

# Multitudo - the Search for a New Democracy

Özge Akarsu

Saturday 14 June 2014, The Mono Theatre on location, Kattenberg 93, 2140 Borgerhout

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## Programme

- 20h00 welcome & drinks
- 20h30 screening of the documentary "Taksim Commune: Gezi Park And The Uprising In Turkey"
- 21h00 lecture "Multitudo - the Search for a New Democracy", Özge Akarsu
- 21h30 discussion & drinks

## Summary

The entire tradition of political theory seems to agree on one basic principle: only "the one" can rule, whether that one be conceived as the monarch, the nation, the people or the party."<sup>1</sup> And if it's not transformed into one, it loses its power to be taken seriously. As opposed to that, in today's world, we are confronted everyday with new resistance movements from Taksim square to São Paulo, Tahrir to Sintagma. Crowds are occupying streets, squares and parks, urging us to see the inequalities of the system, fast-paced ecological destruction, global economic crisis, false democrats. It is a burden for their countries where many things have been going wrong for so many years. It is a burden for the world where many things have been going incredibly wrong for many years. This is where the struggle begins: "True Democracy Now!" But what is that "True Democracy" then?

In my presentation, I will make a short opening to explore an enormous concept - "*multitudo*"- which occupies an important place mostly in the work of Machiavelli, Hobbes, Spinoza and Negri. Then I will find the nexus between the concept and today's social movements, with a focus on the Gezi movement in Turkey. As an important concept in my research, "multitude" is not just a philosophical concept taken from these philosophers. It is an action which creates a space to comprehend "*what we are capable of*" through the singularly-plural experience with others. According to Spinoza, "*nobody as yet has determined the limits of the body's capabilities: that is, nobody as yet learned from experience what the body can and cannot do*"<sup>2</sup>. Now let's imagine two bodies that come together to join their forces, and what they can and cannot do. This is where multitude starts: *potentia*.

Özge Akarsu

## Documentary: Taksim Commune: Gezi Park And The Uprising In Turkey

This short documentary is a rare behind-the-scenes look at the Summer 2013 Gezi Park protests in Istanbul, Turkey.

In late May 2013, political unrest swept across Turkey. In Istanbul, a large part of the central Beyoğlu district became a battle zone for three consecutive weeks, with conflicts continuing afterward. The protests were initially aimed at rescuing Istanbul's Gezi Park from being demolished as part of a large-scale urban renewal project.

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, "*Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*", (New York: The Penguin Press, 2004), 328

<sup>2</sup> Benedictus Spinoza, "*Spinoza: Complete Works*", *Ethica*", (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2002), 280.

The police used extreme force during a series of police attacks that began on May 28th 2013 and that came to a dramatic head in the early morning hours of Friday May 31<sup>st</sup>, when the police attacked protesters sleeping in the park. As the images of the heavy-handed policing spread across the world, the protests quickly transformed into a popular uprising against the Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan and his style of authoritarian rule. This short documentary tells the story of the occupation of Gezi Park, the eviction on July 15, 2013, and the protests that have continued in the aftermath. It includes interviews with many participants and footage never before seen.

More information : [globaluprisings.org](http://globaluprisings.org).

*(text: Özge Akarsu)*

### **Bio**

Özge Akarsu is a PhD candidate at the Faculty of Law of the University of Antwerp. Her research is in the field of political philosophy, broadly conceived. She received her bachelor and masters degree in Law at Istanbul. During her studies, she was an activist with Amnesty International. In 2007, she also worked as an intern with the human rights activist and lawyer Eren Keskin (co-founder of the project "Legal Aid For Women Who Were Raped Or Otherwise Sexually Abused by National Security Forces").