

EMEK BAYRAK

Kocaeli University, Turkey

MAKBULE ŞİRİNER ÖNVER

Kocaeli University, Turkey

POLITICAL POWER, RESISTANCE AND SQUARES

Abstract:

Capitalism has emerged along with cities, and cities constitute the agent of its development. The design, construction, formation and usage of urban spaces are very important for capitalist production. In that sense, the struggle for space is a struggle between the ruler and the ruled. Squares are one of the places where this struggle becomes concrete and visible. This fight transforms the squares continuously.

The government which applies neoliberal policies and the public emerge as the agents of this transformation. Neoliberal policies and the authoritarian tendencies which are attached to it may be the dynamics of the struggle. The dynamics of people's struggles for the squares contain different demands that range from reforms to total transformation of the system.

Squares are one of the places where this struggle occurs in Turkey, just like other countries. Therefore, the government endeavors to keep urban squares under control at all times. İstanbul Taksim Square is an example of this. In this study, the struggles which take place in relation to squares, particularly the Taksim Square, is discussed. 1st of May and Taksim Gezi Park protests which occurred in 2013 are examined in this perspective.

Keywords:

Political power, square, Taksim Square, struggle

JEL Classification: Y80, Y90

Introduction

The city expressed as the constructed environment, is the subject of the capitalist development. All the relations of the capitalism is reproduced in the urban area. The urban area is the reproduction place of both capital and social relations. In this respect urban area – society exhibit a dialectic relation; structures, affects and reproduces each other. So, the design, construction, the form and style, the utilization of urban areas is all by itself a struggle arena between the consciously or unconsciously governing and the governed. The government with the effort to structure the city, organizes the social life by this way.

The area which is a minimised microcosmos of the city life, is the place inholding excitement, relaxation, bazaars, public ceremonies, meeting with people and observing the life. Urban areas are the places of democracy fights, won or lost (Kırmızı, 2012). In the historical process, according to the production style/ social relations the utilization, dimension and function of the areas differ.

Even if in the urban areas; specific city state gatherings, public speeches, political actions like agora, are not done as in the past, it can be said that also in our day, the urban areas somehow keeps its political identity as the protest, political action and speech area (Bıyık, 2011: 18).

From the viewpoint of political power, areas are the urban spaces they try to display power, control and guard. While the areas are preferred to become a touristic area, a crossroad for the vehicle traffic since the 2000's, it has become a struggle area with its increasing importance from the view of the public opposition. Existence in the the areas, opposition to the destruction of the areas or artificially constructed pretended areas disconnected from the city have interlocked with the other demands of the public opposition. In the last years, the government's attitudes towards the protest actions in the cities and areas have rather toughened. It is seen that many protests have been smothered by police violence. The applied tough interventions, serve for reinforcing and extending the authorities of the governments (Bıyık, 2011: 18).

In Turkey the areas have entered into the daily life with the republic period. With the establishment of the nation state, the areas have been constituted and arranged with the style to create a nation state and to symbolize the newly established republic.

These areas have been organised as the areas in which the ceremonies and parades has been performed to constitute a new and a common memory. In 2000's the urban areas has been important sources for the continuity of capitalism. Accompanied with the neoliberal policies, the cities and the areas have been started to utilize as the rent sources. With the closed structure of the government to the participation and with its intolerance to the "objections", the areas, which are the gathering and aggregation places of the citizens, have been controlled/ kept caved and on the other hand have been deadened by commodifying.

Within the scope of this study, what the urban area means and how it is used from the view of the the governing and the governed, is studied in the context of social relations in special to İstanbul Taksim Square on the axis of 1 May protest and gezi park resistance. At the beginning the development of urban areas and general characteristics are examined. Afterwards the areas' relation with the social actions is discussed. Than in consideration of the statements made; the İstanbul Taksim Square, the social actions focused on 1 May protest, gezi park resistance occured in the year of 2013, the government's approach and implementations to these actions are studied.

The Development and Main Characteristics of Urban Areas

Squares are one of the public areas of the cities as are the streets, avenues, parks. In these public areas the squares take place on the top to provide the citizens to gather together, to form a common mind by discussing the subjects about their common benefits, to enter into a common agency, to communicate face to face. While the streets and the avenues are the runway areas, squares are the only and main public areas designed to provide social meetings, to realize the rituals, to perform different functions.

In the period of the historical process the urban areas have been used for different purposes and designed according to the economic, social and political conditions of the day. The Urban areas which are open spaces in which many functions are realised, are assembly areas called as agora, forum, plaza, campo, piazza, grand place (Özer and Ayten, 2005: 96).

For the squares, which is the point of junction of the pedways from the districts and the streets, to be a square it must be pedestrian. The squares having also the function

to be the city centre, witness busy actions and milestones. Also with its social functions develop an identity to the city (Önder and Aklanoğlu, 2002: 96-97).

With the first cities arising the urban areas had also come into existence. In the Sümer cities, the square in front of the city gate had existed both as a market and an area in which the judicial agreements were made. (Boysan and Bilgin, 1996: 79). In the greek cities the areas called as Agora were the center of the business and the political life in the center of the city. In the roman period, the squares had been clustered around the forums in which the gladiator fights and the public actions were performed (Önder and Aklanoğlu, 2002: 96-97). Roma forum was also the area which was the social, economic and political center of the city (Kılıçbay, 2000:42).

The west cities had risen and developed as a result of their own specific situation. Similarly, the middle east or the east cities had constructed their cities as the formation, organization and reflection of their economic, social and cultural components.

As the urban area does not develop independent of the socio-economic and cultural structure, also the urban area has been on the position affecting these components. From this view, socio-economic and cultural differences and developments, had brought out different urban formations in the historical period. Especially, in the middle-east the effect of islamic religion shows itself in the city areas. Historically, when the cities dominated by islamic religion are studied, it is seen that the east-style squares do not exist. But, the non-existence of the east-style squares does not mean that the functions imputed to the squares did not occur and "squares" did not exist. A spatial formation carrying out the functions of the east- squares, distributing these functions to different areas exists.

In the middle-east cities the mosque courtyards serves as a public sphere. In the the districts having an important place in the urban fabrics square do not exist. They have different areas having the functions of the west squares. The mosque courtyards are used as the squares of the city.

" In the islamic city's the public spaces are not the areas having a specific form, they are the total fields between the districts, bazaars, mosques and it can be let on about the hierarchies of the areas instead of a single area. [...] Infact in the islamic city's the community which is the main power, gathers together after the friday midday prayer in

the city's major mosque and the area in which the political decisions are made is courtyard of the grand mosque of that city. Another evidence, that the mosque courtyard is the major area of the city, is that they had placed the major mosque of the city on the area of the forum of the Roman city's they had conquered" (Boysan and Bilgin, 1996:75).

In the cities the social life passes in the mosque and the bazaar. Out of the cities there are areas called as *coffin* having the capacity to keep the whole community and serving for a different function. These areas are the places; the soldiers gathered before the great military expeditions and the citizens could watch the penalty of deaths and executions. Beside these places had been used as bazaar and used as the places where collective rain prayers were done when there was poor precipitation (Boysan and Bilgin, 1996: 76).

In the middle ages the city's obsolescence and diminution affected the areas. Since the 11th century, in the cities developing again with trade and especially in the Italian cities the areas had become important. Especially the areas in the fronts of the religious constructions had come in to use as the urban areas. Square (*piazza*) which is an important part of the cities had become the center of social and economic life further than its predecessors. For example, the first banks had risen here, the first social movements had burst out here and the leaders of these movements had been punished here (Kılıçbay, 2000: 43). In Italy public movements are called as "*movimenti di piazza*" (area movements). From this point of view for the movement the term of "going to the area" is also used (Boysan and Bilgin, 1996: 76). In the Renaissance period, areas had started to be organized as to show the prestige and the power of the royalty near the palaces. Since the 19th century, in the process of building modern cities areas had also taken part. Changes occurred in the functions and forms of the areas propitiously to the changes in the cities (Önder and Aklanoğlu, 2002: 97). In the 20th century areas have now mainly two functions: For different reasons (feasts, festivals, political protests, parades ext.) a gathering area for the masses and vehicles in terms of transportation (Boysan and Bilgin, 1996: 82). Now we are face to face with the areas affected directly with the application of globalization and neoliberal politics in the social and economic arenas and is formed according to these conditions.

With the traffic concentration, overvaluation of the city land , especially the central areas brings out the destruction of the areas in the public center of the city. Due to the traffic the urban areas turns into an intersection, for the rent and supervision to be realized, the squares, that are public areas, are privatized, sold to the construction companies. The areas that are under guard due to the historical buildings and productions are transformed to green area, road, business organization area touristic area so to loose the square function. The areas are also damaged especially due to structuring the city according to vehicle traffic, the areas are structured by directing the traffic to the center. Boysan and Bilgin (1996: 84) summarizes the case as below;

“ If in the following period an unexpected politization is not realized, in the area struggle the traffic will predominate the public utilization. If we remember that the celebrations are performed by driving around, sounding the horn and flagging instead of celebrating in the areas; we can state this: The public usage of the areas belonged to the period that the custom of acting together existed, but driving around in the traffic belongs to the period of the individuals who are not together even if they are side-by-side.”

Boysan ve Bilgin’s “unexpected politization”’s had risen up and rising up on every 1st of May in terms of Taksim Area and beginning from Taksim Gezi Actions experinced in 2013 in almost all areas of Turkey.

Areas and Social Actions

Areas are one of the most important place of the struggle between the goverment and the dissidents and during the history the dominants had used the areas to empower their own authority. The power acquiring the management of a city, penetrates their management to the public areas. The goals of the goverment to control the urban areas is to limit the entrance and exit, to discipline the behaviours inside. There for; during the history the areas had witnessed the public actions and the goverment’s demands directed to realize their strict control demands and violence (Boysan and Bilgin, 1996: 75).

The areas as the places that the public socialize in between, interact with; seems to be open to everybody; in reality we confront the areas as the places that the goverment makes feel its monopoly on the power and political decision mechanism to the public. Since the moden city has risen, the public areas has been used as

“advertisement area” and “nerve center” by the dominants. Besides these areas have the reputation to be the places of great social actions such that most of them got their names from such events.

Main arterial road and specially the areas are the places, in which the hegemony struggle, carried out against the dominant factors in the society, occurs. While the government wants to maintain control in this area too as in the other areas, the social attempts aim to get rid of the government’s hegemony and annihilate this hegemony by turning these areas into a target for the actions.

In Europe in the middleage, the people challenging with the authority had been penetrated in the areas. Execution like rope and whip penalties had been applied here. This arises from the authority’s intimidation of opponent idea and actions. Just like the middleage Europe, also modern capitalist government worries about the actions out of auto-control. Even in the class society the dominant political mind has changed, the functions of the areas, based upon strengthening the dominant regime, has not changed. The dominant class expresses its power by celebrating formal ceremonies used as a repression mechanism and by the construction of monuments and statues.

However the areas are not the play field of only dominants, but at the same time are used also by the oppressed. And in this case, the dominants contrary strategies sometimes does not give result. As an historical example the Paris Commune shows this. Because no protection of Haussmann had worked and could prevent the 1871 Paris Commune.

City life and areas turn into an area continuously monitored by the cameras by the government. The citizens surrounded by the cameras continuously enter into the surveillance area and their actions are saved. The usages and the users seen as contrary are removed away. This means the explicit destruction of the public area. This situation means forming an area that will be interfered and shaped only by the government by building fear in the urban space. Because the tools to shape the areas by the government are not limited by fear, oppression and the police violence. At this point one of the most important tools used is monitoring. “ Everbody who feels the monitoring view and the severity of the view, interiorises the view so that at last comes to the point of observing himself, in this way will manage this view on everybody and

against himself. Excellent Formula: A continuous power and as a result a ridiculous cost!" (Foucault, 2003: 95).

The character of the city life becomes a meta like the city itself in a world where consumerism becomes the major aspect of economic politics. Postmodernist passion surrounds the people in both consumer habits and cultural forms. In this way, fast-foods, shopping centers like the craft bazaar places, multiplexes, box boutiques increase (Harvey, 2008.: 31).

The areas also take their share from this process, through which the neoliberal politics are applied, in these days. Another development accompanying the formation of the areas by violence, monitoring, interfering by the government is the privatization of areas. At this point the commoditization of the areas appears. The commoditization of the areas by losing the usage value results with loss of the protest and agency function of the area. At the same time, this means that the areas are defeated against the change value. This is actualized mostly by the shopping centers (Baysal, 2011: 41).

But a social opposition holding on the areas against the violence actions, monitorings and commodification of the areas applied by the government, always exists. Because for the oppressed the areas are the ideal opposition platforms. This platform is an area of coming across with the 'big brother'. Areas provide two main factors against the official discourse for the resistance: Field and volume. The sufferers of the system, oppressed and privatised challenge against the system by gathering together in these areas. In this way, the public space and the areas are chosen as a challenge place by the classes and the identities. In terms of the social actions, areas are the center of rebellions and revolutions against the dominant class. For the oppressed the role of the areas is to play the host for the resistance mechanisms. Because these areas increase the power of demands and sanctions.

One of the versions of this resistance is the occupation actions – aims to gain the areas again with the occupation actions against the restraining and privatization of city centers by the government. Occupation of areas mean the standing against and resistance of the citizens and the oppressed against the practices of seizing, auditing, controlling, commoditization, gentrification of the government and the capital on the areas (Penbecioğlu, t.y.) While the capital is insisting the consumption culture on the

society by using the areas, the social actions uses the areas as the propaganda fields. For example, Occupy actions had been realized in Wall Street, the finance region of New York city. Activists had occupied the capital center to be able to dub their claims and demands spiritedly. Election of the areas insistently for the occupation actions and social challenge, at the same time carries the meaning of opposition against the arrangement of the social life over these areas by the government. These movements challenge the government's strategy of both commodification and seising the area of their opponents whom they see as an enemy.

İstanbul Taksim Square

One of the most important areas of İstanbul even of Turkey is Taksim Square. It has a fundamental and historically important place in İstanbul which has a large and dense population. The area is a connecting gathering center in terms of pedestrian and vehicle traffic. İstanbul Taksim Square is a centre which is memorialized with many political and social cases beside being a touristic center of attraction. In terms of this study the main important character of the square is that it is always an area of challenge in terms of the government and citizens oppressed.

The area is generally in the monopoly of the government, official use. In the square demonstrating, gathering, issuing a press statement, except the cases determined by the government, is forbidden. Generally the actions, gatherings and press statements in the classification of these prohibitions are about the discussions directed to the applications of the government and opinions and statements apart from official discourse. With the last government, different restrictions about laying wreath to Atatürk statue, the symbol of republic, has been introduced. In the previous government terms, different civil society organizations were able to lay wreath to the Atatürk Statue on national days and holidays. But now, this is put away. Laying wreath to the Statues of Atatürk, except the official authorities stated in the regulation, is forbidden.

Prohibitions about gathering in the area are not valid for the celebrations of the wins of the supporters of different football teams, the protests appropriate for official discourse, sending the young men to soldiership, new year celebration and etc. Even these gathering comes to the point to build up an autocade in the way that intersection and roads going to the area are closed, toleration of the government is permanent.

The month of ramadan determines another form of the area usage which has become a routine with AKP (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi -Justice and Development Party). In the month of Ramadan iftar tents are set up, elaborating to the “old Ramadans” different activities are realized after the iftar upto the suhoor. When all these are regarded, it can be said that the only civil usage of the square is for transportation. Istanbulites use the area as a transfer area since it forms transportation network in which the roads going to metro, bus, collective taxi intersect. From now on, the area is not a place in which amusements and activities are arranged, the protests are expressed, a short break is taken out of the bounds of the government (Gümüő, 2013).

Taksim Square takes its name from a construction known as “Taksim Maskemi” builded to serve out the water from the reservoir existing in Taksim to the surrounding districts in the Ottoman period. It means the place distributing the water.. With the proclamation of the republic, planning of İstanbul had been taken up and Taksim Square took its first form during this planning.

The cities had also been included in the modernisation process beginning with the Turkey Republic Establishment. While the modern cities were being builded, the areas were also included. The areas decorated with the statues expressing the republic, had been builded. The cities (independent of socio-economic political process) taken as reference were France cities of the 19th century. The likes of Paris areas had been tried to be builded in Ankara, İstanbul and İzmir (Kahraman, 2013). İstanbul Taksim Square is also one of these areas.

In 1936 upon Atatürk’s invitation the french architect and urban specialist Henri Prost had come in order to design the planning of İstanbul. Although Prost is known as a supporter of preservation of history and natural environment, since the traditional urban fabric is affected by the fires and is not appropriate for the standards of the changing life, he adopted a a conversion strategy in the direction of a complete modernization of the historical urban fabric in İstanbul (TMMOB, 2012). With the proclamation of the republic the first and full-scale arrangement has been done. It is one of the area builded as the symbol of republic. In the beginning the area known as Taksim Republic Area was comprised of four constituents composing an integral with eah other. These are; “Su Maskemi – Water Reservoir”, Atatürk Cultural Center,

Republic Statue ve Taksim Gezi Park (TMMOB, 2012). So these constructions form the historicity of Taksim Square. But, especially erecting the Taksim Republic Statue and planning İstanbul as a modern city, in one sense symbolizes the transformation of İstanbul from the capital town of Ottoman Empire to a city of Republic, a new period.

Except the executions until time the of Lütfi Kırdar's governorship and mayoralty (İstanbul governor – mayor) the major arrangement about the area was at the period of Menderes government. Bedrettin Dalan, the mayor in the term of Turgut Özal presidency known with the applications of the neoliberal policies, realized the third upheaval.

AKP government, now on the state and mayoralty, wants to realize the last big change which is a follow-up of the many projects of Dalan on the area. When the changes aimed to be realized in the last term (the changes which came to the agenda in 2011 and which has been partially prevented as a result of the social challenge with the start of the Gezi Park destruction in the year of 2013) are studied; it is seen that a whole change is planned on the area in which the constituents of Atatürk Cultural Center, Republic Statue and Taksim Gezi Park forming Taksim Square exist. With this Project the square will lose its character of being an area.

Besides the constructions in the area and around the areas are historical park and statue symbols, Taksim Square is also an important place generating a social memory for the citizens. It is an area where feasts, festivals, social joys, protests, assertions are realized. The If the project known as Taksim Pedestrianization Project is realized, the utilization of the square will get harder and in one sense will be closed (TMMOB, 2012). With Taksim Pedestrianization Project the roads going to Taksim Square are taken under the road and Topçu Post and mosque which were destroyed in the republic period are wanted to be constructed again. This is a Project to create an unmanned public area, Taksim Square "Under the name of pedestrianization" (Hür, 2012). Although it is contrarian against the government's own regulation arrangements, what is targeted to be done is the reason of the start of Gezi Park Activities. With the first conflicts by the reacting people standing against the construction vehicle trying to enter the Gezi park against the nonfunctioning and neutralization of Taksim Square named as Taksim Pedestrianization Project, it transformed to a street movement spreaded over the whole of Turkey against the government.

“ With the the destruction of Gezi Park coming into the agenda for the construction of a new shopping center in Taksim, on the midnight of 27 May 2013, the process starting with entering the park with no warning and the attempt to disforest without a licence was reacted by the people trying to protect their future and defend a public area as a resistance indication taken as a ““occupation movement”. The prior aim of the activists is to prevent the ruinate of the park which is a common municipal by camping in the park” (Önver and Kanbak, 2014).

But irreconcilable, the non-participation “I know and apply” manner of government, oppressive and authoritative attitude of government about the realization of the Project, provide the growth and proliferation of the protests. With glossing over the cases by violence and unbalanced force applied by the government, by the mainstream media’s publications siding the government it made an opposite reaction and brought the propogation of the protests locationally and by the time, aiming the government.

The violence applications of the police, gase fireworks, shooting the protesters with the real cartridge, causing their death and excecation against the peaceful demonstration about the destruction of Gezi Park and in return the non- retract of the Project about the destruction of Gezi Park caused the protests to become widespread and to turn the anger directly to the goverment and the president. The goverment continued its authoritarian and capital sided attitude insisently and in an aggressive way (Önver and Kanbak: 2014). This attitude was no longer the problem of the trees. The occupation of the Square and Gezi Park by the opponents, resulted with the new political experiences for the attendants and many people.

The challange of the liberalization and acquisition of the places and the areas, provided the transaction of the collective practics to communal life pratics. This corresponds to a pratic of directly realizing the democracy even if the classes and consciousness level of the attendants differs. Infact another contribution of the challenge over the square is to present an opportunity to be an agency for the apolitic people by pulling them into the politics. In this way Taksim Square has made a new and profound notch to the social opponent’s memory. In any case; Taksim Square social opponence holds a challenge experience and consciousness of many years about the 1 may worker's day. In Turkey, every goverment has closed this area which is the most impotant area for the goverment and the opponents, and pushed down the

activities by violence. While the area is open to other meetings and gatherings, it is seen that the political actions and 1 May meetings are prevented. Şükrü Aslan said this matter, In this challenge between the opponence and the goverment Taksim Square is an important symbol from the point of worker class and social opponence. At the same time, it is a political place instantiated by the 1 May 1977 bloodshed (Çuhadar, 2011). The process of Taksim Square's being a political area has intertwined with yhe 1 May worker's day in Turkey. After forbiddance of 1 May by the occupation forces, with the proclamation of the republic the workers were face to face with the industrial action demand. The 1 May actions forbidden in 1924 has been celebrated in 1928 for the first time. Than it was forbidden again. After the long years and oppressions, a 1 May demonstration with the broadest participation has been realized for the first time by confederation of progressive trade unions in 1976 in İstanbul. In 1977 again in Taksim Square ,it has been gathered for a 1 May demonstration with the attendance of 500 thousand people. But in consequence of the opened fire to gathering crowd, 34 people have died and tens of people has been injured. So 1 May of 1977 is known as bloody 1 May. The attackers were not found but in Taksim Square 1May Meetins were forbidden. By the 1980 military coup, as all the demonstrations 1 May was also forbidden (Öztan, 2013; Çorbacioğlu, 2009). Upto the year of 2010 social opponence, workers, some unions had always forced these prohibitions. Even in every 1 May Taksim Square had been announced as a forbidden area, there had always been workers trying to enter the area. After 32 years from 1977, 1 May has been accepted as public holiday. After the compelling challenges, Taksim Square has been opened to the 1 May demonstrations in 2010. In 2010 in the opening of Taksim Square for 1 May demonstrations the president Erdoğan stated in his speech that “ 1 May 2010 is a concrete memorial of how Turkey has changed, grew mature, brought taboos, demolished the status quo, pulled away the incitation and provocation fear” (Radikal Newspaper, 02.05.2010). But when it is came to 2013, the same goverment, this time has forbidden the entrance to Taksim Square on 1 May. A hard violence had been committed to the mass all the same time trying to enter the Taksim Square on 1 May (Radikal Newspaper, 02.05.2010) when it is came to 2014 the trials to break the Taksim Square ban on 1 May, had this time increased further with the anger of the The usage of the square by the social opposition on the base of different demands and criticism is always blocked by police violence by the goverment. Bu on the all 1 mays what does no change is that the workers,

oppressed, constituents of social opposition are exposed to the government's hard attacks, even not allowing to the entrance into the square.

The challenge repeated every year, is in one sense comparing the powers, an challenging for the break down of the resistance. Taksim square, witness the challenge of the government and the social opponence. The last government undertaking a new Project to turn this challege in the favor of the government, has given the signal that the social challenge will get even harder especially by his approach shown to Gezi Park Resistance.

Result

The square, a public area of the city, in an very important challenge area both for the governments and the social movements . While the government shows its authority and power over the areas, the social movements tries to build the areas as the place of the reistance. The tools of the politics of the government to preponderance the areas are monitoring, controlling, closing to the actions and suppressing with violence. With the neoliberal politics, the collaboration of the government and the capital tries to make areas nonfunctional by commodifying the areas. The goverment, dominant try to silence the voice of the oppressed in every period. The oppressed has always searched and found a way to make their voices heard. At this point, these areas has been the most important places in which this struggle has been experienced in the most visible and dense way. The goverments trials to suppress the areas, show their power from here by their authoritarian arrangements were tried to be disabled by the oppresseds and the opponents opposite maneuver. This has directed the opponents and social movements to find new challenges and resistance ways. 1 May and Gezi Park Resistance cases can be understood over such a dialectics. Areas are very important in terms of the opponents, oppresseds. Because the dominant ideas have the opportunities to make its voice heard easily by the mass media but the most important addresses of these classes to make their voice heard are the streets and areas. So oppresseds and opponents both try to state themselves and make their voice heard and challenge to be in the area. In one sense they get into "free fight" for the areas.

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