

**FROM A POLITICAL
PROTEST TO AN ART
EXHIBITION:**

BUILDING INTERCONNECTEDNESS
THROUGH
DIALOGUE-BASED ART



What changed in the last year?

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A photo I took during the research process, which later became inspiration for our poster.

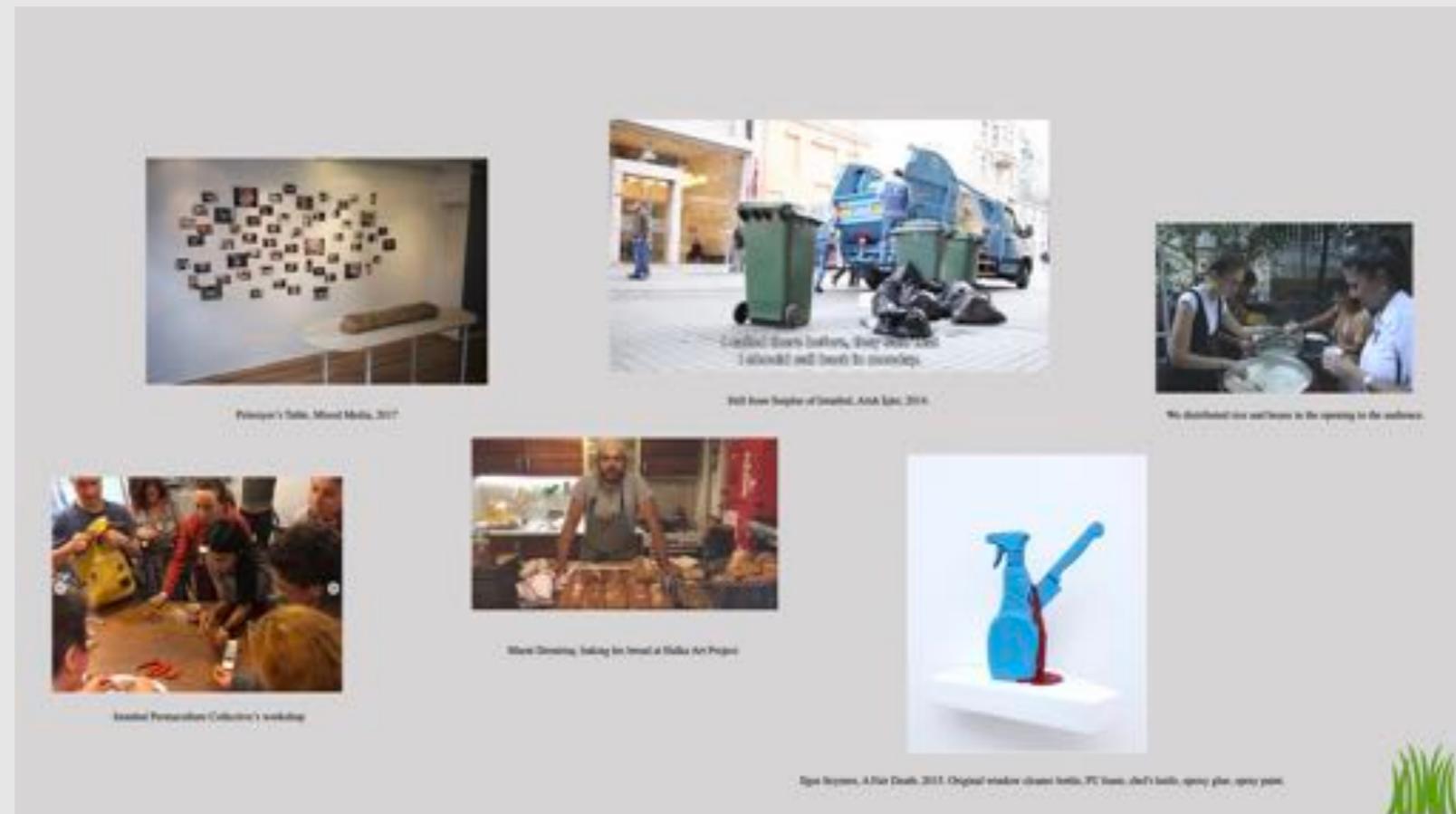
A short summary of my PhD research:

- This research is about understanding, extracting and re-applying certain qualities of the Gezi Park Protests, and re-think them and in the light of topics discussed under the community art practices. I identify these qualities as **critical dialogue, agonistic community and performative expression.**
- For my research, I worked collaboratively with six art and environmental collectives in Turkey using a **collaborative and participatory artistic research methodology.** The outcome of our collaboration was presented in the form of an exhibition titled *Maybe We Will Benefit From Our Neighbour's Good Fortune* that took place at Istanbul Halka Art Project in 2017.
- The Gezi Park Protests have been analysed from different perspectives, from political studies to urban sociology, social movements theory and performance studies. **As an artist, my intention is not to realize yet another socio-political analysis of the protests, but rather to observe and point to certain intersections between the protests and my ongoing research of community arts.**



Reflections on the Last Year

Before the SAR 11 conference in Bergen Norway, the practical part of my research was mostly completed. After working for one year with six artist and ecological collectives in Turkey, we had realised an exhibition together, based on our imaginary idea of “neighborliness” towards **forming a dialogue that can create new kinships across different segments of the society.** The title of our exhibition “*Maybe, We Will Benefit from Our Neighbour’s Good Fortune*”, took place in Halka Art Space in Istanbul in 2017.



Images from the exhibition, Courtesy of Işıl Eğrikavuk.

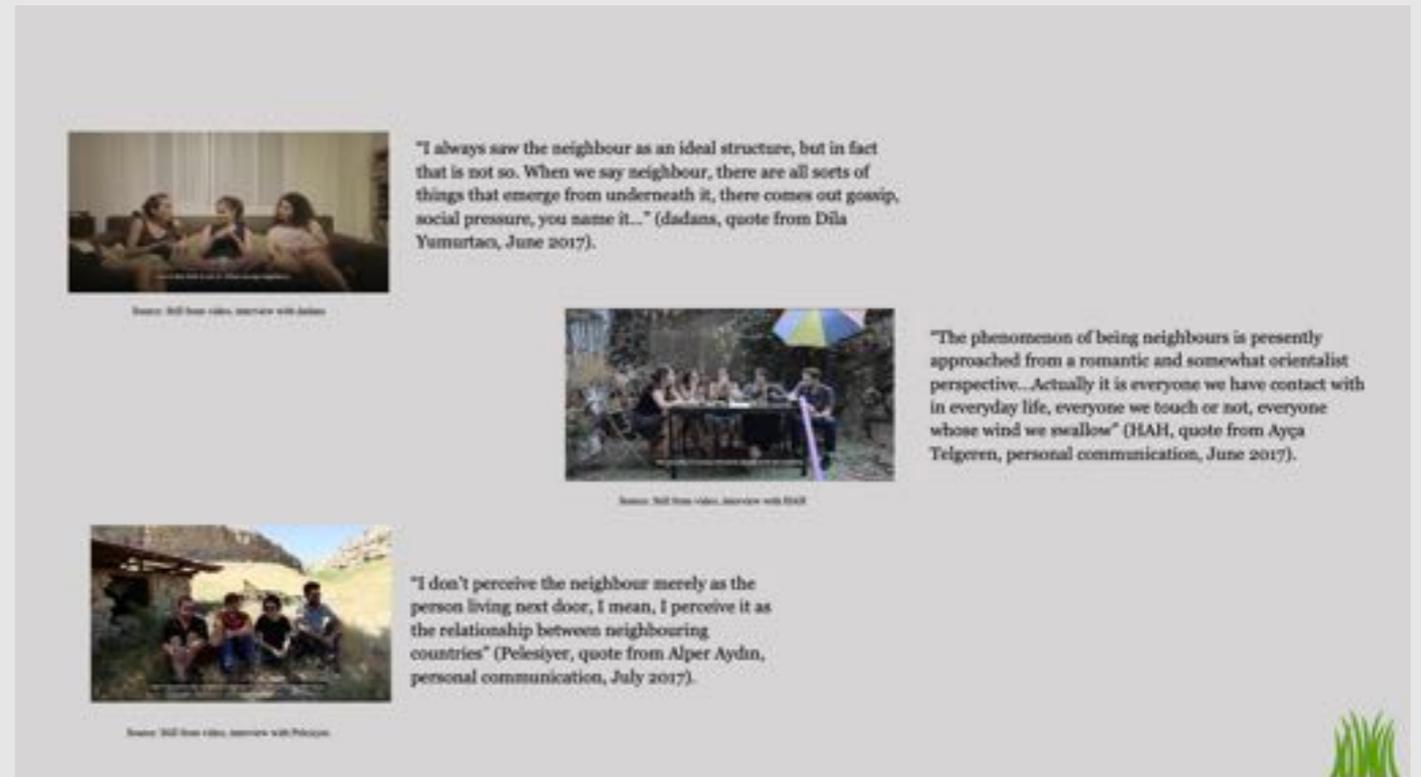
Reflections on the Last Year



- Last year, in March 2020, I was scheduled to meet with the collectives one last time, to understand and reflect on what had passed in the two years time frame after our exhibition ended. Luckily, on March 8th, right before the COVID 19 took over our daily life routines, we were able to meet and sit down together one last time.
- During the COVID 19 lockdown, I sat down and interpreted our conversations from the meeting and wrote my conclusion chapter.
- With the collective members, whom I could not meet face to face, I communicated through email.
- In the next pages, I will share with you the conclusions of my overall research process.

Reflections on the Last Year

Through our conversations with the collectives, I gathered that a key finding: **a major motivation for the collectives to come together is the need for sharing emotions and supporting each other, rather than a straightforward aim to make art together.** What brought their collective formation together was not initially a desire to make work around similar artistic inclinations, but rather **a need for expressing themselves, feeling heard, feeling accepted, and thus feeling connected and safe, rather than a shared artistic vision, common ideological agenda or career-related goals.** The work that came out of that seemed only to have followed their shared connection. **My dialogues with the collectives also shaped my literature research,** and I started to look into **how feelings and emotions play a role in our cultural formations.**



From my interviews with the artist collectives, which I documented on video.



Interpretations

What outcomes can I draw from the whole process?

- **My first interpretation is** that the current collective model of working within contemporary arts in Turkey **not only serves as a platform for a shared artistic expression, but also meets a major need of emotional solidarity with others**, especially in current social and political conditions. The artist collectives I worked with are exemplars of such a need.
- **My second interpretation is**, in an environment where freedom of speech is limited, the artistic collaborative and participatory working method serves as a platform for the inclusivity of heterogeneous participants. **Through the use of dialogue-based participatory art practices, not only the artists, but also the audience have an outlet to express themselves.** I contend that these practices are safe zones both for the artists themselves and other people from different segments of the society to express themselves and hear one another.



Interpretations

My third interpretation:

Previous research shows **that the collective performances of the Gezi Park protests connected protesters to one another and strengthened its spirit.** Gezi is long gone, but in our current political climate where freedom of speech and the right to public protest is extremely limited, **I argue that artworks created through and for a dialogue-based process holds the potential to create interconnectedness among people and transform the society.**

Overall I argue that we need more dialogue based approaches within the arts, especially at this moment and now. This requires a re-thinking of roles, positions, methodologies of art and art making, and embracing the potential that comes from a dialogue based approach.



dadans, Doll's House, performance, 2017



Images from our works



Photo: Murat Demirtaş while baking his bread at Halka Art Project. Photo: Işıl Eğrikavuk



HAH, Without Encountering, Mixed Media Installation, Halka Art Space, 2017. Courtesy of HAH



Pelesiyer, Pelesiyer's Table, Mixed Media, 2017. Courtesy of Pelesiyer.



dadans, Doll's House, performance, 2017, courtesy of dadans



From Istanbul Permaculture Collective's workshop, Photo: Işıl Eğrikavuk.

Conclusion

I completed my PhD in late 2020, and in January 2021 I earned my title as a doctor.

As a final note, I want to say that an overall motivation for me to write my thesis is to **make academia speak openly about emotions and their transformative power as well as to create safe spaces to practice them.** In an age where speaking on the **emotions is considered a soft skill and attributed to a feminine quality, just like the arts,** I argue that my research could become a path to others who want to include practices of care, love and interconnectedness in their work.



Together with all participant collective members. Image from the opening night.
Photo: Işıl Eğrikavuk

About me



Işıl Eğrikavuk (PhD) is an artist and academic, whose research specialise in performance, dialogue-based art and artistic research. She has an MFA from School of The Art Institute of Chicago and a PhD from Istanbul Bilgi University. She has been teaching for 12 years in different universities in USA, Turkey and Germany. Currently she lives in Berlin and she is a faculty member at Berlin University of Arts (UdK).

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