* exists as long as street action is out there, underlying the necessity to go beyond the dichotomy of online/off-line activism and media (Cammaerts 2007a) among which the Internet should be 'seen as being embedded in a larger communication strategy, including other media and ways to distribute their aims and goals' (Cammaerts 2007b, 270). And sustaining Capul TV relies not on advertising money but 'labour of love':

> Sibel: It's like being a revolutionary. It's like asking a revolutionary why she is a revolutionary despite the lack of any return for her labour.

What makes *Capul TV* distinctive, then, in its attempts to disrupt the spectacle is partly its affective networks to which labour of love was central. It not only enabled people to pick the mic and say anything they wanted but also taught the activists how to make videos, conduct interviews, coordinate the broadcasts, provide technical help and ultimately give the resistance a voice and an image. For Aslı, a somewhat informal and loose division of labour in *Capul TV* enables reflexivity for all parties involved and have them question, for instance, the sexist language that was part of Gezi. For Kerem, who provided technical assistance for *Capul TV*, the *raison d'etre* was not really about political commitment but 'labour of love' that eased the burden on his comrades:

> Kerem: You either need to believe in the cause and say that you'll put your flag on the ground or love the people there. I belong to the latter group. I loved those people since they were my friends. They would have worked for two consecutive days if I hadn't gone there.

Through the interaction of 'labour of love' and *Capul TV*'s conscious strategy to stay away from wage labour and engage with activists through a collaborative pedagogy, Gezi ultimately produced its own media makers:

> Merve: Here, I learned how to do montage, print layout, and news production. I learned a lot of technical skills. These are all things you can learn naturally even if you don't study them in college. Capul TV in this respect is quite similar to a school. And so are the social relations.

To conclude this section, voluntary labour does not mean there is no division of labour. This division of labour is an informal one and involves everybody to do something 'in line with her labour and experience.' More experienced activists are involved in coordination but this is more of a 'natural leadership, natural coordination.' Mobilization of voluntary labour is especially relatively easier thanks to digital technologies but this convenience does not do away with the issue of materiality regarding how activists organize and resist oppressive structures, which takes us to the question of organization and leadership.

5. The 'Hive' Disrupts the Spectacle: Leadership, Strategy and Politics

In terms of organization, the emergence of the so-called leaderless social movements raises questions about the organizational dimensions of participatory media. Questions of leadership in networked social movements and the logic of digital communication are interwoven. On the one hand, scholars such as Castells (2012) and Juris (2005) point to the horizontal, leaderless nature of networked social movements and the various opportunities created by digital technologies to this end. On the other hand, according to Western, the idea of being 'leaderless' is a 'utopian fantasy,' which is an attempt to fill a 'gap' and not a 'sustainable replacement' (2014, 675). Western sees 'disavowal of all leadership' as one of the main reasons for lack of durability within social movements (675). Miriyam Auoragh points to the need for 'organizers, leaders, determination, and accountability' for a revolutionary social change (2012, 534). In the context of the Egyptian movement during the Arab Spring, AlSayyad and Guvenc state that 'such movements are often appropriated by pre-existing and well-organised social or political groups, which have established credibility through grassroots engagements at the urban level' (2013, 12). This is not necessarily a denial of non-hierarchical organizational forms. Instead, Western offers the concept of 'autonomist leadership' which is based on the principles of 'Spontaneity, Autonomy, Mutualism, Networks and Affect' (Western 2014, 680). Autonomist leadership also seem to resonate with the Debordian principle of 'self-abolition of the organizational form' (Shukaitis 2014, 264). The remarks of an activist point to a shift in the mentality of organization:

> Aslı: When I say acting in an organized way, I mean leaning towards a division of labour which will speed things up or make them easier… That's why I used phrases of 'being organized' and 'partisanship'.… For me, partisanship is something that includes fanaticism, it is something in which various power relations are formed and which I do not think work as much as the organizational consciousness people develop in themselves.

Instead of hierarchies based on top-down organizational discipline or professionalism, *Capul TV* depends on affective attachment of its members through discourses of struggle:

> Elif: We don't call what we do journalism. Actually, we claim that we are revolutionaries. We do what is necessary for being a revolutionary. It is not journalism, not professional journalism. Maybe it is in part journalism but it is a mode of struggle. We see it both as an instrument for the struggle and as another space of struggle in terms of the right of people to be informed.

Capul TV, as a strategic media hive, also operates within a vast network of alternative media. Within this network, there are experienced activists who already have been volunteers of sendika.org and Sendika.TV, members of *Halkevleri* throughout various cities (more than 40 cities) in Turkey, Alternative Media Association through which sendika.org and *Capul TV* receive donations, and other alternative and oppositional media outlets, for example, *Halk TV*, *Naber Medya*, *Seyri Sokak*, and various contributors who send photos and videos around the world. This network of volunteers, contributors and associates allow *Capul TV* continue to exist as a hive during times in which social movements are in a phase of retreat.

6. Conclusion

In this chapter, we have analysed *Capul TV* through interviews with its activists and volunteers in the context of the society of the spectacle. We conceptualize *Capul TV* as guerilla media acting as a hive for a social movement that challenged an increasingly authoritarian political environment in which commodification of public spaces and subjugation of all forms of media had become the norm. *Capul TV*, both as an alternative media outlet and a network of activists, provided a media platform during and after the Gezi Park Protests which enabled citizens as activists and volunteers to voice their ideas, concerns as well as make their own programmes in the studio of *Capul TV*. In terms of resources, *Capul TV* depended on a network of both individual activists and associations which they collaborated with or utilized to raise public awareness and donations. In terms of sustainability and organization, we argue that *Capul TV* goes beyond the dichotomy of a purely horizontal model and the model of a vanguard party and acts as a hive, which closely follows the framework of autonomist leadership. *Capul TV* activists, who are well aware of the fact that the existence and sustainability of their outlet depends on the trajectory of the social movement, enable the necessary conditions for the continuity of *Capul TV*, such as a physical space, a studio, online infrastructure such as servers, and a network of news sources and volunteers. Rather than acting as a vanguard organization with a strictly defined ideological stance, *Capul TV* activists choose to enact an alternative platform which can serve the needs of emerging political subjects in their quest to disrupt the spectacle.

Notes

[1] *Capul TV* derives its name from 'çapulcu', which means 'looter' in Turkish. At the beginning of Gezi Protests, Turkish President – then the Prime Minister – called the protesters 'çapulcu' to denigrate them in the public eye. Activists in turn responded by endorsing this phrase, calling themselves 'çapulcu' and naming the outlet *Capul TV*.

2 President Erdogan and the governing Justice and Development Party pushed for a presidential system with the support of the national-conservative Nationalist Movement Party. A constitutional referendum was held on April 16, 2017. The proposed constitutional changes included the abolition of the office of prime minister and designation of the office of president as a strong executive branch. With the proposed changes, the president can remain as a member of his/her political party and has expanded powers to issue executive orders unless there is a law made by the legislation about the same topic, 'to appoint cabinet ministers without requiring a confidence vote from parliament, propose budgets ... appoint more than half the members of the nation's highest judicial body ... to dissolve the national assembly and impose states of emergency' (Soguel 2017). Those against the changes – Republican People's Party, Peoples' Democratic Party, various political parties, NGOs and activist groups from a broad political spectrum including left-wing, socialist, liberal, nationalist and conservative groups – conducted separate 'no' campaigns. Citizens who voted 'no' declared the referendum results illegitimate due to fraud claims. A leading Capul TV activist was even detained for five days based on the allegation of 'try[ing] to demonstrate the referandum results illegitimate and stir agitation among the people', revealing once again the limited but powerful impact of a media outlet such as *Capul TV*.

3 For this research, we conducted interviews in and outside *Capul TV*'s studio. We have anonymized every *Capul TV* activist who agreed to participate in our research.

4 Vehicles used by the police to intervene in protests and demonstrations in Turkey.

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