

# THE POWER AND NATURE: THE RESISTANT SUBVERSIONS

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## **ABSTRACT**

This is a study of the dominant power of governmental implementations in spatial practices and their disregard for nature and its representational values in the public sphere. It begins by making a brief mention of the struggle for Gezi Park in Taksim Square and the reasons behind its rapid development into a social phenomenon. The initial emergence of the activist movements in Taksim Gezi Park seem to have been a reaction to the government-based deconstruction and construction processes and actions for Taksim, as a place in the heart of the city that is well-known for social events, demonstrations and social activities. The square was closed by the government, preventing the holding of such social activities as the May 1 celebrations in 2013, despite Taksim Square being a symbol of May 1 for the demonstrators; and still under re-construction processes, changing the spatial organization of the square.

The destructive nature of the government-based construction processes became a stimulating phenomenon for the public when attempts were made to remove the trees from Taksim Gezi Park, which was considered at the time an act of violence of the governmental processes against the natural environment through its means and apparatuses. The government's actions spurred into action not only activists, but also many of the inhabitants of İstanbul and people all across Turkey, who saw Taksim Gezi Park as a unique social space for İstanbul, as a green area at the heart of the city. The sudden increase in activism and demonstrations, not only in the city, but also across the whole country, depicted oneway management of the construction processes in Taksim, and the rising tension within society resulting from a lack of reconciliation and mediation between different political groups, thoughts and ideologies – in other words, the decreasing democratic processes in the country in decision making that disregard nature and the associated public sphere.

In this respect, Taksim Gezi Park becomes a symbolic and resistant space, not only for the activists protesting the construction processes, but also for the political struggles that emerged as a result of power tests and non-democratic decision-making processes related to issues that concern the entire nation. It became a representative social space of the resistance of a social movement, articulated through events, demonstrations and the physical bodies of the activists as a result of the struggles between the security forces and the demonstrators. These actions and reactions turned Taksim Gezi Park into a place, a space, for the resistance of activists against the decreasing democracy. The park gained representational meaning beyond its physical and cognitive values, based on the experiences, actions and reactions as part of the political and social struggles, which came to spread across the entire country. It becomes obligatory, in this sense, to question the role of the space itself in political and social organizations to re-identify whether the space itself could be part of the social and political resistance.

This study, in this sense, aims to understand initially the meaning of social space and its dynamics, as constructed by the public sphere under the control of the government, its apparatuses and its sovereigns. The social meaning of spatial practice is reinforced by a discussion of the dialectical relationship between nature and subjectivity, creating their own dominant forces within themselves under the concept of spaces of resistance. In this regard, nature is not only a source for understanding the social sphere and its dynamics under political and ideological forces, but also its representational power, as identified within these socio-political and cultural struggles.

## **INTRODUCTION**

This critical essay began to take form in the Arch 505 Advanced Architectural Design Research course in Middle East Technical University during the Gezi Park events of May 2013, which served as a backdrop for the city and

country in a period of social struggle, especially between the activists and the government security forces, as a result of the lack of democratic processes and non-reconciliation. Since the initial and specific conditions of any aspect is seen as a significant input for the end result of the produced knowledge, it is thought to be necessary to denote the existent situations of the essay that written in.

It may not be misleading in that sense to bring to mind the incidental record of the national government of Turkey related to nature, since the paper has already been written in the period of the Gezi Park events. This draws attention to the government's politico-economical and ideological reckonings with the values developed throughout the modernization process in the Republic, in which the role and the power of representation of nature were apparent.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP) government, which has enjoyed 14 years of rule that have been marked by repeated violent interventions to establish its authority in its dominance over nature, has showed its animosity in its destruction of the representational values attributed to the natural assets of the country. Accordingly, the violent operations of the government related to the county's natural environments, including AOÇ (the Atatürk Forest Farm and Zoo), METU Forest in Ankara and Gezi Park, bring to light not only its rent-driven destructive activities, but also its institutional and ideological animosity with its secular predecessors.

The term 'secularity' is not accidental here to provide the representational power of nature as an asset of modernization processes in the country in the early Republican period. Most of the natural environments discussed here were created as a result of the rational intention to celebrate the modernization process in the country, which was influenced by the secular thought of modernity. In this sense, the representational power of natural and institutional assets in the country has become a target for the government, supported generally by conservative democrats and fundamentalists. The existing condition signifies not only the creation of rentable areas for the economic exploitation of nature, but also the ideological oppositions in the country itself, where there has been a lack of mediation.

Just several months after the Gezi Park events, the country experienced an invasion by the Great Ankara Municipality of METU Forest to create a new highway. The preceding period had witnessed a continuous exploitation of a significant part of AOÇ (Atatürk Forest Farm and Zoo), which has not only natural reservations for the city center but also the representational meaning as a memorial to the establishment of the modern city as the capital of the Republic, became the site of the new Presidential Palace after cutting down trees and changing the surrounding natural conditions. In İstanbul, the third bridge between Europe and Asia has been constructed, opening up the surrounding natural environment for possible further market-driven exploitation. In the last five-year period, the 'deviant project' has also been on the agenda of the government, which is proposing the creation of an alternative to the Bosphorus, and creating its own representational and rentable geographies by exploiting nature itself. This can in short be summarized as a project of the standing government aimed at creating its own cultural geographies so as to stabilize its power.

At this point it is worth mentioning the struggle for Gezi Park and Taksim Square, and the reason behind it, and explaining how it became a social phenomenon in such a short time in the heart of the city of İstanbul, the country's largest city. The representational power of the place, as Taksim Square, as forbidden to be entered in May 1 event was the initial reason for the rise in tension between the government and the labor unions. In the preceding period, this tension had been a compelling argument in the apparatuses of the government for the destruction of the park at the center of the city, and for the construction of its own representational space to stabilize its power through spatial practices as still in the actual condition of Taksim.

In this respect, Taksim Gezi Park became a symbolic and resistant space for activists demonstrating against not only the construction process, but also the political struggles that emerged as a result of power tests and autocratic decision-making strategy of the government related to issues that concerned the entire nation. As mentioned earlier, not only Taksim Gezi Park, but also many other places in different cities in the country became sites of resistance against the government and the security forces. It was not only about the space itself, but was also related directly with political and social phenomena, i.e., the opposition of different ideologies. The most dramatic aspect of these events and actions was not merely the spaces that formed part of the resistance across the entire country, but the rising violence that occurred within these spaces as a result of the increased political and social tension.

In this context, the formalization processes of thought and political judgement come to be re-understood, in a general sense, how the instrumentalization dominates thought itself. Although the thought, the thought in the Enlightenment, is a way to found the unified and universal humanity with objective reasoning processes in the search of 'the real', the processes of formalization and subjective reasoning not only increased the tension between man and nature, but also society in the public sphere. Additionally, and most dramatically, it is clearly apparent how the formalization processes of thought to identify the real could have created the war machines that dominated the activists, as engaged to 'the thought' of humanity itself.

### **Space, society and politics: Spaces of Events and Experiences**

Initiated before, the essay primarily concentrates The focus of this study is the social construct of space, in other words, the spaces of places (Castells, 1994). Space, as a social construct, goes beyond the conceptual space in its dimensional aspects, but is defined within the interaction between social actions and the events experienced within the nature of materialistic properties. The place hence signifies the interaction between objects, people and events, actions and reactions, creating dynamic relations that go beyond ontological meanings.

The social space can be defined by attempting to understand the specific condition emerged as a result of the events and experiences in Gezi Park. The social construct of space is hidden, in this respect, in the history of mankind, as a result of the already experienced actions, engaged within the production and consumption relations, social realms occurred in that space, leading to the new social and spatial practices. The traces of the reasoning processes of mankind, therefore, are all saved in the space, creating the meaning for place; as a definition, as a social construct. The definition of the experienced space is depended with the meaning and the identity of space and the social interactions within. Even the a priori space, as ideal space, gets its meanings with the ontological existence of the subject in that space. The social actions and intellectual processes derived from these actions and interactions, which generate the production of knowledge about the social space. In other words, space only becomes meaningful by the interaction between man and man; and man and nature within by creating memorial actions and relations for the future.

Ideology plays significant role in the production and the creation of social space throughout the political and social relations. Since the history of mankind is full of different thoughts, power struggles and power relations, or in other words, different ideologies engaged within the space question, the production of space (Lefebvre, 1991) is open to the influences of political sphere. The question is further to get the power of space whether it constructs counter-ideologies and resistances from itself (Sargin, 2000). Namely, it is not only to understand the social interactions and political relations influencing the production of space, but the space itself to get the influence of social and political relations as a power of space, space as a social construct. It is both to understand, in short, the social space as a phenomenon influencing the political relations; and the politics over space resulting in the production of conceived space.

It starts first with the power of space, therefore, as a political phenomenon, in the regulation of socio-political movements due to the notion of social space. Gezi Park, in that respect, is the striking example, in the discussion of power of space as a social and political phenomenon. It is one of examples for the spatial practices of the forces of 'ideological state apparatuses' (Althusser, 1971). The space, Gezi Park itself, in that sense, has generated its actors of opposition in the existence of power relations.

Hence the power relations could be seen with their double-sided aspects in this condition: the influenced; and the influencing. This fact always creates the possibility of the influencing power of the influenced. In other words, it creates an opportunity to the influenced phenomena in the power relations to reshape those relations in the interacted way, as a result of these interrelated sets of relations between man and man, man and nature, and objects and objects. Thus, it is the resistance of the space creates its own counter-hegemonic powers in these interactive processes. The representational power of space reinforces the symbolic signification processes grounding for the meaning of space, a place of power and of resistance.

In this respect, the social space itself has its own meanings and identity constructed through these social relations. The social interactions force over the space creating a memorial identity and meanings. Social memory together with the cognitive aspects of the space create a social phenomenon, a representative power.

The social space hence stands as a social and political realm with the power over things; and power over dominating relations, in themselves.

Taksim, with its meanings as a social space, has depicted the mentioned resistance against the instant decision making processes of authorities. This is the fact that not only has led to the immediate reaction and resistance of activists repressed under authoritarianism but also defined a certain memorial meaning for the representational power of that resistance. Identity, representational and experienced meanings and values as memories becomes critical intersections created in the interfaces of space between the public sphere as a powerful contemplation for the revolt of the repressed under authoritarian procedures of decision making and spatial practices. The space itself, therefore, has the political power in itself against the possible dominant forces over it creating its own resistance and social phenomenon.

Although The resistance holds the actions and representational meanings occurred in a sudden and depicts the internal opposition against the dominant forces as emerged at the demarcation/breaking point of the place itself in a repressive process. It is possible to read this process with multi-layered aspects in the public sphere with the restructuring processes of authoritarian government using the state apparatuses to enforce the dynamics in the society and mass media for the re-creation of cultural codes and representational meanings.

It is still Taksim today in İstanbul having the identity and function to regulate, to stimulate, to volatile the social and physical movements of people when we try to make an analogy between its historical feature and the existing condition. Since Taksim was really used to divide and distribute water for the city as it gets its name from that function, it is the equivalent function of the place today to gather and make the people flow around. In that sense, the concrete condition of Taksim, as a natural asset, represents the resistant power of the social meanings as a political and ideological force over the dominant power over the space of place itself in its ultimate form. It shows the specific materialistic qualities of space, interacted with certain social events as a social power over dominant/cognitive meanings – as a “bottom-up” force (Sargin, 2000), as a way of constructing ideologies in itself.

and their instrumental procedures as the base of the space beyond experiences. The process of ideological production of space includes the cognitive and intellectual concepts, formalization of these concepts together with the instruments as also derived from concepts. The end results are shaped by these formalization processes mostly influenced by subjective reasoning. Although the ideal space out of materialistic qualities as a concept, as a project, is even beyond the sensorial space and the experiences within, the production of ideological space is derived from subjective thoughts and becomes a mere reduction of the thought into instrumentalized and materialized practices (Horkheimer, 1947). In these practices, the power relations derived in the development of instruments together with other formalization processes of the thought. The said aspect transforms the ideal space into ideological one. This fact sometimes emerged as a program superposed onto spatial practices with certain subjective needs, and sometimes as a practice of representational meanings of some knowledge, signs, code with certain formalization processes. It is emerged sometimes as traditional values or even as political formalization processes of thoughts into space. Thus, the ideal space itself is sacrificed for certain ‘ideological subjective reasoning processes’, and transformed into mere materialistic and formalized qualities depicting the gap between the ideal thought and the practiced material as the end result throughout the formalization. The national government’s political projects, in that sense, show themselves as the exact examples for the imposition of certain ideological and symbolic meanings onto the spatial practices.

The ideology to re-assert the Taksim Military Barracks in Taksim Square, for example, as a part of the domination with ideological reflections, proves the government’s desire for creating its own representational space with the powerful imagery of military in the most significant symbolic place of country throughout the mechanized and ‘militarized order of space’ (Foucault, 1977). Lefebvre enriches the examples of dominated spaces as military architecture, just as in the practice of Taksim Military Barracks, with discussion on fortifications and rampant (Lefebvre, 1991). Thus, it is the domination of instrumentalized power relations derived from subjective reasoning and power struggles. The domination of political power over the decision making in the spatial practices at the heart of the city without any mediation is projected with one of the traditional form of military architecture. Although the place was the original settlement for that building, it is the re-assertion of political dominant power as a way of the commodification and politicization of tradition and history. It reveals the power test of the dominant politics over the space, over the society, over the history itself.

It concerns not only the domain of space, but also the society and social meanings in the place. As a result of the imposition of some political thoughts onto the place with certain social meanings and memories, authority represses the public sphere. This repression, however, also creates the possible ways for the resistance of that place, a way of resistance for that social meanings and memories, dialectically.

The condition in Ankara, similarly, has also been depicting the imposition of political and subjective desires onto the city space by the authorities responsible for the management of the city chosen by the public. Significant to mention about the studies of government-based projects on the city of Ankara and the production of space under politics, the transformation of some of the facades of the buildings in Kızılay on Atatürk Boulevard into traditional forms signifies the same impulse for the spatial practices. It seems to be the similar condition of desired project of Taksim Military Barracks in the Square. Thus, although Kızılay area is the most symbolic environments for the modernity project of the Republic, and although there was any significant trace for the Seldjukid architecture, in the area of Kızılay, as the center of the city, it has been determined and designed by the management of authorities. The whole facades on Atatürk Boulevard hence were to be transformed with Seldjukid patterns on facades to turn it in a 'protocol path'. That shows the domination of the authority over the space, over the city itself, as a result of the presidential force of the municipality, which becomes more than a decade, in time.

The recent exploitation of Atatürk Forest Farm and Zoo for the sake of the creation of the luxury Presidential Palace is even much more spectacular example of the desire of the authoritarian rulers to re-establish its stable power. The location of the Palace is not arbitrary, in that sense, as directly proving the counter-ideological operation with its apparatuses against its secular precedent with its representational values and territories by the subversion and exploitation of its cultural and natural assets. It only depicts the 'aestheticisation of politics' of the authority through the city space by enforcing the political and subjective desires onto the city. The reason, obviously, is to update the vision of the *cit(y)zens* into the transformed images of the commoditized tradition as a political tactic. The image making processes and the procedures of the political power shows itself, in that sense, as a result of the mutated political discourse. The project is to attract the people engaged with their tradition, as a result of the dispersal nature of postmodernity (Harvey, 1989) creating the cultural conflicts for these people immigrated from their pastoral environments to a congested city space creating not only crisis in the perception of time and space (Giddens, 1984), but transforming the everyday life of these people.

The city of Ankara's entry gates with the conservative styles, for this respect, are being produced in the image making processes with the simulacra of the traditional and cultural values and images, as a project for the city depicting the rigid determination of the authority. It is the commodification of historical culture and transformation of them into mere replicas. Not enough for the political domination over space, however, the harsh intervention and the rising clashes between security forces and activists has depicted the political imposition onto space throughout instrumental and formalized forces. The domination of space throughout violence engaged with ideological and hegemonic relations have been designated as in the case of METU Forest. Even the violence itself becomes the part of that ideological production of space conflicting with the ideal space. The violence, and event, in its ontological meanings shows us the existence of resistance and counter-ideological positions, however, as a result of the dictation and status quo of the governmental powers.

depicting the hegemonic relations over the production of space; and the counter-resistance of the space leading to physical violence. Since the formalization of the thought with subjective reasoning processes leads to advance in technological tools, they are used to increase the intension of the violence against the activist resistance. The subjective reasoning processes of the thought itself have created war machines dominating the thought and the people engaged to it, i.e., the rational thought itself. Although the thought was to create the unified humanity for the emancipation from any repressive forces, it creates its own struggles, powerful instruments for clashes, power struggles in the formalization processes of the thought, at the end result.

Consequently, to re-understand how the thought developed for the reason of liberating the humanity from the repressing powers and forces detects the creation of its own repressing conflicts with formalization processes. In other words, it is to quest the subjective reasoning processes in the thought leading to such a deviation from democracy, unity, freedom and piece; and request for the liberation of humanity again, in the intellectual processes of mankind in this critical essay.

**Subjective reasoning processes violating themselves: Genealogy of the power over nature**

The natural phenomena with disasters and repressing forces including the myths and post-material forces over humanity has led to fearful and painful experiences of the man. The fearful experiences in the ancient periods of humanity have created the thought of the liberation of man from phenomenal forces over the humanity. It is the thought of the Enlightenment developed in that framework to find the universal law of the nature and natural forces; to get the liberation of humanity (Horkheimer, 1947) from the hands of phenomenal forces.

The idea of 'the truth' that sacred in the nature and in the nature of the human itself is to find the universal and unified law of the life to be found for the freedom of humanity. It has become to push the intellectual processes of the humanity to quest for 'the real' of nature under the reasoning processes, as the objective truth. Therefore, it has become the way to route the intellectual and the production processes of the humanity with respect to the thought focused on nature. The formalization processes of the thought have brought the search on natural laws to find the unified and universal laws formulating the ecological cycle and the life in universe. The demarcation point for the development of the technology, however, is based on the domination of nature over humanity which has been transformed into the domination of man over nature and then the domination of man on man. The machines are invented as a result of the enlightened science and technology, creating the revolutionary production processes as the Industrial Revolution in the following period. It becomes easy to regulate, then, the natural phenomena to some extent, even to destroy the nature and recreate an artificial environment for the humanity, called as culture. It is open to be abused by certain subjective desires, the desires of authorities on the power relations as in the case of Gazi Park. Thus, the formalization processes not only depicted the gap between the thought and the material, as the theory and the practice, but also become the way of the domination of the thought over itself.

Increasing the dichotomy between nature and culture, between natural forces and the human with the rising struggle in the formalization practices, it becomes also the part of the power struggles in the cultural processes of mankind as a result of uneven cultural and formal development. The struggles within the society together with the rising oppositions proceed with uneven development having increased the domination of man over man, as a result, in the crisis of social structures. It is the dichotomy between the self and the society; and more significantly between the society and the authority, in this respect, with increasing self-awareness; and self-submission to the authority creating intellectual dichotomies.

In the specific condition of Gezi Park, therefore, although we cannot find connections between the origins of Turkish government's ideological roots and the rational thought of humanity; the domination of formalization processes of thought throughout the 'ideological and repressive apparatuses of the state' (Althusser, 1971) is directly engaged with the non-democratic spatial practices of the authoritarian government's decision mechanisms. The 'dominated' nature hence becomes the signifying tool for the 'domination', of having the control over the tools and nature onto the other; depicting the dichotomy between the authority and the subjects; between the superego and the ego. But this dichotomy always hides the duality of the submission and resistance on the behalf of the dominated (Horkheimer, 1947). In other words, first nature hides the real for the thought of Enlightenment; and is submitted and substituted by the irrational (subjective) rationalization and instrumentalization of thought. Second nature, as the self, which hides the idea of liberty in itself and dominated by the mass as a reflection of totality of the thought, dialectically; have also the nature of resistance represented in themselves. The possibility of the emergence of collective resistance against the repressing superego, in that sense, can create its own conscious revolt. The case of Gezi Park, however, can also be criticized in itself, with regard to that, since the immediate revolt of people could not succeed as a result of that lack of collective consciousness.

It is related with the initial reasoning of the real of the thought in the dialectical thinking of material, together with the cycling relations and the domination of one to another. The reason reveals the revolt of human and culture, and 'the revolt of nature' (Horkheimer, 1947). Thus, it becomes the end result of the subjective reasoning processes mostly manipulated by the authoritarian desires and regimes by using the means for the ideological ends, deviating from nature itself. The repressing force of authoritarian government in the production of cultural codes, rules and regulations besides the consumption and production relations has

prevented the creation of such a collectivity around the idea of the revolt of nature, in the case of the Gezi Park events. It has resulted from the inevitable submission of the revolt of people to the order of authority.

It becomes the role of the philosophy, in this respect, to The history of man depicts that the increasing dichotomies are the result of the subjective reasoning derived from the thought for the liberation, which is even as a part of the feeling of freedom from fear. Obligatory to ask, as Tschumi also asks, that “does the truth of revolution lie in the permanent expression of subjectivity?” (Tschumi, 1994). In other words, can it be possible to find any objective reality or unless there is any ‘the real’? Is it the only way for praxis is the determined subjective reasoning processes in these dichotomies? Although the history of man depicts that the whole intellectual processes are influenced from subjective thoughts and practices, it may not to assert that the history of man can explain the whole procedures and processes in nature by the expression of subjectivity. It is due to the fact that the history of man is full of contradictions and dichotomies mostly ended up with violent and violating processes. In the trajectories of subjectivity, it may not be forgotten that the second nature as culture, including the very concept of subjectivity itself, is depended not only on the perceptually but also ontologically the pure existence of first nature defining the cognitive and representative values constructed through.

In that sense, mediation, in the condition of the existence of ontological, representational and physical violence becomes necessary, in nature, to overcome the repressive traps of the obsessive cycles for the satisfaction of power crisis. It does not, however, imply the submission of the self to the society, or the society to the authority. The duty is over the shoulders of the governments and rulers to establish the grounds for mediation by negation as a democratic procedure. Negation by relation within the social construct of space, therefore, must be reserved to overcome the contingent power struggles within the territories of repressed geographies to get the unified idea of emancipation of humanity. Emancipation of humanity, in that sense, cannot be achieved through the destruction of nature, which becomes necessary for the activation of second nature, but through the construction of set of relations to overcome the culture-nature dichotomy. It is suggested to be based on ethico-aesthetic principles of humanity based on justice, democracy, equality and human rights; and the social conducts of those in the construction of public sphere, in nature, beyond the search for a mere natural determinant formula for the humanity itself.

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