

**POPPING UP AND FADING OUT:
PARTICIPATORY NETWORKS AND ISTANBUL'S
CREATIVE CITY PROJECT**

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Introduction

In 2010 Istanbul received the annually rotating title of European Capital of Culture (ECOC), which is awarded by the Council of Ministers of the European Union (EU) to selected European cities. Istanbul ECOC 2010 realized close to 600 projects and 10,000 events, including concerts, exhibits, publications, symposia, workshops, festivals, educational sessions, and launches of cultural centers and urban planning platforms. In addition, a huge and rather overdue investment was made in urban regeneration and restoration projects that secured Istanbul's placement on UNESCO's World Heritage list (Ernst & Young, 2011: 24). Istanbul 2010, as both the Turkish media and Istanbulites themselves named the ECOC project, promoted Istanbul's cultural wealth: the heritage that it had accumulated as a 'cradle' and 'crossroads' of civilizations. However, Istanbul 2010 did not just celebrate and 'sell' the city's heritage but also aligned 'culture' with the project of the creative city by commanding particular forms of networked transformation and production. Istanbul 2010 targeted the mobilization and integration of diverse knowledges, resources, and energies by stimulating and coordinating practices of networking between public institutions, civil society organizations, the cultural sector, and, importantly, 'participatory' citizens. Inspired by the paradigm of the creative city that was promoted by the renowned author-consultant Charles Landry (2008), a wide range of governance actors shared the expectation that these new partnerships would start cycles of cultural exchange that resulted in cultural-democratic transformation as well as (potential for) economic growth (Comunian, 2011; Istanbul ECOC 2010 Agency, 2010).

This essay focuses on socio-technical forms of governance that target Istanbul's transformation into a creative city, and especially on discourses and practices of 'networking'. Parallel to claims by others addressing what appears to be a continuing trend (Dean *et al.*, 2006: xvii; Law, 2000; Thrift, 1999), Andrew Barry states that discourses of networking that allude to information and communication technologies (ICTs) inform practices as varied as governance, business, and protest (2001:14). Barry argues that the interweaving of, on the one hand, technical discourses and practices and, on the other, political imaginaries and governance models, points to the extent to which technical change is the model for the facilitation of control but also political intervention. Today, discourses and practices of networking play a principal role in organizing socio-technical realities and they contribute to particular diagrams of power. Barry highlights the diagram of interactivity that provides arrangements of bodies, instruments, and practices in excess of any technical functionality (2001: 19, 150, 151, 200).

I investigate the modalities of power and the political field that emerge through and in relation to the conjunctive operations of Istanbul 2010's material technological instrumentalities and human or social bodies in the context of the contested transformation of Istanbul into a creative city. To the extent that the project of the networked creative city directs urban governance efforts toward transforming local populations, including their skills, their civic consciousness, their love and care for the city, and their creative potential, networking in urban governance also implies new and extended usages of what Bernard Stiegler refers to as psychotechnologies (2010: 136, 147). According to Stiegler, these psychotechnologies both condition and delimit our ways of thinking about and paying attention to phenomena, and thus our knowledge, know-how (*savoir-faire*), and our capabilities to care, including 'taking care' of ourselves and caring for our city. Our skills and capabilities are interwoven with the technical logics and the spatialized, material organizations that develop in and through the adoption of psychotechnological instruments and infrastructures. Stiegler analyzes 'psychopower' as 'both control and the production of motivations' (132). He also hints at the possibilities of a politics of care and attention, as these psychotechnologies constitute a 'spectrum of possibilities' (165) and are 'the source of political ideas and actions' (167).

By focusing on Istanbul 2010, this essay examines how discursive reiterations and practices of 'networking' organize socio-technical

forms of governance. If the diagram of interactivity is effectuated in apparatuses of control through psychotechnologies targeting 'active' and 'creative' citizens, the question is where to locate the source(s) of political ideas and actions that are able to defy or reappropriate regimes of psychopower. While networking in urban governance generates particular modalities of participation in and belonging to the creative city, it also enables modalities of staging protest and struggle over urban transformation and the project of the creative city. As I will suggest, possibilities for resistance reside in those forms of engagement and productivity that elaborate transformation and differentiation *beyond control*. Yet in order to generate more thoroughly transformed relations of care (of populations for one another as well as for their environments), urban struggle might need to find ways in which networks can accommodate different sets of skills and integrate different mediations of care, memory, and dialogue.

I will begin by outlining how I theorize networking as a contextual construct. Subsequently, I will describe the ways in which technological discourses of networking informed Istanbul 2010's urban governance practices and their political imaginaries. Istanbul 2010's networking assemblages cast populations as active contributors to and participants in Istanbul 2010 and the city as such. In the last two sections, analyzing the 'participatory' networks of Istanbul 2010, I focus on the branding of place, or place branding, not so much as a professionalized symbolic production in support of the marketing of the city, but as a psychotechnology that both incites and controls popular participation. By reflecting on social exclusion and on urban movements, I endeavor to come to terms with some of the implications of the diagram of interactivity, effectuated by networking assemblages, for the condition of citizenship and for the possibilities of urban protest.

Networking Beyond the Grid

Both influential advocates and critics of networked forms such as the network society and collective intelligence have centered their analysis on an essential logic that exists independent of, yet also absorbs, reconstitutes and controls, context (Castells 2000; Lévy 1998; Kittler 1999). Such evocations of an expanding grid have been made at the expense of revealing the particular and uncertain processes that affect technological networks and practices (Latour, 2005: 39, 131, 132; Law, 2000). In line with this critique, I want to

emphasize that networking is an *assemblage* that is *unstable, dynamic, and articulated contextually* (Wise, 2005).¹ In doing so, I partially draw from those network theorists who have complemented the image of the grid with the suggestion that heterogeneous and divergent dynamics *emerge from networks* (Rossiter, 2006; Terranova, 2004). I further emphasize that networks and the logics of networking are produced contextually, in relation to particular political imaginaries, ways of knowing and acting (including caring and attending), and multiple continuing 'pasts' that interrupt and are interrupted by modernity's logics (Chakrabarty, 2000: 64-66). In Istanbul 2010, assemblages of networking involved discourses of 'exchange', 'interactivity', 'self-organization', and 'interface' and articulated them with various actions, bodies, and passions. In what follows, I will look at the effects of these articulations in terms of how they produce specific socio-technical formations without ruling out possibilities for others. Instead of considering networking merely in relation to the latest ICTs, I will suggest that these assemblages of networking also implicate the wider range of mediating materialities that support everyday life.

Considering networking as an assemblage that is articulated *contextually* means developing an alternative to binarisms such as 'informational capitalism' versus 'culture', or 'flow' ('the Net') versus 'place'. As Doreen Massey argues, there is an imagination of 'the global' as always emanating from somewhere else, while 'local places' are considered to be merely victims of globalization that have no agency (2005: 101). Her critique is not a political defense of the local against the global; nor, I would add, of the human-cultural against the technological. Rather, Massey proposes to focus on the relational production of the *global and the local* and to push inquiry beyond 'abstract spatial form', which 'in itself guarantees nothing about the social, political or ethical content of the relations which construct that form' (101). Accordingly, modalities of power that organize the global city do not come strictly 'from above' or from 'elsewhere', but are produced within complex contextual relations. While the analysis of the modalities of power associated with global flows should not be dismissed, power should be understood in relation to its negotiations in everyday life and at the margins.

Istanbul 2010 mediated between forces that operated at various scales and that were complexly shaped by economic, cultural, and political ambitions. The project was ambivalently oriented toward, first, Istanbul's emergence as a global city in a multi-polar world (according to the conservative-Islamic ruling party, a revival of the

city's imperial past); second, Turkey's eventual accession into the European Union and prosperity for the country as a whole; and, third, the decentralization of the urban governance empowering local communities. Within this multi-layered context, emerging incompatibilities and the possibility of conflict put pressure on Istanbul 2010's governance networks. For instance, while the EU provided only 0.5% (€1.6 million) of the total budget of Istanbul 2010, an astonishingly large part of the project's funding came from the Ministry of Finance and was generated through a special, nationwide tax levy (Ernst & Young, 2011: 24). Nonetheless, the governance of Istanbul 2010 was hardly modeled after that of the welfare state, with a priority on the principle of safeguarding public interests. Increasingly, there were suspicions with regard to whom or what would benefit from the investments made: what relations of impact and responsibility did Istanbul 2010 construct between the global city and the rest of the country; or between differentially empowered segments of the urban population? Did the project support quality of life in any comprehensive sense, or did it merely advance the narrow economic interests of certain elites?

On the one hand, Istanbul 2010 facilitated the kinds of selective investments by the post-developmental state in metropolitan zones that serve to reconcentrate the capacities for economic development (Brenner, 2004; Ong, 2006). On the other hand, as Neil Brenner helps to underscore, urban governance projects that enact spatial strategies such as Istanbul 2010 do not extend from a pre-given functional unity, but are highly experimental and contested modes of governance (2004: 203, 211). Istanbul 2010 thus formed a site at which different apparatuses of government intersected. Analyzing the context-specific operation of Istanbul 2010's networking assemblages brings an understanding of the field of struggle as emerging from spatialized governance strategies and their specific arrangements and combinations of both *macro-politics* (institutional organizations of power) and *micro-politics* (capillary power operating through horizontal mechanisms of the control of behavior, including psychotechnologies [see also Grossberg, 2010: 251]).

The Entanglements of Network Governance

Communication supported by ICTs undeniably played an important role in Istanbul 2010. For instance, the main platform for communicating with audiences and participants was the official

website. The website was not just a catalogue but also a variable database that was easy to update and expand, flexible in its categorization per type of event or project or per date, and linked to the websites of partnering organizations and sponsors.² The technical functionality of the website resonated with the multi-faceted, multi-actor, and project-based nature of Istanbul 2010. Moreover, the website, together with affiliated social media platforms, provided a vital space of communication beyond either the commercial domain of major media outlets or the formal, state-related public sphere.³

At the same time Istanbul 2010 advanced a political imaginary around communications. It is significant that the section of the original bidding document that outlined the communications strategy featured right at the beginning the announcement that the double goal of Istanbul 2010 was: to ‘involve as many people and organizations as possible; and to use this opportunity to redefine relations between the people of Istanbul and the city administration in order to create a new mechanism for decision making’ (Initiative Group, 2005: 143). Discourses of networking, which integrated technical references, advanced the notion that positioned as an organizational principle networking would enable good governance. In 2006, The Initiative Group, which consisted of the thirteen Istanbul-based non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that had begun the application, handed over its ownership of the project to a coordinating Agency. In doing so, the NGOs strengthened and formalized the collaboration with local and national state institutions. Nonetheless, one of the members of The Initiative Group and later the Chairman of the Executive Board, Nuri Çolakoğlu, advertised the organizational model of the Agency and its decision making processes as the anti-thesis of state centralism. That is to say, it would work in an ‘anti-hierarchical manner’ and by ‘sharing ideas freely’ (2006: 38).⁴ Promoting networking and informational exchange as key to good governance, Çolakoğlu hailed the Advisory Board as a ‘communication and sharing platform’ for the exchange and generation of diverse and interdisciplinary knowledges (40).

Networking urban governance promised a move towards ‘smarter’ but also more inclusive forms of governance. One of the initiators of Istanbul 2010 and an Executive Board member of its coordinating Agency, Korhan Gümüş, stated that Istanbul 2010 had sought to establish new ‘interfaces’ (*arayüzler*).⁵ Gümüş deployed this term as a technically inspired metaphor that outlined a certain type of

organization of communication between diverse actors. The task of these interfaces would be to enable knowledge production which, thanks to the investment in collaboration, would be multi-disciplinary, versatile, and multi-perspectival, and which would be independent not only from the repressive modern state and its homogenizing public sphere, but also from influential interest groups and the market. As Gümüş argued, the interfaces would constitute platforms for a form of urban governance and politics that would be participatory, pluralist, and more inclusive. However, while testifying to the necessities of interfaces, Gümüş did not have just ICTs in mind as their technical support. In response to a question about which specific media he thought would serve as interfaces and would offer the right platforms for collaboration, Gümüş answered that this could not be decided in advance. The interfaces themselves would only be generated in and through interaction. For sure, he argued, there should be a multiplicity of interfaces, and they could all develop, change, or be abandoned and disappear in the process.

While the Istanbul 2010 Agency itself was in fact a calculated mix of hierarchical organization and horizontal networking, its role was to facilitate and coordinate networking practices and communicative exchange among state institutions, NGOs, the cultural sector, and self-organizing local communities of 'participatory' citizens. The organizational structure of Istanbul 2010 followed the model of 'network governance', commonly formulated in urban studies and public administration. This type of governance aims to mobilize and integrate the various knowledges, capabilities, resources, and energies of interdependent yet autonomous actors, including civil society organizations, expert groups, local public agencies, firms, and citizens (Davies, 2009; Sørensen & Torfing, 2009). The procedures of network governance do not just involve the processes of negotiation between actors with pre-existing and fixed identities; more importantly they also involve the continuous transformation and differentiation of identities and their languages through processes of exchange (Van Wezemael, 2008a: 178). Knowing lies 'in the connection', in the in-between: it is located at the sites of exchange through which new ideas, energies, and collective bodies emerge that feature properties not displayed by the individual members of the governance networks (Wezemael, 2008b: 9; see also Jessop, 2002: 229; Landry, 2008: 17, 55, 77).

The conditions of possibility for the emergence of Istanbul 2010's network governance and the re-articulations of discourses on

horizontal organization and knowledge exchange were however context-specific. Contributing to the particular articulations of Istanbul 2010's networking assemblages were the legacies of the repressive, overtly centralist Turkish state. Until the mid 1990s, the Turkish state, led by the Ankara-based Kemalist elite, executed a developmentalist and western-oriented project of modernization. Riding the tide of successful grassroots mobilization in poor squatter neighborhoods in Istanbul, the Welfare Party (WP) became the first Islamist party to win the elections in 1996. The WP promised state reform but was removed from office by the military. Partially inheriting the WP project, since 2002 the Islamic-conservative administration of the Justice and Development Party (JDP) has enacted reforms that have ended up being a move toward neoliberal policy-making rather than the initially promised (anti-western) democratization (Keyder, 2010; Tığal, 2009). Moreover, whether the post-developmental state of the JDP actually achieved a break from centralist and repressive state traditions has been increasingly questioned by, among others, those cultural elites who had a strong presence within the Istanbul 2010 governance networks.

Signaling a continuing quest for alternatives to statist development and representative democracy, Istanbul 2010 promoted networked self-organization as a model of social transformation and popular participation. As I will argue, this model of self-organization reconfigured both the duties and the rights of citizenship in relation to the expectation that citizens would be 'productive' and 'participatory'.

The Interface of Participation

The slogan predominantly used in Istanbul 2010's domestic campaigns was 'Our energy comes from Istanbul'. Public communication by the Agency often framed people's creative contributions, volunteering, and enthusiasm as both inspired by and dedicated to 'Istanbul'. Technologies of place branding were an important component of Istanbul 2010's assemblages of networking. Place branding did not merely encompass market-oriented, professional, symbolic production and the dissemination of particular representations through logos, slogans, and imagery. It also encompassed the deployment of the psychotechnique of managing the involvement of citizens. The expectation was that networked cultural exchange and production would be stimulated by branding Istanbul, 'Cultural Capital of Europe', or 'Istanbul

2010', and by providing *logo support* to projects even if they did not obtain any financial assistance from the Agency. New partnerships and collaborative projects would emerge that were invested in the label and expand its value in turn by starting cycles of creative and communicative exchange. Especially amongst poor, ex-migrant communities in the urban peripheries, technologies of place branding were used to foster 'urban consciousness' and a sense of belonging to the city. A volunteer to Istanbul 2010 explained to me that the project, The March of the Cultural Ants, targeted children from such communities, not so much to define Istanbul *for* the children as to *let them* define their city. Hence, during the activities, the children were invited to understand the city as a rather abstract object of love and wonder, and to narrate and draw Istanbul as they imagined it.⁶

Istanbul 2010's place branding staged local populations as co-producers of the project, and more broadly, of Istanbul as a thriving creative city and a frontrunner among global knowledge economies. Meanwhile, local populations would produce themselves as 'proper' citizen-subjects and collectivities of such a city. At the same time, the technologies of place branding that generated involvement in Istanbul 2010 intersected with explicit discourses of 'participation' that mediated the hope for a more just city and promoted the moral values associated with the anticipated urban democracy. As was repeatedly emphasized, Istanbul 2010 would not be just a 'festival' or an 'event' that would be over in a year, but a process towards a sustainable change in social relations and a new model for urban governance that would improve relations between governing bodies and those governed. The Istanbul 2010 Agency's website announced that 'Istanbul's success as European Capital of Culture will depend on Istanbul residents' [sic] embracing and supporting this project through extensive participation'.⁷ If such discourses of participation were the principal mediators of moral investment, a number of questions remain concerning how 'participation' was articulated into the project of the networked, creative city; what forms of involvement the logics of place branding enabled; and what forms were disallowed or disempowered.

In order to answer these questions, it is useful to return to the concept of the interface put forward by Güngör, placing it in the light of Celia Lury's analysis of the brand as a new media object (2004: 1-16). Brands share with new media objects their function as interfaces that call upon us to relate to them and engage with them. Lury borrows from Andrew Barry to suggest that 'interactivity', as

the organization of exchange and involvement, plays a key role in branding (2004: 131, 132). Because brands only come into being as meaningful identities and entities capable of ordering their contexts through the very engagement and involvement they themselves command, they rely on the inputs and interactions they incite and on the dynamic sets of relationalities they are able to establish between the (abstract) object of the brand and variously situated subjects. Brands function on the basis of the performative iteration of such relationalities, which become reflexive loops through which information regarding the subjects attending to the particular brand is incorporated and exploited for the redesign of the brand as well as of the product, service, or organization it represents (8-10). As brands attain a form of power on the basis of inclusion (not exclusion), they are dependent on a certain degree of openness in order to expand the possible interactions and sets of relationalities involved. At the same time, however, technologies of branding control and manage exchange and involvement, although there is always the risk of losing control. Hence the value of a brand is contingent on the strategic balance between two operative mechanisms, one of which reinforces the 'system of mutual implication, the system of regularities, and the coherent network of conditions of possibilities that has given rise to the brand', while the other maintains the brand as a 'possible set of relations and connections' (16).

Istanbul 2010's technologies of place branding, operating as interfaces that appealed to populations as co-producers of Istanbul 2010 and of the city as such, called for, incited, *and managed* general creativity, involvement, and participation. Being components of the assemblages of networking, these psychotechnologies facilitated controlled popular involvement.

One program within the Urban Culture division of the Istanbul 2010 Agency that especially sought to stimulate and manage participatory culture was the Volunteer Program. This Program connected a group of 6,000 volunteers (initially it aimed for 10,000, but the amount was lowered, not because of lack of interest, but because the size of the group became unmanageable). In order to promote a participatory culture and as a reward for their time and energy, volunteers received training by professionals in entrepreneurship and self-organization, especially within the cultural and the third (NGO) sector. Moreover, the volunteers were invited to directly practice the skills they had gained by brainstorming with other volunteers they had met during their service or through the

online database in order to initiate more projects and events for Istanbul 2010.⁸

As the Program coordinator Murat Alemdar explained, the Volunteer Program could not have been executed in the way it was without the use of social media platforms, email groups and the Program blog, because these venues enabled dynamically evolving groups to collaborate and organize around specific projects and events.⁹ Again, networking was also fostered through, and informed by, a discourse of political imagination. The Program blog laid out the merits of informal and decentralized communicative exchange, which was assigned a key role in stimulating self-organization and participation. Hence the Program design and its promotional discourses stressed the importance, not only of blogs and sharing websites, but also of skills for dialogue, self-expression, presentation and team work.¹⁰ Expressing a political vision of networking, the header of the Program blog pictured a map of Istanbul with the dynamic structure of an evolving network superimposed onto this cartographic imagery in thin red lines. The lines forming the network connected human figures which would pop up and fade out again at regular intervals. These figures were avatars of sorts, representing the volunteers of the Program, located in different parts of the city. The captions that accompanied the avatars noted the various ages and professions of the volunteers in addition to the projects they were working on.

Figure 1: Volunteer Program Blog

Istanbul 2010 GÖNÜLLÜ PROGRAMI
www.istanbul2010.org/gonullu

Istanbul 2010 Avrupa Kültür Başkenti YERİNİ AL!

Karim Berberyan (32)
Tiyatrocu
Istanbul 2010 gönüllüsü
Katabalk etkinlikler ekibi

Mehmet Başoğlu
Koyunçu, 17
Istanbul 2010 gönüllüsü
Mahalle Çalışmaları Ekibi

Ayten Yemert
Ev hanımı, 36
Istanbul 2010 gönüllüsü
Saha Çalışmaları Ekibi

İdris Yıldız
Emekçi, 58
Istanbul 2010 gönüllüsü
Sanatçı Ajartırma Ekibi

Bahar Okucu
Öğrenci, 22
Istanbul 2010 Gönüllüsü
Yeme-içme Ekibi

Selin Atanar
Emekçi, 58
Istanbul 2010 Gönüllüsü
Sanatçı Ajartırma Ekibi

Anasayfa **Site Haritası**

Gönüllü Programı Hakkında
Kavramsal Çerçeve
Program Ekibi
Gönüllü Olmak İstiyorum
Gönüllü Olmak İçin
Gönüllü Olursanız
Sık Sorulan Sorular
İletişim
Bloglar

Sık Sorulan Sorular
Gönüllü Programı ne zaman çalışmaya başladı?
Kimler gönüllü olabilir?
Gönüllülere para verecek misiniz?
Okuldan arta kalan vakitlerimi 2010 etkinliklerinde değerlendirmek istiyorum. Tüm süreçte aktif olarak yer almasam da vaktim oldukça gelsem olur mu?
Aktif gönüllü kimdir?
Kayıtlı gönüllü kimdir?
Taksiciyim etkinliklere katılamam ama yapabileceğim bir şey yok mu?
Istanbul dışında vasıtorum, nasıl proramam dahil olabilirim?

Duyurular
Program Kapandı, Şimdi Değerlendirme Zamanı
Programın sona ermesiyle birlikte artık programın yürüttüğü çalışmalar... [devamı](#)
Gönüllü Programı Kapanış Buluşması'na Davetlisiniz
30 Ağustos 2009 pazar... Gönüllü Programı blogunda yer alan ilk yazımın... [devamı](#)
[Tüm Duyurular](#)

One of the activities receiving the most emphasis was the organization of two neighborhood festivals for which the volunteers worked together with neighborhood organizations, sport clubs, local businesses, and religious and cultural institutions. As the Program coordinator explained, the intention was that the model of the Volunteer Program would replicate and spread itself beyond the Agency-centered structure of Istanbul 2010. By reaching out to neighborhoods, the Volunteer Program targeted the development of an expanding, self-organizing network or network of networks. Admitting the limited scope of the festival projects, my interviewee asserted that it would take more than one year to replicate the model of the Volunteer Program widely. Nevertheless, the vision of an expanding network of self-organizing and collaborative communities was an important motivation for those involved in the Program. During a focus group meeting, one of the volunteers told me that their work set up not just cultural events but ‘a model for the world’ that took ‘matters from the very local up until the very universal level’.¹¹ He added that, in contemporary times, ‘we see that things are very intertwined anyway’, implying that the present global state of connectedness would enable bottom-up organization on the basis of collaborative communities world-wide (ibid.). Some of his fellow volunteers mentioned that they advocated the universal potential of their model of self-organization whenever promoting the Program to recruit new volunteers or organizations as partners in the festival network (ibid).

To return to place branding: ‘Istanbul 2010’ as a brand, in cooperation with ‘The Volunteer Program’ and the respective neighborhood festival brands (for example, ~~the~~ ‘The Kad Festival’),¹² instructed citizens on how to ‘properly’ participate and belong to the city and their particular neighborhoods. Through their performance of the citizenship ethos and values communicated by these brands, the volunteers and neighborhood participants enacted these brands themselves. They made the multiplication of relationalities extending from these brands possible by providing additional input. At the same time, these ‘participatory’, ‘inclusive’ networks and their branded interfaces stimulated the reflexive transformation of volunteers and the neighborhood participants involved. In personal interviews as well as in published newspaper interviews, volunteers emphasized the simultaneity of doing something good for their beloved city (a conception corresponding to the ethos of the brands), establishing relations with people of diverse social and cultural backgrounds whom they normally would

not encounter, and undergoing transformative experiences that helped them to develop themselves.¹³

Popping Up and Fading Out

Barry approaches interactivity neither as a political ideology nor as a technical function, but as a diagram effectuated by assemblages involving particular technical devices, political discourses, and practices (2001: 150, 151). I will examine the networking assemblages of Istanbul 2010 both in terms of participation and as a manifestation of the diagram of interactivity.

The Agency's website spoke of Istanbulites having to accept their duty to represent their city and to participate in what could be seen as a collective performance of 'being Istanbul'. Istanbul 2010's Advisory Board Chairman and Member of Parliament for Istanbul, Egemen Bağış, declared in Istanbul 2010's bidding document that the project would 'pave the way and do all within our power for culture and art to meet with the people [and] thus transform the Istanbulite into [the] Enthusiastic Participator' [sic] (Initiative Group, 2005: 17). Politically, the diagram of interactivity as manifested in the participatory networks implied that Istanbul 2010 reinforced and extended the *requirement to participate*. Following the logics of network governance, participation forms a civic responsibility through which one attains a chance to have a voice, but there is no such right in the first place. 'Participation' becomes a *sine qua non* that, to the extent that the model of network governance becomes increasingly influential in the management of cities and their decision making processes, replaces the territorial regime of citizenship rights, including the 'one man one vote' principle of representational democracy. Participation offers the sole option of active involvement, or else one does not effectively exist – not even as the excluded, alienated 'mass' that is inadequately represented by failing representational-democratic institutions. By implication, the status or condition of 'exclusion' is rendered absent. As the header of the blog of the Volunteer Program suggested, if read symptomatically, participatory subjects 'pop up' and 'fade out', after which they have no visible presence. This condition of invisibility extends into the critical theory of networked sociality as there seems to be no prominent concept that is able to evoke, and hence critically underscore, this 'absence of exclusion' pertaining to 'the beyond' of the participatory networks of network governance.

What about those who chose not to participate in Istanbul 2010? The Volunteer Program volunteers, who worked with neighborhoods to organize festivals, emphasized the extent to which they would chase local organizations and whomever they identified as ‘key individuals’ in the neighborhood to become a partner in the festival network.¹⁴ They would call them again and again to convince them to attend the meetings and highlight the importance of their contributions. Yet, at some point, they felt that they could not help it if people refused to come or ignored them. In the end, the responsibility and will to participate lay with the people.¹⁵ The director of the Urban Culture division at the Agency, Yeşim Yalman, stated that when evaluating Istanbul 2010’s success for herself, she did not focus on the numbers of those whom Istanbul 2010 did not manage to involve, but on those who were reached and who did become engaged. Even if Istanbul 2010 made a change for only *some* people and improved the relations to the city for only *some* groups, the experiment in urban governance would have achieved something.¹⁶

However, by discursively identifying ‘proper’ connectivity, creativity, and complexity, and by targeting a particular networked and transformative sociality, Istanbul 2010 actively discouraged identification along the lines of historically produced ethnic and religious categories of social identity. The invisible ‘beyond’ of the participatory networks can be identified as those movements, organizations, and cultural centers invested in identity politics.¹⁷ Apart from a few exceptions, these organizations were not explicitly approached as partners, nor did they understand themselves as such. Consequently, those who thought of themselves as excluded from formal, representative politics and from society’s hegemonic formations of publicness were often only reaffirmed in their belief. Considering the fact that racism and the oppression of dissidence are pervasive in Istanbul and Turkey – and in relation to the Kurdish population this situation is exacerbated by a covert history of civil war – to insist on a cooperative ‘network of the willing’ might not, I would argue, constitute a strategy poised to improve the state of democracy and cultural rights.

The *sine qua non* of participation also bore on the political potential of the relations within the Istanbul 2010 Agency. In 2009 prominent civil society leaders resigned from the Agency. As one of them argued in an open letter, the transformative potential of Istanbul 2010 was being blocked by bureaucrats and business men, who made Istanbul 2010 ‘anti-civil society’, ‘anti-art’, ‘big budget’, and

even suspect of corruption.¹⁸ However, Gümüş and others, including the Volunteer Program coordinator, stayed in post, arguing that persistent involvement would be the only way to forge transformation. Yet the multiplicity within the governance networks did not amount to the recognition of adversarial positions. In the absence of accessible mechanisms for the mediation of antagonistic relations, the predominant allusions to the promise of collaboration for the common good implied that the presumably transformative networks in fact by and large reproduced hegemonic relations. Exclusion resided in the acts of silencing opposing voices and it became to some degree visible through their departure. Yet, within the governance networks, the *sine qua non* of participation reinforced tendencies of participatory network governance toward substituting an ethos of dialogical democracy for more antagonistic or agonistic approaches to politics.

Nevertheless, the diagram of interactivity effectuated by assemblages of networking – including the interfaces of place branding – induces the potential for struggle and protest as much as for government and control. Networked self-organization and place branding form strategies for generating value in and for the creative city, yet they also offer ways of *claiming* this value for communities threatened with displacement by the urban transformation projects. These communities are often constructed as ‘others’ and excluded from the ‘Turkish’ and/ or ‘urban-Istanbulite’ community of ‘we’. Attractive for them is the potential to employ networked brand platforms as less exclusive and more differential technologies of belonging to the city that allow for new collaborations. Indeed, there are multiple neighborhoods in Istanbul that have appropriated technologies of place branding by emphasizing the neighborhood’s cultural wealth and unique ‘social fabric’ (*mahalle kültürü*, neighborhood culture); by organizing festivals through which the neighborhood performatively constitutes itself; and by collaborating with outside activists for knowledge production. The question is, what sort of ‘possibilities for alternative forms of joint action’ and ‘making new publics’ (Foster, 2007: 719) do the assemblages of networking and branding enable (or not) in the context of urban struggle, and in what ways might such a politics subvert ideological and institutional power as well as the modalities of control?

In 2006, the neighborhood in Istanbul, Sulukule, which was a Roma settlement historically, became threatened with demolition permitted by a newly passed law on urban revival and preservation. In reaction, several resistance networks emerged, of which the

Sulukule Platform became the most extensive and prominent. While there was collaboration with the local neighborhood association, principal among the participants in the resistance networks were Istanbul's cultural elites, including scholars, artists, and the so-called creative workers, who attribute the value of uniqueness to places that are neglected by mainstream tastes and development schemes (Özkan, 2011). Being 'skilled' and having access to relevant resources, these individuals were able to insert the concerns of specific neighborhoods into the online informational zones of urban activism as well as into wider national and international circuits of media and knowledge production. 'Sulukule' incited countless videos, blogs, scholarly productions, workshops, a youth orchestra, the 40 Days 40 Nights neighborhood festival, an alternative urban planning proposal to be executed in collaboration with Istanbul 2010, and research and reports that addressed institutions such as the United Nations, UNESCO, and the European Commission. Speaking to the advantages of networked resistance, one of the activists argued that the municipality had not been able to judge whether what was at stake was a cultural festival, a movement of sorts, or political action by dissidents. She claimed that transgressing those categories and operating in unexpected ways had been the strength of the resistance network.¹⁹

The formation of new networked publics is a matter of the redistribution of care, which is, as Stiegler argues, conditioned by psychotechnologies. With regard to Sulukule, it has been argued that urban activism, conducted through place branding and the claim to cultural uniqueness, led to unwanted orientalizing spectacles that exacerbated tendencies toward the 'othering' of these populations (Kırca-Schroeder & Aytar, 2012). More, the case of Sulukule tended to absorb all public attention at the expense of other cases, and while the activists successfully knew how to address and involve various powerful institutions and actors, Sulukule became isolated from other neighborhoods in Istanbul that were threatened by the same fate of demolition (ibid). I would like to emphasize that the actual knowledge production by the activists was rather diverse, and their networking generated both antagonisms and a transformative potential that often affected those most involved. Yet the resistance, in the search for publicity, also relied on psychotechnologies that reproduced fixed identities through consumable spectacles of otherness, in addition to a fixed division of roles on the basis of unequally distributed skills. Approaching the possibilities of resistance materially as a redistribution of care, it is not sufficient to attract attention by resorting to the circulation of spectacular

symbolic production through ICT-based or broadcasting venues. Rather, reorganizing care and attention, and thereby social relations, requires cultivating and translating between media that integrate various sets of skills and mediate care, memory, dialogue, and reflection in different of ways. This would enable resisting what Stiegler calls psychopower (attentional control) as well as monopolies of knowledge and power (Berland, 2009: 97; Rossiter, 2006: 205, 206, 209). Let me recall here Gümüş' speculation, which admittedly confused me at the time of our conversation: the dynamic interfaces of networking cannot be reduced to ICTs; they may include any of the venues and forms that mediate everyday life, such as teahouses, stoops, neighborhood zines, self-built speaker installations, and walls habitually appropriated to feature posters and graffiti.²⁰

Conclusion

This essay set out to explore networking as an assemblage that includes contextually particular articulations of political imaginaries and organizations of governance, ways of knowing and acting in the world as well as materializations of instruments. In the context of Istanbul 2010, networking promised an alternative to the overtly centralist, repressive state and its top-down modernization project. Istanbul 2010's networking assemblages constructed interfaces that both incited *and* managed citizen involvement through place branding. Turning participation into the condition of citizenship, these assemblages effectuated a diagram of interactivity revolving around the *sine qua non* of participation. By extension, they rendered absent the status of exclusion and erased antagonism from the governance networks.

However, the diagram of interactivity also opens up possibilities for protest and struggle. Following Lury's analysis, the 'risk' inherent in the technologies of branding consists in productivity, transformation, and differentiation *beyond control*. Underlying the management and exploitation of civic investment, Istanbul 2010's assemblages of networking and branding called on citizen-subjects to be participatory, caring, and creative. However, self-organization and creative production were not restricted to Istanbul 2010 programs; they also informed the resistance networks that used place branding as a more differential technology of belonging to the city. Moreover, Istanbul 2010 stimulated decentralized communication and valued extra-institutional self-organization as

the site of cultural-democratic transformation. Even though the resistance networks formed around Sulukule did the same, they were not guided by the promise of dialogical democracy and notions of the common good. As a result, these networks politicized social relations and instigated antagonisms. However, technologies of place branding and networked collaboration revealed their own limitations in the Sulukule case. New relations of care among urban populations that are able to defy regimes of psychopower are unlikely to emerge from the dissemination of spectacles of otherness via information systems. Such relations require cultivating a multiplicity of forms that mediate care, memory, and dialogue and that accommodate different sets of skills.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the editors, as well as Murat Es, Lawrence Grossberg, Freya Thimsen, and Derya Özkan for their helpful comments on drafts of this paper. Any mistakes and omissions are my own. I thank the Prins Bernhard Cultuurfonds and Carolus Magnusfonds for their generous support during my fieldwork.

Notes

¹ My notion of context does not refer to a pre-existent condition ‘out there’, but to a context that is itself constructed partially in relation to the assemblages of networking and re-constructed through my effort to map it.

² Personal interview with Yim Yalman, director of the Urban Culture division at the Istanbul 2010 Agency, conducted on June 13, 2011, Istanbul. Personal interview, anonymous Agency employee, conducted on August 12, 2011, Istanbul. The website www.istanbul2010.org is no longer available.

³ Personal interview with Yim Yalman conducted on June 13, 2011, Istanbul. Personal interview conducted on August 12, 2011, Istanbul.

⁴ All translations from Turkish are mine.

⁵ Personal interview conducted on July 9, 2011, Istanbul.

⁶ Personal interview with anonymous volunteer conducted on July 3, 2010, Istanbul.

⁷ http://www.istanbul2010.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/ist2010_images/gp_585220.pdf, last accessed on August 21, 2010.

⁸ Personal interview with Murat Alemdar, coordinator of the Volunteer Program, conducted on July 30, 2010, Istanbul; See also www.istanbul2010.org/gonullu; <http://2010gonullu.blogspot.com>, last accessed on March 23, 2011.

⁹ Personal interview conducted on July 30, 2010, Istanbul.

¹⁰ <http://2010gonullu.org/?kavramsal>, last accessed on March 23, 2011, Istanbul.

¹¹ Personal focus group interviews with anonymous volunteers conducted on June 7, 2011, Istanbul.

¹² Kadirga is a neighborhood, part of the district Fatih, in Istanbul. One of the two neighborhood festivals was organized here.

¹³ Personal focus group interviews with anonymous volunteers conducted on June 7, 2011, Istanbul; see also <http://www.stargazete.com/pazar/istanbul-icin-gonullu-oldular-239992.htm>, last accessed October 15, 2011.

¹⁴ Personal focus group interviews with anonymous volunteers conducted on June 7, Istanbul.

¹⁵ Personal focus group interviews with anonymous volunteers conducted on June 7, 2011, Istanbul.

¹⁶ Personal interview conducted on July 9, 2011, Istanbul.

¹⁷ I was stunned to notice that the Ernst and Young evaluation report of Istanbul 2010 deployed the definition of minorities based on the Treaty of Lausanne concluded in 1923, and did so without further commentary. Although formally still in use, this definition is heavily contested, since it only acknowledges Christian confessional groups such as Greeks and Armenians in addition to Jews. It omits Kurds, Alevis, Laz and many others including sexual minorities, and reproduces the exclusions of formal politics and hegemonic publics by not addressing these exclusions.

¹⁸ <http://bianet.org/kadin/kultur/118373-faruk-pekinin-istifa-mektubu>, accessed on September 20, 2011.

¹⁹ Personal interviews conducted with anonymous activists on August 4, 2010, and June 6, 2011, Istanbul. Despite all the efforts, the demolitions eventually took place.

²⁰ For a critique of the tendency to associate 'media' with particular, preconceived objects, so-called media technologies, rather than considering media in the light of the general problematic of mediation and in the light of the particular and mutually constitutive relations between technologies and contexts, see Grossberg (2010: 206-208) and Wise (2005: 80-86).

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