

Sepideh Karami

PAUSE: A DEVICE FOR TROUBLING ROUTINES

05

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ABSTRACT

Pause is a technique for troubling routines, a tactical device for change capable of disturbing established flows. Where urban public spaces are concerned, a pause is a device, an act however tiny that unsettles the balance or order of those spaces, bringing about a moment of dysfunction in which an individual is liberated for an unspecified duration. While the dominant power is busy 'fixing' this pause, alternatives can emerge. In this paper taking on the voice of a fictional character, I investigate the ins and outs of pause through the case of the Standing Man of the Occupy Gezi movement in Turkey (2013). The pause of Standing Man is used as a concept to rethink the architectural profession. Drawing on Lefebvre theory of 'moment', pause is discussed as an event destined to fail. This inevitable failure of the pause makes the moment of failure intense and tragic. In this way duration matters, and one of the contributions that architectural practice could make in working with pause would be to work with this duration – and to expand it.

To study further how architecture can contribute to the idea of pause, a case of the unfinished building in Tehran during the 1979 revolution is discussed in relation to the Standing Man. The discussion is built up around the infrastructural nature of pauses, the importance of body politics to the idea of pause as a device and the post-production of space by means of occupation. In this regard, reflecting on the work of architecture, there might be a need for pause in the architectural profession itself, in its attitude to 'completing' the world.

The narrator in this paper, an architect who participated in the 1979 revolution, examines the pause of the Standing Man through an architectural lens while watching a video of the event on YouTube. The argument is built up through a lecture on the subject, a discussion with a group of architecture students, and through snippets of nostalgic daydreaming and introverted contemplation. The flashbacks, the lecture, the movie and the train of thoughts interrupt one another, creating moments of pause in the narration.

BIOGRAPHY

Sepideh Karami is an architect and researcher undertaking PhD research at Umeå School of Architecture on interrupting devices and dissident architecture. She graduated from Iran University of Science and Technology with an M.A. in Architecture in 2001. Since graduating, she has been committed to teaching, research and practice. In 2010 she achieved her second masters in "Design for Sustainable Development" at Chalmers University, Sweden and in mid-2010 she started to work as a guest researcher at Umeå School of Architecture.

Sepideh Karami

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It's June 2013. I'm fiddling with my phone, scrolling up and down the pages. The Occupy Gezi movement is still underway in Turkey, despite the park being evacuated by police and the imposition of a curfew banning the gathering of more than eight people. That an urban planning project – the takeover and demolition of the Gezi public park – has triggered such a movement demonstrates the on-going social resistance to the commercialisation of urban spaces, a resistance that is part of the constant struggle over the right to the city, or, in David Harvey's terms, "a right to change ourselves by changing the city" as "the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization."¹ However, while it is this resistance that is made manifest by the emergence of the Occupy Gezi movement, what I find fascinating is the offspring of the curfew: the new waves of passive protests that suggest that the movement has entered a new phase. The marker of this new phase is the appearance of the Standing Man.

On *The Guardian* blog on 20th June Kaya Genc (under the alluring title *The standing man of Taksim Square: a latterday Bartleby*) writes:

(...) a young man wearing a white shirt and grey trousers appeared in Istanbul's Taksim Square. He walked towards Ataturk Cultural Centre, adjacent to the Gezi Park, which had turned into a battleground. But the young man didn't go inside the park. Instead he stopped in front of the Cultural Centre, placed his backpack on the ground, put his hands in his pockets and stared at the building for eight hours.²

A clear message: instead of going to the park, which had turned into a battleground, this young man had come to the 'wrong' place but found it the 'right' site for

expressing disobedience or resistance. His body, fragile and vulnerable, standing alone in the middle of the square in front of the massive Ataturk Cultural Centre,³ unsettled what had until then been called the "Occupy Gezi movement". As civilian security officers search him it is clear that standing still has become a crime in Turkey, and simultaneously that a disarmed body standing in a public space can be threatening. While it seems unimaginable that silence or inactivity could be used as a weapon in an increasingly mobile, integrated, high-speed society, the standing man causes us to *pause*.

* * *

I clear my throat, lean on the podium and say:

- "Pause is a technique for troubling routines, a tactical device for change capable of disturbing established flows. What comes out of this disturbance is, of course, contingent and unexpected, but it is critical to have an image of it. Metaphorically, it enhances the 'stammering' moment,⁴ in Deleuze's terms, the moment of dysfunction. Pause interrupts, but it also connects through new and undefined connections; this is the 'infrastructural behaviour' of the pause."

- An interruption from the left corner of the lecture hall: "What do you consider 'routines'?"

I continue:

- “Routines are established sequences of actions that allow the normal flow of everyday life to continue; they guarantee the familiar. By routines I mean the processes through which the wheel of capitalist production operates; through which commoditised everyday life moves; through which dominant systems, whether economic or ideological, are optimized; through which the dominant power is stabilised. Where urban public spaces are concerned, routines become the sum of all the flows and circulations of life that protect the order of those public spaces. In this context a pause is a device, an act, however tiny, that unsettles this balance or order, bringing about a moment of dysfunction where an individual is liberated for an unspecified duration. While the dominant power is busy ‘fixing’ this pause, alternatives can emerge.”

At the push of a button an image of an Israeli checkpoint emerges on screen. I continue:

- “There are always moments of compulsory pause in our everyday life: checkpoints, people waiting at traffic lights, traffic jams and queues. Needless to say, the liberating potential of pause cannot be found in these moments. On the contrary, these are pauses of control that belong to our daily routines. Similarly, there are pauses for consumption that favour the spectacular gaze. I differentiate these routine pauses from pauses of opposition and resistance, or pauses of transgression.”

* * *

Turning from my phone I try to come to terms with the standing man’s action, his pause. In elucidating his theory of the ‘moment’ Henri Lefebvre likens the moment to the ‘festival’⁵ as an ‘intense’ and ‘tragic’ part of everyday life.⁶ For Lefebvre these festivals, seemingly paradoxically, are both outwith and part of everyday life; they are two parts of the whole with the former contrasting violently with the latter.⁷ Observing life in public spaces one sees that pauses are similarly ever-present moments, however the affectivity of the pause cannot be described through festivity, but through a sort of intensity that troubles normality. Once extended, intensified and accumulated, once located where and when they are not supposed to be, pauses become a tool of opposition and resistance; they become a symbolic form of resistance challenging routine that, in the case of the standing man, absorb and focus the energy and politics of a movement in a single standing

body. In this particular instance, as with Lefebvre’s festive moments, the pause of the Standing Man is indeed tragic:

[T]he moment has its specific negativity. It is destined to fail, it runs headlong towards failure.⁸

I read a few pages further and come to the conclusion that the pause of the Standing Man is likewise destined to fail, either as a result of the suppressive force of a dominant power or the biological limitations of the body. In either case it is the resistance to an inevitable failure that fascinates me, the tension between moving and standing. In this tension we might come to understand the efficacy of the pause, even as it is destined to fail. As Lefebvre notes: “If we are to understand and make a judgement, we must start not from the failure itself, but from the endeavour which leads to it.”⁹ The pause, as an act of inevitable failure, must be understood as both moment and endeavour, and it is the moment of the failure of the pause, the liberation of an intense energy at the tragic moment when the pause ends, that is key. While the affectivity of the standing man as protest (the endeavour) is clear, the aftereffect of the pause is less readily grasped, but it is at this point that those dominant flows that existed prior to the pause are inexorably changed.

* * *

- “Then surely duration is significant? The longer the duration, the better the chance that an alternative be developed?” he asks from the dark end of the hall.

- “It definitely is,” I reply. “I believe one of the fundamental characteristics of pause as a device for change is duration. Pause disturbs power, but in such a way that it does not provoke an immediate reaction. It is an interruption rather than a disruption, and in this interruption there exist chances for an alternative to emerge. In fact, one of the contributions that architectural practice could make in working with pause would be to work with this duration – and to expand it.”

* * *

It was a summer night. I was lying down on the rooftop with my younger sister and older brother. We experienced the night in intervals. Twenty seconds of night then came twenty seconds of neon light from the roof opposite. For

twenty seconds you could see the moon and stars: all this seen in great haste, every detail dwelt on entailed losing something of the whole, because the twenty seconds quickly ended and the neon light took over, obliterating everything with pink light cast on white sheets. As on other nights, during those twenty seconds of darkness we played a game connecting stars into familiar shapes. Frustrated, we sought to extend the night curtailed by the eruption of pink neon. A stone thrown... eighteen, nineteen, twenty, breath held, twenty-one, twenty-two, the sky rose, infinitely starry above us. A real night, free from intervals even if only for one night, created by the absence of neon light.¹⁰

* * *

I sit back gazing at the video on screen through my architect's glasses; more people have joined the Standing Man. I notice the distance between the bodies. This distance, I surmise, is what protects them; there is no definition in the curfew law of the distance between bodies that delimits a 'gathering' or 'crowd'. These protestors have not broken the curfew as they are individuals, standing apart and alone. I recall the deplorable image of the crowd in Don DeLillo's *Mao II*, conjured by his description of the faces of individuals being pressed into fences:

They show the fence from a distance, bodies piling up behind it, smothered, sometimes only fingers moving, and it is like a fresco in an old dark church, a crowded twisted vision of a rush to death as only a master of the age could paint it.¹¹

I begin to see how the spaces between those surrounding the Standing Man create an expanded tissue of bodies that spreads over a territory. I feel an urge to zoom out and see the landscape created: the bodies as fixed points, the spaces as active connections, intensity present in the gaps, an infrastructure of bodies appended to the city. This landscape of connected but dispersed bodies threatens those in power.

* * *

Grandfather drew the newspaper close to his eyes.
"What are you looking for?" I asked

"Trying to find myself dear. I was there every single day. I was one of the standing bodies there. And it matters that 'I' was there." He replied.

* * *

An image of an unfinished building in Liberty Street in Tehran is projected onto the wall of the lecture hall, taken in 1979 during the revolution. At the time people, myself included, had climbed this building, watching as beneath a flowing tissue of crowded bodies replaced the street itself with moving, shouting individuals. I begin: "In this instance the building has become a static point that has absorbed the crowd and, at the same time, produced a new sort of street; a vertically folded street that provides a space for standing and sitting as an alternative form of demonstration. Verticality intensifies the energy present, accumulating it and turning the event into a 'tragic' moment. Similar to Standing Man in fact, the building is the materialisation of Lefebvre's 'moment'. In both cases what is paramount is the adjacency of vessels of movement and stillness. This adjacency makes the pause more affective."

- "Are sit-down strikes a sort of pause?" another student asked from the first row.

- "Definitely" I answered. "They are a pause in the capitalist production instigated by factory owners; by refusing to work while being present productivity decreases and profits are reduced. So pause as a collective action is hugely detrimental to the proprietor."

"I suspect what lies behind your question is that you are, in fact, wondering what the difference between these two forms of pause is? Or, what in particular the standing bodies produce that the strike does not? I would argue that the two both come from a politics of refusal and disobedience. They are similar in many ways: they are a way of claiming your rights by not participating, by not being part of a system, and they both act through the momentary appropriation of space, be it public space or the space of factory (production). Crucially both the strike and the standing man question routines. However the particular political situation within which the standing man 'stands out' (stands outside the norms of a public space) is key, this act concerns the politics of public space 'as a medium allowing for the contestation of power'.¹²



01:
Standing man, Occupy Gezi Movement, Turkey
2013.



02:
People join the 'Standing man' protest
in Taksim Square, Istanbul. Erdem
Gunduz, the original Standing Man, is a
choreographer, and the act could be read
as un-choreographed collective performance
that invited thousands to join a political
performance.



03:
The standing bodies have physically occupied
the public space, through introducing a new
infrastructure of bodies to the existing
material urban infrastructure. Taksim
Square, Istanbul, 2013.



04:
Unfinished building, Liberty Street, Tehran
during the 1979 Revolution. Playfulness in
lingering, standing and sitting bodies as a
different form of protest.

"For eight hours the standing man occupied Taksim Square, the main transportation hub in Istanbul and a historically and strategically important urban site. Today this square is a typical modern public space – a depoliticised neoliberal space of commerce, consumption and control; a "representation of space" in Lefebvre's terms.¹³ However, this is also a 'representational space'. Or, in Hana Arendt's terms, a 'space of appearance' where people, through their actions, become visible.¹⁴ As Simon Springer notes, this interplay of visibility and action is critical:

While visibility is central to public space, theatricality is also required because whenever people gather, the space of appearance is not just 'there', but is actively (re)produced through recurring performances.¹⁵

Public space provides visibility to political action and encourages participation.¹⁶ The standing bodies physically occupied public space and introduced a new infrastructure of bodies into the existing material urban infrastructure."

* * *

I resume the video of the Standing Man, thinking architecturally: what is it that creates the links between the bodies? AbdouMaliq Simon describes infrastructure as the politics of together-ness. He states:

"The question, 'what is [it] that we can do together?' – whoever and wherever that 'we' may exist – is largely a question of what is in-between us; what enables us to reach toward or withdraw from each other. What is the materiality of this in-between – the composition and intensity of its durability, viscosity, visibility, and so forth? What is it that enables us to be held in place, to be witnessed, touched, avoided, scrutinised or secured? Infrastructure is about this in-between."¹⁷

The infrastructural pose of the bodies is what keeps the crowd from being disbanded. The bodies connect and flow through infrastructures, but also perform as an infrastructure themselves. They make connections, fill in the in-between spaces, activate interstices, and transform the behaviour of the existing material infrastructure. Just as a material infrastructure they fix and distinguish points and spaces, but as they are in constant motion this fixity is more fluid. This infrastructural character is essential to the effective potential of pause to create change. Fragmented pauses can only perform as safety

valves, creating critical moments instead of nurturing emergent politics, whereas an infrastructure of pauses, a connection of bodies across extended territories rather than a single standing man, takes on immediate political affectivity.

* * *

Another question – "You just talked about infrastructural architecture. As architects, how do we deal with the idea of pause? How do we design spaces of pause? Or how can the idea be applied in architecture? Is architecture as infrastructure a clue to the problem?"

– "Firstly I would like to stress the importance of body politics to the idea of pause as a device. Describing the role of the body in disturbing the *purity of architectural order*, Bernard Tschumi notes that:

[T]here is the violence that all individuals inflict on spaces by their very presence, by their intrusion into the controlled order of architecture. Entering a building may be a delicate act, but it violates the balance of a precisely ordered geometry.¹⁸

So where pause as a device is concerned, perhaps it is primarily in the sense of a post-production of space by means of occupation. This is visible in the examples of the Standing Man and likewise in the building in Tehran in 1979. Therefore, to enhance the affectivity of a pause as a device for change and liberation we must consider the possible post-production occupation of space. It is therefore crucial to think further about what architecture can do to enhance the potential for pause.

Secondly, a pause is an event. Architecture should facilitate this event, creating spaces that can absorb and intensify those forces and elements that break with existing or routine flows. Here the architect's ability to identify chances, to read the existing gaps in any system, and develop those gaps to the point where alternatives could emerge becomes key.

Maurizio Lazzarato describes the event as follows:

The event gives us an open, unfinished, and incomplete world, and in so doing calls upon subjectivity because we can inscribe our actions and exercise our responsibility in this incompleteness, in this non-finitude.¹⁹

The unfinished and incomplete; this describes the very aesthetics of infrastructural architecture; the infrastructure of pauses.”

I continue: “By way of an example we might consider how existing spaces already work as spaces of pause. Mohsen Mirdamadi, an architect and researcher working with urban issues within large cities in Iran, notes that in the high-speed spaces that we move through daily there is a need to stop. His term ‘Rahvand’, meaning ‘spaces attached to a route’, mimics an infrastructure of pauses.²⁰ He likens cities to the Silk Road, arguing that spaces like caravanserais or water reservoirs are not only spaces for resting, eating, trading, etc., rather they are, more importantly, social spaces where spontaneous encounters produce new conditions along the road. *Rahvands* are spaces of speculation and reflection after moving and traveling; a pause that is not an end to the moving, but a point of departure enriched by encounter. Similarly, a city consists of spaces of moving and pausing. What enriches the political and social life of the city is not the roads but the “pause spaces” that make up the sequences of social life. At political and social turning points where large numbers of people gather, they do so in pause spaces, either found or invented by their own action. This means that many of these spaces are not designed as pause spaces but are capable of being inhabited and activated through different sorts of occupation.

* * *

Perhaps Bernard Tschumi’s term “expanded sequences”²¹ best describes pause spaces. For Tschumi an “expanded sequence” makes:

a solid of a gap between spaces. The gap thus becomes a space of its own, a corridor, threshold, or doorstep – a proper symbol inserted between each event.²²

Thinking of pause spaces in this way means that as well as those ‘un-designed’ spaces of event, we might consider architecture’s role as identifying chances or in-between sequences, expanding them and creating new alternative inter-sequences. The revelation of a previously undefined space along a familiar and defined space of flow could stimulate a pause in that flow. Revealing it, however, cannot always be done by architecture alone in its established form. This is perhaps where architecture

should pause, refrain from meddling with space; pause to reflect upon a fetish for completing the world.

* * *

I am still perching on the building in Tehran, looking through the gap between my feet. The building is empty, so is the street. Did he see me on top of the building? I had red sneakers that matched my red lips... but we lost each other forever. I am holding Franz Kafka’s *The Castle* in my hand. I read:

“I can’t think of any greater happiness than to be with you all the time, without interruption, endlessly, even though I feel that here in this world there’s no undisturbed place for our love, neither in the village nor anywhere else.”

I sway back;

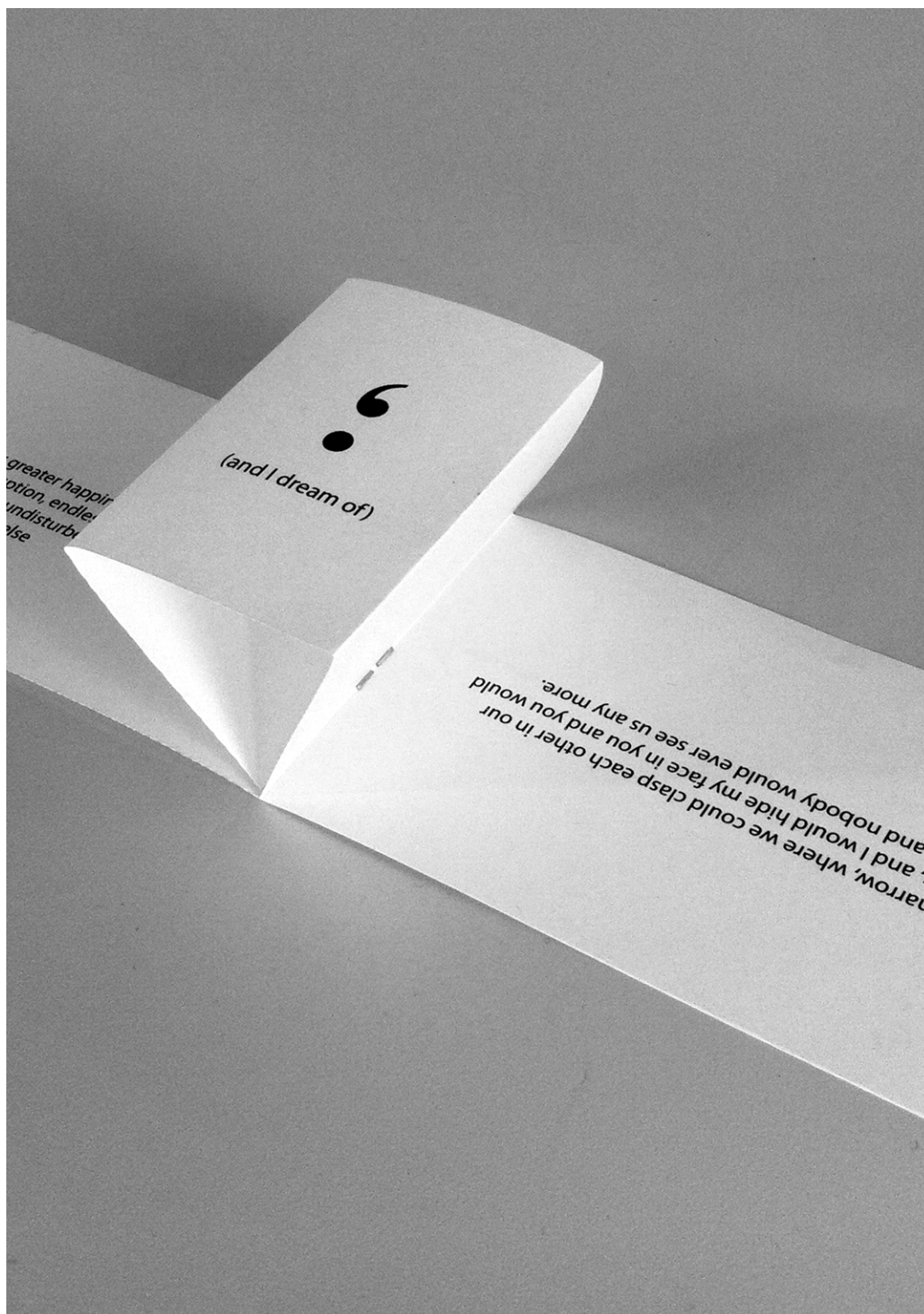
“;”

I pause.

I sway forth,

“and I dream of a grave, deep and narrow, where we could clasp each other in our arms as with iron bars, and I would hide my face in you and you would hide your face in me, and nobody would ever see us any more.”²³

I can stand up, go down the stairs and walk the streets without you, surrendering to the city that swallowed you. Or I can sway forth and drop into the emptiness of a vast grave. There, I might find you. But I still sit where I am sitting; in the semicolon, between the impossibility of embracing you in the place where life remains, and the possibility of embracing you where life is absent. How far can I push back these two parts of the whole? How long can I stay on the edge of the building, watching it disappear into a city of thousands of similar buildings? I gaze at the semicolon; the words on the page are blurring; the street below lies empty; the book is falling apart; my pause lingers...



05:
The semicolon as the space of pause, of imagination. From the
project *The Impossible Book*, Sepideh Karami, 2013.

- 1 Harvey, David. 2008. 'The Right to the city' in *New Left Review*, Vol.53, p. 23.
- 2 Genc, Kaya. 2013. 'The standing man of Taksim Square: a latterday Bartleby' in *The Guardian*, Thursday 20th June, 2013. Available at <<http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2013/jun/20/standing-man-istanbul-bartleby-melville>> (accessed 25.06.2013). In Herman Melville's *Bartleby the Scrivener*, Bartleby refuses to work and simply restates the phrase 'I would prefer not to'. As Genc notes in his blog post, it would not have been surprising if the security officers searching the Standing Man's backpack uncovered a copy of Bartleby, the Scrivener.
- 3 The Ataturk Cultural Centre represents the history of secularisation of Turkey by Ataturk.
- 4 Deleuze, Gilles. 1995. 'Three Questions on Six Times Two' in *Negotiations, 1972-1990*. Trans. Martin Joughin. New York: Columbia University Press, p.35.
- 5 Elden, Stuart. 2004. *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*. New York: Continuum, p.118.
- 6 Lefebvre, Henri. 2002. *Critique of everyday life*, Vol. II, trans. J. Moore. London: Verso Books, p. 347.
- 7 Elden, Stuart. 2004. *Understanding Henri Lefebvre*, p.118.
- 8 Lefebvre, Henri. 2002. *Critique of everyday life*, Vol. II, p.347.
- 9 Lefebvre, Henri. 2002. *Critique of everyday life*, Vol. II, p.351.
- 10 This paragraph is a rewriting of a part of the short story 'Mon and Gnac' in Italo Calvino's *Marcovaldo* collection. Calvino, Italo. 2001. *Marcovaldo*. trans. W. Weaver. London: Vintage Books, p.71.
- 11 DeLillo, Don. 1992. *Mao I'*. London: Vintage, p.34.
- 12 Springer, Simon. 2011. 'Public Space as Emancipation: Meditations on Anarchism: Radical Democracy, Neoliberalism and Violence' in *Antipode*, Vol.43 No.2, p. 542.
- 13 In Lefebvre's terms, public space that is controlled by government or other institutions, or whose use is regulated, is referred to as "representation of space", whereas public space as it is actually used by social groups is called "representational space". See also: Springer, Simon. 2011, 'Public Space as Emancipation', pp.537-8.
- 14 Springer, Simon. 2011. 'Public Space as Emancipation', p. 537.
- 15 Springer, Simon. 2011. 'Public Space as Emancipation', p. 537.
- 16 Springer, Simon. 2011. 'Public Space as Emancipation', p. 538.
- 17 Simone, AbdouMaliq. 'Infrastructure: Introductory commentary by AbdouMaliq Simone'. Curated collections, *Cultural Anthropology Online*, November 26, 2012. Available at <http://www.culanth.org/curated_collections/11-infrastructure/discussions/12-infrastructure-introductory-commentary-by-abdoumaliq-simone> (accessed 22.09.2013).
- 18 Tschumi, Bernard. 2001. *Architecture and Disjunction*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, p 123.
- 19 Lazzarato, Maurizio. 2011. 'The dynamics of the political event: process of subjectivation and micropolitics', *European institute for progressive cultural policies*. Available at <<http://eipcp.net/transversal/0811/lazzarato/en>> (accessed 06.05.2014).
- 20 Mirdamadi, Mohsen. Interview with Sepideh Karami. Personal interview. Tehran, August 25, 2012.
- 21 In *Architecture and Disjunction* Bernard Tschumi explains 'expanded sequences' in contrast to 'contracted sequences', which he defines as follows: "we might see the beginning of a use in space followed immediately by the beginning of another in a further space. Contracted sequences have occasionally reduced architecture's three dimensions into one." Tschumi, Bernard. 2001. *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.166.
- 22 Tschumi, Bernard. 2001. *Architecture and Disjunction*, p.166.
- 23 Kafka, Franz. 2008. *The Complete Novels of Kafka*. London: Vintage, p.547.

FIGURES

- 01 Still from video *Türkei: Stiller Protest*, uploaded 18th June 2013, available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNONsBm-bv0>> (accessed 18.10.2014)
- 02 Still from video *Türkei: Stiller Protest*, uploaded 18th June 2013, available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNONsBm-bv0>> (accessed 18.10.2014)
- 03 Still from video *Türkei: Stiller Protest*, uploaded 18th June 2013, available at <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cNONsBm-bv0>> (accessed 18.10.2014)
- 04 Still from *A Dialogue with Revolution, 2013* [Film] Directed by Robert Safarian.
- 05 Karami, Sepideh. 2013. *The Impossible Book*. Image by the author.

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