

ID 1392 | POLITICAL CONFLICT ON SPATIAL PRACTICE AT URBAN PARKS IN TURKEY: CASES OF ANKARA AND İSTANBUL

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1 INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS 'POLITICAL' AT URBAN PARKS?

Urban parks are defined as 'green', 'open' and 'public' spaces where citizens recreate themselves; interact with nature and each other. Furthermore, (as lived spaces) parks provide a backcloth for spatial practices and (re)produce urban everyday life via framing daily rhythms and behaviours within their physical boundaries. Nonetheless, urban parks (as conceived spaces) are regulated via official decisions of the state, especially by the hand of local governments, which implies the spatial policy of the party in power and capital accumulation process rather than use value of inhabitants and spatial quality of natural-built environment.

Indeed, spatial policy is fragile particularly in the countries like Turkey, since it is extremely influenced by the political-economic shifts. Moreover, neo-liberal spatial policies stretched the limits and definitions of public and private spaces; which led to both deformation of open-green areas and privatization of public spaces.

We can follow a disruption and displacement process within urban public spaces and green areas especially in the cases of Ankara and İstanbul, two great cities of Turkey. As an essential example, Ankara was conceived and re-designed delicately in 1920s as the capital of newly-established nation-state which has both a spatial and political essence in the planning history of Turkey. The re-creation of Ankara served for not only creating new publics with their (public) spaces but also constituting the examples of modern city planning in new Turkish Republic (i.e. Gençlik Park [meaning Youth Park, one of many examples constructed in several other Turkish cities in early-republican period] and Güvenpark [the name of the park means 'safety', 'trust'; it was designed with a symbolic-political content and formed as a part of both the master plan of the city (Jansen Plan) and micro design of the city-centre]). However, public space pattern of the city has been gradually disrupted in the following decades. Rather than staying in and practicing publicness, citizens tend to pass through open public spaces, which is partly a result of incremental and arbitrary approaches to the design and construction. Moreover, the political-symbolic displacement process –during the reproduction of open public spaces and urban greenery– led to a decrease in the socio-spatial quality of such spaces. On the contrary to the first era of early-republican period, dysfunctional and poor-quality public spaces have been constructed and reproduced through plans, codes and projects of decision makers hand in hand with market mechanisms though their recreational and public potentials via urban daily experience.

Parallel to the displacement process witnessed in the capital city, disruption and deformation were observed in quality and quantity of green areas in several locations, particularly in metropolitan cities. As the most critical case, the attempt to reconstruct Topçu Kışlası –one of the military barracks from Ottoman Period– in Taksim Square, İstanbul, by demolishing Gezi Park [in 2013] led to several struggles spreading all over the country. This contradiction appeared as a breaking point in both political and spatial history of Turkey. Nevertheless, the JDP (Justice and Development Party) Government has continued to interfere public spaces and green areas after June Resistance at Gezi Park (in İstanbul), such as construction of a mosque in Validebağ Grove in İstanbul, construction of the new house of president and Ankapark in AOÇ (Atatürk Orman Çiftliği – Atatürk Forest Farm), and destruction of almost 6000 trees in Yırca Village, in Soma, despite the legal rejection of the construction permit, which may be seen as 'sickness' (as caricatured in Fig. 1.). These attempts also resulted in conflicts, indicating the symbolic tension between the two faces of the public: the inhabitants (the 'public' as users) and the government (the formal 'public' in the role of state who has the right and responsibility to shape physical forms of public spaces and green areas), which implies the political dimension of the issue.



Figure 1 - A cartoon criticizing the green policy of JDP, Behiç Ak, 22.11.2014, Cumhuriyet
Source: http://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/cizim/147115/Behic_Ak_Kim_Kime_Dum_Duma.html

The cartoon (in figure 1) criticizes the recent attempts of central government in Turkey; the translations are (from left to right, up to down): (1) "They were constructing a building in Validebağ Grove"; (2) "They were determined to cut the trees in Gezi Park"; (3) "A law was enacted to cut the olive trees"; (4) "Hundred, thousands of trees were cut for the construction of bridge and airport in İstanbul"; (5) "They are going to construct buildings on the open spaces for gathering during earthquakes"; (6) "Oh my god! The state has officially got sick!" The recent spatial policy of JDP's government on environment and green is criticized in the cartoon, arguing that the state has got sick. Spatial policies interfere not only our physical environments but also via spatial projects they influence our daily lives, rhythms, rituals, construction process of self-identities and social bonds. The mentioned cases above indicate a turning point to a new era in the green policy of Turkish governments and also imply a potential field of political-symbolic struggle through urban space. Considering this turning point, "how urban parks function via reproduction of space recently" occurs as a critical question. Such spaces promise spatial practices linked to a pure use value rather than exchange value, so "how can urban parks survive within urban spatial pattern as 'a natural' and 'an open public space' within this mode of production"?

Although (open) public spaces, especially urban parks, are on the basis of our daily experience and self-reproduction process; in Turkish case, they have turned out to be places where we pass through and seem to be at the mercy of the decision makers or to be constructed through market mechanisms, which lead to arbitrarily developed open public spaces. However, they have great social, political and professional potentials. The recent attempt to demolish Gezi Park (and the struggles over it since June 2013) is a good example of both of these situations in Turkey. The opposition rose against not only the spatial intervention to our organization of public spaces but also to the undemocratic intervention to our everyday life and rhythms.

This transformation and struggle will be critical in following years in Turkey. This very recent struggle indicates the tension between users and (technically or politically) designers of these spaces. This study bulldozes the conflictual nature of urban parks in Turkish case within examples of reproduction of such spaces especially in Ankara (the capital city of Turkey) and in some other cases in İstanbul (the largest metropolis of the country) through the analysis of 'reproduction mechanisms', 'meaning shifts' and 'spatial-historical phases'. These examples would both demonstrate a framework for the main question of the study: how has neoliberalism shifted the boundaries of symbolic/political content of Turkish urban parks; and would indicate the political-spatial potentials rested in this shift such as the case of Gezi Resistance during June 2013.

2 HISTORICAL PHASES FOR REPRODUCTION OF URBAN PARKS IN TURKEY

Most of the largest parks in Ankara were created in 1920s after the declaration the capital of new nation state: Turkish Republic. Urban parks did not occur until Republican Period (Oğuz, 2000). In the Ottoman Era, palace gardens existed under the ownership of the Sultan; society recreated themselves in the orchards (bağlar) and private gardens. Therefore, large urban parks in Ankara are products of 'Republican project to construct a modern society' (Oğuz, 2000: 165): [i.e. Gençlik (Youth) Park (see Fig. 2.) is the first planned urban park to supply the public recreation need in Ankara (Uludağ Sökmen, 1998a, 1998b; Oğuz, 2000)].



Figure 2 – Gençlik Park, 1953

Source: Gürkaynak Alpayeski's Personal archive, in 'Ankara Resimleri Meraklıları Platformu'[Facebook group]

The first dominant theme related to phases for urban parks, which indicates a transition process, is a revenge on socio-spatial inheritance of Ottoman Empire (İlkay, 2016). In the second half of 19th century, the industrial revolution and capitalist mode of production influenced the legal-institutional framework and spatial organisation in Ottoman cities as well. Ottoman Empire was open to capitalist relations; the new city centres were organised around banks, insurance firms, hotels, and office blocks rather than market places located around Bedesten [a covered Turkish bazaar]. The city centre was expanded with train stations, docks, harbours, post offices; and state buildings settled among this pattern as a result of rising bureaucracy in the empire. In addition to spatial re-organization of the centre, new transportation modes (such as cars, trams, ferries, suburban trains) evolved beyond pedestrianized patterns, which also led to urban sprawl, suburbanization and shifts in both societal stratification and types of landuse. Such a sudden urban transformation awoke the lack of legal-institutional organization and a necessity of planning. In 1836 and 1837, Van Moltke prepared the first plan of the Empire for İstanbul. In 1848, Ebniye Nizamnamesi (the Code of Structures) was legislated for İstanbul (Tekeli, 1998). This legislation aimed to regulate land expropriation, construction permits, width of streets, and height of buildings (Çalışkan, 1990; cited in Müftüoğlu, 2008). Moreover, as one of the first institutional regulations in the empire, in 1855, Şehreminiği / Şehremaneti (a kind of municipal authority) was established for the city of İstanbul (Tekeli, 1998, Kayasü, 2005); 'şehir' means 'urban' and 'emin' means 'trustworthy' in Turkish, which indicates a role attributed to a mayor or institution as the guard of the city (Cengizkan, 2002) and implies the roots of the conflict between ownership and possession of urban space in Turkish cases. In 1882, the first development law of Ottoman Empire, Ebniye Kanunu (the Law of Structures) was enacted. Construction was forbidden in recreation areas and urban parks were constructed in İstanbul in several locations such as Gülhane, Sultanahmet, Fatih and Üsküdar-Doğanlar, which was a positive dimension of the new law (Müftüoğlu, 2008). The first urban green area in Ankara was Millet Bahçesi –Garden of Nation (see Fig. 3.). This space, located in Ulus (the old city centre), was the only urban green (before Republican Era), consisting of a small pond with wooden theatre building. In addition to this garden, vineyards in districts of Ankara such as Çankaya, Etlük and Keçiören were used as recreational needs by the citizens of the city (Çalışkan, 1990; cited in Müftüoğlu, 2008).

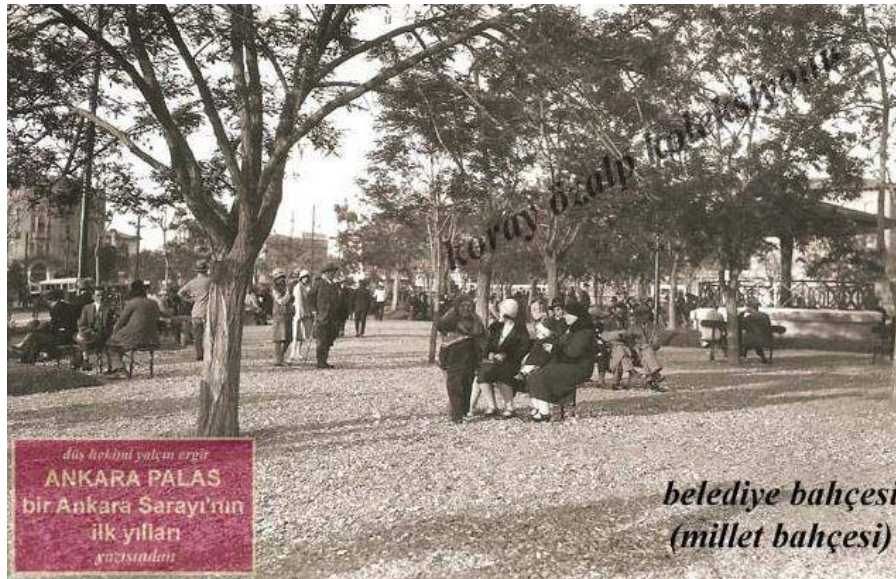


Figure 3 – Millet Bahçesi (Garden of Nation), Ulus
Source: http://www.ergir.com/2012/Ankara_Palas.htm

Spatial and institutional regulations continued till the beginning of 20th century in the empire, however these attempts were not enough to organize a holistic, planned beautification and development for cities; the macroform was not considered in these limited regulations, which was the most lacking issue in the Empire's spatial policy at that time. Moreover, these spatial re-organization attempts were condemned to be unsuccessful since a new political and spatial organization was forthcoming in this land. Şengül (2003) labels the urbanisation period after the establishment of nation state in Turkey as 'urbanisation of state' during the years between 1923 and 1950. Within this period, Ankara was declared as the capital city, which was attempted to be developed as a spatial project of the extension of the newly established nation state ideals.

This era indicates a rejection of the spatial-institutional inheritance of the Ottoman Empire and relatively a holistic spatial policy towards not only urban green areas but also all of the urban segments. The lack of central political-spatial organization and organic urban pattern (inherited from the Empire) complicated the control of central nation state, therefore the spatial transformations had to be organized at first nation state scale and then the city had to be re-organized as political-spatial node of the modernist project of the state (Şengül, 2003, Tekeli, 1998). Ankara, as the capital city, was selected as the model for this transformation, which was a challenge (Cengizkan, 2002).

Various legislations were enacted as a part of the new spatial policy (Cengizkan, 2002; Kayasü, 2005). Ankara Şehreminliği (The Directory of Development) was established in 1924 (Müftüoğlu, 2008), which was equipped with a great spatial authority (Tekeli, 1998). As the first activity, Lörcher, a German architect, was assigned to prepare a report (with three plans attached to it) on the inventory of spatial and social needs of Ankara (Cengizkan, 2002; Cengizkan, 2004). Lörcher Plan, which constituted the basis of Jansen Plan –the first official plan of Ankara approved in 1928– organized both the new neighbourhood as Yenışehir [recently Kızılay Square (which later turned out to be the new centre of the city in 1950s)] and the pattern of public spaces and green areas reproducing the public sphere within this neighbourhood and the whole city. The square with Güvenpark, attached to it, was designed as the node of this pattern through a holistic and organized planning attempt (Cengizkan, 2002).



Figure 4 – Güvenpark, Yenişehir (New City)

Source: Gürkaynak Alpayeski's Personal archive, in Ankara Resimleri Meraklıları Platformu [Facebook group page]

Güvenpark was also attached to Kızılay Square, and both were designed to be the symbol of the new republic and the public space of the bourgeoisie (see Fig. 4.). Located at the intersection of two main streets, Kızılay Square was planned to provide a new kind of public life via spatial elements such as Havuzbaşı and Güvenpark (Batuman, 2000; Batuman, 2002). Moreover, AOÇ (Atatürk Orman Çiftliği – Atatürk Forest Farm) was conceived in 1925, on a 150 000 da area, by the demand of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the nation state. With this multifunctional farm, a large area would turn out to be a huge urban green space in the very centre of both Ankara and the middle Anatolia (see Fig. 5). This space would provide space for both agricultural activities and recreational facilities for the citizens; and in addition to these functions, the daily needs of the citizens for milk, beer, cheese, oil, and yoghurt would be met by the production in this farm (Müftüoğlu, 2008).

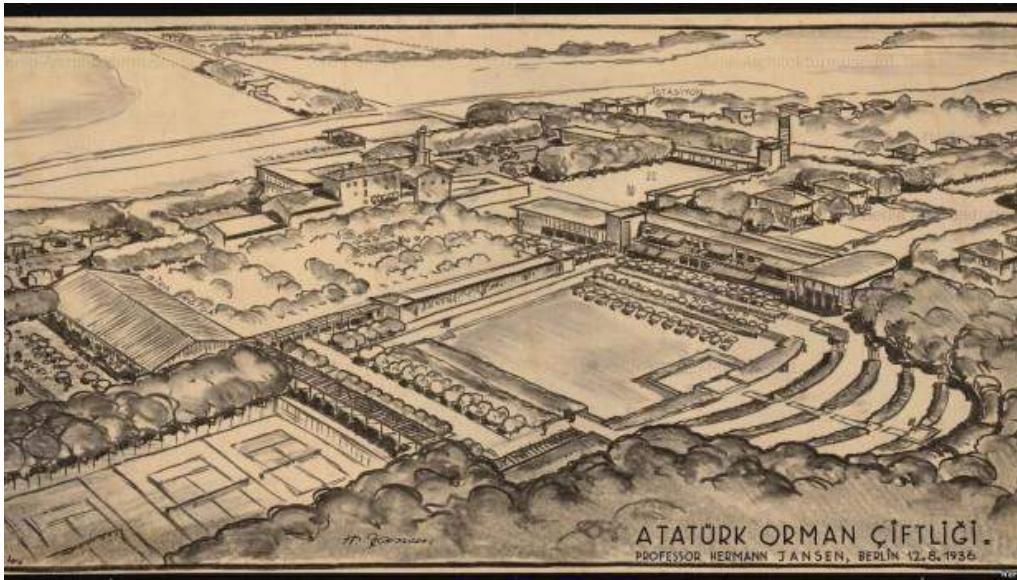


Figure 5 – A Drawing of Atatürk Forest Farm (AOÇ), 1936

Source: <http://www.kuzeyormanlari.org/2014/08/21/ataturk-orman-ciftligi-arazisinin-ucte-ikisi-gitti/>

Jansen Plan was sensitive to both protecting the natural layout of the city and creating a spatial structure of urban greenery. Within a holistic approach, valleys and brooks were planned to be protected and strengthened via green belts and the continuity of urban green spaces was proposed (Müftüoğlu, 2008). Furthermore, green areas were planned to meet citizens' recreational and social needs (Değirmencioğlu, 1997). Gençlik Park (Youth Park) was located at the city centre, Ulus, consisting of a huge water

component, which covered 1/3 of the total area (Kayasü, 2005); this space was realized in 1946, such a huge water element was a dream at that time at the heart of an Anatolian city (Uludağ Sökmen, 1998.b.). Güvenpark was conceived to be a 'square park' attached to Kızılay Park (see Fig. 6) as a component of the green space system defined in Jansen plan (Memlük, 2009). Kızılay Square consisting of Güvenpark was designed as a spatial strategy to create a public sphere with its spatial necessities (Batuman, 2000 & 2002). Atatürk Boulevard was playing an essential role as an axis connecting critical open and public spaces such as parliament, Güvenpark, Kızılay Square and Zafer Park (means 'Triumph Park' in English). This pattern created a public-recreational axis [north-south skeleton of public sphere in Yenişehir] (Batuman, 2002) reaching to Gençlik Park in Ulus. The parks on this axis [Gençlik Park, Kızılay Park, Güvenpark and Zafer Park] were meeting the recreational needs of the citizens (Memlük, 2009). In this period, youth parks, culture parks, and urban forests were constructed in several cities by the demand of Atatürk to provide public places for citizens to socialize and educate oneselves on the new public domain of the nation state. These urban green areas were designed as squares and public gardens in several cities (such as Adana, Afyon, Ankara, Antalya, Bolu, Bursa, Çanakkale, Gaziantep, İstanbul, İzmir, Samsun and Trabzon) between 1923 and 1945. These spaces were used as tools and stages to publicise the reforms of new period – i.e. Atatürk presented the new Turkish alphabet in Sarayburnu Park in İstanbul, on August, 9th, 1928 (Gündüz, 2002). Summarising during the urbanisation of state period open and green spaces were used as not only recreational places but also representational spaces forming the social-political perceptions of citizens.



Figure 6 – Kızılay Square and Güvenpark, 1942, postcard
Source: http://urun.gittigidiyor.com/ANKARA-KARTPOSTAL-KIZILAYMEYDANI_W0QQidZZ5248552

By 1950s, modernization in agricultural techniques led to massive population movements from rural areas to cities in Turkey. In fact, Ankara had experienced population growth after its declaration as the capital which resulted in difficulties to implement holistic plans and provide a regular urban development. Moreover, this era witnessed some other political-economic shifts. The rest of the world was passing through a process of Welfare state after the Second World War and Turkish economy was opened to wider capitalist relations by the help of Democrat Party after the transition period to multi-party regime. Şengül (2003) names this chaotic era as 'the urbanisation of working class'. Squatter settlements spread all over the large cities in the form of 'slum belts; informal sectors and authentic transportation modes (like 'dolmuş') appeared in the daily life of cities as a result of lacking systems of the state and control mechanisms with lacking infrastructure (Tekeli, 1998). New comers (coming from rural areas turned out to be workers from being farmers) encountered and conflicted at and through urban space with the urban inhabitants which had political and spatial consequences (Şengül, 2003). The first spatial transformation related to our issue was that, Kızılay (earlier Yenişehir as a housing neighbourhood) turned out to be a commercial centre by 1952 (Batuman, 2002). The public spaces of this area, especially Güvenpark, attracted the ambition of working classes who could not access there before, this occurred as both a political/symbolic and a spatial-social demand (İlkay, 2008). During this period, differentiated social groups and classes could encounter at Kızılay, which was a city centre and a square with an urban park, these

encounters developed differentiated narratives and symbols over the space which formed the political and symbolic content of the space (Batuman, 2002). The first and largest designed public space of the capital city turned out to be a political stage and an issue which was subjected to struggles [for a detailed narrative of this political-spatial shift, see: İlkay, 2007 and İlkay, 2008].

Şengül (2003) defines a third era in Turkish urbanization and planning history by 1980s as: 'Urbanization of capital'. In 1970s welfare state declined in leading economies of the world which resulted in a shift from redistributive spatial policies to growth oriented neoliberal spatial policies as well. Moreover, identity politics shone out and replaced distributional politics. By 1980s all of these changes influenced the urban green policy in Turkey in three dimensions: (1) use value has replaced with exchange value more deeply which limited the creation and reproduction of urban space; (2) such an approach led to a decrease in the spatial quality and a fragmentation of mechanisms and processes of reproducing urban space; (3) as a result of rise in identity politics, the space reproduction turned out to be more sensitive to representational politics and dynamics, which opened a path to increase in symbolic-political struggles on urban green areas and therefore the public character of the urban green areas precluded the natural dimension and open space character of such spaces (İlkay, 2016). These themes dominate the reproduction mechanisms for urban parks in Turkey, by 1980s, which will be discussed within examples in the next sub-section of the paper.

3 SYMBOLIC STRUGGLES (ON SPATIAL PRACTICE) AT URBAN PARKS

The economic-political context of Turkey brought a shift to exchange value from use value parallel to the world economies. This shift has been deepened in subsequent decades; 2002 is a turning point for Turkish politics, when the Justice and Development Party (JDP) grabbed the power. 'Deregulation' and 'liberalization' have framed Turkish planning and development structure by 2002, which catalysed private sector in urban spatial reproduction processes via legal and institutional rearrangements (Balaban, 2008). This facilitation decreased the quality and quantity of urban green areas (i.e. Fig. 7), which have hardly met the needs of increasing urban populations and developed lands. However, the official sources claim the opposite, which makes it difficult to document the exact transformation of amounts and quality of urban green spaces (İlkay, 2016). Nonetheless, in-depth interviews (conducted during the writer's PhD thesis [İlkay, 2016]) demonstrated that citizens perceive an 'impoverishment' of green and open spaces in Ankara.



Figure 7 – The decrease in green areas in İstanbul
Source: <http://wowturkey.com/forum/viewtopic.php?t=136028&start=160>

The planning system has been gradually fragmented; separate institutions conflicted in the same segment or thematic space of the cities and they had to interfere at a location with respect to various legal texts (Duyguler, 2012). This resulted in a chaos, which grow this impoverishment up. In the cases of Ankara, the metropolitan municipality seems to either conflict or harmonize with the district municipalities, this leads to a duality in the manner to interfere the local spaces and to transfer funds for construction of urban parks. The discussions among municipalities or the juridical struggles between metropolitan municipality and the chamber of architects and planner imply the changing definition of urban green areas. The cases indicate that, the natural character and basic motivation for urban green areas have been withdrawn so

that the parks seem to be conceived as either 'symbolic spaces' or stages for political demonstrations. Figure 8 demonstrates an announcement of the opening ceremony of an urban park, which is attached to urban transformation project area; however in fact such an ceremony seems to perform two political motivations: (1) to give a stage to the existing prime minister to explain his party's propaganda for the forthcoming elections in June 2015 and (2) to legitimate the urban transformation processes via a ceremony of drawing lots for the possible inhabitants of the newly developed housing area (see Fig. 8) (Ilkay, 2016).



Figure 8 – The announcement of Ankara Metropolitan Municipality for the opening ceremony of Hatip Çayı Park on 23.05.2015

In Turkish metropolitan cities, such a content for spatial development was not an issue of 2000s, rather it rooted from earlier. By 1990s, a new political era began with the local elections in 1994. Islamic municipal politicians captured the power of several cities; Refah (Welfare) Party won the elections at the prominent cities such as Ankara, and İstanbul which had been castles and models of spatial modernization project of newly established Turkish Republic since 1923 (Doğan, 2007). Between 1997 and 2002 the Islamic local governments performed several populist spatial implementations at Kızılay Square and Güvenpark such as İftar tents, free public transportation during Bayrams (religious festivals), concerts of popular singers, and delivering plastic balls after victory of national football team. Batuman (2002) discusses the symbolic function of such tents with free public transportation as providing the conservative poor populations (who are living in the peripheries of the city) to reach city centre both bodily and symbolically since they would be visible at urban open public spaces and green areas with their Islamic identity and cultural values. This was a reciprocal desire among the mayors, local politicians and the communities who gave charge to them (Batuman, 2002).

Doğan (2007) defines 'Islamist' as not a rise of spirituality, rather it is an ideology or legitimizing tool on the political stance of the Islamist Politics and it is framed through a set of systematic attempts to regulate both the state and the society. Refah (Welfare) Party [RP] continued their success in the next parliamentary elections in 1995, as becoming one of the prominent actors in the parliament after elections. This success influenced the symbolic struggles occurring in the urban space via spatial projects, symbols and limitations on spatial practice. Doğan (2007) examines the Islamist Municipal Governments in the case of Kayseri, one of the large cities of Turkey, located at Middle Anatolia. He argues the Kayseri case as a significant example of reproducing urban space as a part of their great representational project which serves for empowering the societal-political impact of the Islamist movement within public sphere. Şükrü Karatepe, the mayor, practiced a strategy called 'White City Kayseri' via reconstructing certain public spaces by reorganizing with Islamic motifs between years 1994-1998. These motifs would emphasize the conservative values while deleting the previous symbols and structures. Seljuk motifs and spatialisation symbols dominated such an attempt (Doğan, 2007).



Figure 9 – The decrease in green areas in İstanbul
Source: 'The Park, The Penguin, and The Gas', Öztürkmen (2014)

Related to this issue, one of the recent similar trials is the attempt to construct Topçu Military Post at Taksim Square. This case is critical since not only it is a top-down intervention; but also, this specific intervention occurred with a potent to create counteraction on both symbolic content of spaces and freedom of everyday urban lives (see Fig. 9). Gezi Park in Taksim Square was attempted to be demolished by the party in power, towards the end of May in 2013. The JDP government aimed to re-vitalize Topçu Military Post as a part of pedestrianisation project conceived at the historical and political square of the city. This spatial intervention was certain to be a political attempt, which comprises a symbolic displacement process and an attack to the collective memory of the citizens in İstanbul, and Taksim Square. The government insisted on this spatial project though the counter-views rose; without any legal permit to reconstruct the military post, the trees were begun to be cut off and the police responded harshly to the ones who reject this illegal reconstruction. When the police's intervention got more violent towards activists, and inhabitants of the park –who were trying to protect the space, as the police burnt the tents of the inhabitants, the other cities also began to rebel against both this project and violent activities of the police. Figure 10 demonstrates the harsh struggles among policemen and protestors in Ankara, Kızılay, with reference to the events in İstanbul (İlkay, 2016).



Figure 10 – Kızılay District and Yüksel Street (one of the significant pedestrianized paths), Ankara Policemen are located at Güvenpark, in Kızılay while the protestors are struggling with them along the boulevard (photos by Hüseyin Aldırmaz)

This struggle was not solely against the destruction of a couple of trees; but also, it rooted from a reaction towards intervention on undemocratic re-organization of both our public spaces and daily rituals and rhythms. This conflict indicates the tension among the users and designers of the same space; also, it implies a struggle field on urban everyday spatial practice. Protests continued several days via severe struggles, death and injuries, polemics, all of which has influenced our political-societal atmosphere since then. However, Gezi Park, as a living site and environment showed us a potent to re-create our own urban daily life spaces and practices.



Figure 11. Protestors created their own daily spaces and practices after capturing the park, Gezi Park, İstanbul, 14.06.2013, (Personal Archive)

The protestors with the inhabitants of İstanbul, and out comers all together occupied the park, set their own daily life, rituals, and spaces such as library, forums, music, eating and drinking patterns (without paying money) and spatial-political discussions, activities (see Fig. 11). Although this democratic and communal atmosphere was destroyed with gas bombs and other interventions on the evening of 15th June [by demolishing tents, all the spatial setting, posters, stands, activity nodes], this spatial practice has been a symbol and a model of counter actions towards undemocratic spatial projects and interventions (İlkay, 2016).

Gezi Park event and June Resistance has echoed since then; several park forums and NGOs were created after this model struggle [Such as: Anıtpark Forumu, Atatürk Orman Çiftliği Halk Meclisi, Ayrancı Forumu, Çayyolu Üç Fidan Parkı Forumu, Çayyolu Atapark Forumu, Çayyolu Türkkonut Halk Meclisi, Eryaman Forumu, Ethem Sarısülük Parkı Forumu, Güvenpark Forumu, Seğmenler Parkı Forumu, Yüzüncü Yıl Forumu and Tuzluca Dayanışması (Ankara forumları hayallerindeki Ankara'yı konuştu, Sol, 29.09.2013: <http://haber.sol.org.tr/kent-gundemleri/ankara-forumlari-hayallerindeki-ankarayi-konustu-haberi-80334>)].

However, on the other hand severe interventions and undemocratic spatial projects also continued.

Government, with the help of private sector and certain local governments, has attempted to transform certain green spaces such as constructing a mosque in Validebağ Groove in İstanbul, which is a great breathing space among housing neighbourhoods; constructing the Presidential Palace and an entertainment park in Atatürk Forest Farm, which is both an inheritance of the founder of Turkish Republic and one of the largest and oldest urban green spaces of Ankara (see Fig. 12.); cutting almost 6000 trees in Yırca Village, in Soma, though there is a legal rejection of the construction permit (İlkay, 2016). Also, a recent attempt has threatened the existence and atmosphere of Roma Park in Cihangir, İstanbul, by destructing the most of the space for the construction of social entities although the site has also an archaeological potential.



Figure 12 – Destruction of Atatürk Forest Farm via Construction of the Presidential Palace, 2014
Source: <http://kentinsesi.tv/?m=2014&paged=3>

4 CONCLUSION

All these attempts led to conflicts, implying the symbolic contradiction among the two sides who define the physical boundaries and spatial practice of such spaces: the inhabitants (users) and the government (who has the right to define physical boundaries of public spaces). Urban parks and other public spaces are critical sites to be seen therefore easily turn out to be representational spaces. The form and content of the symbols and political hegemony depends on usually the party in power and relations among top to down and from bottom up societal movements; however, parks which are regarded as purely natural spaces usually function as political sites –scenes and subjects.

Examining the historical phases and transformation of political/symbolic content of urban parks in Turkey (in the cases of Ankara and İstanbul), three essential shifts draw attention: (1) Recent attempts of spatial transformation of urban parks and green spaces usually imply both a rejection a destruction of especially the spatial values and practices of early republican era, the spatial inputs created by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk and his colleagues. Atatürk Forest Farm and Gençlik Park in Ankara, and Gezi Park in İstanbul are essential examples. This turns out to be a demolition process of previous political symbols and an attempt to be seen and applying pressure through space on the opposition. (2) As exchange value has been emphasized, the quality and quantity of urban green areas have been reduced. The green policy and approach has been shifted from a relatively more sensitive conception of nature to a more aggressive approach towards nature and urban space. (3) The holistic reproduction processes and planning tools have been left aside and fragmented institutional structure and planning attempts got on the stage. But all these negative aspects did not delete the importance of urban parks. Rather, urban parks gained significance as representational spaces and turned out to be critical castles of the struggles on spatial practice at urban green areas. Acknowledgements: Special thanks to Prof. Dr. Ali Cengizkan, who supported all dimensions of the study, and contributed to the process of shaping the boundaries of the research.

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ID 1406 | GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AS EMERGING OPPORTUNITIES FOR INCLUSIVENESS. COMPLEXITY AND DYNAMICS IN MUNICH NORTHERN REGION

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1 BACKGROUND

Munich (Figure 1) is a growing city and is one of the most competitive metropolitan areas in Germany (Figure 2), characterised by a dense concentration of functions developed through complex and dynamic ecological, social and economic networks acting at city, region and global levels. The increase of landscape consumption due to settlement and traffic is accordingly above average and accounted for 6% between 2004 and 2010. The population of the City of Munich, currently about 1.5 Mio., is expected to grow by approximately 230,000 inhabitants until 2030. With around 7% the expected population growth between 2010 and 2030 is nowhere else as high in Germany; the actual number of population for the whole region is around 5,5 Mio.



Figure 1 – Englischer Garten, Munich (Stefanie Grüber, 2013)