

# micro strug gles ▲

**‘What is  
Struggle?’**

**Tuğçe Şahin**

**'Micro Struggles'** is an artistic intervention, first time was placed during international un-conference **Urban Struggles in Mediterranean Cities: The Right to the City and the Common Space**, which was at the School of Architecture, National Technical University of Athens between 31st May and 3rd June 2018.

Also it is an endless research and exploration to discover possibilities around us and to keep our hope not to leave struggle.



De Certeau said that 'the use of the city is restrictive and directive, actually any random action to break it is a form of resistance'. In cities, not everything is shaped by established rules. Rules can be manipulated and this in itself may create the struggle. To manipulate the rules and create our own micro spaces, we use small tactics as part of our daily actions.

This research focuses on the meaning of struggle on the micro scale and is enhanced with examples of micro struggle activities from urban spaces. It focuses on existing urban spaces and attempts to manipulate rules/daily routine and offers a look at individual activities in the city which can be defined as micro struggles.

Cities are struggle grounds where so many different elements strive to be free, to exist,

to live. Sometimes just existing and not leaving the urban scape, using that space has potential in terms of urban struggle. Your activity can be a type of protest, a quest for belonging or simply because you're a vendor who stands on the same corner of the street. You occupy a place, you settle there for a while and use it for your individual activity.

The main action in this installation is 'to pause / to stop' while at the same time experiencing examples of micro struggle, for it is essential to have a break in daily routine in cities, too, and to exist in the urbanscape, to be aware of time, to create new tactics and situations.











**stop!**





Watching - Once Upon A Time In An Unknown Place

In the preface of 'Des Corps Urbains' (Urban Bodies), Michela Marzano asks; 'Today how do we live in the cities? How do our bodies harmonise with urban rules-boundaries? May the person find his/her own place? Can the person survive against all noise, craziness of daily life, all glances surrounding him/her, all violence and all threaten attacks? How a body/person can live in the city and how can be free?'

Kenneth Surin gives a clue about this in his article 'Micropolitics': Deleuze and Guattari oppose micropolitics to the politics of molarisation. Where the molar (or 'arborescent', to use their equivalent term) designates structures and principles that are based on rigid stratifications or codings which leave no room for all that is flexible and contingent, the molecular which is the basis of micropolitics allows for connections

that are local and singular. A molecular logic of production is basically self-organising or auto poetic.

The city is a big playground to live and explore new possibilities, new freedom spaces. We need to remember this and take heed of individual discovers. And first of all to be aware of our body, our willing, we may need a pause/a stop in our daily routine. firstly we need to reconnect with ourself and with our auto-poetic side. After then we can include other people to our actions and create a collective production in the city.

Every person has potential which defines a micro struggle by ownself.



Fishing - Once Upon A Time In An Unknown Place

**struggle!**





Shoe Painter and His Permanent Place - Ankara, Turkey



Shoe Painter and His Permanent Place - Ankara, Turkey

Let's think about vendors who stand on the same corner of the street for weeks (if they are lucky) or perhaps just appear in the city for a few hours before they are made to leave. They occupy that place for a while and use it for their selling activities. Existing there and trying to keep that "there" can be defined as a micro struggle.



Temporary Vendor - Istanbul, Turkey

struggle!



Temporary Vendor  
Istanbul, Turkey



Permanent Vendor  
Ankara, Turkey



Permanent Vendor  
Ankara, Turkey

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take  
a seat!







**settle!**



A Square With Settlements of Open-air Tea Spot, Juice Bar, 'Simit' Seller, Little Cafe/Buffer - Istanbul, Turkey



In Spaces of Hope, David Harvey says:  
“We are a species on earth like any other, endowed, with specific capacities and powers that are put to use to modify environments in ways that are conducive to our own sustenance and reproduction. In this we are no different from all other species (like termites, bees and beavers) that modify their environment while adapting further to the environments they themselves help construct.”





In this square, in Kabatas Istanbul, every settlement has their own specific properties and all together they defines this physical space as a living urbanscape. Every one of them have their own corner, their own style, their own tactics to sell, their own creativity to define their places and improve their business. They create unique micro spaces and have an effect on other people and cause to other individual activities. The city can be defined with this unique, variable, unsteady diversity and layers.





Same Square; Open-air Tea Spot, Juice Bar, Chestnut Seller - Istanbul, Turkey

settle!



Open-air Tea Spot, Juice Bar, Chestnut Seller  
Istanbul, Turkey



Open-air Tea Spot, Juice Bar, 'Simit' Seller, Little Cafe/Buffer  
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In this square, in Kolataş Istanbul, every settlement has their own specific properties and all together they defines this physical space as a living urbanescape. Every one of them have their own corner, their own style, their own tactics to sell, their own creativity to define their places and improve their business. They create unique micro spaces and have an effect on other people and cause to other individual activities. The city can be defined with this unique, variable, unsteady diversity and layers.



Pomegranate Places Are Sold  
In The Cops



'Simit' Seller



Juice Bar



Chestnut Seller

take  
seat

**party!**

In September 2013, selling alcoholic beverage after 10 pm has been forbidden in Turkey. Even for the places with licence to sell, they can't sell alcoholic beverage after that time. After this regulation a little shop ( which mostly sell alcoholic beverage and tabacco, called 'tekeli' in Turkish) started to organize street parties in front of their shop. They announced 'last two hours' parties via social media and between 8-10 pm they made so many people to come there and drink and join to their street party with music and joy. Maybe it was an individual solution for decreasing sellings but caused social and public reactions to new prohibition.

Source of Images: Google



'Last Two Hours' Parties - Istanbul, Turkey





'Last Two Hours' Parties

**write!**



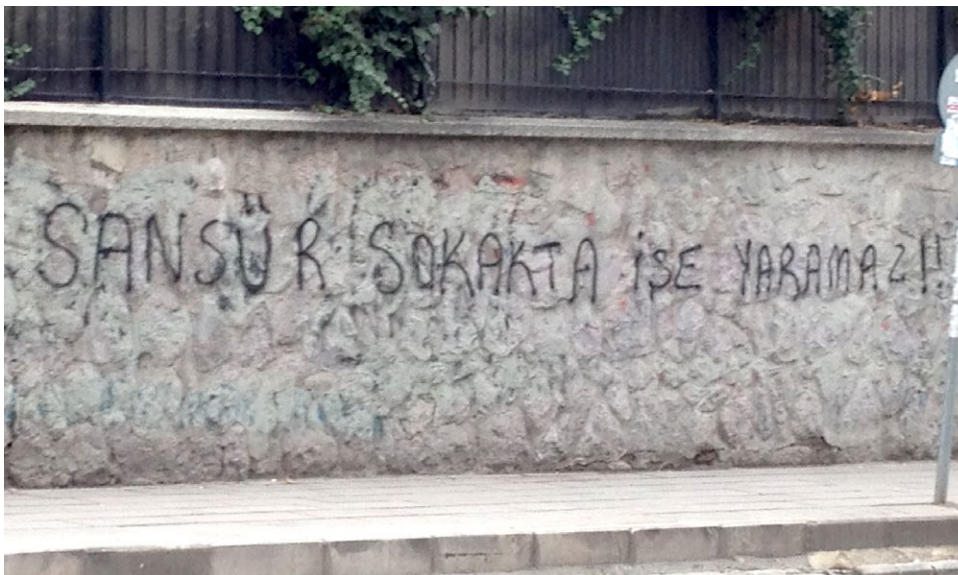
‘Here, these are all revolution.’ - Antalya, Turkey

Inside of capital system, mostly streets and their surfaces, billboards are used by state and companies which want to publish their political campaigns and advertisements. But when citizen want to give an answer to political power and want to make our messages visible they use the streets too. Kripoes, a graffiti artist, says ‘ we need the place, we need to reclaim the cityscapes to express ourself with our own way. There are so many rules and guides in the life, graffiti is a good way to break the rules.’

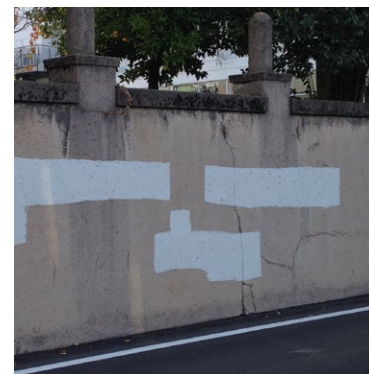


‘Freedom is in the streets.’ - Antalya, Turkey





After first writing was covered with grey by municipality, another message was appeared.  
'Precensor doesn't work in the streets.' - Ankara, Turkey



I think this grey color is universal  
to cover graffities. - Lecco, Italy

take  
a seat!



**stand!**

'In the beginning my concern wasn't to perform although I'm a dancer, my concern is what you can say with only the body? Sometimes the attitude of a body may be more meaningful than the attitude of a language...My individual reason is similar to those of others, asking for more freedom. I was there as a citizen who lives in that country. I simply believe in individual actions.' These words are belong to 'Duran Adam' (standing man), Erdem Gündüz.

After police attacked to Gezi Park and took out everyone from there on 16th June 2013, he went to Taksim Square on 17th June, turned his face to Ataturk Cultural Center and started to stand.

As people began to notice what he was doing, some joined him. Not just in Taksim, but across the country. His silence, his individual action was strong. Sometimes just



existing and not leaving the urban scape has potential in terms of struggle, resistance. His micro movement inspired too many people and became a macro movement. Even it caused to opposite movement, some citizen started to stand in public places with the t-shirts which is written on: standing man against standing man!

Images Source: Google





'Duran Adam' Protests Spreading - Istanbul, Turkey



Standing - Istanbul, Turkey



**paint!**

In 27 August 2013, in Fındıklı Istanbul the stairs of a street were painted in rainbow colors by Hüseyin Çelikel who is one of dweller in that neighbourhood. After a few days work when he and his helpers finished painting, the stairs were discovered by LGBT members and became a social media phenomen in very short time. Hüseyin Çelikel explained the reason of his action as an innocent protest against municipality who didn't repair, care with the old stairs. It was just after Gezi protests, this action must have been seen as a threat, the day after the stairs were painted to universal grey by municipality. Actually municipality didn't accept that they painted to grey but they took so many public reactions. These censoring caused a kind of public resistance from a micro action and made people to paint stairs in rainbow colors all around the country.

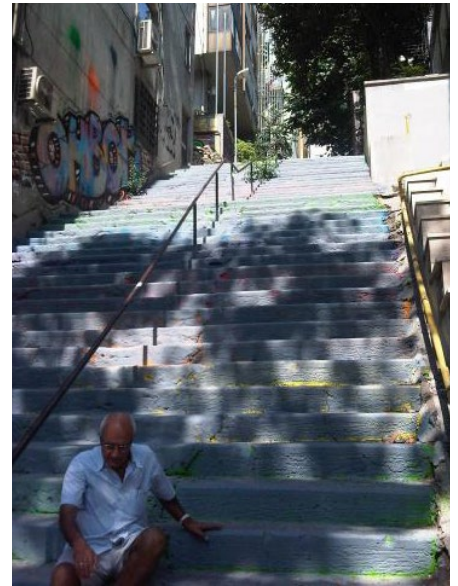
In the and it's called 'Rainbow Revolution' with full hopes and joy of a rainbow.

Source of Images: [www.gokkusagidevrimi.tumblr.com](http://www.gokkusagidevrimi.tumblr.com)



Painted Stairs Which Caused to 'Rainbow Revolution'  
Istanbul, Turkey





H. Çelikel and Covered Stairs by Universal Grey (!) by Municipality  
Istanbul, Turkey



Other Painted Stairs From Canakkale, Sirnak, Corlu



## Conclusion

‘Micro Struggles’ as an artistic intervention was placed in the courtyard of Architecture School of Athens Technical University where un-conference was happened. During un-conference we had chance to listen so many lectures about struggles, solidarity, resistances in Mediterranean countries and also to be part of different workshops to explore Exarcheia, where is the neighbourhood of university and one of the center of urban struggles in Athens.

Observing reactions to ‘Micro Struggles’ intervention was like observing diversity of a street in a city. Sometimes people stoped to read the texts, sometimes they used the stools but sometimes they just sit on the floor, sometimes they asked about the reality of the samples that I gave from Turkey.

Sometimes they got closer with their eyes, their mind but sometimes they even didn’t see it. They just passed and kept walking.

City is like a living organism, be formed of little cells which fed on it, pumped blood and be formed of micro lives. Besides craziness of macro life in the cities, our individual explorings give us power and hope to go on struggles. At least efforts that we show to go on are another struggles in these days.

That’s why all phases of ‘Micro Struggles’ made me think, micro struggles may be in everywhere independently of time and space. In everywhere where life and people exist.

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Un-conference: [urbanstruggles.net](http://urbanstruggles.net)

Watch: [vimeo.com/277119491](http://vimeo.com/277119491)