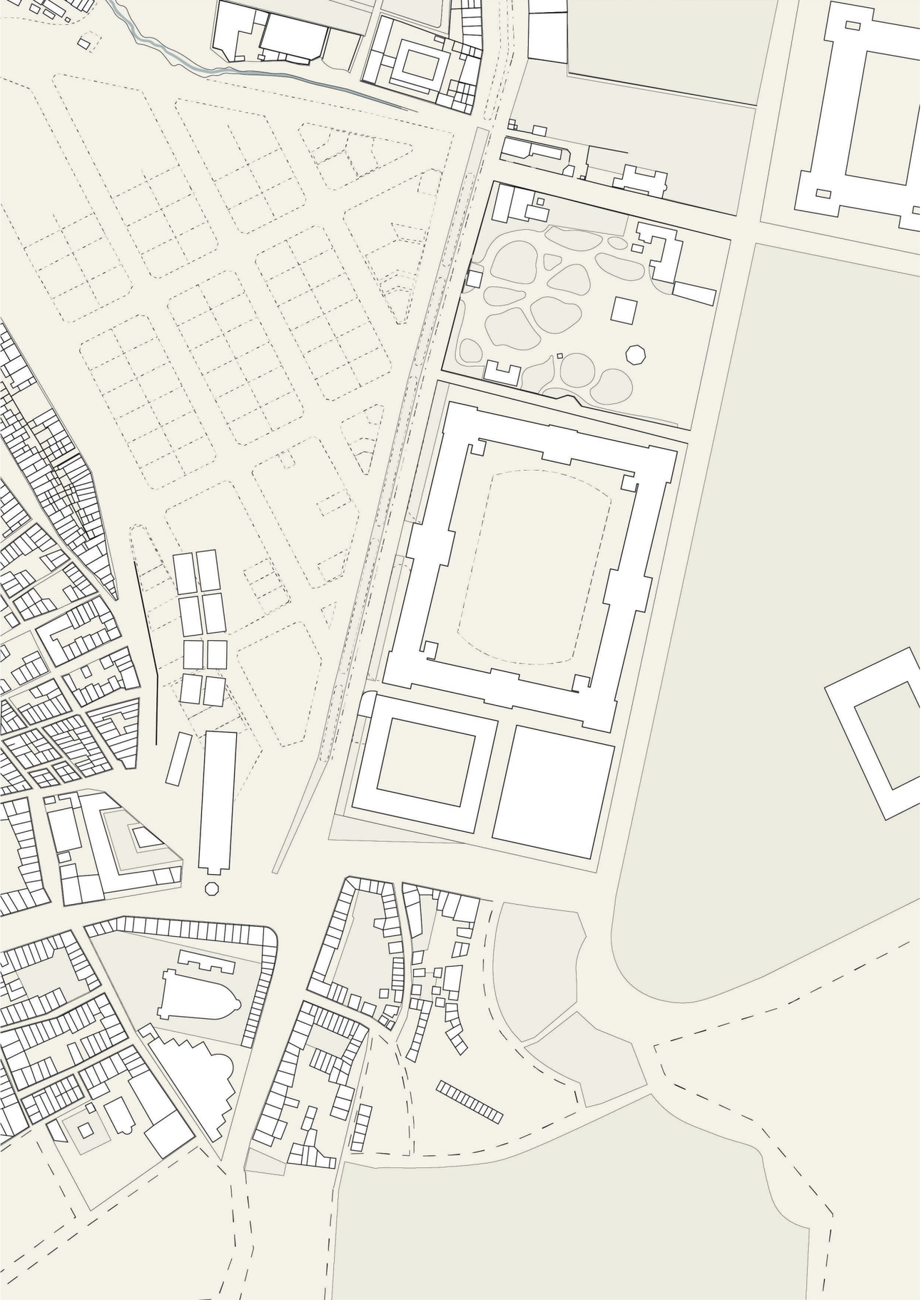
CONTESTED GROUNDS

Socio-Spatial Dynamics of Taksim Square from the Late-19th Century until Today

ÖZGE DALAKLI

JULY 2026



POLITECNICO DI TORINO

Master of Science in Architecture for Sustainability

Master's Thesis

Contested Grounds:
Socio-Spatial Dynamics of Taksim Square from the Late-19th Century until Today

Supervisor (Politecnico di Torino)
Asst. Prof. Sofia Nannini

Co-Supervisor (KTH Royal Institute of Technology)
Prof. Catharina Gabrielsson

Candidate
Özge Dalaklı (s329109)

AY 2025/26
July 2026

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines Taksim Square as a historically and contemporarily contested public space shaped through architectural interventions, state ideology, media narratives, and civic practices. Situated at the intersection of architectural history, urban sociology, and political geography, the study approaches public space not as a neutral physical setting but as a socio-spatial construct continuously produced through power relations, representation, and conflict. Focusing on Taksim Square, the research investigates how the square's political and symbolic meanings have been formed, stabilized, and challenged over time.

The thesis addresses three central questions: how Taksim Square has been shaped by architecture, urban interventions, and state ideology throughout its history; how press narratives and collective memory have contributed to the production and circulation of the square's political meanings; and how the 2013 Gezi Park protests, and subsequent spatial transformations and protests, have rendered conflicts over public space, the right to the city, and urban democracy visible.

Methodologically, the research adopts a qualitative and multi-layered approach. The primary analytical lens consists of a systematic examination of historical and contemporary media archives, in which press narratives are analyzed through a spatial reading perspective to trace shifting representations of Taksim Square. This is complemented by a broad, cross-generational survey mapping perceptions of Taksim Square's past, present, and future, alongside a witness seminar with a more focused group, concentrating on the Gezi Park protests and the post-Gezi period, enabling an in-depth analysis of contemporary encounters, protest practices, and lived spatial experiences.

Keywords: taksim square, contested public space, spatial politics, mediated space, right to the city, lived experience

This thesis is rooted not only in a long-term academic inquiry but also in a personal and generational encounter with Taksim Square. I was born and raised in Antalya and had no direct relationship with Istanbul during my early years. When the Gezi Park protests began, I was thirteen years old, preparing for high school entrance exams, and the events were unfolding far from my everyday life. Like many of my peers at the time, I followed what was happening closely through social media and felt a strong, if not yet fully articulated, desire to be part of it. I remember secretly leaving my exam preparation course to join demonstrations held at Cumhuriyet Square in Antalya. Although I did not yet grasp the broader political or spatial significance of Gezi Park, I distinctly remember encountering Taksim for the first time through a chant that resonated across distance and place: "Everywhere is Taksim, everywhere is resistance." Looking back from an academic and professional perspective, this early encounter stands out as a formative moment that shaped my understanding of public space, collective action, and political imagination. In this sense, the thesis emerges from both scholarly inquiry and a long-standing lived engagement with the meanings and possibilities of public space.

This research is also the result of a long-term academic and intellectual process shaped across different institutions, locations, and encounters. I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the individuals and institutions that directly contributed to the development of this work.

First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor and mentor, Assistant Professor Sofia Nannini, not only for her continuous academic guidance throughout the research process, but also for the genuine mentorship she has provided throughout my academic journey. Beyond the thesis itself, her trust, encouragement, and thoughtful guidance have been deeply meaningful to me, helping me gain confidence in my research, refine my academic voice, and navigate the challenges of academic life with greater clarity and assurance.

I am also deeply grateful to Professor Catharina Gabrielsson for accepting to co-mentor my research at KTH Royal Institute of Technology within the framework of the *Tesi su Proposta all'Estero,* which made it possible for me to conduct my thesis work in Sweden. I would further like to the opportunity to participate in the Architecture and Democracy seminars at KTH. These seminars enabled me to approach Taksim Square from a different theoretical and analytical perspective, significantly enriching the research and expanding its conceptual and critical scope.

I would like to thank all the participants who took part in the witness seminar. Their willingness to share individual experiences and reflections related to Taksim Square enabled the thesis to engage with the square as a lived and affective space. These shared narratives and moments of collective reflection significantly shaped the empirical dimension of the study, grounding it in situated experiences alongside archival and theoretical analysis.

Finally, *sevgisini ve desteğini her an üzerimde hissettiğim canım annem Aysel'e ve bana her zaman güç veren babam Mehmet'e; bu hayattaki en büyük şansım ve destekçilerim, canım ablam Gözde'ye ve abim Can'a çok teşekkür ederim. Ecem, bu teze ve bana harcadığın emek için; Selen, Deniz ve Pınar, tek bir bakışınızla bana olan güveninizi en derinden hissettirdiğiniz için; İpek ve Hazal, bildiğim ne varsa sizinle birlikte öğrendiğim için; Koray, Bayram ve Meriç, bu şehri bir yuva gibi hissettirdiğiniz için size ne kadar teşekkür etsem az.* And to Mariam, Mariam and Sadaf, thank you for giving me my girl gang, for every laugh made this journey so much lighter. And to my Adam, thank you for your endless patience, for always being curious about what I'm doing, and for believing in me even on the days I didn't believe in myself.

To everyone named here, and to everyone who held me up along the way, thank you, from the bottom of my heart.

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Contested Grounds: Socio-Spatial Dynamics of Taksim Square from the Late-19th Century until Today

imperial decline | republican secularism, nation-building, modernization | liberalism, free market, U.S. alignment | political polarization, military interventions, coalitions | neoliberal reforms, market liberalization | coalition politics, economic crises, islamist rise | urban transformation, conservative democracy, authoritarian populism

Mehmed VI Vahideddin

Proclamation of the Republic of Turkey

Single-Party Period

Republican People's Party

Transition to Multi-Party Life

Democrat Party

Military rule

Coalition

Justice Party

Technocratic cabinets

Coalitions

Military rule

Motherland Party

Coalitions

Justice and Development Party

1930 | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 | 1970 | 1971 | 1980 | 1990 | 1994 | 2000 | 2010 | 2013 | 2020

ACTIVISM

TAKSIM SQUARE

ATATURK CULTURAL CENTER

TAKSIM MOSQUE

GEZI PARK

Erection of the Republic Monument

The municipality decided to expropriate the Surp Agop Cemetery.

Perret designed a monumental opera house proposal, never realized due to World War II and high costs.

Henri Prost prepared Istanbul's modern master plan.

The Artillery Barracks was demolished and Gezi Park was built, destroying much of the Surp Agop Cemetery.

Güney and Kip created a more modest opera house design; construction remained a structural shell because of budget issues.

Construction of the Hilton Hotel.

Construction of the Divan Hotel.

Bonatz consulted on revised the opera house project.

The opera house structure was transferred to the Ministry of Finance.

The Democrat Party initiated the first attempt to build a mosque in Taksim.

Tabanlıoğlu redesigned the opera house structure.

Süleyman Demirel requested allocation of the plot (today's mosque site).

Opening of the Gezi Park

Hilton Hotel reduced the northern part of Gezi Park by nearly 60%.

Divan Hotel restricted the Gezi park's western and northern entrances.

Sheraton Hotel (now InterContinental Istanbul) narrowed the park's eastern slopes and the Mete Street edge.

The Marmara blocked the park's openness toward the square and isolated it from Taksim.

The Taksim metro line broke ground.

Istanbul Municipality approved the metro project.

Istanbul Cultural Palace reopened as the Atatürk Cultural Center.

The military administration shelved the mosque project, citing social tension.

The "Taksim Mosque Foundation for Culture and Arts" was established.

Recep Tayyip Erdoğan became the mayor of the Istanbul. Emphasized moral order and attempted to regulate nightlife and public behaviors in Beyoğlu, Taksim axis.

February 28, Post-Modern Coup

Marmara Earthquake. Transition to the building control.

April 27, e-Memorandum issued by the military.

Gezi Park Protests

July 15, Failed coup attempt

The opening period in Taksim ended and restrictions returned.

Ban on Taksim gatherings lifted under EU reforms.

Saturday Mothers' vigils at Galatasaray High School on İstiklal Avenue.

Night March (8 March) was held on İstiklal Avenue, an continued annually.

Pride March was held on İstiklal Avenue, on continued annually.

Taksim Pedestrianization Project launched.

Gezi Park Protests

Construction of the new AKM.

New AKM inaugurated.

The mosque was inaugurated.

Site transferred to Foundations Directorate.

The first comprehensive protest ban in Taksim Square was imposed under martial law.

Construction and opening of the Old Intercontinental / Etap Marmara Hotel (now The Marmara).

Construction and opening of the Sheraton Hotel (now InterContinental Istanbul).

Traffic regulation of Taksim Square.

Pedestrianization of Taksim Square.

The opera house construction resumed and continued.

AKM opened as the Istanbul Cultural Palace.

AKM restoration and reconstruction.

A major fire destroyed the Istanbul Cultural Palace.

Post-fire redesign of AKM by H. Tabanlıoğlu.

The Nationalist Front government approved a mosque decision, later annulled by the Council of State.

After the military coup, the National Security Council (MGK) fully prohibited protests in Taksim Square.

Saturday Mothers held their vigils in front of Galatasaray High School on İstiklal Avenue.

Talimhane was designated a Tourism Area by Cabinet decision.

Pedestrianization of İstiklal Avenue

The Taksim metro opened to service.

Discussions on demolishing AKM

AKM closed due to structural deterioration.

AKM demolished

AKM closure

New AKM design by M. Tabanlıoğlu

Gezi Park protests, turning the mosque project into a site of social tension.

Gezi Park restricted the park's western and northern entrances.

Groundbreaking took place; the design was assigned to Şefik Birkiye and Selim Dalaman.

Erdoğan used the mosque project permission as a key campaign promise.

The Refah-Yol government revived the project, but it was blocked during the 28 February process.

Artillery Barracks reconstruction proposal.

The Council of State removed a major legal obstacle by approving zoning plans covering Taksim Square.

Construction of the Taksim Tunnel.

Taksim Square for demonstrations banned.

Taksim Square reopened.

Taksim Square closed for Gezi Park protests.

Taksim Square reopened.

Taksim Square closed for Labor Day.

Taksim Square reopened.

Taksim Square closed for New Year's Eve.

Taksim Square reopened.

Taksim Square closed for Republic Day

INTRODUCTION

Research Aim and Scope

The aim of this thesis is to examine Taksim Square as a contested urban public space whose spatial, political, and symbolic meanings have been continuously produced through the interaction of state-led interventions and civic practices. Rather than approaching the square as a static architectural setting, the research conceptualizes Taksim Square as a socio-spatial construct shaped by ideology, representation, and collective action across time.

The thesis traces the transformation of the square through the late nineteenth century, the Republican period, the 2013 Gezi Park protests, and the contemporary developments unfolding up to present.

Analytically, the thesis situates Taksim Square at the intersection of architectural history, urban sociology, and political geography. It examines how architectural projects, urban regulations, and planning decisions have intersected with media representations and civic mobilizations to shape the square's evolving meanings. By adopting this integrative perspective, the study aims to reveal how public space is not only designed and regulated, but also negotiated, contested, and reconstituted through social and political processes. In doing so, the thesis contributes to broader debates on public space, urban governance, and democracy by foregrounding the temporal depth and relational dynamics of spatial contestation.

Research Questions

This thesis is guided by a set of interrelated research questions that seek to unpack the historical and contemporary production of Taksim Square as a contested public space. Rather than treating the square as a singular site defined by exceptional moments, the research approaches it as a long-term socio-spatial process shaped by architectural interventions, political agendas, media representations, and civic practices.

The first research question examines how Taksim Square has been shaped over time by architecture, urban interventions, and state ideology. This question addresses the role of design decisions, infrastructural projects, and planning strategies in structuring the square's spatial form and political symbolism from the late Ottoman period onward.

The second question focuses on the role of press narratives and collective memory in the production of Taksim Square's political and symbolic meanings. By analyzing historical and contemporary media coverage, the research investigates how representations of the square have contributed to stabilizing, contesting, or reconfiguring its meanings across different historical moments.

The third research question explores how the 2013 Gezi Park protests, and subsequent spatial transformations and protest practices have rendered conflicts over public space visible. This question situates Gezi and its aftermath within broader debates on public space, conflict, and the right to the city, examining how civic mobilization and everyday spatial practices have challenged dominant narratives and state-led spatial ordering.

Together, these questions provide a framework for analyzing Taksim Square as a site where spatial form, political power, and civic action intersect and remain in ongoing negotiation.

Methodology and Sources

This research adopts a qualitative and multi-layered methodological framework that combines archival research, media analysis, spatial reading, and fieldwork. The methodology is designed to capture both the historical depth and the contemporary dynamics of Taksim Square.

The thesis introduces a media-oriented perspective to the historical analysis of Taksim Square. Rather than treating press archives as supplementary background material, historical newspapers are positioned as the primary analytical lens through which key moments of spatial transformation and contestation are identified. The primary analytical lens of the study consists of historical and contemporary press archives. Drawing on the digital archives of major Turkish newspapers, including *Milliyet, Cumhuriyet, Tan, Vakit, Son Posta,* and *Akşam,* the research examines how the square has been represented across different political orientations and historical periods.

For the contemporary analysis, social media archives were examined as complementary sources.

On X (formerly Twitter), posts were collected through hashtag-based searches, including *#Taksim, #TaksimMeydanı* (Taksim Square), identified and selected as key analytical highlights.

These moments function as critical episodes through which shifts in spatial governance, public discourse, and contestation become visible. Each highlighted moment was subsequently examined through a focused literature review, allowing the study to situate media narratives within broader theoretical debates and to connect empirical findings with existing scholarship.

Secondary research incorporates interdisciplinary literature across urban sociology, political geography, and architectural theory. In particular, the analysis draws on debates around realms of memory, spatial justice, the production of space, and the right to the city, as well as critical discussions on architecture's entanglement with ideology, capital, and power. In relation to contemporary practices, the study provides conceptual tools for interpreting protest practices and informal spatial transformations in and around Taksim Square. To access historical data and architectural documentation, archival research was conducted primarily at SALT Research in Istanbul, which served as the main research hub.

This was complemented by materials accessed at the Istanbul Research Institute, the Atatürk Library (Istanbul), the METU Library (Ankara), and the Presidential National Library (Ankara). Together, these repositories enabled a systematic cross-referencing of media narratives, architectural discourse, and historical documentation, strengthening the historical and empirical grounding of the study.

To complement the archival and media-based analysis, the study employs two qualitative research tools, a broad survey and a witness seminar conducted in a workshop format, designed to operate at different analytical scales.

The survey was distributed to participants of different age groups living in Istanbul, with the aim of capturing a broad spectrum of perspectives on Taksim Square. It focuses on participants' levels of awareness regarding the historical layers of the square, how they describe and interpret its spatial, political, and symbolic transformation over time, and how they relate Taksim to the present and imagine its future.

The thesis extends this historical analysis into the present through a witness seminar that foregrounds contemporary, citizen-centered perspectives. The witness seminar functions as a methodological tool for analyzing how Taksim Square is experienced, remembered, and negotiated today, particularly through everyday encounters and activist practices. By centering urban residents as knowledge producers, this component allows the research to capture forms of spatial understanding that remain largely absent from official narratives and archival sources.

The witness seminar was conducted as a workshop with a more narrowly defined group of participants who are living in Istanbul. Participants came from diverse backgrounds and included individuals who were born and raised in Istanbul, those who had been living in the city for zero to five years, six to ten years, eleven to twenty years, as well as those who had resided in Istanbul for more than twenty years., as well as those who had resided in Istanbul for more than twenty years.

The witness seminar was conducted as a two-hour workshop structured around visual expression and collective discussion. Following a brief introductory statement, participants were invited to express their personal spatial perception of Taksim Square through a small drawing, which could take the form of a plan, abstract diagram, symbol, text, or spatial relationship, with an emphasis on individual interpretation rather than aesthetic quality.

All drawings were subsequently placed in a shared space and used as prompts for an open discussion, in which participants could begin speaking from any drawing, including those produced by others. The discussion developed collectively, with occasional guiding questions introduced by the researcher to sustain and deepen the conversation.

In the final stage, participants were asked to write one to three keywords or a short phrase related to Taksim Square.

The material generated through this process was analyzed through thematic concentration, focusing on collective patterns rather than individual testimonies.

The witness seminar was conducted as a voluntary, low-risk qualitative workshop. Participants were informed in advance about the aims of the research, the workshop format, and the academic use of the material. No personal identifiers were collected, and all contributions were anonymized during analysis. The material was analyzed thematically rather than through individual attribution, to protect participants' privacy and to foreground collective patterns of experience.

In parallel with the archival research conducted for this thesis, the historical and contemporary visual material gathered during the study, including cadastral maps, satellite imagery overlays, press clippings, and photographic documentation, has been systematically organized and published in a curated online archive.

This digital repository, built using the Are.na platform, is available at:and available at: https://www.are.na/ozge-dalakli/channels

It served as a dual function within the research process. First, it provided a working environment for cataloguing and cross-referencing primary sources across different historical periods, facilitating the comparative spatial analysis presented in the following chapters. Second, it constitutes a publicly accessible extension of this thesis, allowing readers to consult the original visual material, beyond the static figures reproduced in the printed text. The archive is intended to remain accessible after the completion of this research, supporting the broader aim of transparent and traceable source documentation in spatially-oriented historical research.

Theoretical Framework and Positioning of the Study

This thesis is grounded in critical theories of public space that conceptualize urban space as a political and contested formation rather than a neutral physical setting. Drawing on Henri Lefebvre's notion of *the production of space* (1974), David Harvey's work on spatial justice and *the right to the city* (1973; 2003), and Pierre Nora's notion of *lieux de mémoire* (1989), the study approaches Taksim Square as a socio-spatial process continuously shaped through power relations, conflict, and claims to urban citizenship.

The primary theoretical anchor of the study is provided by Henri Lefebvre's concept of *the production of space,* which conceptualizes urban space as an outcome of social relations rather than a neutral or purely functional container. Within this framework, Taksim Square is analyzed as a space produced through the interaction of spatial practices, representations of space, and representational spaces. This perspective enables the study to move beyond descriptive accounts of physical change and to examine how ideological, political, and symbolic dimensions are embedded in the square's spatial organization and use. Lefebvre's notion of *the right to the city* further frames public space as a site of collective claims, contestation, and struggles over urban citizenship.

Building on this relational understanding of space, the study draws on David Harvey's critical work on urbanization, power, and neoliberal restructuring. Harvey situates public space within broader political-economic processes, emphasizing the role of state power, capital accumulation, and spatial strategies of control in shaping urban environments. This lens is particularly relevant for analyzing the recurring interventions in Taksim Square and the tensions between state-led projects and civic practices. Rather than treating protest as an exceptional rupture, the study adopts Harvey's view of urban space as a central arena where structural conflicts over access, visibility, and political meaning are continuously materialized and negotiated.

A third central reference for the study is Pierre Nora's work on collective memory and *lieux de mémoire,* which provides a critical bridge between spatial analysis and media representations. Nora's conceptualization of memory as selective, mediated, and socially constructed challenges linear or cumulative understandings of urban history. From this perspective, Taksim Square is approached as a site where memory is continuously

produced, fragmented, and reconfigured through representation. This framework is particularly relevant for the analysis of press archives, social media analysis, survey and witness seminar which are treated not as neutral records but as active agents shaping how the square is remembered, narrated, and politicized across different historical periods.

Within this theoretical framework, the thesis positions itself in relation to existing studies on Taksim Square and the Gezi Park protests. One important reference is Güldem Baykal's *The Iconography of Taksim Square: Competing Claims on a Public Space* (2000), a PhD dissertation, which examines the square from an urban sociological perspective and foregrounds the relationship between architecture and political representation. While the historical reading developed in this thesis resonates with Baykal's engagement with architectural history and symbolic meaning, the present study departs from her work by placing media analysis at the center of the inquiry. Moreover, Baykal's study, published prior to the Gezi Park protests, does not address the contemporary transformations that have reshaped Taksim Square since 2013.

A second closely related study is Cansu Kılıçler's *Istanbul's Taksim Square: As a Terrain of Political Symbol and Matter of Contestation* (2016), a master's thesis, which examines Taksim Square as a site of political symbolism in the context of the Gezi Park protests. While this study shares an interest in contestation and acknowledges media as a relevant scale of analysis, its engagement remains brief and largely descriptive. Media is invoked as a contextual reference rather than as a systematically analyzed archive, and the temporal scope of the analysis largely concludes with the Gezi Park protests, treating 2013 as an endpoint.

A similar limitation characterizes much of the post-Gezi literature, which tends to approach the protests and their consequences through political and sociological frameworks focused on activism, repression, governance, and social mobilization. Although spatial changes in and around Taksim Square are occasionally noted, they are often treated as secondary illustrations rather than as the primary object of analysis. By contrast, this thesis places architecture and urban space at the center of the discussion, examining how post-Gezi transformations, particularly those materialized after 2017 and 2018, have altered the spatial configuration, symbolic meaning, and everyday experience of Taksim Square. In doing so, the study foregrounds architecture not as a backdrop to political processes, but as a key medium through which power, control, and contestation continue to be spatially enacted in the post-Gezi period.

Therefore, the thesis addresses a notable gap in the existing literature by examining recent architectural interventions in Taksim Square, particularly the newly constructed Taksim Mosque and the reconstruction of the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM), through a combined architectural, political, and media-based analysis. While these projects have been widely discussed in public debate and media narratives, there is a lack of academic work that analyzes them as spatial and symbolic interventions within the longer trajectory of contestation in Taksim Square.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is structured into three main chapters, following a chronological and analytical progression that reflects the research questions and methodological framework outlined in the introduction.

The first chapter provides a historical analysis of Taksim Square from late 19th century to 2013, examined through the lens of architectural history and theory. This section traces the transformation of the square from its late Ottoman origins to the period preceding the Gezi Park protests, focusing on key spatial interventions, planning initiatives, and ideological projects.

The second chapter focuses on the contemporary period, covering the 2013 Gezi Park protests and the developments that have unfolded since. This section examines Gezi as a pivotal moment of spatial contestation and collective mobilization, followed by an analysis of post-Gezi transformations, protest

practices, and evolving forms of spatial control and governance. Emphasis is placed on understanding how conflicts over public space have been rearticulated in the aftermath of 2013.

The third chapter consists of a survey and witness seminar that forms the empirical core of the study's contemporary analysis. Drawing on collaborative work with Istanbul-based urban residents, this section presents a witness-centered examination of lived experiences, memories, and everyday encounters with Taksim Square. By situating these accounts alongside the historical analysis, the final part of the thesis bridges past and present, offering a layered understanding of Taksim Square as an ongoing site of negotiation and spatial struggle.

Temporal Framework and Historical Period Selection

The first chapter comprises the historical component of the analysis and spans the period from the late nineteenth century to 2013. These phases are defined not merely by chronological succession, but by shifts in governance, urban policy, and symbolic meaning, each of which translated into specific forms of spatial intervention and conflict.

The first section of the first chapter (late nineteenth century-1940) examines the transformation of the area as a proto-square during the late Ottoman period. This phase concludes with the initiation of Henri Prost's master plan in 1940, marking the institutionalization of modern urban planning and state-led spatial restructuring.

The second section (1940-1971) focuses on the Republican project of modernization and the construction of modern Taksim Square as a monumental and symbolic public space. The military memorandum of March 12, 1971 marks a critical rupture that reshaped state-society relations and significantly altered the governance of public space.

The third section (1971-1994) is characterized by heightened political polarization and intensified spatial contestation. During this period, Taksim Square emerged as a central site of protest, ideological struggle, and violence, reflecting broader social and political conflicts. The election of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan as Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 1994 represents a turning point in both urban governance and ideological orientation at the municipal level.

The fourth section (1994-2013) examines processes of ideological contestation and spatial reconfiguration under the rise of political Islam in municipal governance. This phase culminates in the May-June 2013 Gezi Park protests, which constitute the key temporal rupture of the thesis by bringing long-standing conflicts over public space, authority, and citizenship into sharp public visibility.

Building on this historical background, the second chapter shifts the primary analytical focus to the rise of political Islam and its relationship to the transformations leading up to the Gezi Park protests. It then concentrates on the Gezi Park protests of May-June 2013, with particular emphasis on Gezi Park and its immediate surroundings, approaching the events through an architectural and spatial lens. The chapter subsequently extends the analysis to the post-Gezi period, from 2013 to the present, examining how spatial interventions, protest practices, and everyday uses of Taksim Square have been reshaped in the years following the protests.

LATE 19TH CENTURY TAKSIM

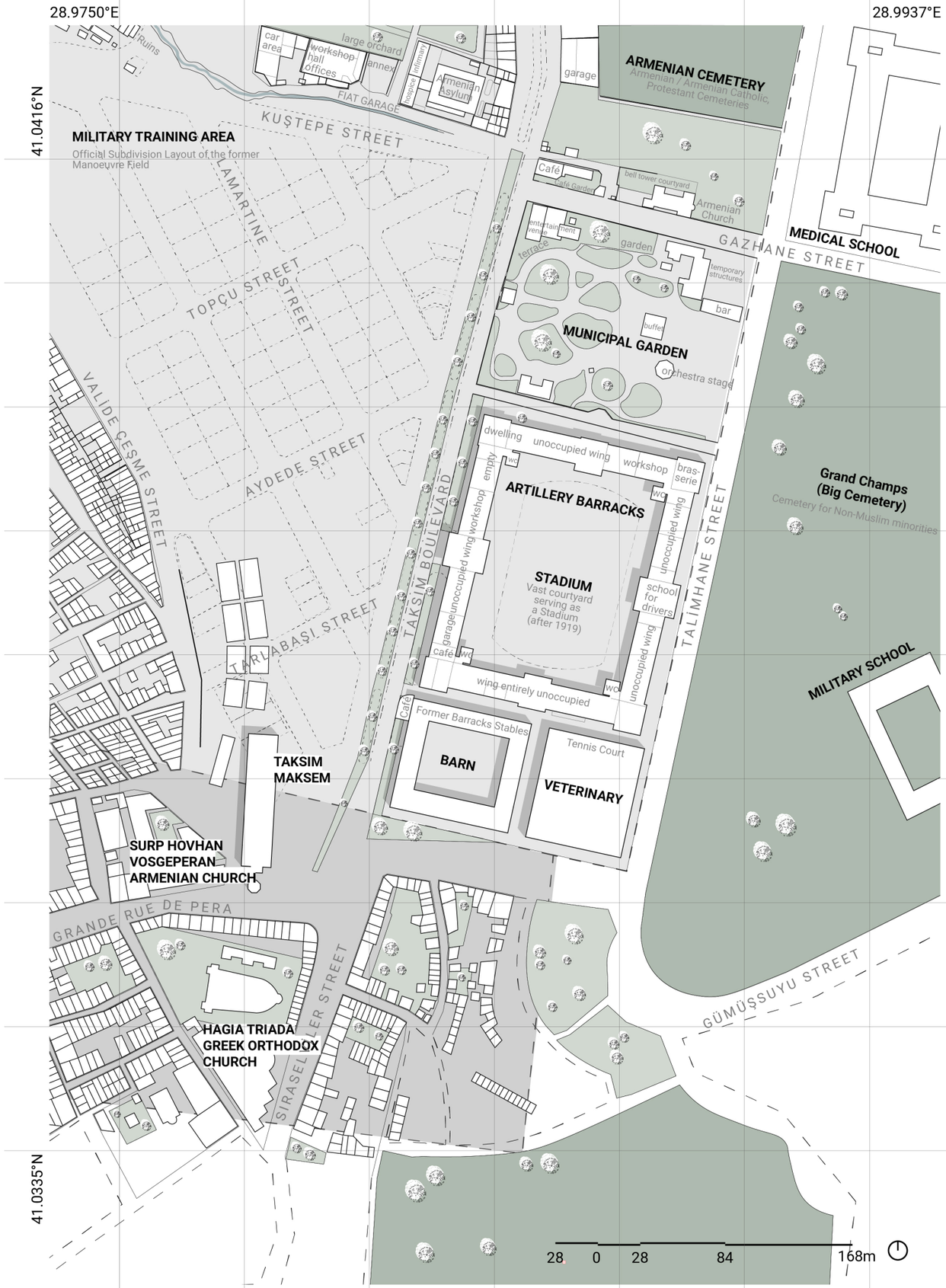
This map is produced through the superimposition of two primary historical cartographic sources representing the Taksim district of Istanbul, supplemented by a contemporary scholarly reconstruction for functional interpretation.

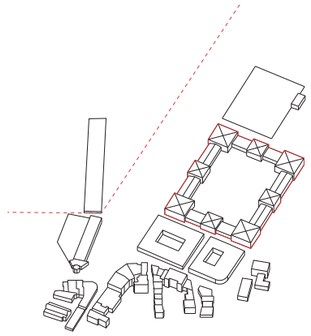
The first source is the *F. Huber Map* (1887–1891), drawn in Ottoman Turkish (Arabic script) at 1:1,000 scale. Produced under the Sixth Municipality, the map served as a detailed urban survey recording street networks, building footprints, land uses, and green spaces during a period of accelerated Westernization in Beyoğlu.

The second source is the J. *Pervititch Insurance Cadastral Map, Sheet No. 12: Taxim* (July 1925), drawn in French at 1:1,000 scale. Jacques Pervititch (1877–1945), a Croatian-born topographer and engineer based in Istanbul, produced this cadastral series for the Central Office of Turkish Insurance Agents. The maps were designed to record fire risk factors, documenting building materials, structural typologies, floor counts, and topographic elevations, and constitute an unparalleled archive of Istanbul's built fabric in the early Republican period.

The functional classification of buildings and land uses visible in both historical maps was interpreted with reference to the GIS-based vector reconstruction of the Huber Map produced by *Merve Özbay Kınacı and Nuran Zeren Gülersoy* (2023).

- Pervititch Map (1925)
- Gardens
- Cemeteries
- Walls
- Stadium (1940)
- Plan / Division pf spaces
- Subdivision plan from Pervititch map (1925)
- Özbay Kınacı & Zeren Gülersoy (2023)
- Huber Map (1887-1891)
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Unkown places complemented by Huber Map
- Tree





CHAPTER 1: TAKSIM SQUARE AS A CONTESTED SPACE

Late 19th century - 1940: From Proto-Square to Modern Urban Space

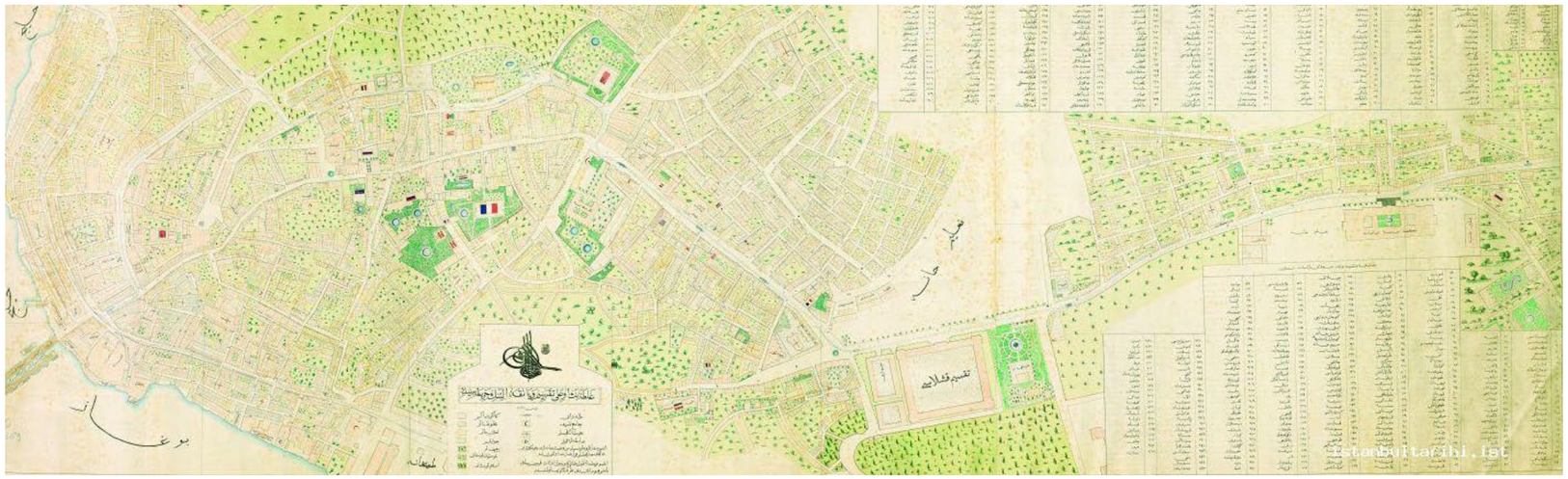


Figure 1. Map of Galata, Beyoğlu, Taksim, and Pangaltı prepared during the reign of Abdülhamid II, depicting the urban fabric, circulation networks, and cadastral parcels of the late Ottoman period.
Note. İstanbul University Library, Nadir Eserler Collection, Map Section (n.d.).

Beyoğlu: A central district of Istanbul historically shaped by European influence.

Pera: The historical name of Beyoğlu.

Grande Rue de Pera: The late Ottoman name of İstiklal Street, reflecting European cultural and commercial dominance.

İstiklal Street: A major pedestrian avenue and cultural spine of Beyoğlu.

Gümüşsuyu: A neighborhood descending from Taksim toward the Bosphorus, shaped by military buildings, housing, and infrastructure.

Sıraselviler: A street and surrounding area linking Taksim to Cihangir, characterized by mixed residential and commercial uses.

Taksim's Role as a Proto Square

Taksim Square is recognized as the symbolic heart of the Turkish Republic and often referred to as the Republic Square of the secular state, although it was not always conceived as such. It emerged as a public space after many historical, spatial, and socio-political transformations. As Turkish historian Mustafa Cezar (1991) describes, it functioned as a broad junction where four major roads intersected, centered around the Taksim Fountain and the adjacent Taksim Maksem.

By the end of the 18th century, as Beyoğlu* expanded toward the Taksim Maksem, the area was increasingly defined by the road connecting Pera* to Taksim, demarcated by the *Grande Rue de Pera**, known today as İstiklal Street*. This expansion opened major routes toward Gümüşsuyu* and Sıraselviler* (Aksoy, 2022, p. 8).

Taksim Square's identity is closely tied to the Taksim Maksem, from which the district derives its name. As defined by Çelik Gülersoy (1986), Taksim refers to the action through which water is divided and distributed to various directions. Maksem is the structure where this division takes place. The verb "to divide" (*taksim etmek*) denotes this action. The square derives its name from a shortened version of this verb in public usage. The construction of the Maksem began in 1732 and was completed in 1839 (Aksoy, 2022, p. 8). Architecturally, it is a classical Ottoman water structure, featuring a shaped roof and an octagonal plan.

The building, made from *Küfeki* stone*, is completed with an octagonal pyramid roof (Campbell & Boyington, 2018). Over time, the term Taksim began to represent not just the water distribution system, but the broader district and eventually the square itself.

Küfeki stone: A local limestone widely used in Ottoman and early Republican architecture in Istanbul, valued for its durability and workability.

TAN
Gündelik Gazete

ISTANBUL SULARININ BIR ASIRLIK TARIHININ SAYFALARI

Bir Cesme Basında

OKUYUCU MEKTUPLARI

Birçok Mahalleler Susuzluk Yüzünden Büyük Sıkıntı Çekiyorlar

Figure 2.
Newspaper page from Tan dated November 12, 1937, featuring the article "Pages from a century-long history of Istanbul's waters" ("İstanbul sularının bir asırlık tarihinin sayfaları"), which discusses the history of Istanbul's water supply system with repeated references to the Taksim Water Reservoir (Taksim Maksemi).
Note. Tan, November 12, 1937, p. 5. Retrieved from Gaste Arşivi.

Taksim Maksem was a key component of Istanbul's urban water supply system for centuries. In November 12, 1937 article in *Tan* newspaper on the city's water infrastructures indicates that Taksim remained crucial until the introduction of modern networked water systems (Tan, 1937). In addition to its military and social functions, Talimhane accommodated a variety of structures. Historical documentation and cartographic records compiled by urban planning scholars Özbay Kınacı and Zeren Gülersoy (2023, pp. 10-11) indicate that the area historically accommodated a dense cluster of civic, military, and service-related functions, including a police station, fountain, fire brigade barracks and office, large and small stables, and haystacks. To the northeast, Surp Agop Hospital, together with its associated school and church, constituted a major institutional presence. In the southwestern section, near the former Surp Agop Cemetery, two prominent community structures, the Zapyon Greek School and the Aya Trias Church, were established. Cartographic sources further reveal the emergence of residential buildings along the northern edge, where residential densification gradually shaped the urban morphology. In contrast, the southern section of Talimhane became increasingly defined by fire safety and military-related functions, directly linked to the adjacent Artillery Barracks and reinforcing the area's role as a functional extension of the military complex.

Figure 3.
Photographic negative showing the Taksim Water Reservoir (Taksim Maksemi) and the adjacent tramway line during the early Republican period.
Note. Ülgen Family Collection, SALT Research, Photographs (TAUSB#877). https://archives.saltresearch.org

Although the area was originally shaped by military and security functions, the later introduction of healthcare, educational, and religious institutions transformed it into a multi-functional urban environment. This shift signals its transition from a military periphery to a more integrated urban morphology combining residential and community-based functions

Urban planner Yıldız Aksoy (2022) emphasizes that the Taksim Artillery Barracks, constructed in 1806 partly on former cemetery land, played a pivotal role in the Ottoman Empire's military modernization process. The structure was builta during the reign of Sultan Selim III* as part of the broader military modernization and centralization reforms pursued in the late Ottoman period.

Beyond its primary military function, the Taksim Artillery Barracks carried a strong symbolic dimension tied to the Ottoman Empire's reformist ambitions. Its position overlooking Beyoğlu, Galata*, and the diplomatic quarters suggests that the structure was conceived not only as a military facility but also as a spatial staging of state power within the urban landscape. Drawing on the influential theory of the production of space developed by sociologist Henri Lefebvre, which conceptualizes space as a social product shaped by power relations, ideology, and material practices, this configuration can be interpreted as an early

Sultan Selim III (1761–1808): An Ottoman sultan associated with early modernization initiatives, particularly the Nizam-ı Cedid reforms in military and administration.

Galata: A historic port district with Genoese origins, long associated with trade, cosmopolitan populations, and layered urban

Figure 4. Photograph of the monumental entrance of the Taksim Artillery Barracks (Topçu Kışlası) taken by Guillaume Berggren in the late nineteenth century. The façade displays a combination of architectural elements-such as Bursa arches, pointed horseshoe arches, muqarnas capitals, geometric lattice balustrades, dentil parapets, and onion-shaped domes-that reflect the Orientalist aesthetic popular during the period. Note. Photograph by Guillaume Berggren, late 19th century. Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation Photography Collection. Displayed in the online exhibition Taksim: Heart of Istanbul.

moment in the production of space through which modernization ideology and centralized authority began to be materially articulated in Taksim (Lefebvre, 1991). From a Lefebvrian perspective, the barracks may thus be read as one of the earliest spatial manifestations of state power and visibility in the area, setting the groundwork for later forms of political representation and control that would continue to shape Taksim's urban and symbolic identity. Architecturally, the barracks marked a notable departure from classical Ottoman styles. Italian writer Edmondo de Amicis (1876/2006) described it as a Maghreb inspired Turkish renaissance, highlighting features such as Sultan Mahmud*'s golden crescent, small arabesque windows, and elegant columned porticos. Turkish writer Çelik Gülersoy (1986) characterized it as "flashy but impersonal," drawing parallels to Russian and Indian designs, especially through its onion domes and rich ornamentation. Architect Mahir Öztaş (2010) further identified the barracks as one of Istanbul's most exotic orientalist structures of the period. He highlights that the plan scheme of the Artillery Barracks has a layout specific to 19th century Ottoman barracks: a rectangular courtyard in the middle and side wings surrounding it. The most decorated part of the structure is its monumental entrance opening onto Cumhuriyet Street*. This entrance stands out clearly from the façade with its octagonal towers on both sides and its gate crowned with a stepped pediment. The onion domes on the towers both strengthen the monumental effect and emphasize the orientalist character of the structure. The façade layout reflects the exoticist architectural approach seen in the West during the same period (Öztaş, 2010, pp. 99-104). The characterization of an Ottoman structure through such an orientalist and exoticizing lens is interesting, particularly considering the late Ottoman modernization process. It was shaped not only by western but also by a complex negotiation with multiple cultural references. As Orhan Esen (2013) observes, since the late 18th century, Western visitors to the city were met with disappointment, they could not find the "Orient" they had imagined. Consequently, the West began to recreate the Orient it could not find in its place, shaping it according to its own fantasies.

This raises the question of whether the Istanbul presented to the Westerner gradually became a stage for an imagined Orient,

*Sultan Mahmud II (1785–1839): Mahmud II An Ottoman sultan known for centralizing reforms and the abolition of the Janissaries, marking a decisive phase of imperial modernization.

*Cumhuriyet Street: A major arterial road connecting Taksim to surrounding districts, shaped by modern planning and transportation infrastructure.

TAKSIM SQUARE AS A CONTESTED SPACE

***Sultan Süleyman (1494–1566):** Suleiman the Magnificent An Ottoman sultan whose reign marked the empire's political, territorial, and cultural zenith.

***Tepebaşı:** A historic area associated with entertainment venues, theaters, and early modern urban life in Beyoğlu.

***Parmak Kapı:** A historic passage or gateway in Beyoğlu.

***Harbiye:** An area historically linked to military institutions and later cultural venues such as concert halls and museums.

***Cihangir:** A hillside neighborhood overlooking the Bosphorus, known for its intellectual, artistic, and residential character.

***Ayaspaşa:** A residential neighborhood near Taksim, historically linked to elite housing and late Ottoman urban development.

***Dolmabahçe:** An area along the Bosphorus associated with imperial modernization, most notably through the Dolmabahçe Palace.

***Kasımpaşa:** A working-class district along the Golden Horn, historically associated with shipbuilding, industry, and migration.tably through the Dolmabahçe Palace.

meticulously constructed through the agency of architects. Can the orientalist language of the Taksim Artillery Barracks be read not as an Eastern imitation but as a Western-imported style that symbolically certifies modernity? Beyond its stylistic distinctiveness, the Artillery Barracks influenced the urban morphology of the area. They introduced a monumental scale and formal presence that redefined the city's visual and spatial identity. Examining the Ottoman modernization process, Lefebvre's approach offers again an analytical framework to explore the spatial and political significances of the Artillery Barracks. As will be discussed in subsequent chapters, Lefebvre's theory of space also serves as a guiding framework for understanding not only the emergence of the Artillery Barracks but equally its erasure from the urban and political fabric.

Cemeteries in the Urban Landscape of 19th-Century Beyoğlu

Throughout the 19th century, cemeteries in Beyoğlu played a multifaceted role. During the reign of Sultan Süleyman* (1520-1566), a major cholera epidemic in Istanbul led to the prohibition of burials within the city walls for public health reasons. Europeans referred to the cemetery areas in Galata and Tepebaşı* as the *Petit Champs des Morts* (Small Cemetery), while Taksim and its surroundings were known as the *Grand Champ(s) des Morts* (Large Cemetery). The area stretching from Parmak Kapı* Street to Taksim and onward toward Talimhane was used by the Greek (in Turkish *Rum*) community; the zone extending from the site of today's Gezi Park toward Harbiye* served as the Armenian cemetery; the area running from Taksim toward Cihangir* on the left side was reserved for the Latin (Catholic) community; and the land extending from Ayaspaşa* toward Dolmabahçe*, as well as the route from Taksim toward Kasımpaşa*, constituted the Muslim cemetery grounds (Gülersoy, 1986).

However, in the second half of the 19th century, shifting paradigms in urban governance and public health led to a re-evaluation of cemeteries as integral components of the urban fabric. In line with the hygienist urban planning paradigm, Guido

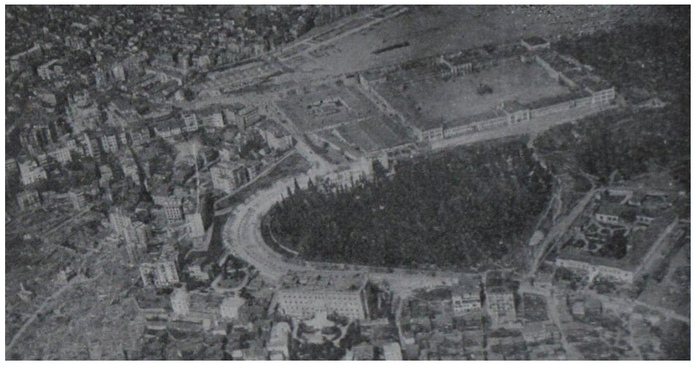


Figure 5.
Early aerial photograph of the Taksim area showing the Artillery Barracks (Topçu Kışlası), Gümüşsuyu Cemetery, and the early patterns of urban parcelization in Beyoğlu.
Note. Originally published in Harp Mecmuası, August 1333 (1917). Reproduced from "Yüz on yıl önce ve yüz on yıl sonra" by Cem Baydar, Eskimeyen e-dergi, March 14, 2021.

Zucconi (2002) states that cemeteries were increasingly perceived as sources of contamination and spatial disorder, necessitating their removal from dense urban fabrics at the end of the 19th century. Architect Zeynep Çelik (2015) confirms that a similar situation existed in the late Ottoman times. Influenced by Tanzimat-era* modernization reforms and the increasing adoption of hygienist planning principles, cemeteries began to be perceived as incompatible with emerging ideals of order, cleanliness, and civic progress. Within this framework, the *Grand Champs des Morts,* serving predominantly non-Muslim communities such as Armenians, Catholics, and Protestants, became a focal point of relocation efforts. By 1860, the Sixth Municipality* had designated new cemetery grounds in Feriköy* for these communities.

The transfer of burials from Taksim marked a turning point in both spatial policy and the symbolic reconfiguration of the urban landscape (Önver, 2019). The relocation of the *Grands Champs des Morts* reflects broader processes of urban modernization, where space is redefined not only physically but also symbolically to express new civic identities (Zucconi, 2002). Like Zucconi, medical historian Howard Markel (1997) argues that, with the rise of modernity, the collection of control elements that developed in societies was not only a medical policy, but also a loose organization of control and order over society. This reconceptualization of funerary landscapes was not merely about relocation; it reflected a broader urban vision in which formerly sacred terrains were reimagined as spaces of public life.

Figure 6.
Aerial photograph of the Taksim Artillery Barracks (Topçu Kışlası), showing the full spatial extent of the complex and its surrounding urban fabric.
Note. Ülgen Family Collection, SALT Research, Photographs (TASUH7145).

***Tanzimat-era (1839–1876):** A reform period in the Ottoman Empire characterized by legal, administrative, and urban modernization efforts.

***Sixth Municipality (Altıncı Daire-i Belediye) (est. 1857):** The first modern municipal administration in the Ottoman Empire, governing Pera/Beyoğlu as an experimental urban

***Feriköy:** A district historically characterized by cemeteries, industrial uses, and later residential expansion.

CANIM AYŞE

Stadyomda deve güreşi yapıldı!

Ağızları kilitlenmiş develer birbirlerine hamarat davranarak saldırıyorlardı

Galipler, mağlûplar

İspartada

Figure 7.
Newspaper excerpt from Vakit dated February 6, 1933 (p. 5), titled "Camel wrestling took place in the stadium" ("Stadyumda deve güreşi yapıldı"), reporting on camel-wrestling events held in Taksim Stadium.
Note. Vakit, February 6, 1933, p. 5. Retrieved from Gaste Arşivi.

Taksim Square in the Early Republican Period

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Taksim area was defined by a layered landscape of cemeteries, the Artillery Barracks, the Taksim Maksem, and various religious and civic institutions. With the onset of modernization policies, however, the area became the target of major spatial interventions. According to archival research reported by Uygur (2021) in *Agos,* debates over the cemeteries in this zone extended from the late Ottoman period into the early Republican era, a continuity also emphasized by Armenian historian Armaveni Miroğlu (2009).

In the same year, the Artillery Barracks became the focal point of a major historical event: the March 31 Incident, a reactionary uprising against the Second Constitutional Monarchy*. Although the rebellion was suppressed by the Action Army*, it seriously disrupted the military and public functions of the barracks. This event marked the beginning of the barracks' decline (Öztaş, 2011, pp. 105-110).

Following the rebellion, the structure sustained partial damage and fell into neglect. With the founding of the Republic and the relocation of military authority to Ankara, the barracks lost their functional purpose (Kırbaş, 2014). By the 1920s, it had stopped serving any military role (Gülersoy, 1986).

The courtyard of the Artilery Barracks began to be utilized as the first stadium in Istanbul in 1921, and it was called Taksim Stadyom. The matches were played between Turkish teams and several rivals such as English and French occupation units and Romania. Besides

Second Constitutional Monarchy (1908–1918): The final constitutional period of the Ottoman Empire, marked by parliamentary rule, political pluralism, and social

Action Army (Hareket Ordusu) (1909): A military force mobilized to suppress the March 31 Incident and restore constitutional order during the late Ottoman period.

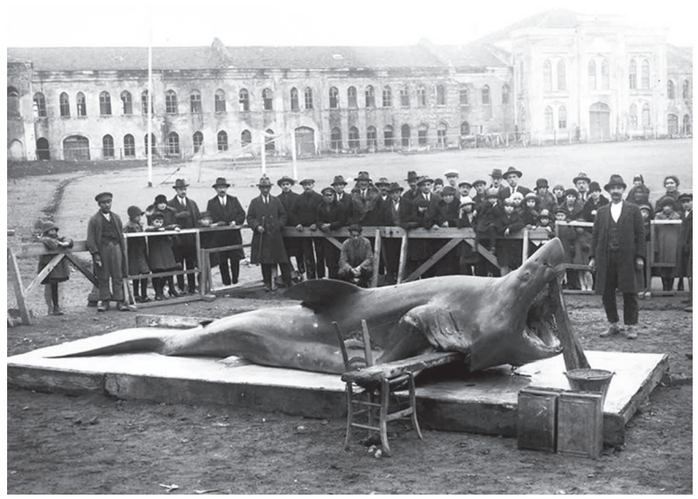


Figure 8.
Historic football match held at Taksim Stadium on June 29, 1923, in which Fenerbahçe defeated a combined team of British occupational forces 2-1 to win the General Harrington Cup
Note. Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation Photography Collection. Featured in the online exhibition Taksim: The Heart of Istanbul, İstanbul Research Institute Archive.

Figure 9.
Shark caught in the Marmara Sea and displayed at Taksim Stadium in the late 1920s
Note. Suna and İnan Kıraç Foundation Photography Collection. Featured in the online exhibition Taksim: The Heart of Istanbul, İstanbul Research Institute Archive.

football, the stadium also hosted 19 May celebrations*, as well as several sports branches like wrestling, track and field, boxing, and field hockey (Kırbaş, 2014). The stadium quickly gained widespread popularity, and the numerous sporting and public events held there were frequently covered in contemporary newspapers, attesting to its prominence in Istanbul's urban and social life.

During the Ottoman period, Istanbul lacked structures deliberately constructed as monuments, since Ottoman society did not feel the need for such symbolic representations (Öztaş, 2010). In accordance with Islam's iconoclastic principles, depicting living beings through paintings or sculptures was frowned upon, and such theatrical and emblematic urban elements were considered features unique to European cityscapes (Gülersoy, 1986). In Islamic urban tradition, social life revolved around mosques and bazaars, where mosques, rather than open squares, served as centers of communal life. Social gatherings typically occurred during holidays, weddings, and religious ceremonies. These events generally involved only family and acquaintances, which prevented the formation of public spaces conducive to spontaneous encounters like those seen in European squares (Öztaş, 2010).

The monument was designed in proportion to the square's dimensions, which at the time was bordered by the Taksim Maksemi and residential buildings to the west, and the Artillery Barracks to the north (Öztaş, 2010). Italian sculptor Pietro Canonica was commissioned for the work. Although the original concept was limited to a statue of Atatürk,

19 May celebrations (since 1919): Commemorations marking the beginning of the Turkish War of Independence, later institutionalized as a national youth and sports

AKŞAM

Gençlik âbide önünde and içti

Atatürkün kurduğu kudretli ve kuvvetli rejime, inkılâplara daima sadık kalacak

Atatürkün naaşları Dolmabahçeden karayolile Sarayburnuna getirilecek

Dün Taksim meydanı insan denizi halini almıştı

Yüksek tahsil gençliğinden başka on binlerce halk meydanı doldurdu

Andın sureti

"Atatürk, istikbalinden korkmayan kuvvetli millî bir devlet bırakmaktadır.

Figure 10. Newspaper clipping from Akşam dated November 13, 1938, reporting the mass gatherings in Taksim Square following the death of Atatürk and featuring a photograph of youth taking an oath in front of the Republic Monument. Note. Akşam, November 13, 1938. Retrieved from newspaper archive.

founder of Turkish Republic, Canonica advocated for a comprehensive monument embodying both the War of Independence* and the founding of the Republic. Unveiled on August 8, 1928, in a grand ceremony, the monument drew the largest crowds Beyoğlu had ever seen. Contemporary newspapers estimated the attendance at over 30,000 people (Gülersoy, 1986).

Standing 11 meters tall and weighing around 184 tons, the Taksim Monument is built from red marble sourced from Trentino and green marble from the Susa valley in Italy. Its two main façades depict different historical narratives: one side commemorates the Victory of August 30*, while the other celebrates the Republic. Atatürk stands centrally in civilian attire, flanked by Ismet* and Fevzi Pashas*. The date October 29, 1923, marking the Republic's proclamation, is inscribed on the lower portion. On the side panels, two soldiers carry flags representing war and peace. Above them are medallions with two female figures: one veiled, and the other, a symbol of emancipation, unveiled by the revolution. The Taksim Monument's composition is calm and symmetrical, far removed from the dynamic, exuberant style often associated with revolutionary regimes. The sculptures are arranged in a gentle manner, and the use of colored marble and rosette motifs evokes 19th-century Italian urban aesthetics (Gülersoy, 1986).

With the erection of the Republic Monument, the first clear signals emerged that Taksim Square would be reinterpreted within a new ideological and spatial order. As the primary symbolic representation of the newly founded Republic, the monument did not merely commemorate a political rupture but actively participated in the production of a new spatial meaning. From a Lefebvrian perspective, this moment may be read as the initial phase in the state-led production of space, whereby a previously underdefined and relatively vacant area was transformed into a representational space of the new regime. In this sense, the transformation of Taksim aligns with the critical urban theory developed by geographer and urban theorist David Harvey, the political and economic production of space,

***War of Independence:** The 1919–1923 struggle that led to the founding of the Republic of Turkey.

***August 30:** The 1922 Victory Day marking the final decisive battle of the War of Independence.

***İsmet Pasha (1884–1973):** A key military leader and statesman of the early Republic.

***Fevzi Pasha (1876–1950):** A senior commander who played a major role in the War of Independence.

Figure 11.. Landscaping around the Republic Monument at Taksim Square nearing completion, ca. 1930 Note. İstanbul Research Institute Archive (1930).

drawing on this perspective, which understands spatial organization as an active outcome of political and economic processes rather than a neutral backdrop to social life, the selection of this site was therefore not incidental (Harvey, 1973). The location coincided with the city's northward expansion trajectory, embedding the monument within both a symbolic and a developmental logic.

By the 1930s, the fate of the Armenian Cemetery was effectively sealed.

On November 26, 1934, the court ruled that the Armenian Patriarchate held no legal claim over the cemetery and ordered it to cover litigation expenses, including a 150-lira court fee. After eight years of legal dispute, the cemetery was fully expropriated in 1939 and transferred to the municipality (Nalcı & Dağlıoğlu, 2014). Subsequently, tombstones were reused as construction material for park staircases and restoration works in Eminönü Square* (Miroğlu, 2009; Pamukciyan, 2003, p. 266).

***Eminönü Square:** A historic urban square functioning as a major transportation and commercial hub on the Historical Peninsula.

AKŞAM

Yeni belediye kanunu münasebetile

Zehirle

Müsademe!

Taksim meydanının hali

Meydanın inşaatı neden aylardan beri bitmiyor?

Akdeniz etrafındaki havuz için Avrupadan mermer bekleniyor

İSTANBUL'UN

Boğazda hava

Alman kabinesi

Figure 12.
Newspaper page from Akşam dated April 6, 1930, featuring the article "The construction of the square has not been completed for months because marble for the pool is awaited from Europe" ("Meydanın inşaatı neden aylardan beri bitmiyor? Havuz için Avrupa'dan mermer bekleniyor"), reporting on delays in the Taksim Square construction works.
Note. Akşam, April 6, 1930. Retrieved from Gaste Arşivi.

Figure 13.
Opening of the Republic Monument at Taksim Square, ca. 1928
Note. İstanbul Research Institute Archive (1928).

Among the former cemeteries of the area, the history of resistance surrounding the Armenian Cemetery is particularly significant, not least because this sustained collective struggle was ultimately followed by dispossession and removal. Despite prolonged mobilization, legal action, and public protest, the community was displaced from the site, underscoring the asymmetry of power that structured the process. From the perspective of French historian Pierre Nora, whose concept of *lieux de mémoire* theorizes sites of memory as emerging precisely at moments of rupture, loss, and discontinuity, such places acquire their critical significance when their material and social continuity is threatened. As Nora argues, memory attaches itself to sites when real environments of memory disappear (Nora, 1989), rendering the Armenian Cemetery not only a site of physical erasure but also a condensed locus of contested memory.

At the same time, this process can be read through Lefebvre's understanding of the production of space as necessarily involving processes of spatial erasure, whereby certain histories and social groups are rendered invisible through state-led reorganization of the urban fabric (Lefebvre, 1991). In this sense, the physical demolition of the Armenian Cemetery did not simply eliminate a burial ground; it enacted a double operation of spatial production and mnemonic displacement, through which a minority memory was removed from the visible city. Yet precisely through this erasure, the site may also be understood as acquiring an intensified mnemonic charge, suggesting that in some cases the significance of place within collective memory may paradoxically increase through its very disappearance.

On the other hand, this was not the only act of destruction during this period. Under Governor Lütfi Kırdar*'s administration, a major urban redevelopment campaign was launched, culminating in the appointment of French urban planner Henri Prost (1874-1959) as Chief Planner of Istanbul in 1936. Prost's vision was to reconfigure the city according to modern Western planning principles. Within this framework, redesigning Taksim Square and its environs became a critical project.

Lütfi Kırdar (1887–1961):
A physician and politician who served as the Mayor of Istanbul and played a major role in shaping early Republican urban development.

AKŞAM

Amerikan filosu hazırlanıyor

Bütün mürettebatın derhal gemilere binmesi emredildi

Uzak Şarkta deniz nümayişi ihtimalinden tekrar bahsediliyor

Fransa gazeteleri, Fransanın Akdenizde Stratkiyo mahfezagi derekte edebileceğini yazıyorlar

Mülkiye müfettişlerine dün bazı otobüsçüler müracaat ettiler

Surp Agop mezarlığı ve Fenerbahçe planı

Avrupa gerginliğinde hissolunur azalma var

Figure 14.
Newspaper excerpt from Akşam dated December 22, 1937, titled "Surp Agop Cemetery and Fenerbahçe Plan" ("Surp Agop Mezarlığı ve Fenerbahçe Planı"), reporting on legal disputes regarding the ownership of the Surp Agop Cemetery. Note. Akşam, December 22, 1937. Retrieved from Gaste Arşivi.

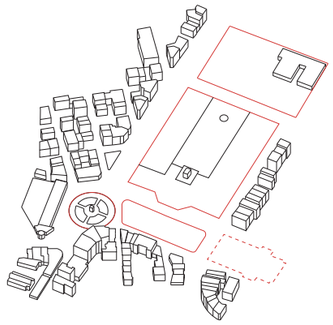
His interventions represented more than a physical transformation. They symbolized the Republic's secular and modern identity. With these intentions and in accordance with Prost's plans, the Artillery Barracks was demolished. The reason given was that the building had by then become functionally obsolete (Kırbaş, 2014).

The demolition of this structure recalls a question: What happens to all this power after the demolition of a building? The Artillery Barracks functioned as an instrument of power; however, power itself is not inherent in the building's walls. Power resides in the order, institutions, and network of relations that the space represents. The demolition of a spatial instrument like the Artillery Barracks eliminates its carrier of power, yet the power itself does not completely disappear; it is redistributed. The state, the military, religious institutions, or capital will reproduce this power in another space. In fact, sometimes the destruction of a structure can amplifies its symbolic power, as the lost object acquires a more intense political meaning, as in the case of the Armenian Cemetery.

However, space remains a source of legitimacy and visibility for power. Therefore, the demolition of a building compels that power to seek a new ground of legitimacy. When the Artillery Barracks were demolished, a park took its place. However, it was not merely a park; it was the spatial representation of modernization, public life, and the values of the secular Republic. Taksim Square began to represent an ideology, the new face of the Republic, yet it was also haunted by the ghosts of those who found no place within it. As Öztaş notes:

> Sacrificing the old to build the new is not foreign to Turkish urban culture… every iteration of Istanbul was founded by demolishing the one before (Öztaş, 2010, p. 62).

This mindset constituted one of the fundamental dynamics of the spatial transformations that took place in Taksim during the early Republican period, and it was even left as a legacy for the future, as will be discussed in the following chapters.



1940 - 1971: Making of Modern Taksim

The Spatial Manifesto of the Republic: The Henri Prost Plan

The early Republican period stands out as one of the most significant phases in the history of the Turkish Republic. The republican ideology aimed at a comprehensive modernization process.

Architectural historian Pelin Bolca (2023) highlights that the early Republican decade marked profound transformations in the political system and reflected an attempt to construct a legal foundation for embedding these changes within the social and cultural fabric. Architect İnci Aslanoğlu (2010) emphasizes that the goal of reaching the level of contemporary Western civilization was reflected in many aspects of life, including urban and rural planning, architecture, interior design aligned with modern lifestyles, clothing, music, and visual arts. To support this cultural development, the Law for the Encouragement of Industry* was introduced, which enabled foreign architects to work in Turkey (Aslanoğlu, 2010). All these initiatives sought to absorb the latest modern advancements from Europe and reinterpret them urbanism and architecture, both in theoretical discourse and practical application (Bolca, 2023).

Within the context of the nation-state formation process, French urban planner Henri Prost was invited to Turkey by Atatürk in 1936 to develop a comprehensive master plan aimed at the modernization of Istanbul (Akpınar, 2010).

Related to this period, architects İpek Akpınar and Cana Bilsel, who are among the most prolific and authoritative scholars researching Prost's work in Istanbul, provide valuable insights into his planning approach and its impact on the city.

Prost, a graduate of the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Paris, was particularly influenced during this period by architect Camillo Sitte's ideas on *espaces libres* (open spaces) and urban conservation (Akpınar, 2010).

According to Sitte (1889/1965), a successful urban space is achieved not only through the functional arrangement of buildings but also through their aesthetic relationship. In this context, *espaces libres* are not merely voids but spaces that are shaped and defined by the

***Law for the Encouragement of Industry (1927):** A Republican-era law designed to promote domestic industrial production through state incentives and protectionist measures.

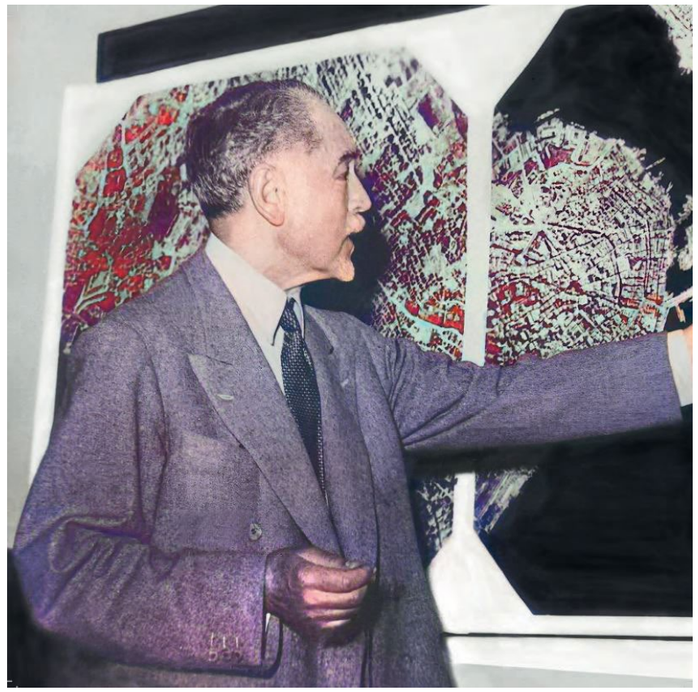


Figure 15.
French architect-urbanist Henri Prost presenting his Istanbul Master Plan, 1937
Note. Taken from Coşkun (2023). Original photograph held at the Centre d'Archives, IFA Archives, Paris, as cited in H. Coşkun, "French planner Henri Prost's Istanbul master plans, his housing planning ideas and methods as an architect-urbanist," Civil Engineering and Architecture, 11(1), 123–141.

surrounding structures, thereby gaining meaning. In other words, open areas such as squares or parks become more intimate, functional, and aesthetically pleasing when they are enclosed by the buildings around them. These are places where people gather, interact, and public life flourishes (Akpınar, 2010).

In 1933, the state formally institutionalized hygiene, aesthetics, and circulation as the three guiding principles of Istanbul's urban planning agenda, leading to a more instrumental and pragmatic approach to heritage-related decisions (Bolca, 2023).

Within this framework, Henri Prost's master plan was structured around the same triad, *l'hygiène, la circulation,* and *l'esthétique*, which came to define the modernist logic of Istanbul's spatial transformation (Bilsel, 2010).

Between 1914 and 1924, Prost developed various projects for Morocco, provided consultancy for the 1924 İzmir Plan in Turkey, and prepared a master plan for Algiers in 1931. From 1928 to 1934, he served as the chief planner of Paris.

Given this rich background, Atatürk chose Prost for the task of designing a more modern, hygienic, and beautiful Istanbul. Prost was not only well-educated and experienced, but also

SON HABERLER

"Harbi kısa bir zamanda kazanmaga karar verdik,"

Hava fotografı

Her şehrin bir fotografik planı olursa Türkiyede şehircilik terakkileri kolaylaşacaktır

Yazan: Monp HENRI PROST

HEM NALINA HEM SIRTINA

Geçkili yerasını bilirsen genç kavuşacaksın

Şehirde kurulacak Rumen köyü

Almanya, harbi, Tahsn bozacaağa Mecburdur

Figure 16.
Newspaper clipping from Cumhuriyet dated March 31, 1940, featuring a column by Henri Prost titled "If every city had a photographic plan, urban development in Turkey would become easier" ("Her şehrin bir fotografik planı olursa Türkiye'de şehircilik terakkileri kolaylaşır"), discussing the role of photographic planning in modern urban development. Note. Cumhuriyet, March 31, 1940. Retrieved from Cumhuriyet Newspaper Archive.

both Western and Eastern urban fabrics, accustomed to working across different cultures, and already knowledgeable about Istanbul and Turkey. In other words, in a country that aspired to reach the level of contemporary civilization but remained predominantly Muslim, President Atatürk deliberately selected a Western expert who had professional experience in Islamic cities (Akpınar, 2010).

Shaped by the secularizing legacy of the 1789 French Revolution, the Turkish nation-state pursued its modernization project through a comprehensive reform agenda. In historical perspective, the Republic of Turkey represents a singular case of secularization within a deeply religious social structure (Akpınar, 2010). From this standpoint, as Birge Yıldırım (2012) suggests, the decision to commission Henri Prost, a planner firmly embedded in the French planning tradition, to redesign Istanbul becomes a coherent extension of this secular-modernist trajectory.

In 1937, Henri Prost presented the first section of the *Master Plan for the European Side of Istanbul* (Bolca, 2023). However, before the plan's approval process was finalized, President Mustafa Kemal Atatürk passed away in 1938. Due to this political uncertainty, the approval process was delayed. Eventually, the master plan for the European Side was officially approved in 1939 through the direct intervention of President İsmet İnönü, who served as the first Prime Minister during Atatürk's presidency (1924-1938) and succeeded him as President from 1938 to 1950 (Bilsel, 2010).

Henri Prost carried out the planning of Istanbul for fifteen years during a period when the Republican People's Party (established by Atatürk and later led by İsmet İnönü, which still exists today) ruled as the single-party government. Good relations were established between Prost and President İnönü, as well as with prominent Istanbul mayors of the time, especially Lütfi Kırdar, which facilitated their cooperation. Despite the severe economic difficulties caused by World War II, some of the urban projects he proposed were successfully implemented (Akpınar, 2010). The city was beautified through geometric arrangements that can be interpreted today as Europeanization, refinement, secularization, and citizenship, such as rows of evenly planted trees, neatly maintained flower beds, pools, and sculptures (Bozdoğan, 2010, as cited in Akpınar, 2023). The architectural reflections of the plan on daily life represent the showcase of the Republic.

This transformation was portrayed in the press primarily as an act of creation from scratch. When examining the news articles from 1936 to 1940 about the changing face of Istanbul, it becomes clear that this transformation attracted the attention of both the media and the public. Henri Prost's name began to appear in the press around 1936, with particular emphasis on the planned changes in Galata and Beyoğlu. Over time, news articles began to mention Atatürk and Henri Prost together, highlighting that Atatürk was the visionary behind this transformation. There were also newspapers that published criticism. In fact, Henri Prost became such an influential figure that one of the country's most prominent newspapers, *Cumhuriyet*, featured a column he wrote on architecture and urban mapping.

During this period, Galata and Beyoğlu were extremely dense districts whose built fabric failed to meet basic public-health standards. Henri Prost proposed demolishing and reconstructing the entire northern shore of the Golden Horn* up to Taksim, yet emphasized that such a transformation required phased interventions, most notably the systematic widening of all streets in Galata and Beyoğlu to satisfy the demands of *la circulation* and *l'hygiène* (Bilsel, 2010).

Although Prost had previously advocated the preservation of historic and natural environments, his Istanbul strategy prioritized a radical modernization of the existing urban fabric. This shift reflected the combined impact of extensive fire-damaged areas in the historic peninsula, the rapid socio-cultural reconfiguration driven by Atatürk's reforms, and the Republic's aspiration to produce an urban milieu suited to a modern society (Bilsel, 2010). Bolca (2023) further contends that Prost's approach closely aligned with municipal priorities, particularly regarding the management of intangible cultural heritage. Indeed, Prost characterized his Istanbul work explicitly as

Golden Horn: A natural harbor dividing the European side of Istanbul, central to the city's industrial, commercial, and social history.

HABER'in sabık romanı

YEDİ POSTLU Kayyam

İhtar: silini, pencere kepenklerini büyük bir gürültü ile kapanmak taklid etti

Günün Meselesi

Prost plânı Istanbul'un ciğerlerini tıkayacaktır!

Halici koskoca bir demirhane haline gelirmek Beyoğlunu ve Istanbulu duman ve kurum içinde bırakmak demektir

Yazan: Şekip Gündüz

Sevindirilen yavrular

PAPYO

İstanbul Reşyosu

Reklarlara

Figure 17.
Newspaper page from Akşam dated April 26, 1938, featuring an article criticizing Henri Prost's planning proposals for Istanbul and illustrating public concerns regarding the environmental consequences of his vision. The headline reads "The Prost plan will suffocate the very lungs of Istanbul!" ("Prost plânı İstanbul'un ciğerlerini tıkayacaktır! Haliç'i koskoca bir demirhane hâline getirmek, Beyoğlu'nu ve İstanbul'u duman ve kurum içinde bırakmak demektir"). Note. Akşam, April 26, 1938. Retrieved from Gaste Arşivi.

a comprehensive "change/transformation of the city" (Bilsel, 2010).

> The plans I drew, which I am satisfied to see partially implemented, will significantly shake old Istanbul (Prost, 1943, as cited in Akpınar, 2023).

Architect Bozdoğan and historian Kasaba emphasize that the 1937 Prost Plan outlines the political and spatial framework for creating a modern, secular European city within a conservative community. Prost's proposals reflect striking similarities with the ideals of the Republic. This plan is closely linked to the socio-political revolutionary program in secular Turkey. Public spaces enable women and men to participate together as equal and free individuals within the urban scene (Bozdoğan & Kasaba, 1997). At this point, it can be interesting to examine since when architecture has been recognized as a profession in Turkey. The institutionalization of architecture began in 1883 with education based on the École des Beaux-Arts model from France at the *Sanayi-i Nefîse Mektebi* (School of Fine Arts); however, architecture was taught and acknowledged as a distinct profession only after the proclamation of the Republic, specifically in 1928 with the *Devlet Güzel Sanatlar Akademisi* (State Academy of Fine Arts) (Düzenli, 2009). During the early Republican modernization process, architectural magazines played a significant role in the public recognition and professionalization of the architecture profession. Among these publications, *Arkitekt** magazine, which started publication in 1931, was one of the most influential (Özgüven, 2020). Throughout its publication period (1931-1981), *Arkitekt* extensively explored the complex relationship between the city and the principles of urban planning. Its influence went beyond shaping Istanbul's urban transformation, extending to numerous cities across Anatolia (Bolca, 2024).

By the late 1940s, the *Arkitekt* magazine began to voice the increasing problems of Istanbul and the difficulties experienced by its residents. The modernizing professional elite like architects, planners, and journalists developed a critical discourse on the city's issues (Akpınar, 2010). Following the transition to a multi-party regime in 1946 and the victory of the center-right Democratic Party in the 1950 general elections, the balance of power in the country's governance shifted. In fact, the discourses related to Istanbul's urban planning were later adopted by politicians affiliated with the Democratic Party in the 1950s. Within the framework of the Democratic Party's municipal election program, Istanbul was repositioned as a new center. After winning the municipal elections, the Democratic Party did not renew Henri Prost's contract (Bilsel, 2010). Architect Aron Angel, who once worked with Henri Prost, clearly explains the background of Prost's departure from Istanbul in an interview. He argues that this departure was the result of a purely political decision rather than technical or professional reasons. It was directly related to perceptions of Prost's political identity; being seen as a man of the Republican People's Party caused his exclusion from the planning process in Turkey (Boysan, 1999).

During this period, the nationalistic themed debates in the Municipal Council* gained wide resonance and support. Within the framework of these "Turkist" tones, the revision of the Prost Plan was carried out by Turkish experts between 1950 and 1956. The 1952 Temporary Revision Commission* (1954) played a role in Prost's exclusion (Akpınar, 2010).

The most contentious term in Prost's report was "beautification" (*embellissement*), a concept far broader than its Turkish translations captured. For Prost, *embellissement* encompassed preserving natural heritage, restoring monuments, redesigning the circulation routes around them, producing hygienic and healthy architectural environments, and expanding public spaces (*espaces libres*) (Akpınar, 2010). This multilayered concept carried clear ideological implications. As Akpınar (2010) argues, Prost's *espaces libres* and new road networks can be read as attempts to anchor Istanbul's modern identity in pre-Ottoman Greco-Roman urban traditions, to weaken the symbolic authority of the "imam," and to advance themes such as gender equality and youth-centered modernization. The logic of creative destruction, famously applied in 1950s New York, was effectively replicated in Istanbul during the latter half of the decade. In 1950s Turkey, road building and construction

***Arkitekt:** A leading Turkish architectural journal (1931–1981) documenting modern architecture, urban projects, and professional debates of the early Republican and mid-20th-century period.

***Municipal Council:** Municipal Council, A governing body responsible for local administration, planning, and public services within urban municipalities.

***1952 Temporary Revision Commission (1954):** A short-lived governmental body established to review and revise specific urban or administrative regulations during the early Republican period.

Şehrin imarı mı, yoksa korunma işleri mi ön plâna alınmalı?

İstanbulun bazı tasavvurlara karşı korunma emrile ve tâdilâtlarla devirlerle bağdaştığından bahisle bazıları ne diyor, gökyüzü hafiflerek başka çerçeve ile bulunan mıyız?

YAZAN

Emekli general H. Emir Erkilet

Tabii - gayritabii

Bunları biliyor mu idiniz?

GÖNÜLİSLERİ

İaşiltme ve Nahiyeden

Figure 18.
Newspaper page from Son Posta dated March 6, 1940, featuring the headline "Should urban planning or conservation efforts take precedence?" ("Şehrin imarı mı, yoksa koruma işleri mi ön plana alınmalı?"), discussing tensions between urban development and heritage preservation in Istanbul during the early Republican period. Note. Son Posta, March 6, 1940. Retrieved from newspaper archive.

acquired heightened political and symbolic value, as Istanbul was imagined as a quasi-capital embodying the nation's Westernizing aspirations. With the ambition of creating a "Little America", Western urban images were imported with little critical scrutiny, a vision first articulated by Democrat Party president Celal Bayar and circulated through slogans encouraging citizens to "do what the Americans do" (Akpınar, 2023). This Americanizing orientation was underpinned materially by U.S. aid beginning in 1948 through the European Recovery Plan. The Democrat Party's development model, rooted in U.S. alignment, liberal economic policy, and NATO membership in 1952, framed economic growth and modernization as synonymous with the American path, with European Recovery Plan funding providing the infrastructural basis for this paradigm (Üstün, 1997).

In the 1950s, infrastructure expansion, highway construction, and the influx of modern building materials reshaped Turkey's architectural and urban-planning paradigm. Following U.S. recommendations, railway investments were abandoned in favor of an automobile-oriented planning model. Adnan Menderes's urban interventions in Istanbul were carried out under pronounced American influence. On the Harbiye-Taksim axis, on the ridge above the Maçka Valley*, where Henri Prost had envisioned a major green area, the Istanbul Hilton Hotel was instead constructed in 1955 by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill* with American capital (Bozdoğan & Akcan, 2013). Aron Angel later identified this decision as the key reason for his resignation, remarking on the Hilton project as follows:

> We created a green space here, and we struggled a lot to expropriate this land. It later became clear that discussions had taken place with the Americans and that a preliminary design for the Hilton Hotel had already been prepared. I spent that night thinking and handed in my resignation the next morning. I even left with the statement: 'I feel ashamed to work in an institution where personal interests prevail (Boysan, 1999).

Shortly thereafter, in 1956, the Divan Hotel was opened at a location very close to Taksim Square, along the Gümüşsuyu and Cumhuriyet Street axis, at a point adjacent to the Hilton. The Hilton and Divan became symbols of this transformation and were seen as buildings spatially representing American influence and a modern lifestyle (Bozdoğan & Akcan, 2013).

Historian Çağlar Keyder (1997) states that despite the discourse of preserving the values of the past, the urban development movement led by Menderes took on the character of an attack against the imperial identity and traditional architecture. The rapid modernization process eliminated the historic fabric, which was regarded as an old-fashioned obstacle (Keyder, 1997).

İnönü Promenade: A Symbol of Modern Istanbul

One of the most significant components of change in Henri Prost's Istanbul Plan was Taksim Square. To truly function as a square, it underwent a series of transformations beyond those implemented during the early years of the Republic. An Islamic society required specific measures for its transformation, which encompassed not only political, legal, and educational reforms.

This was particularly significant because, within Ottoman culture, the use of public space was deeply rooted in Islamic practices, practices that were largely abandoned by the new Republic.

Taksim Square was conceived as the symbolic plaza of the new Republic and substantially enlarged to accommodate theatres, conference halls, clubs, transport terminals, and parking areas, producing a rectangular ceremonial space anchored by a planned opera house. The Surp Agop Cemetery was cleared and replaced with multi-story residential blocks alongside the Radio House and the Tennis, Fencing, and Mountaineering Clubs. Significant attention also centered on the redesign of Park No. 2, bounded by Taksim, Harbiye, Maçka, and Dolmabahçe, which Prost envisioned as a multifunctional urban landscape rather than a simple recreational zone (Yıldırım & Erdem, 2015). Conceived as an integrated green network, the park combined cultural, artistic, and athletic facilities with public open space (Bolca et al., 2017). This restructuring produced a modern park system and the İsmet İnönü

*Maçka Valley: A green corridor between Taksim and Nişantaşı, functioning as an urban park and ecological break within the dense city fabric.

*Skidmore, Owings & Merrill: An international architectural and urban design firm known for large-scale modernist projects and corporate architecture.

Figure 19.
Demolition of the Artillery Corps Barracks in Taksim Cumhuriyet Square and construction of İnönü Gezisi (Gezi Park), 1941
Note. İstanbul Research Institute.

Promenade, constructed on the site of the former Artillery Barracks (Tekeli, 2013).

Aylin Topal (2016) notes that many conservative commentators argue the founders of modern Turkey rejected proposals to reutilize the Artillery Barracks for Republican military purposes, and some claim the demolition decision was taken personally by İsmet İnönü. From an urban-planning perspective, Aron Angel offers a contrasting account: the barracks were not demolished by Henri Prost but had already been largely dismantled before his arrival in Istanbul, with only fragments remaining. Angel stresses that Prost intended to preserve these remnants, yet they were subsequently cleared to make way for new constructions on the site (Boysan, 1999).

In one of Prost's letters, he articulated his position as follows:

> The *urbaniste* is responsible for expressing a political idea, a social idea, with the help of monuments, parks, gardens […] The *urbaniste*,* the powerful man, is responsible for this transmission. (Prost, undated, as cited in Akpınar, 2023, p. 59).

Urbaniste: A French term referring to an urban planner designer involved in shaping cities, planning policies, and spatial development.

When asked why he proposed so many parks for Istanbul, Prost replied that their purpose was to "bring women and children out of their cages," a rationale he associated with the eighteen parks he designed for the city (Prost, undated, as cited in Akpınar, 2023).

The parks served to make women visible. As part of secularization, the most significant reform redefining the role of women in public life, a new urbanization model was implemented. Within this context, *espaces libres* are regarded as a physical manifestation of the secular nation-state.

Although borrowed from Sitte and Hénard, the organization of public spaces, reflected in the urban fabric through boulevards, parks, and squares, creates opportunities for men and women to coexist equally and freely. The significance of the Prost Plan lies precisely in these expansive public spaces: without *espaces libres*, secular legal and administrative reforms could not have been visualized.

Lütfi Kırdar described the İnönü Promenade as follows:

> This is not an ordinary park; it is a promenade area like those we see

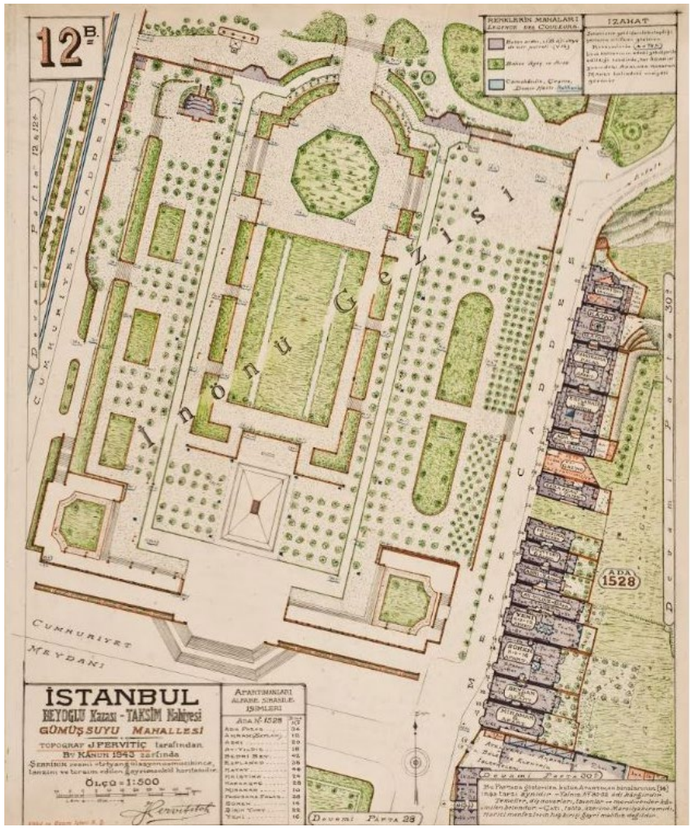


Figure 20.
Taksim Gardens extending from İnönü Promenade (Gezi Park), featuring the monumental entrance of the Artillery Corps Barracks awaiting demolition, 1941
Note. SALT Research.

in European capitals. It is a place where people can relieve the fatigue of urban life, just like the Trocadero Gardens in the heart of Paris or Hyde Park in London (Kırdar, 1940, as cited in Akpınar, 2013).

Urban planner İlhan Tekeli notes that the park's design unfolded over roughly three years, with the İnönü Promenade emerging as a public, ceremonial, and monumental space that embodied early Republican cultural values and urban philosophy (Tekeli, 2013). Covering 62,000 m², it represented a distinctly modern, Western-style park system, featuring tree-lined paths, lawns, benches, and diverse recreational amenities. By the mid-1940s, Maçka Park and a football stadium had been completed to its northeast (1947), alongside an open-air theatre (1946) (Aksoy, 2022). The Mete Street edge was defined by acacias and mature trees, while hundreds of plane trees and ornamental species, such as evergreen camellias, were planted throughout; a rose garden marked the promenade's center. Marble stairways,

Figure 21.
Aerial photograph of Taksim Square, shared by the Twitter account "Tarihi Merak Ediyoruz," depicting the square before the construction of major hotels, dated by the post to the 1950s.
Note. Tarihi Merak Ediyoruz (@tarihiimerak), January 23, 2026.

Figure 22.
View of İnönü Promenade (Gezi Park) as depicted on the Pervititch map, 1943
Note. SALT Research.

terraces, benches, and open grass areas consolidated its role as a major urban attraction. Although raising the promenade above Tramway Street* drew objections, the elevation was intended to prevent Mete Street* from dominating the topography and to preserve the sea view visible from the corner of Taksim Garden* (Öztaş, 2010).

In the 1950s, after Henri Prost's resignation, a series of urban interventions were undertaken that drew only limited benefit from his design framework. These operations proceeded without adequate legal provisions and without relocating expropriated property owners to alternative sites. By then, the monumental entrance of the İnönü Promenade had been converted into a municipal bus terminal, yet traces of Prost's original design remain discernible within the park (Bilsel, 2010).

Istanbul Opera House: Building a New Stage for the Nation

In 19th-century Europe, theatres and opera houses were central to urban planning

***Tramway Street:** A street shaped by the historic tram line running between Taksim and surrounding districts, structuring mobility and everyday circulation.

***Mete Street:** A major street in Taksim connecting the square to hotels, public buildings, and the Dolmabahçe axis.

***Taksim Garden:** A landscaped public garden historically located near Taksim Square, reflecting early Republican approaches to recreation and urban greenery.

50 YIL ÖNCE
Cumhuriyet 1930
Bulgaristan'da Polislerin Çiftçilerle Müsademesi
Fransız Kabinesi Düştü
Çarpışan vapurlar
Türkiye Kraliçesi Kan'da Bir Nutuk İrat Etti
Macar Hariciye Nazırı geliyor
Taksim'de Yapılacak Tiyatro
Osmanlı Bankasının Teklifatı
Hronika gazetesi davası
Zabıtname
En pahalı şey ev kiralarıdır

Figure 23.
Newspaper page from Cumhuriyet dated February 19, 1930, featuring the article "The theater building to be constructed in Taksim" ("Taksim'de yapılacak tiyatro"), reporting on early Republican proposals for a theater building in the square.
Note. Cumhuriyet, February 19, 1930. SALT Research.

Grand Théâtre: A monumental theater proposal designed by Auguste Perret for Taksim Square during the early Republican period, reflecting the state's ambition to position Taksim as Istanbul's new cultural and civic center through modernist monumental architecture.

and regarded as essential markers of modernity. Reflecting this tradition, Prost proposed an opera house for Taksim Square, viewing it as a symbolic anchor of contemporary urban life.

Architectural historian Afife Batur (1984) notes that the first official step toward the construction of an opera house in Taksim was taken in 1939. Upon the recommendation of Henri Prost, the Istanbul Municipality invited the French architect Auguste Perret (1874-1954) to prepare a project for a "Grand Théâtre*." Perret developed the proposal between 1939 and 1940 (Batur, 1984). While the project remained unbuilt, its commission was not incidental: Perret was already internationally recognized for monumental cultural buildings, such as the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées (1913), which had established a new architectural language for modern theatre and opera buildings through its use of reinforced concrete and classical monumentality. In this sense, the choice of Perretsuggests that the proposed opera house in Taksim was envisioned not merely as a functional cultural venue, but as a symbolic and representational structure aligned with the Republic's aspirations for cultural modernity and international visibility.

Auguste Perret designed a symmetrical building on the west-east axis, situated to the east of Taksim Square. The building opens to the square through a foyer elevated several steps above ground level, which, together with the steps in front, defines the main entrance on the western facade facing Taksim Square. Perret structured his design around a hierarchical mass composition, aiming to create a monumental building for Taksim Square. The monumentality represented by the structure is expressed on the facades through vertical windows that align with the rhythms created by the column system. However, this project could not be realized due to the outbreak of World War II. Although Turkey was not directly involved in World War II, it could not escape the global effects of the war; ongoing projects and investments were suspended or canceled for economic reasons (Batur, 1984).

Consequently, Rüknettin Güney (1904-1970) and Feridun Kip were commissioned to prepare a new design. Initially, the

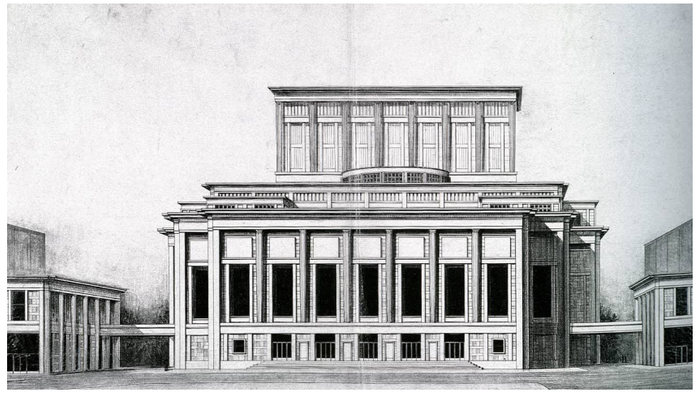


Figure 24.
Main entrance façade of the Opera House designed by Auguste Perret
Note. Retrieved from https://akmistanbul.gov.tr/tr/tarihce

building was planned as a large opera house, with its foundation laid on May 29, 1946, coinciding with the 494th anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019).

Lütfi Kırdar (1947, as cited in Ganiç, 2016) expressed his greatest wish for the building to be opened on May 29, 1953, marking the 500th anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul.

The project developed by Güney and Kip reflects the approach proposed by Perret in terms of plan decisions, mass organization, and principles guiding the design of the building's shell. The arrangement along the west-east axis, the position and function of the large hall within this layout, and the opening of the building to the square through a foyer elevated by a few steps from the ground level all continue the understanding established in Perret's plans. It also echoes the heavy and monumental effect. In addition to its neoclassical shell design, this proposal incorporates Baroque theater forms within the interior space (Tabanlıoğlu, 1966).

Unfortunately, the construction process, initiated according to Güney and Kip's design, was interrupted. The process related to the building progressed far behind the expectations of Lütfi Kırdar. The structure remained incomplete for a long time, with only its skeleton finished. The ongoing budget problems caused the construction to advance very slowly (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019).

When it became clear that the municipality lacked the resources to continue construction, the project was transferred to the Ministry of Finance on July 15, 1953.

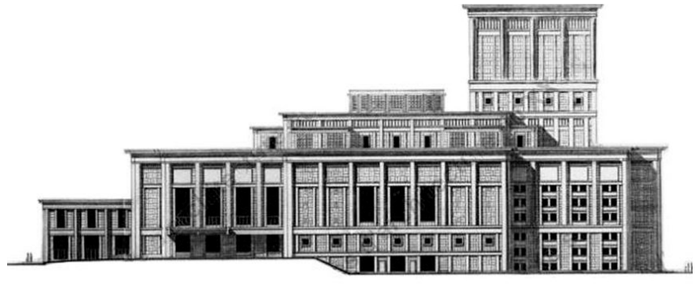


Figure 25.
West elevation of the hierarchical mass composition proposed by Auguste Perret
Note. From Ganiç (2020, thesis).

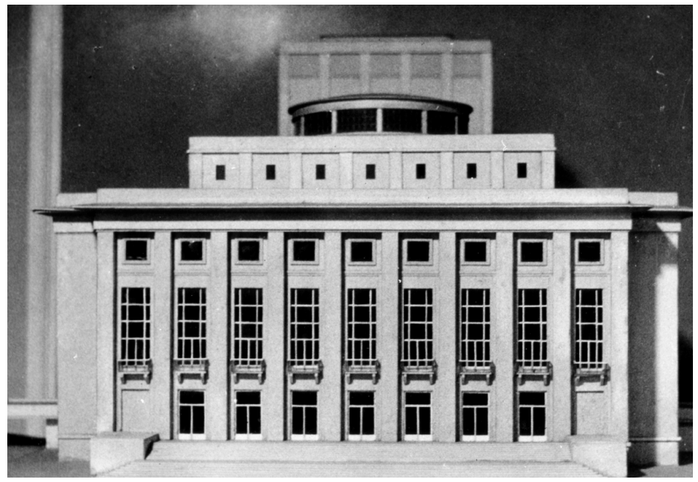


Figure 26.
Architectural model photographs of the İstanbul Opera Building representing the project by Rüknettin Güney and Feridun Kip, whose construction began in 1946
Note. SALT Research.

Güney and Kip subsequently revisited the already partially completed structure, this time consulting the German architect Paul Bonatz (1877-1956). After leaving Germany during the Nazi period, Bonatz worked in Turkey between 1943 and 1954, teaching at Istanbul Technical University and contributing to key projects (May, 2009). His presence in Turkey should be understood within the broader context of the early Republican state's deliberate strategy to invite foreign architects and planners as part of its modernization and nation-building agenda. In this sense, Bonatz's work and academic position exemplify how the state mobilized foreign architectural knowledge to support both the material and representational dimensions of early Republican modernization (May, 2009).

His 1954-1955 sketches indicate only minor revisions, principally increasing the main hall's seating capacity and making slight adjustments to the façade organization (Ganiç, 2016).

In their revised proposals, Güney and Kip introduced several changes, most notably a simplified building envelope. Yet Paul Bonatz opposed them on nearly all major points. He dismissed Kip's strongly defended lobby as unnecessary and meaningless, a disagreement that escalated tensions and ultimately prompted Bonatz to resign from his consultancy (Ganiç, 2016).

Notably, the lobby, Güney and Kip's most distinctive intervention, constituted the first attempt to introduce transparency to the façade facing Taksim Square, an architectural gesture that would later reappear as a defining element in Hayati Tabanlıoğlu (1927-1994)'s schemes.

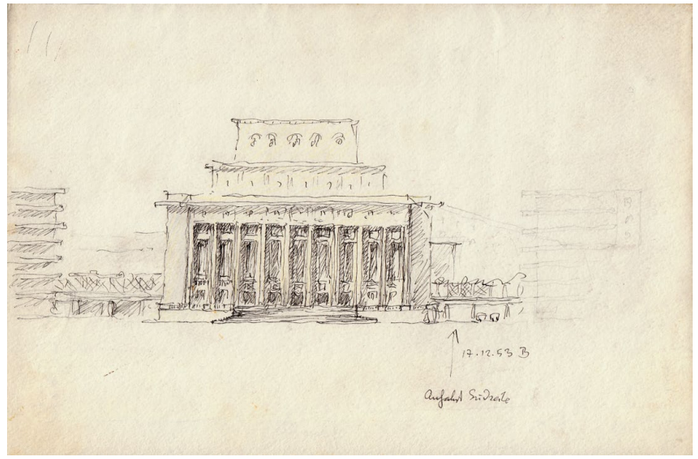


Figure 27.
Entrance façade sketch of the Istanbul Opera House by Paul Bonatz
Note. From Tabanlıoğlu (1966).

When responsibility for the project passed to the Ministry of Public Works in 1956, Güney and Kip's designs were abandoned. Instead, architect Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, who had completed a doctorate on theatre architecture in Germany and possessed practical experience in the field, was tasked first with reviewing the existing drawings and then with reorganizing the entire project (Tabanlıoğlu, 1979).

As Batur (1984) explains, Ottoman revivalism, identified with the First National Architectural Movement*, was increasingly rejected as incompatible with the modern era. The Republic sought instead an architectural language capable of expressing its desired level of contemporary civilization. Although modernism dominated architectural discourse until the late 1930s, it failed to fully capture the period's ideological spirit. With World War II, the intensification of nationalist discourse revived an emphasis on locality, embodied in the Second National Architectural Movement*. Across Europe, architecture simultaneously became a key instrument for expressing state power. In this context, the succession of projects for the Istanbul Opera House, first by Auguste

*First National Architectural Movement (c. 1908–1930s): An architectural movement emphasizing Ottoman–Seljuk references and national identity in early Republican architecture.

*Second National Architectural Movement (c. 1940s–1950s): An architectural movement favoring monumentality, symmetry, and modernized classical references within

Figure 28.
Photograph from the groundbreaking ceremony marking the beginning of the construction of the Istanbul Opera House (later the Atatürk Cultural Center), 1946
Note. The ceremony reflects the symbolic and material commitment of the early Republican state to cultural modernization. SALT Research.

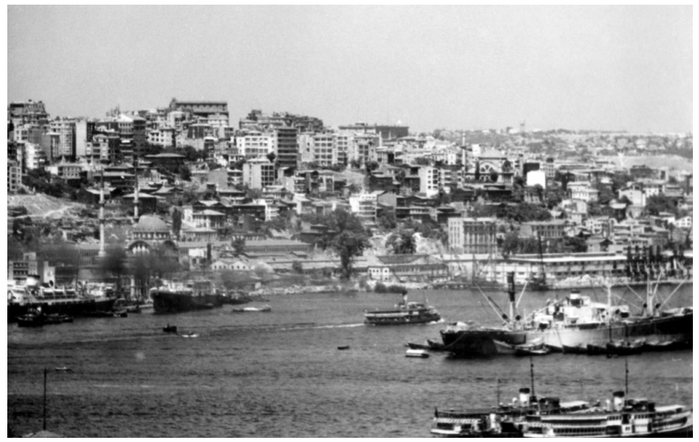


Figure 29.
Photographs of the unfinished İstanbul Opera Building as seen from the Bosphorus, reflecting the halted status of the project during its early construction phase and its visible impact on the urban silhouette
Note. SALT Research.

Figure 30.
Photographs of the unfinished İstanbul Opera Building from the Bosphorus (view 2)
Note. SALT Research.

Figure 31.
View of the Opera House designed by Güney and Kip from Cumhuriyet Square, illustrating the early construction phase of the building, 1952
Note. Istanbul Research Institute.

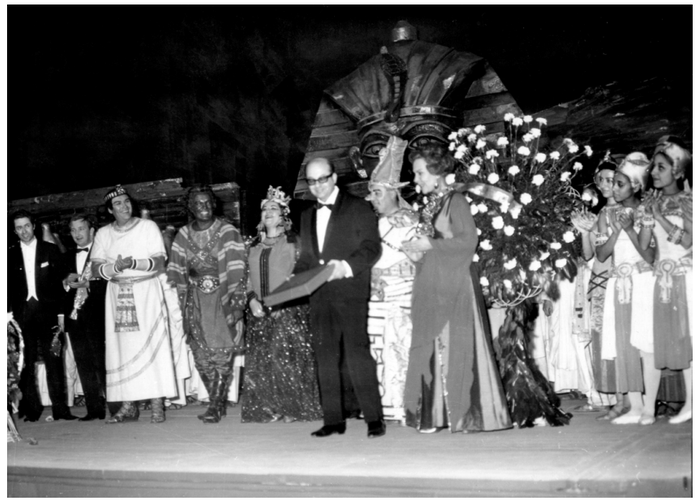


Figure 32.
Opening performance of Aida at the Culture Palace, featuring architect Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, April 12, 1969
Note. Photograph from the Tabanlıoğlu Family Collection. SALT Research.

Perret in 1939, then by Rüknettin Güney and Feridun Kip, and subsequently by Paul Bonatz, reveals a consistent intention to produce a neoclassical monumental structure (Batur, 1984).

Monumental masses and classical tendencies are evident in the projects of Perret, Güney and Kip, as well as in Bonatz's proposals. Considering the innovative discourse of the Republic, it can be argued that the works of these architects conflicted with the program of the new regime. However, these works still followed the architectural movements that emerged within the country during their respective periods. Assigned to the project in 1956, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu argued that the building should function not only as an opera and ballet venue but as a broader cultural complex (Tabanlıoğlu, 1979). This vision prompted a renaming: rather than the Istanbul Opera House, it became the Istanbul Cultural Palace (*İstanbul Kültür Sarayı*), underscoring its multifunctional role (Küçükdoğan, 2007).

However, the re-emergence of economic difficulties once again prevented the process from progressing at the anticipated pace (Tabanlıoğlu, 1979). Tabanlıoğlu explains the situation as follows:

> …the limited funds allocated to the budgets were the main cause of the delay in completion. In 1959, 2 million lira was allocated; in 1960, 10 million liras; in 1961, 5 million lira; in 1962, only 1 (one) lira; in 1963, 5 million lira; in 1964, 5 million lira; in 1965, 7 million lira; in 1967, 11 million lira; and in 1968, 26 million lira were allocated (Tabanlıoğlu, 1979, p. 7).

The magazine *Ses* (issue 17, April 19, 1969) covered the opening of the building with the headline "*Now Istanbul Also Has a Culture Palace*," highlighting its protracted construction: inaugurated on April 12, 1969, with a speech by Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel, the building, whose foundation was laid on May 29, 1946, had witnessed five

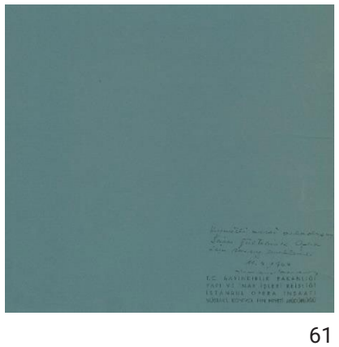


Figure 33.
Istanbul Opera House brochure issued by the T.C. Bayındırlık Bakanlığı Yapı ve İmar İşleri Reisliği, İstanbul Opera İnşaatı Müstakil Kontrol Fen Heyeti Müdürlüğü, signed by Hayati Tabanlıoğlu (April 11, 1964)
Note. Tabanlıoğlu Family Archive, SALT Research.

Figure 34.
Magazine article from Ses dated April 19, 1969, reporting on the opening night of the Culture Palace (Atatürk Kültür Merkezi), accompanied by photographs documenting the ceremony and attendees.
Note. Ses, April 19, 1969. SALT Research, Tabanlıoğlu Family Collection.

governments, eight prime ministers, and fourteen ministers of public works over its 23-year gestation. The article noted the presence of Istanbul's political and cultural elite, including municipal council members, artists, actors, musicians, and writers; demand for invitations was reportedly so high that some applied through Ankara and local protocol offices. The palace opened with *Aida*,* a choice that drew criticism for not featuring a Turkish work; as a conciliatory gesture, a 20-minute Turkish ballet, *Çeşmebaşı**, was added to the program (Ses, 1969, p. 3).

According to Küçükdoğan, Can Gürzap defines the opening of the building as "tragicomic." Then Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel insisted that the inauguration be completed in time for the general elections to be held that same year, which resulted in the building being put into service before it was fully finished. For instance, no administrative or technical director, as required by regulations, had been appointed to the building. These deficiencies became evident on the evening of November 27, 1970, as will be discussed in later chapters (Küçükdoğan, 2008).

**Aida:* An opera composed by Giuseppe Verdi, frequently referenced in discussions of Western high culture and operatic performances in Ottoman and Republican contexts.

Architectural Features of the İstanbul Cultural Palace

In this part of the chapter, primary sources providing firsthand information about the architectural design process of the Istanbul Cultural Palace are examined. These sources have been compiled from architecture journals accessible through the SALT Research. The analysis includes Hayati Tabanlıoğlu's 1965 article in *Mimarlık* magazine, which directly reflects his thoughts on the building's architecture, as well as his writings published in 1966 in *Arkitekt* magazine and the *Yapı ve İmar İşleri Haber Bülteni* (Building and Zoning Affairs Bulletin). Additionally, an early commentary on the project's public presentation, published in the 1969 issue of *Turizm* magazine, has also been examined within this context.

In a 1979 *Arkitekt* article, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu notes that when construction began in 1946, the building already had a completed design by Feridun Kip and Rüknettin Güney, featuring a neoclassical exterior and a Baroque-inspired interior. Upon taking over the project in 1956, Tabanlıoğlu reassessed the existing structural frame and

**Çeşmebaşı:* A symphonic suite by Turkish composer Ferit Tüzün, inspired by Anatolian folk motifs and structured as a modern orchestral interpretation of traditional festive rhythms.

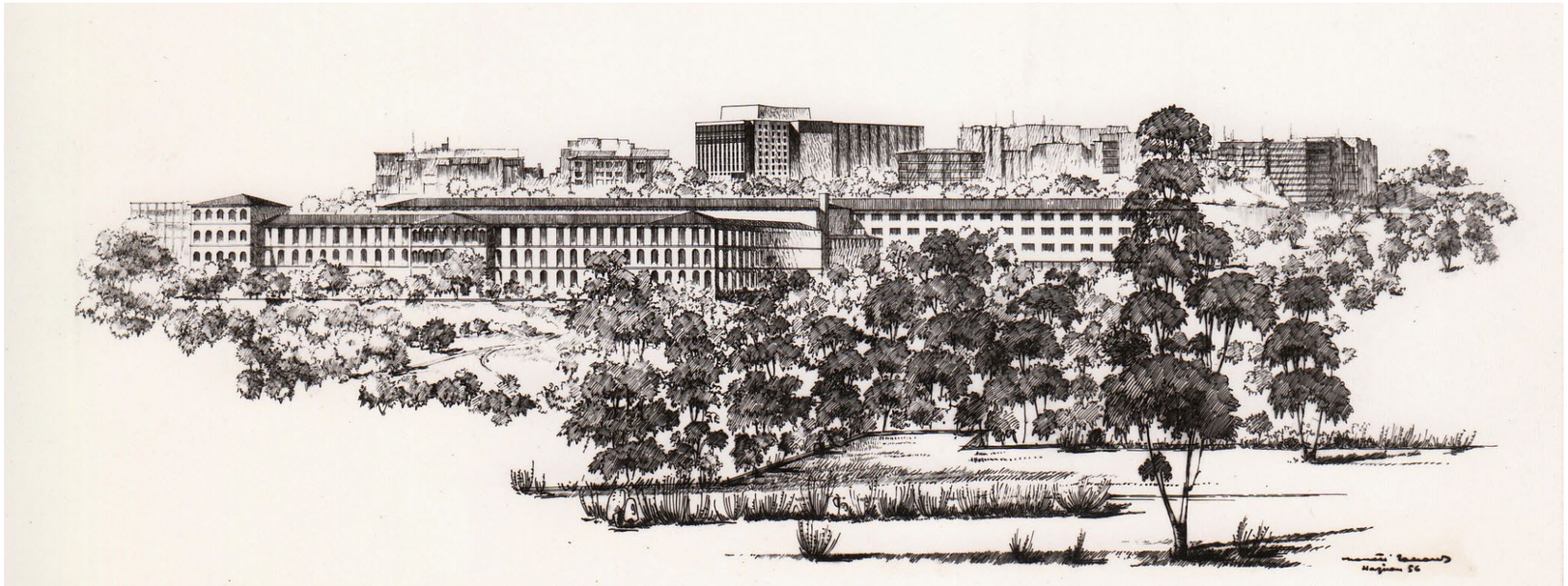
Figure 35.
Construction site visit at the Atatürk Cultural Center featuring architect Hayati Tabanlıoğlu together with high-level bureaucrats and political figures, including Bolkan Çelikkol, Faruk Sükan, Süleyman Demirel, Yusuf Erüleç, and Vefa Poyraz
Note. The image reflects the political and institutional visibility attached to the project during its construction phase. SALT Research.

Figure 36.
Construction site of the Atatürk Cultural Center during an official visit by President Cevdet Sunay, accompanied by architect Hayati Tabanlıoğlu
Note. The visit highlights the national-level political endorsement of the project in the late 1960s. SALT Research.

reconceived the scheme as a multifunctional Istanbul Cultural Center rather than a traditional opera house. Using the available structural and design data, he developed an entirely new project approach and carried it into implementation (Tabanlıoğlu, 1979).

Tabanlıoğlu (1966) explains that vertical emphases were introduced into the building's silhouette, particularly as viewed from the Bosphorus, to reinforce its identity and contextual harmony. Surrounding structures were removed from the zoning, while a forecourt was formed to improve pedestrian circulation. Through selective expropriations and planned demolitions, the building was positioned more freely on its site, thereby strengthening its architectural presence.

Access from the Taksim Square side entrance leads directly into the main hall. From this point, one straight and one circular staircase rise to the parterre foyer, maintaining volumetric continuity with the entrance hall. The expansive foyer was designed not only as a circulation space but also as a venue for ceremonies, exhibitions, and official receptions.



In the earlier structure, the large horseshoe-shaped auditorium with three balconies required substantial reworking; all balconies were therefore removed (Tabanlıoğlu, 1966).

The building's most iconic feature is its exterior, where the volumetric diversity generated by functional requirements is resolved into a unified composition that asserts a strong presence within Taksim's dense urban fabric. The stage tower's tall mass is articulated with vertical lines that accentuate height and produce a sense of lightness against the surrounding bulk. The large transparent glass façade, approximately 55 × 26.4 meters, enables interior cultural activities to be visually registered from the square. A rhythmic screen of vertical and horizontal Grinatal aluminum elements overlays this surface, giving the façade both a sculptural character and a nuanced texture; although the system was imported, it was installed using local resources (Tabanlıoğlu, 1966).

Batur's (1984) observations on 1950s architecture are clearly reflected in Tabanlıoğlu's scheme: the international style of the period favored horizontally extending rectangular volumes and expansive glass façades framed in metal, often detached from the reinforced-concrete structural grid. Within this context, Tabanlıoğlu's proposal signaled an opening toward the international architectural canon. By eliminating Baroque tendencies in the interior, he also liberated the earlier monumental shell from classical precedent, producing a clear, simplified rectangular prism consistent with the dominant architectural idiom of the era.

The innovative, multifunctional, and modernist architectural approach of the Istanbul Cultural Palace should be understood within a broader post-war context in which cultural buildings emerged as key symbolic structures of welfare-state modernity; in this sense, it may be read as a Turkish counterpart to contemporaneous projects such as the Barbican Centre in London, which similarly functioned as a comprehensive cultural hub integrating multiple artistic disciplines and public uses under a single institution.

Figure 37.
Perspective drawings of the Atatürk Cultural Center, showcasing the architectural design and spatial organization of the building
Note. SALT Research.

Taksim Alanı'na bir dernek cami yaptırmaya çalışıyor

Deniz SOM

Belediye'nin İmar Planı Bakanlıkça değiştirilerek 2. MC'nin düşmesinden 2 gün önce. Cumhuriyetin ve İslahiyeciların önderliğindeki dergiye istediği değişiklik sonunda «cami alanı» ol-maylandı.

Taksim Alanında Sular İdaresinin de bulunduğu arsa cami yaptırılmasının kabulü ile «Taksim Camii Şerifi ve Külliyesini Yaptırma ve Yaşatma Derneğinin kurulduğu öğrenilmiştir.

2. MC'nin düşmesinden 2 gün önce 26.12.1957 tarihinde onaylanan Beyoğlu İlçe Merkezi Nazım İmar Planı'na göre Taksim Alanında, İstanbul

(Devamı Sa. 11, Sü. 4 de)

Figure 38.
Newspaper supplement from Cumhuriyet dated 1952, featuring the news item titled "An association is trying to build a mosque in Taksim Square" ("Taksim Alanı'na bir dernek cami yaptırmaya çalışıyor").
Note. Cumhuriyet, 1952. Retrieved from VOA Türkçe.

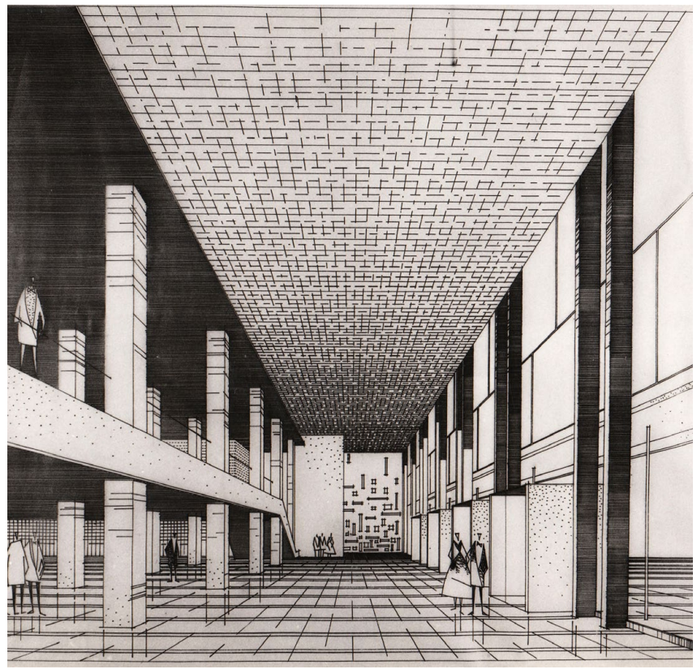


Figure 39.
Atatürk Cultural Center perspective drawings
Note. SALT Research.

Early Public Debates on the Taksim Mosque in Media Discourse

With the founding of the Democratic Party in 1946, Turkey entered a multi-party system, shifting politics from a state-controlled sphere into everyday life. In the 1950s, voting became the primary mechanism for determining political power, expanding popular democratic participation. The period's most significant outcome was the sociological realization of citizenship, which had been legally defined in the early Republic but only fully materialized after 1946. The 1950 elections marked a critical rupture: the Republican People's Party, Atatürk's party, lost power, and the center-right Democratic Party assumed government (Kaynar, 2017).In his 2021 *VOA* article *"The 70-Year Story of the Taksim Mosque"*, Hilmi Hacaloğlu traces the origins of proposals to build a mosque in Taksim, noting that the Turkish Monuments Association* (*Türk Anıtlar Derneği*) first raised the idea in 1952 under the Democratic Party government. With the transition to a multi-party system, civil-society initiatives gained visibility. Founded in 1946, the Association enjoyed strong support from intellectual and bureaucratic circles and worked on conservation, restoration, project development, education, and public awareness (Ceylan, 2017).

***Turkish Monuments Association (Türk Anıtlar Derneği) (est. 1946- present):** A cultural heritage organization founded in 1946 to document, preserve, and advocate for historic monuments in Turkey.

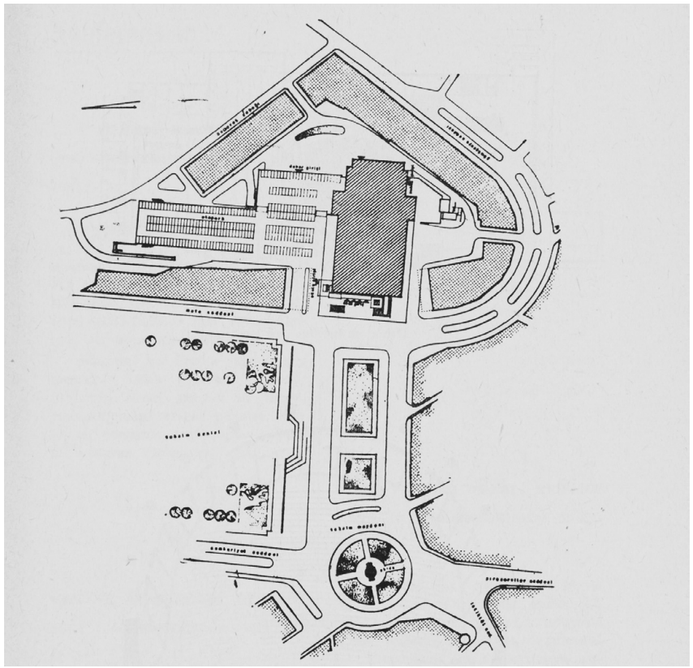


Figure 40.
AKM site plan
Note. From Hayati Tabanlıoğlu's biography and articles authored by Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, "Tiyatro Binaları" and "İstanbul Kültür Merkezi (Opera Binası)," Yapı ve İmar İşleri Haber Bülteni, Monthly Journal, Issue 21 (February 1, 1966).

Against this backdrop, its 1952 position is striking. As reported in *Cumhuriyet*, the Association argued that Taksim Square is a corner of Istanbul largely lacking in Turkish and Islamic monuments. After consulting the Chief Architect of the Foundations, the newspaper recorded his endorsement:

> I find the Association's initiative appropriate. Istanbul has a beautiful silhouette; the Beyoğlu side lacks it. Our eyes want to see magnificent monuments on certain dominant hills. A mosque near Taksim would satisfy us. (Hacaloğlu, 2021).

Taksim Square summarizes this dynamic in the Turkish context: initially conceived as the centerpiece of the early Republican modernity project, it materialized the secular, Western-oriented identity of the new state. In this mise-en-scène, the visible presence of religion was deliberately excluded. The event that would overshadow the mosque debates in Taksim and deliver a decisive blow to Turkish democracy took place on May 27, 1960.

On this date, the military coup not only marked the downfall of the ruling Democratic Party but also culminated in the execution of Prime Minister Adnan Menderes along with other leading members of his government (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019).

Cumhuriyet

İşte "Cihad,, çağrılarının sonu

Kanlı pazar

KARA LEKE

2 genç öldürüldü
200 de yaralı var

Taksim savaş alanına döndü

Toplu namazlar ve yürüyüş için hazırlık erken başlamıştı

İLK YARDIM'DA KORİDORLARI KAN GÖTÜRÜYORDU

Figure 41.
Newspaper page from Cumhuriyet dated February 17, 1969, reporting on the events of Kanlı Pazar (Bloody Sunday). The headline reads "Taksim turned into a battlefield" ("Taksim savaş alanına döndü").
Note. Cumhuriyet, February 17, 1969. Retrieved from Cumhuriyet Newspaper Archive.

Taksim Square as place of Power Dynamics

After 1950, European Recovery Program* channeled American capital into Turkey, accelerating capitalist development and rapidly expanding the working class. The 1961 Constitution introduced a comparatively liberal framework guaranteeing trade-union rights, the right to strike, university autonomy, and press freedom; however, this democratizing environment also facilitated the rise of both right- and left-wing radical movements, as workers, agricultural laborers, the urban poor, small producers, and students increasingly articulated their demands in streets and squares (Yurtsever, 2008). With the Justice Party's single-party victory in 1965, Turkey entered a second centre-right phase (Kaynar, 2020), marked by deepening economic strain, social unrest, and ideological polarization. The labour movement became increasingly politicized between 1968 and 1970 (Yurtsever, 2008). Within this climate, Taksim Square acquired renewed significance as a central platform for public demonstrations and leftist mobilization (Baykal, 2000). This transformation culminated in Bloody Sunday (*Kanlı Pazar*) on February 16, 1969, during protests against the visit of the U.S. Sixth Fleet*, which were met by a counterdemonstration organized by the right-wing National Student Federation, resulting in violent clashes at Taksim that left two dead and over one hundred injured (Hürriyet, 1969). This event marked the first large-scale violent confrontation between left- and right-wing groups in Turkey and established Taksim Square as a key arena in the country's emerging repertoire of political spatial.

As discussed in the chapter *Istanbul Opera House: Building a New Stage for the Nation,* Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel pushed for the early inauguration of the Istanbul Cultural Palace ahead of the general elections, leading to its premature opening in April despite the building's incomplete construction. The deficiencies of the building became evident when a fire broke out on 27 November 1970-585 days after its opening-during a performance of *The Crucible*, resulting in the trial of its architect, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu (Küçükdoğan, 2008).

*_European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan) (1948–1952):_ A U.S.-led post-war economic aid program supporting European reconstruction and modernization.

*_Protests against the visit of the U.S. Sixth Fleet (1968–1969):_ Student-led and left-wing demonstrations in Istanbul opposing U.S. military presence, symbolizing rising anti-imperialist mobilization.

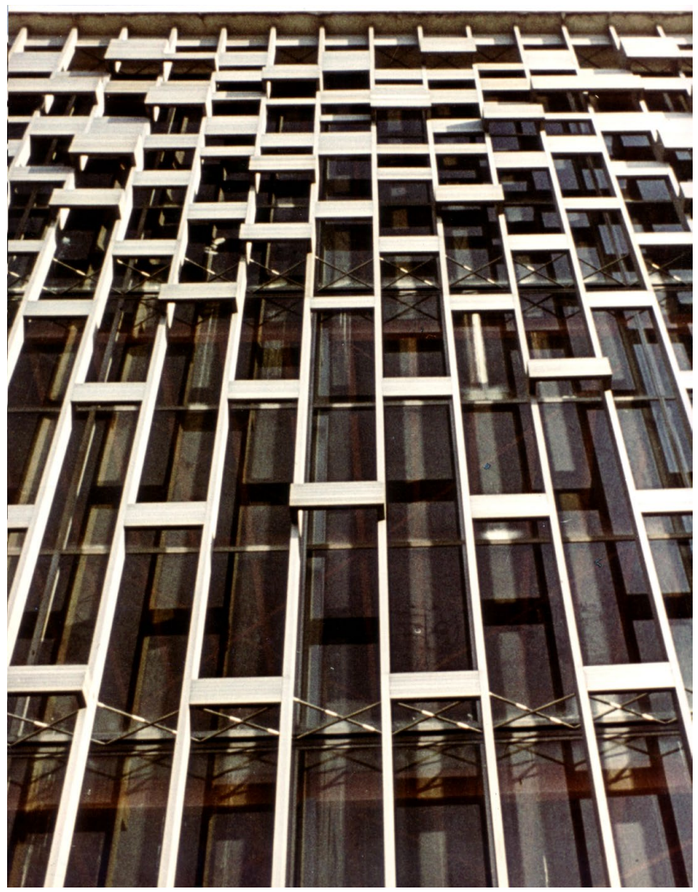


Figure 42.
Façade of the Istanbul Cultural Palace
Note. Arkitekt Magazine, 1966.

GÜNAYDIN

Yangın yaşlı gözlerle seyredildi

23 yılda yapılan Kültür Sarayı 45 dakikada tamamen yandı

Taksim Meydanı'nın tacı idi

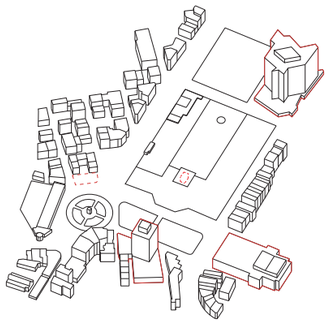
Dün gece «Cadı Kazanı» adlı piyes temsil edilirken yangın sahnesinde elektrik kontağından çıkan yangını seyirciler önce oyun zannedip alkışladılar

Binada teşhir edilen Dördüncü Murat'ın milyonlar değerindeki tarihi eşyaları da kül oldu

Figure 43.
Front page of Günaydın dated November 28, 1970, reporting on the Istanbul Cultural Palace fire with the headline "The Cultural Palace, built in 23 years, burned down completely in 45 minutes" ("23 yılda yapılan Kültür Sarayı 45 dakikada tamamen yandı").
Note. Günaydın, November 28, 1970. Tabanlıoğlu Family Collection, SALT Research.

Figure 44.
Photograph of the Atatürk Cultural Center taken during and after the 1970 fire
Note. The images document the extent of the destruction and the symbolic rupture it caused in the architectural and cultural history of Republican Istanbul. SALT Research.

The decade that began with the military coup of 1960 ended with another armed intervention on March 12, 1971. Although the exact cause of the fire that severely verely damaged the Istanbul Cultural Palace was never conclusively determined, the incident has retrospectively been associated with the March 12 coup and interpreted as symptomatic of the broader political ruptures of the period (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019). The imprint of this fire on collective memory, together with Taksim's increasingly prominent role as a key site of public demonstrations, therefore, constitutes a central concern for the subsequent chapters of this study.



HÜRRİYET 29/8/73

29 Ağustos 1973

Teknik elemanlar fikirlerini açıkladı :

"Kültür Sarayı'na sabotaj ihtimali güç,,

İstanbul 2 Numaralı Sıkıyönetim Mahkemesi Heyeti, sabotaj olaylarıyle ilgili olarak Kültür Sarayı'nda incelemeler yapmıştır.

Yapıcı Albay Ihsan Hepcoskun, Hâkim Binbaşı Metin Demirkıraya ve Kıdemli Üsteğmen Adnan Altın, Opera Müdürü Fikri Ucuncu'dan, binanın kontrol odaları, sahne, salon kapıları dairesi, asansörleri dairesi, asansör odaları ve giriş çıkış kapıları hakkında bilgi almıştır.

Kültür Sarayı'nda yapılan incelemede, sabotaj olaylarını araştıran savcılarımız ayrıntılı rapor sunacaklar ve gazetelere de bilgi verecekler.

Teknik elemanlar, bizim bir sabotaj ihtimalinin güç olduğunu, çünkü binanın her an otomatik alarm sistemi bulunduğu gibi, bu sahne gündüz saatlerinde de çalışmakta olduğunu, bu nedenle bir sabotaj girişimini kolaylıkla önleyebileceklerini söylediler.

İnceleme sırasında, mahkeme heyeti bir süre dinlenmiş, öğleden sonra da Halk Tiyatrosunda bulunan "Harmanda, bekle gemisi" adlı oyunu seyretmiştir.

Dün yazdığımız 2 Numaralı Sıkıyönetim Mahkemesinde Türk Hafa Kurtuluş Partisi davasının 3 üncü duruşmasına başlandı. Dağcı, "Bu binanın emin değilim, dedikten sonra Ankara'da yaşanan bazı olaylardan yargılanmakta olan sanıklara gösterilen ilgiyi eleştirdi. Yargıç, "Onları mahkûmiyetle tehdit ediyorsunuz" dedi. Bütün sanıklar adına söz alan Ahmet Bilgin, mahkemeye karşı saygılı olduklarını, fakat bazı hâkimlerin Ecevit ile yaptıkları bir görüşmeden sonra, kendilerine karşı önyargılı davrandıklarını ileri sürdüler.

Hedeflediği ve gösterdiğimiz durumlarında, bu tıpa hastanesi inşâtının için 50 bin lira tahsisat ayırdığını Tekinel'e Ahlaka ile Ahmet Gümüş'e yemin verdirdiğini, Mahkeme dinler bilirkişilerin sözlü için 15 gün süre verdiğini ve duruşmaya bir yıl sonra başlanmasına karar verdiğini.

KÜLTÜR Sarayı yangını ile ilgili olarak dün yeniden bir inceleme yapan Savcılar Kurulu, binanın bütün kilitlerini gördüler. — Foto: HÜRRİYET

Figure 45.
Newspaper page from Hürriyet dated August 29, 1973, reporting on the Istanbul Cultural Palace fire and featuring the headline "The likelihood of sabotage at the Cultural Palace is high" ("Kültür Sarayı'na sabotaj ihtimali güç").
Note. Hürriyet, August 29, 1973. Tabanlıoğlu Family Collection, SALT Research.

1971-1994: Spatial Contestation and Political Polarization

Restoration of the Atatürk Cultural Center

From the 1940s onward, the following three decades in Taksim Square were shaped by a series of critical transformations: the demolition of the Artillery Barracks and the creation of the İnönü Promenade (*Gezi Park*) in its place; the long-awaited opening of the Istanbul Cultural Palace after 23 years of construction; the fire that severely damaged the building in 1970; the Bloody Sunday incident of February 1969, which established the square as an arena of political confrontation; and the emergence of the first public debates surrounding the Taksim Mosque project, backed by conservative circles.

Although the Justice Party came to power alone after the October 1969 elections, it faced internal divisions and a loss of authority. Demirel's administration was criticized for failing to prevent anarchy and implement reforms. Following these developments, the Turkish Armed Forces issued a memorandum to the government on March 12, 1971, aiming to restore order, prevent radical changes, and re-establish state authority. After the memorandum, Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel resigned (Yurtsever, 2008).

At the end of the previous chapter, the Istanbul Cultural Palace was left engulfed in flames. On November 27, 1970, at 10:46 p.m., during the premiere of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible,* at the Istanbul Cultural Palace, a piece of stage scenery caught fire. The blaze rapidly spread across the stage, resulting in a major disaster. In addition to the destruction of stage equipment, a large portion of the auditorium was rendered unusable due to extensive damage to the building (Küçükdoğan, 2008).

Thanks to the building's compliance with international safety standards, there were no fatalities or injuries in the fire (Tabanlıoğlu, 1979). In addition, Sultan Murad IV*'s robe, sword, tunic, a decree he had sent to Kösem Sultan*, and a valuable handwritten Qur'an by the calligrapher Hafız Mehmed* were completely burned and lost (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019).

Following the Istanbul Cultural Palace fire, the incident was rapidly politicized under the March 12 military regime, which linked it, together with other acts of sabotage, to an alleged coup plot. Although both military officers and leftist organizations were initially accused, the military defendants were ultimately acquitted, while selected civilian cases resulted in politically selective nature of the trials (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019). Despite various claims regarding the cause of the fire, no definitive legal conclusion was reached;

Figure 46.
Photographs of the Atatürk Cultural Center after the 1970 fire, showing Süleyman Demirel inspecting the damage
Note. SALT Research.

*Sultan Murad IV (1612–1640): An Ottoman sultan noted for authoritarian rule and efforts to restore state authority during a period of internal disorder.

*Kösem Sultan (c. 1589–1651): One of the most powerful women in Ottoman history, exercising significant political influence as Valide Sultan and regent during the

*Hafız Mehmed (c. 1600–1651): An Ottoman bureaucrat and military figure, representative of the administrative elite shaping imperial governance in the

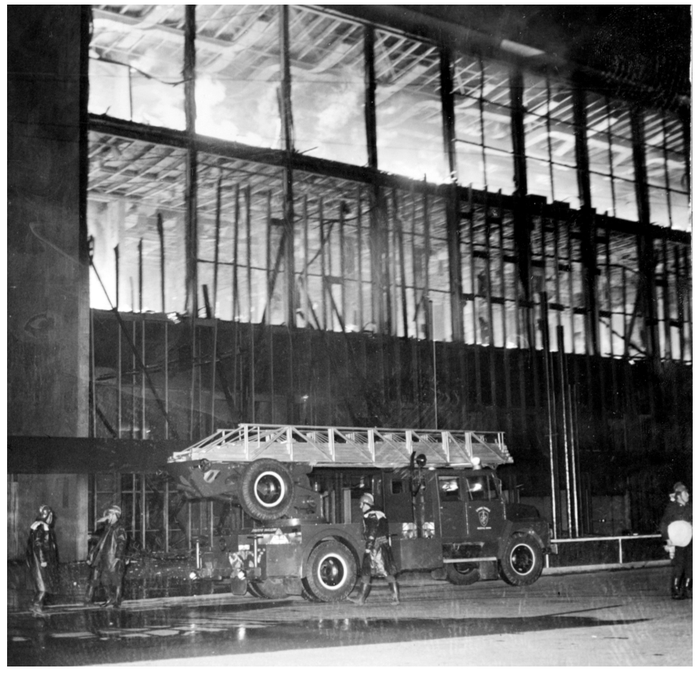


Figure 47.
Photographs of the Atatürk Cultural Center during the 1970 fire
Note. SALT Research.

Kültür Sarayı Dosyası

Suçlusu bulunamayan yangın devlete 75 milyona maloldu..

Figure 48.
Newspaper article titled "The fire that could not be found guilty cost the state 75 million" ("Suçlusu bulunamayan yangın devlete 75 milyon mal oldu"), discussing the situation of the Istanbul Palace of Culture after the 1970 fire.
Note. Newspaper source, 1974. SALT Research.

Singener Aluminium am neuen Opernhaus von Istanbul

Figure 49.
Magazine article on the aluminum façade system of the Istanbul Opera House (Atatürk Cultural Center), published in Schmoll in July 1962, featuring construction photographs and technical explanations of the façade production process in Singen.
Note. Schmoll, 1962. Article in German. Tabanlıoğlu Family Collection, SALT Research.

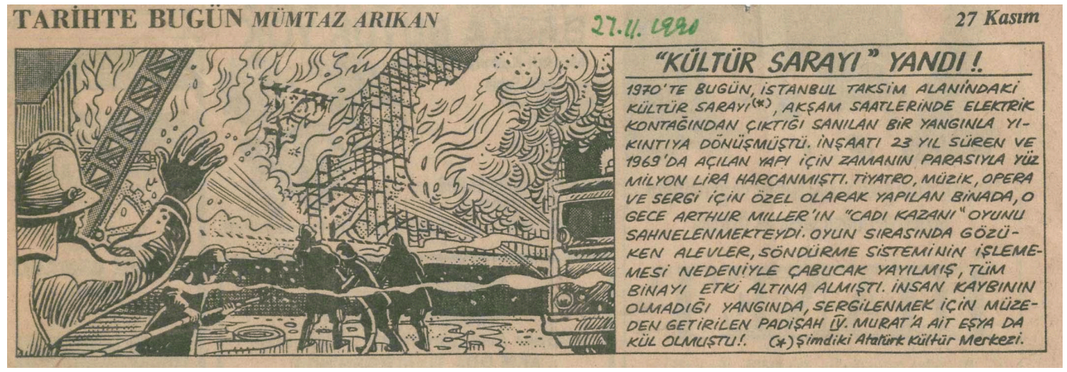
the Council of State (Decision no. 1973/214) attributed the incident to technical operational failures, a view also adopted by the project's architect, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu (1979).

The restoration of the building began in 1973 under the supervision of Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, and it reopened on October 6, 1978, as the Atatürk Cultural Center (Küçükdoğan, 2008). Tabanlıoğlu later noted that the structure had required thirteen years to complete initially and a further seven years after the fire (Tabanlıoğlu, 1977). The then Minister of Culture, Talat Sait Alman, made the following statement regarding the name change:

> A palace is not established in the Republican era; this structure belonged to the imperial era. For this reason, the building was named Atatürk Cultural Center (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019).

According to Talat Sait Alman, it is evident that even fifty-five years after the foundation of the Republic, the representation of the Ottoman legacy in the new Turkish Republic remained a controversial issue. From the perspective of the Republic's representatives, palaces were associated with dynastic privilege rather than public use. Terms such as palace evoked the luxury and hierarchical structure of the old regime, making them ideologically incompatible with the principles of the Republic. Consequently, discourses framing these buildings as hubs or cultural centers were perceived as more inclusive and aligned with spaces intended for public use. Following the fire, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu gained significant public interest. A newspaper article obtained from the SALT Research states: Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, an architect who dedicated himself to the Atatürk Cultural Center, worked in close collaboration with 24 ministers, 11 undersecretaries, and 15 construction and zoning directors during the project process.

In an article written after the building's second opening, Tabanlıoğlu emphasized that the existing reinforced concrete frame structure was preserved during the reconstruction process (Tabanlıoğlu, 1979). During the first design phase, the building was constructed using many


TARİHTE BUGÜN MÜMTAZ ARIKAN 27.11.1990 27 Kasım

"KÜLTÜR SARAYI" YANDI!

1970'TE BUGÜN, İSTANBUL TAKSİM ALANINDAKİ KÜLTÜR SARAYI(*), AKŞAM SAATLERİNDE ELEKTRİK KONTAĞINDAN ÇIKTIĞI SANILAN BİR YANGINLA YIKINTIYA DÖNÜŞMÜŞTÜ. İNŞAATI 23 YIL SÜREN VE 1969'DA AÇILAN YAPI İÇİN ZAMANIN PARASIYLA YÜZ MİLYON LİRA HARCANMIŞTI. TİYATRO, MÜZİK, OPERA VE SERGİ İÇİN ÖZEL OLARAK YAPILAN BİNADA, O GECE ARTHUR MILLER'IN "CADI KAZANI" OYUNU SAHNELENMEKTEYDİ. OYUN SIRASINDA GÖZÜKEN ALEVLER, SÖNDÜRME SİSTEMİNİN İŞLEMEMESİ NEDENİYLE ÇABUCAK YAYILMIŞ, TÜM BİNAYI ETKİ ALTINA ALMIŞTI. İNSAN KAYBININ OLMADIĞI YANGINDA, SERGİLENMEK İÇİN MÜZEDEN GETİRİLEN PADİŞAH İV. MURAT'A AİT EŞYA DA KÜL OLMUŞTU!. (*) Şimdiki Atatürk Kültür Merkezi.

Figure 50.
Newspaper cartoon dated November 27, 1990, depicting a commentary by Mümtaz Arıkan on the fire of the Cultural Palace (Kültür Sarayı), accompanied by a retrospective news note.
Note. Source: SALT Research, Tabanlıoğlu Ailesi Collection (1990, November 27).

imported materials due to the conditions of the period. The influence of Eastern Europe, Germany, and Switzerland is clear in the material selections used in the building. For example, the aluminum façade added during the construction in 1969 was sourced from Singen*, which is an industrial city in southern Germany. However, most of these imported materials were destroyed within just 45 minutes in the fire (Tabanlıoğlu, 2023).

Schmoll*, the company responsible for producing the aluminum façade of the Istanbul Opera House, published an article in 1962 discussing the building and the construction process of the aluminum panels. While the article primarily emphasizes technical aspects of the implementation process and the material's specific qualities, it also notes that a joint venture had been formed with the Turkish metal construction company Arçelik*, referred to in the article as *türkischen Freunden,* or "Turkish friends" (Schmoll, 1962). This terminology is particularly noteworthy, as it reflects not only the collaboration between Turkish enterprises and Western technology but also provides insight into the broader context of international relations and cross-cultural professional networks during that period. In contrast, differences emerged in material production due to developments in Turkey's industrial capacity during the restoration process that began in 1973; the same aluminum façade was produced domestically by the manufacturer Arçelik (Tabanlıoğlu, 2021). Thus, although the façade design remained unchanged, the production process and sourcing reflected Turkey's economic and technological transformation. This process goes beyond the mere technical construction of a building; it demonstrates the strategic promotion of domestic production, the internalization of modern architectural and technical standards, and Turkey's broader effort to align its architectural and engineering practices with international norms.

Although the renovated building closely resembles the original structure from the outside, some changes were made to the interior space (Tabanlıoğlu, 2023). Differences are noticeable

Singen: A German town frequently referenced in migration, industrial, or comparative European

Schmoll: A European firm or brand name appearing in early 20th-century industrial or commercial records, often associated with imported goods or technologies.

Arçelik (founded 1955): A major Turkish household appliances company, symbolizing post-war industrialization and domestic

Proje boyunca 24 bakan, 11 müteşar ve 15 yapı ve imar reisi ile çalıştı

Atatürk Kültür Merkezi'ni meslek edinen mimar

ÜNLÜ BİR ESER BAHRİ

Figure 51.
Newspaper article titled "The architect who made the Atatürk Cultural Center his profession" ("Atatürk Kültür Merkezi'ni meslek edinen mimar"), reporting on the career of the architect who dedicated 25 years of professional life to the project.
Note. Newspaper source, n.d. SALT Research.

KAZA SONUNDA BU ÇOCUKLAR ÖLDÜ...

Kamyon kamyonetle çarpıştı, bir aileden 3 çocuk öldü

BU KOMADA

SHERATON'DA DÜĞÜNÜ DUR DE DEVAM ETTİ

KÜLTÜR BAKANLIĞI ANKARA DEVLET OPERA VE BALESİ

MİDAS'IN KULAKLARI

BULUTLAR NEREYE GİDER

ROMEO - JULIET

ANKARA DEVLET OPERASI ORKESTRA VE BALESİ

KÜLTÜR BAKANLIĞI İSTANBUL DEVLET OPERA VE BALESİ

ATON GÜN

8. ADNAN SAYGUN

YUNUS EMRE

İSTANBUL DEVLET OPERASI

Orkestra ve Ko.osu

Figure 52.
Newspaper page from Milliyet dated October 1, 1978, presenting the program of the reopening ceremony of the Atatürk Cultural Center
Note. Milliyet, October 1, 1978. Milliyet Newspaper Archive.

in the color palette and material usage; in the main hall, the white-colored boxes were removed and replaced with dark green balconies (Tabanlıoğlu, 2021).

Following the completion of the building's construction, a grand opening festival was held between October 6 and 18, 1978. The events included the oratorio *Yunus Emre*, a performance of the play *Othello*, a screening of the film *Al Yazmalım*, a recital by İdil Biret, a concert by Ruhi Su, and various exhibitions ranging from sculpture to caricature (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019).

After its reopening, the building rose to a central position in Istanbul*'s cultural life and became an inseparable part of the city's urban and social memory. For many years, the Atatürk Cultural Center* served as the focal point for theatre, concerts, exhibitions, and other artistic events, shaping Istanbul*'s cultural dynamics. During this period, the building transcended its role as a mere performance venue and maintained its presence as an important cultural symbol and public space in the collective memory of society.

Taksim Square: May 1st Commemoration Site

The 1970s are widely regarded as one of the most complex periods in modern history. As many European historians have observed, the decade witnessed the end of a particular pattern of postwar economic planning, the disintegration of a broadly religious-democratic political consensus, and a sustained challenge to hierarchical social norms (Chabal, 2016).

During this decade, Turkey also experienced military interventions, deep political polarization, economic crises, ideological conflicts, and cultural transformations.

During the 1970s, no single political party in Turkey managed to maintain a continuous period of sole governance; political instability persisted through coalition governments. Following the March 12 Memorandum, technocratic governments were in charge almost every two years. Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the two politicians who dominated this period: Süleyman Demirel, Chairman of the Justice Party, and Bülent Ecevit, Chairman of the Republican People's Party (Kaynar, 2020).

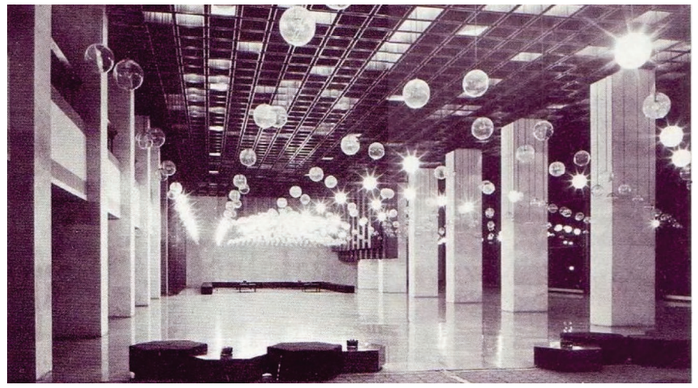
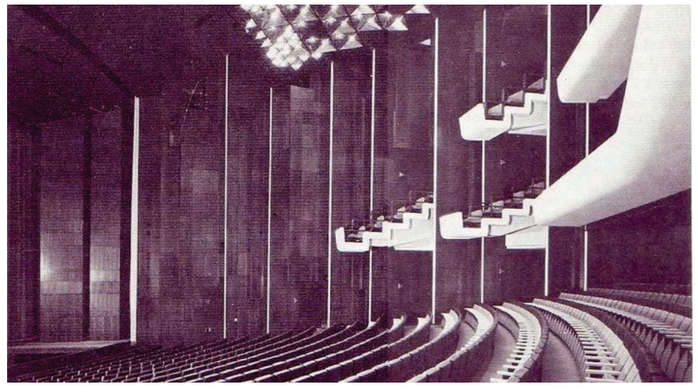


Figure 53.
Before and after views of the Grand Foyer, showing changes in lighting and the addition of a Turkish carpet
Note. From H. Tabanlıoğlu (1979), Atatürk Kültür Merkezi [Atatürk Cultural Center] (booklet). Ministry of Public Works, General Directorate of Construction Works (T.C. Bayındırlık Bakanlığı Yapı İşleri Genel Müdürlüğü), Istanbul, Turkey.



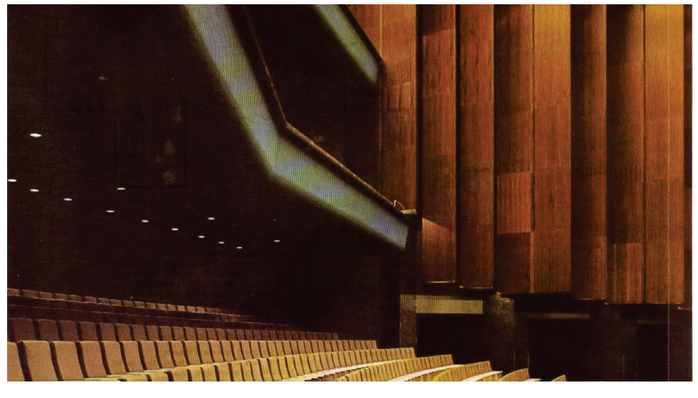


Figure 54.
Before and after views of the Grand Hall, showing changes in the balconies
Note. From H. Tabanlıoğlu (1979), Atatürk Kültür Merkezi [Atatürk Cultural Center] (booklet). Ministry of Public Works, General Directorate of Construction Works (T.C. Bayındırlık Bakanlığı Yapı İşleri Genel Müdürlüğü), Istanbul, Turkey.

Figure 55.
Newspaper front page from Milliyet dated May 2, 1976, featuring the headline "May Day rally passed without incident" ("1 Mayıs mitingi olaysız geçti"), reporting on the May Day gathering in Taksim Square.
Note. Milliyet, May 2, 1976. Milliyet Newspaper Archive.

Figure 56.
Taksim Square before the May 1, 1977 massacre
Note. Photograph by F. Kürkçüoğlu (May 1, 1977). Feza Kürkçüoğlu Archive.

During this time, May Day celebrations symbolizing the struggle and unity of the working class became a significant social and political dynamic, gaining importance alongside the strengthening of the state, labor organizations, and revolutionary movements (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019).

The first mass May Day celebration in Taksim Square took place in 1976, when *DİSK** organized a rally attended by tens of thousands, marking the growing strength of the labor movement; the event concluded peacefully (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019).

During the May Day celebrations at Taksim Square, the Ataturk Cultural Center (***AKM***) façade functioned as a symbolic backdrop, adorned with banners, while additional flags and banners were suspended on lines strung between utility poles. No formal stage was erected; instead, the demonstration centered around a vehicle, around which participants gathered. The vehicle was positioned slightly away from the AKM, oriented toward the building, with some demonstrators facing it directly and others turning

DİSK (founded 1967): A confederation of progressive trade unions in Turkey, central to labor movements and class-based political struggles.

EDEBİYAT
NURİ PAKDİL
Cumhuriyet
Törene yüzbinlerce kişi katıldı
1 Mayıs kanlı bitti: 33 ölü
HÜKÜMET OLAĞANÜSTÜ TOPLANDI

Figure 57.
Newspaper front page from Cumhuriyet dated May 2, 1977, featuring the headline "May 1 ended bloodily: 33 dead" ("1 Mayıs kanlı bitti: 33 ölü"), reporting on the violent events of May Day in Taksim Square.
Note. Cumhuriyet, May 2, 1977. Cumhuriyet Newspaper Archive.

Halay: A traditional collective folk dance from Anatolia, commonly performed during celebrations and political gatherings as a symbol of communal solidarity.

32. Gün (1985–2016): A long-running Turkish television program focusing on political history, journalism, and contemporary affairs, influential in shaping public memory.

their backs, highlighting a nuanced spatial relationship between the participants and the architectural backdrop. Around the drummers and zurna players, small organically shaped clearings emerged, functioning as impromptu dance spaces where *halay** and regional folk dances were performed, creating a festive and participatory atmosphere. The procession moved along the asphalt pathway encircling the green area in front of the AKM, with banner-carrying vehicles following the same route, before eventually entering the central green space. This spatial choreography demonstrates a temporary reconfiguration of the square, wherein the existing architecture, open areas, and circulation paths shaped the patterns of collective gathering, performance, and movement, illustrating the interplay between built form and public ritual in an urban context.

On May 1, 1977, approximately 500,000 people from different provinces gathered in Istanbul, filling Taksim Square under the organization and leadership of DİSK (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019). The documentary produced by *32. Gün** in 1997 provides both video footage and detailed photographs from that day. An analysis of these visuals shows that a stage had been erected at the entrance of the park, equipped with microphones, flags, and posters. Demonstrators faced the stage while chanting slogans, with their backs oriented toward Gezi Park and the AKM building situated to their right.

Temporary routes were arranged to conform with the organization of the surrounding urban infrastructure, and barriers, closed streets, and adjusted traffic regulations were used to manage the movement of the crowd. This coordination was implemented jointly by DİSK and the police (32. Gün, 1997). The façade of the AKM hosted the most iconic banner of the demonstration. In an interview with artist Gülsün Karamustafa by journalist Kültügün Kağan Akbulut, she highlighted aspects of the process of producing posters for May 1, 1977. She also recalled that she had produced posters for DİSK* during that period and noted that the organization relied heavily on artists to meet its demand for visual materials, with associations such as the Visual Artists' Association* playing a key role in production. Orhan Taylan was commissioned to create the large banner for the Atatürk Cultural Center (Karamustafa, 2021).

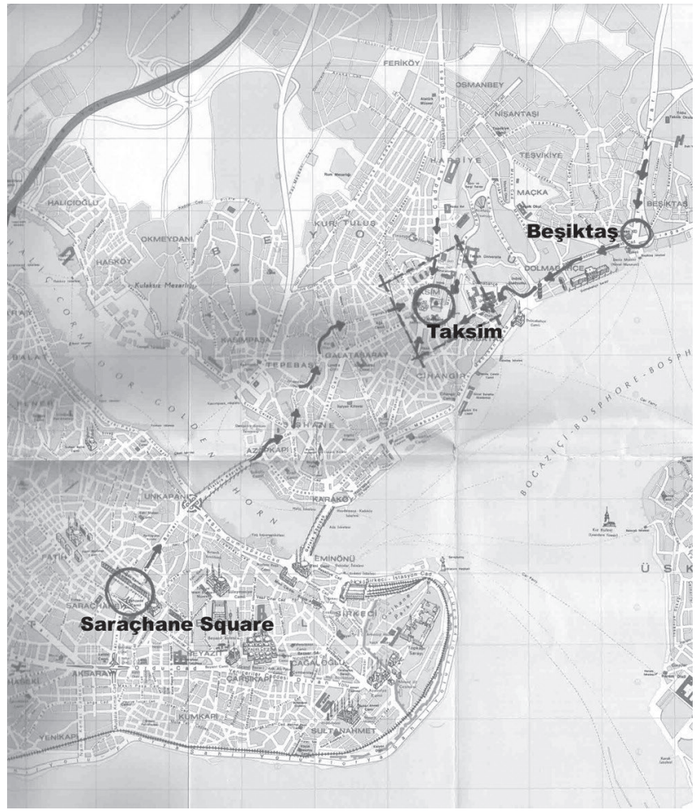


Figure 58.
Map of the march route showing the main gathering points and trajectories toward Taksim Square
Note. On the morning of the gathering, workers and other participants met at two key locations with banners and flags. Those assembling in Beşiktaş proceeded via Dolmabahçe. Illustration by Tali Hatuka.

At around 7:00 p.m., gunfire near Abdülhak Hamit Street* triggered mass panic in Taksim Square as shots were reported from surrounding buildings, including the Water Administration Building and the InterContinental Hotel (then Sheraton), alongside the sudden entry of an unidentified armored water-cannon vehicle that intensified the stampede. As crowds fled toward Kazancı Hill*, further gunfire was reported. The incident resulted in 34 deaths, primarily due to crushing and drowning, and 130 injuries, and entered Turkish history as Bloody May Day (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019).

At the time, the artists were unaware that the May Day event would later be remembered as Bloody May Day, nor did they anticipate that their designs would come to symbolize the demonstration. One of the posters produced by Gülsün Karamustafa for the May Day demonstrations is particularly striking. Designed in red, the poster depicts four workers: two of them carrying a flag inscribed with *"1 Mayıs"* (1st May) while another figure lies on the ground, covered in blood. Reflecting on this work years later, the artist explained that after the 1977 May Day turned into

Visual Artists' Association: A professional organization representing visual artists, advocating for artistic rights, exhibitions, and cultural visibility.

Kazancı Hill: A sloping area connecting Taksim to lower districts, known for its dense urban fabric and layered social history.

Figure 59.
Newspaper front page from Son Havadis dated May 2, 1977, featuring the headline "The Reds went mad" ("Kızıllar kudurdu"), reporting on the May Day violence in Taksim Square.
Note. Son Havadis, May 2, 1977. SALT Research.

Bloody May Day, she was unsettled by the almost prophetic quality of her design, remarking that she was shocked at how she had created such a foresighted image (Karamustafa, 2021). From that point onward, the poster acquired a symbolic meaning that exceeded its original context and achieved permanence in collective memory, becoming one of her most well-known works.

In the immediate aftermath of May 1, 1977, mainstream media largely framed the massacre as the result of internal conflict among leftist groups, a narrative that has been consistently reproduced by right-wing political circles ever since. Except for a limited number of outlets such as *Cumhuriyet, Politika,* and *Vatan*, most newspapers adopted this interpretive line from the first day (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019). This dominant framing played a decisive role in shaping public perception surrounding the event.

The events of 1977 permanently altered both the spatial and symbolic significance of Taksim Square. What had begun as a celebration ended in tragedy, after which restrictions were imposed on mass demonstrations. This transformation can be further understood through Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, which refers to sites where collective memory crystallizes precisely because lived,

Figure 60.
Workers' Day (1977) celebrations in Taksim Square
Note. Photograph, 1977. SALT Research.

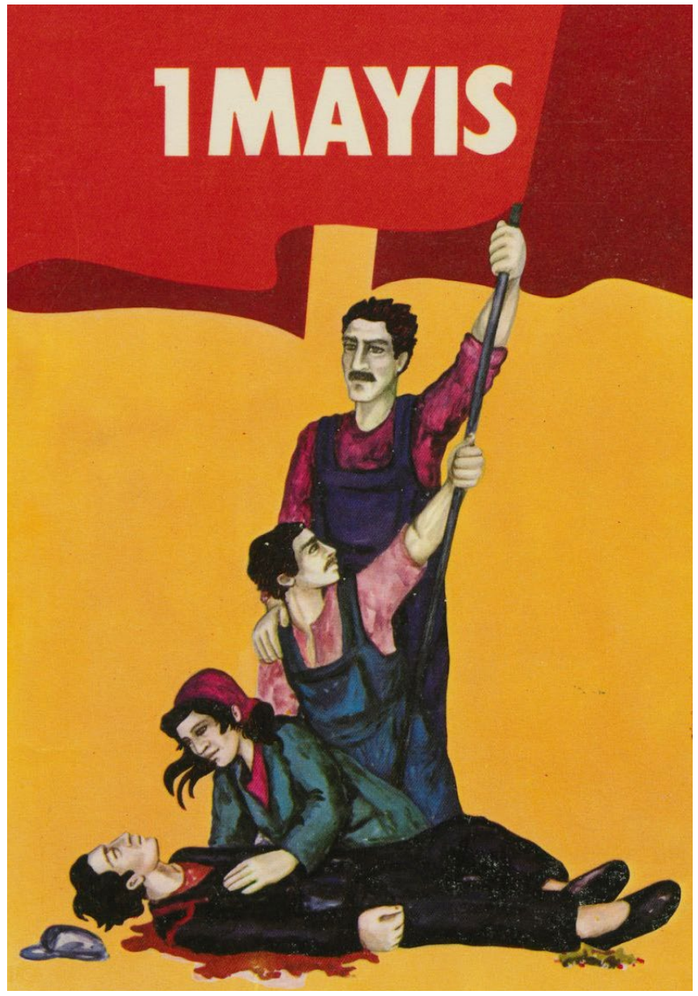


Figure 61.
Untitled drawing from the "1st Visual Artists Association May Exhibition" held at the Harbiye Sport and Exhibition Hall, 1977
Note. Drawing by G. Karamustafa (1977). Photograph produced in memory of the 10th anniversary of the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK). SALT Research.

organic memory has been disrupted or broken (Nora, 1989). According to Nora, *lieux de mémoire* emerge at moments when a society senses the disappearance of its living memory and seeks to anchor meaning through symbolic places, events, or monuments. In this sense, memory is not preserved through continuity, but through rupture, loss, and repeated acts of remembrance.

The political instability of the 1970s and the deepening economic crisis further intensified the conflict between left-leaning voters and the right-wing center. Public spaces such as streets and universities became not only arenas for protest but also battlegrounds. Istanbul, as the country's most populous city, hosted the largest demonstrations, with Taksim Square serving as their central stage. Its prominence was reinforced both by its historical importance and by its strategic position, enhanced by newly constructed roads and transportation networks. Understanding the spatial dynamics of these protests is therefore closely tied to

Figure 62.
Newspaper page from Milliyet dated June 4, 1977, titled "CHP rally held with a large crowd; no incidents occurred" ("CHP mitingi büyük kalabalıkla yapıldı, hiç bir olay çıkmadı"). The lower section includes satirical cartoons of Bülent Ecevit and Süleyman Demirel.
Note. Milliyet, June 4, 1977. Milliyet Newspaper Archive.

reclaiming the national, local, and social dimensions of the space, as well as its symbolic qualities. From the perspective of the politics of space, the May Day demonstrations extended far beyond Taksim itself: processions and convoys from opposite ends of the city converged on the square. The violent events of 1977 marked the beginning of a fragmentation process that has continued to influence subsequent protest practices in this location up to the present day.

In June 1977, around one month after the May 1 massacre, the Republican People's Party organized a large rally at Taksim Square, drawing a massive crowd despite serious security threats. An intelligence report warned of a planned assassination attempt on Republican People's Party leader Bülent Ecevit from the Sheraton Hotel, which Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel conveyed to Ecevit by letter (*Milliyet*, 1977). Ecevit announced via radio that he would attend the rally but would not explicitly call for public participation; this statement was widely interpreted as an implicit invitation, leading to high turnout. The rally thus became a powerful demonstration of public political determination to reclaim the square, despite intimidation attempts, while Demirel later denied allegations that the warning had been fabricated to suppress attendance.

As with previous demonstrations, the rally

Figure 63.
Photograph of a May Day (1 May) celebration in Taksim Square, Istanbul, 1978
Note. Photograph shared by Reddit user r/socialism (1978). Retrieved from https://www.reddit.com/r/socialism/comments/gbfxez/a_1_may_celebration_from_1978_taksim_istanbul/. The banner visible in the photograph reads "liberation socialism."

Figure 64.
Republican People's Party rally at Taksim Square, June 3, 1977. Poster of Bülent Ecevit on AKM's facade.
Note. Photograph. SALT Research.

area was secured by police, and the belongings of participants were searched upon entry. The stage, once again, was erected in front of Gezi Park, replicating the arrangement of the 1977 May Day.

On the façade of the AKM, a large banner featuring a portrait of Bülent Ecevit, accompanied by the insignia of his political party, was displayed. This illustrates the intensive use of the AKM façade as a vehicle for political propaganda. Coverage of these visuals in contemporary newspapers and broadcasts further reinforced this symbolism, demonstrating that the AKM had by then transcended its role as a cultural institution.

Accordingly, the May 1 celebration held in 1978

took place at Taksim Square following the previous year's Bloody May Day massacre and evolved into a massive demonstration attended by hundreds of thousands of people. This event was regarded as a significant success for DİSK and symbolized a period in which the labor movement was reorganizing and gaining strength. In the public sphere, this strong turnout and enthusiasm were perceived as a positive development, emphasizing the continuity of democratic rights and the struggle of the working class (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019). The façade of the AKM was once again covered with banners; however, this time the façade of the Marmara Hotel was also incorporated as a surface for their display. For the procession, the asphalt road located on the southern side of the square was used in a more orderly and controlled manner. Vehicles carrying banners drove along this route, forming a moving demonstration that complemented the collective presence of the crowd within the square.

In 1979, the military authorities in Istanbul banned the May Day rally and declared a curfew. Nevertheless, despite these restrictions, mass May Day celebrations took place in the streets of Istanbul with the participation of hundreds of thousands of people (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019).

Following the escalation of left-right violence, political instability, and economic crisis, the September 12, 1980 military coup was carried out under the pretext of "restoring order," leading to the dissolution of parliament, the banning of political parties, the arrest of their leaders, and the severe restriction of trade unions, associations, and fundamental rights. The 1982 Constitution further consolidated executive power and institutionalized a prolonged authoritarian regime. From the military's perspective, Bloody May Day had marked Taksim Square as a dangerous site of collective mobilization; consequently, mass demonstrations were banned, and the square remained largely closed to public gatherings throughout the 1980s (Günal & Çelikkan, 2019). The decade was also marked by intensified political violence, including the 1982 Esenboğa Airport attack*, after which Artin Penik, a Turkish citizen of Armenian descent, self-immolated in Taksim Square in protest, dying days later from his injuries-an act that left a profound imprint on the collective memory of the square (Bayburt, 2025).

Depoliticization and Touristification of Taksim

After the military coup of September 12, 1980, a new constitution was drafted, which facilitated the transition to a liberal economy. The process of liberalization, combined with increasing global interactions, was soon reflected in Taksim Square through the emergence of skyscrapers, hotels, restaurants, and other forms of cultural production. The square gradually became the center of the entertainment sector. As can also be recalled from earlier decades, attempts to construct hotels in and around Taksim had already begun during the Menderes era, under strong American influence.

The most emblematic outcome of this orientation was the Istanbul Hilton Hotel, whose construction was debated in the early 1950s with direct governmental support. As Turkey's first international luxury hotel, the Hilton symbolized Istanbul's entry into the circuits of Western-oriented tourism, diplomacy, and capitalist consumption, while also signaling a new direction in the use of central urban land (Okta, 2021).

A second major phase unfolded in the late 1950s and 1960s with the Sheraton Istanbul Hotel (today InterContinental Istanbul). The project was initially launched through a design competition in 1959, again during the Menderes period, but was interrupted by the 1960 military coup and suspended for several years. Its construction was resumed in 1968 under the Justice Party government of Süleyman Demirel, at a moment when development-oriented policies, international tourism, and market-driven growth had gained renewed momentum (Okta, 2021). Completed in 1975 (Okta, 2021), the Sheraton introduced a new high-rise, inward-oriented, and securitized hotel typology into Taksim, reshaping both the skyline and the spatial logic of the square.

The Marmara Hotel represents a third and more radical stage of this transformation. The project was institutionalized toward the end of the 1960s, construction began in 1970, and the building was

completed in 1976 (Okta, 2021). Its role became far more pronounced after the 1980 military coup, when Turkey entered a period of economic liberalization, deregulation, and intensified integration into global markets. The Marmara Hotel directly materialized the touristification and commercialization of Taksim Square, embedding tourism-oriented capital at the very heart of Taksim.

In David Harvey's terms (1989), this trajectory reflects the rise of urban entrepreneurialism, where urban space is increasingly mobilized as a competitive asset for attracting capital, investment, and global visibility rather than as a domain of social redistribution. In Taksim, hotel investments became key instruments through which land values were restructured, surrounding districts were progressively gentrified, and the square itself was reoriented toward tourism, entertainment, and consumption. At the same time, this process also unfolded as a form of urban depoliticization. Especially after 1980, Taksim Square was deliberately stripped of its historical role as a site of mass political assembly and reconfigured as a secure, sanitized, and consumption-oriented urban showcase. The growing concentration of hotels, restaurants, and entertainment venues shifted the square's dominant function from collective political expression to individualized tourist and leisure consumption. In this sense, the Hilton, Sheraton, and Marmara hotels were not simply passive outcomes of economic change; they actively participated in the spatial and symbolic redefinition of Taksim, where capital circulation, spectacle, and controlled visibility gradually displaced dissent, assembly, and political confrontation.

This large structure directly transformed the perception and experience of the square. At this point, it is useful to recall Henri Prost's panoramic drawings and his conceptualization of Taksim Square. Prost had envisioned this part of the square as a public space with a viewing terrace overlooking the Bosphorus, emphasizing openness, social interaction, and visual connection to the surrounding urban landscape. The introduction of a massive hotel in this area, however, significantly altered the spatial hierarchy

Figure 65.
Taksim Square with the Sheraton Hotel, undated photograph, likely from the late 1970s or early 1980s
Note. Photograph retrieved from Flickr. https://www.flickr.com/photos/saltonline/12966438805/

and visual permeability that Prost had imagined. The previously open and accessible terrace, together with its panoramic views, was now mediated by a monumental building, which redefined both the physical and symbolic character of the square, shifting its function from a civic gathering place to a space increasingly intertwined with commercial and touristic activities.

With the emergence of these hotels, additional accommodations began to appear both around Taksim and throughout Beyoğlu. Consequently, the area became increasingly targeted for temporary uses and commercial capital-driven activities. Taksim gradually came to be dominated by hotels and tourists, a transformation that was tourists, a transformation that was further reinforced by the proliferation of restaurants, bars, shops, and other commercial establishments, reshaping the square's social and spatial character (Okta, 2021).

Following the 1980 military coup, Taksim Square was deliberately stripped of its political identity and repurposed to serve the interests of private investors and to attract foreign capital. The square's symbolic and civic functions were subordinated to economic and commercial objectives,

Figure 66.
Taksim Square with the Marmara Hotel, undated photograph, likely from the late 1970s or early 1980s
Note. Photograph retrieved from Flickr. https://www.flickr.com/photos/saltonline/12966582183/in/photostream/

Taksim Camisi için 'kutsal ittifak'

1991'de İbrahim Arslan'ın gi... gösteriyle kurulan vatan ilk İki Mü... sorni bizgi(ndeki) otopark alanı... da bir "vanni + çarşı + otoparkl(ve kültür merkezi" inşa etmeyi amaç... Cumhuriyet Meydanı'nda "Cumhuriyet Kültür-Sanat Vakfı'nın" (CS... kuşlık bir "Vakıf Merkezi" bulunuy... yer alan üniversiteden üniversite... yer alan üniversiteden üniversite yöne... Prof. Dr. Abdülhadir Karahan, Abdullah Yazıcı, Ahmet Cubukçu, Ahmet Kabaklı, Ahmet Kabaklı, Ahmet Kavakbaşı, Atalay Sabuncuoğlu, Barlas Küntay, Cemal Ergüzel, Prof. Dr. Ekmeleddin İhsanoğlu, Doç. Dr. Emin Işık, Emer Öreş, Ergun Gider, Prof. Dr. Erman Tuncay, Erol Sabancı, Prof. Dr. Ethem Ruhi Fığlalı, Prof. Dr. Hasan Sağlam, Halit Topruk, Ercan Bir Nurin, Prof. Dr. Hayrettin Ecemiş, Hüseyin Bayraktar, Hüseyin Arslan, İbrahim Bodur, İbrahim Çiçekler, İlyas Yazıcıoğlu, Ergün Ülkü, Prof. Dr. İsmail Özsoy, İstanbul Aslan, Kemal Bayık, Kemal Türkmen) Mahmut Şenocak, E. Gnl. Mahdi Sungur, Mehmet Aslan, M. Emin Cumhuriyetsan, Mehmet Güler, Prof. Dr. Mehmet H. Bilge, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Sarıçoğlu, Mehmet Tütüş, Prof. Dr. Nihat Kaya, Prof. Dr. Nihat Sami Karamağaralı, Prof. Dr. Mustafa Sönmezoğlu, Nazlı Ökçesuyu, Necati Özbatura, Prof. Dr. Nevzat Kuz, Prof. Dr. Nevzat Yalçıntaş, Nuh Kınçoğlu, Numan Esin, Nuri Altınbaş, Nurullah Cengiz, Orhan Kayalı, Osman Bayazıt, Ömer Dinçer, Prof. Dr. Rafet Ekşioğlu, Rahmi Çitaloğlu, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, E. Gnl. Rıza Bekin, Saber Ülker, Sadi Çaycı, Sadrettin Sabuncu, Salih Özcan, Salih Tarhan, Prof. Dr. Salih Tuğ, Semiha Yakın, Prof. Dr. Sönmez Ayverdi, Prof. Dr. Tahsin Ünal, Prof. Dr. Tayfun Eyüboğlu, Prof. Dr. Süleyman Yalçın, Şaban Çavuşoğlu, Şeref Tarı, Taha Akyol, Tahsin Kaya, Ö. Tayyar Altıkulaç, Timur Tüzün, Prof. Dr. Turan Yazgan, Vefa Şeyhoğlu, Vehbi Koç, Yahya Ertaş, Yaşar Okuyan, Yaşar Yılmaz, Yıldırım Gürel, Zeki Sayın, Ziya Baran.

Figure 67.
Newspaper article from Cumhuriyet dated July 19, 1986, titled "Holy alliance for the Taksim Mosque" ("Taksim Camii için kutsal ittifak"), with a map showing parcels owned by various public institutions.
Note. Cumhuriyet, July 19, 1986. Source: Taksim Camii (n.d.), book.

transforming it into a space designed to showcase urban modernity and globalized consumption rather than facilitate collective political expression. This shift illustrates how urban redevelopment and economic liberalization can be instrumentalized to reshape public spaces, often at the expense of their historical and socio-political significance.

Until 1989, Taksim Square largely lost its status as the center of political demonstrations, with only occasional individual protests observed. During this period, it became an area where cultural activities and tourism-related events experienced a revival. For the main political figures of the period, the transformation of Taksim into this new visage represented nothing short of a success, as tourists were attracted and capital circulated through its hotels, the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM), the İnönü Promenade, and surrounding commercial spaces.

Throughout the 1980s, the AKM played a central role in Istanbul's cultural life, hosting events such as opera, ballet, and concerts, thereby strengthening Taksim's artistic identity. Additionally, the İnönü Promenade and its surroundings evolved into a space characterized more by recreational public life, while theaters, cinemas, and art galleries on İstiklal Street were revitalized. The addition of new commercial spaces further reinforced this evolving identity, giving the square a renewed and economically oriented façade. For some politicians, the construction of a mosque in this context was considered strategically significant: its "orientalist" aesthetic was expected to impress foreign visitors while also attracting tourists from Arab countries (Ekinci, 1997). Indeed, the first official initiative in this regard occurred only days after Bloody May Day, demonstrating how political agendas sought to reshape the symbolic and functional character of the square.

Renewed Debates Regarding the Taksim Mosque Project

This section examines the relationship between Taksim and the mosque, the phases the allocated land went through, and the reactions of the public and political circles. Oktay Ekinci's 1997 work, *Taksim Mosque Documentary in All Its Aspects,* serves as the primary source for the discussion. Ekinci's work

Figure 68.
Photograph of Taksim Square by Gültekin Çizgen, depicting the surrounding urban landscape including the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM), The Marmara Hotel, Gezi Park, and adjacent areas.
Note. Source: SALT Research, Gültekin Çizgen Collection (n.d.). https://archives.saltresearch.org/handle/123456789/92100

provides a detailed historical account of the project process, property ownership issues, and the attitudes of local and national political actors.

In the early Republican period, architecture primarily served to symbolize the new regime and its social transformation, with major investments directed toward schools, national banks, factories, public parks, and civic institutions rather than religious buildings (Batur, 1984). As Ahmad (1993) notes, no major mosque was constructed during the first 27 years of Republican People Party rule, while many existing ones were closed for being deemed insignificant. With the transition to multi-party politics in the 1950s and the rise of the Democratic Party, growing American influence and religious visibility marked a shift in architectural priorities, leading to the first modern mosque projects, particularly in Ankara, where architecture was used to signal the government's evolving ideological stance (Balamir, 2004).

A design competition was organized for the construction of a mosque in Ankara, the Kocatepe Mosque, which was won in 1957 by Turkish architects Vedat Dalokay (1927-1991) and Nezih Tekelioğlu (1930-1998), who would also reappear later in the next chapter of this study.

The site was located on a hill intended to dominate the cityscape, and the project brief included a mosque accompanied by a museum, a tourist market, a political conference hall, a campus for an Islamic institute, a 200-person parking lot, and an additional building housing offices, kitchens, and a library. Dalokay and Tekelioğlu's design brought a novel perspective, particularly to the mosque itself (Özkan, 2024).

Architectural historian Sibel Bozdoğan refers Dalokay as one of Turkey's most multifaceted intellectual figures, while also embodying the role of architect. After completing his postgraduate studies at the Institute of the Sorbonne in Paris, Dalokay returned to Turkey with an internationalist perspective that shaped his architectural outlook. Within this context, his contribution to the design of the Kocatepe Mosque represented a pioneering modernist reinterpretation

of traditional mosque aesthetics (Naz, 2005). The Kocatepe Mosque was conceptualized as a modern reinterpretation of a classical Ottoman mosque; the dome was constructed from thin-shell concrete, extending from four corners down to the ground (Bozdoğan, 2001).

Each façade of the mosque was designed with a distinct treatment, incorporating either fully transparent or semi-transparent elements to create different transitions. This approach not only optimized lighting conditions but also enhanced the aesthetic quality of the building. Establishing a visual connection with the surrounding green space outside the mosque was also considered crucial. According to Dalokay, the mosque had to be in harmony with its surroundings and make efficient use of the site; therefore, it was designed to accommodate only 600 worshippers, fewer than initially intended. One of the innovative aspects of the design at the time was the adoption of a thin-shell dome system. However, due to the technical difficulties associated with its construction and the fact that it could not

**Selimiye Mosque:* An iconic Ottoman imperial mosque by Mimar Sinan, frequently used as a reference point in architectural and symbolic comparisons.

**Sultanahmet Mosque:* A landmark imperial mosque on the Historical Peninsula, emblematic of Ottoman religious and urban symbolism.

formed in a mosque designed by someone who does not pray." The management even approached Nezih Tekelioğlu, proposing that only he continue with the design while Dalokay step aside; however, Tekelioğlu rejected this proposal and insisted on maintaining joint authorship (Moustafa, 2013). One of the reasons cited for the controversy surrounding the project was allegedly Dalokay's views on Hagia Sophia. Influenced by the ruling Justice Party government, conservative factions that were gaining influence at the time began advocating for Hagia Sophia to be converted from a museum back into a mosque. Dalokay, however, supported maintaining the building's status as a museum (Olaylar-Yorumlar, 1991).

Amid these controversies and pressures, the partially constructed mosque, whose foundations had been laid in 1964, was demolished. In the revised competition held in 1967, the winning design drew inspiration from classical Ottoman structures, with explicit references to the Selimiye Mosque* and the Sultanahmet Mosque*. Yet, many architects considered it a monument to poor taste. Unlike Dalokay's earlier design, which harmonized with the surrounding environment and spatial layout, this mosque dominated adjacent structures, leaving no open space beyond its concrete mass-a feature still perceptible to visitors today (Ağırsoy, 2025).

Interestingly, in 1969, Dalokay achieved international recognition by winning first prize in the architectural competition for the King Faisal Mosque* in Pakistan. He proposed a design reminiscent of the Kocatepe Mosque, which was subsequently constructed. While this international success brought national pride, it was tinged with regret. Turkish architects remarked:

> Kocatepe could have been a sample of a transition period. How good it would have been if this transition had started from Turkey. We have lost this opportunity (Ağırsoy, 2025).

By the early 1980s, a postmodernist approach had come to dominate mosque architecture in Turkey. This postmodern tendency is also evident in the newer version of the Kocatepe Mosque, which integrated office and shopping facilities into its complex, reflecting the era's intertwining of religious architecture and consumerism (Bozdoğan, 2001). Many mosques began to adopt Ottoman-inspired styles combined with traditional design approaches. The commercial components beneath the Kocatepe Mosque particularly illustrate how closely religious spaces were linked to contemporary consumer culture.

Architect Aydan Balamir highlights that one of the most notable examples of this postmodernist approach is the Parliament Mosque in Ankara, which received the Aga Khan Award in 1995. Construction began in 1986 under the architects Behruz Çinici and Can Çinici (Balamir, 2004). Architecturally distinct from classical mosque design, much of the mosque is concealed within a sloped terrain, while certain sections emerge through carefully integrated landscape interventions. The mosque, lacking both a traditional dome and minaret, represents the qibla* wall with two balconies and a cypress tree, while a terraced pyramid rises from the landscape in place of the dome. The religious space

**King Faisal Mosque:* A modern mosque in Islamabad designed by Vedat Dalokay, noted for its tent-like geometric form and its significance as a major 20th century Islamic architectural

**qibla:* The direction Muslims face during prayer, oriented toward the Kaaba in Mecca and used as a key spatial reference in Islamic architecture.

Milliyet Pazartesi 1 Haziran 1998 haber 7

Taksim'e cami kurulda

İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi'nin hazırladığı ve Taksim'e dört minareli cami yapılmasını içeren proje, Anıtlar Kurulu'ndan onay bekliyor. Taksim'i yeniden düzenleyen proje 96 milyara ihale edildi

Aramızda 25 km var

İstanbul-Ankara 3.5 saat

Cumartesi Anneleri'ne dış destek

ATA KOLEJİ'NDEN EĞİTİME BÜYÜK HİZMET

UNESCO GAP'ta

Paramatik

Oto Ekspres

GAZETECİLERDE

Figure 69. Newspaper page from Milliyet dated June 1, 1998, featuring the news report "Taksim Mosque on the Board" ("Taksim'e cami kurulda"), including a collage placing a mosque image over Gezi Park. Note. Milliyet, June 1, 1998. Milliyet Newspaper Archive.

is defined not by adherence to historical architectural conventions but through the manipulation of form, space, and light, as well as the relationship between building and landscape. A central aim of the project was to generate a strong architectural expression capable of offering symbolic possibilities and design alternatives for the contemporary mosque. Also, this mosque, like the Kocatepe Mosque, underwent a series of debates similar to those experienced by other contemporary mosques, receiving considerable criticism for its lack of a dome and minarets (Balamir, 2004). Both these mosques and the proposed Taksim Mosque exemplify how public arenas in Turkey can be analyzed not only in terms of functional use but also through the lens of design and political discourse. The implementation, or cancellation, of such projects often extended over many years, reflecting their role as instruments within broader political strategies.

Returning to Taksim, it is noteworthy that the intentions behind constructing a mosque there share similarities with the Kocatepe project in Ankara, revealing a comparable political approach. However, the Kocatepe Mosque faced fewer practical constraints, as the site was suitable for the intended construction and the city's demand for a mosque was more readily justifiable. In contrast, the Taksim Mosque proposal raised additional questions due to its location at the very center of Taksim Square, a highly symbolic and contested urban site. Both cases serve as examples of how modern interpretations of mosque architecture can generate not only political but also architectural debates, which continue to be analyzed through archival research today. Interestingly, the Taksim Mosque project has not been examined from this perspective. In nearly every discussion of the project, no rationale or discourse has been articulated that connects it to broader notions of civilization or culture, such as introducing a mosque that reflects contemporary twentieth-century architecture and Islamic thought to Istanbul.

In the days following Bloody May Day, the Nationalist Front coalition government launched the first official initiative to construct a mosque in Taksim. The Ministry of Culture's formal application to the High Council of Monuments, dated May 13, 1977, included a preliminary proposal titled the Taksim Mosque Complex (Ekinci, 1997). As Ekinci notes, the project site was fragmented among multiple public owners: the Treasury, the Foundations Administration, the municipality, and predominantly the Ziraat Bank*. While the High Council approved the project on the condition that the Taksim Maksem remain unharmed, and no obstacles arose for the Treasury- and Foundations-owned plots, the parcels held by the municipality (180 m²) and especially the Ziraat Bank (1,624 m²) constituted the main impediments to implementation (Ekinci, 1997).

Securing the consent of the Republican People's Party led municipality to integrate its land into the mosque site proved difficult. In contrast, the Ziraat Bank interpreted the process as an opportunity to realize its long-planned Taksim branch, as the special zoning privileges granted exclusively to the mosque project offered the only viable way to develop the otherwise restricted plots. In 1980, an agreement enabled the transfer of the bank's parcel to the General Directorate of Foundations, on the condition that it be used solely for a "mosque, marketplace, and parking project," with the bank branch incorporated into the marketplace component (Ekinci, 1997).

Only 42 days after the agreement, the September 12, 1980 military coup brought all official procedures, including the zoning processes for the Taksim Mosque, to a halt (Kaynar, 2023). The validity period of the Ziraat Bank's 1980 land transfer agreement expired in 1990, turning the mosque project into a prolonged dispute shaped as much by property and zoning conflicts as by political debate (Ekinci, 1997).

After the military regime, the Motherland Party came to power with a synthesis of liberal economic policies and conservative-nationalist discourse. Given Prime Minister Turgut Özal's religious-conservative profile, the revival of the project appeared likely. Indeed, following the 1984 municipal elections, Istanbul fell under Motherland Party control, and Mayor Bedrettin Dalan asserted strong authority over Taksim (Ekinci, 1997).

Ziraat Bank (founded 1863): A state-owned bank originally established to support agricultural development, later becoming a key financial institution of the Republic.

Cumhuriyet

Beyoğlu Belediyesi, Vedat Dalokay'ın ödüllü olan projesini bir "yapmak istiyor

"Taksim'e cami" tartışması

Taksim'e yeraltı trafiği

İzmir'de yeşil zabıta

Küçük uçaklar pist istiyor

Ortak, kooperatifini denetlemeli

Figure 70.
Newspaper article on underground traffic planning in Taksim Square published in Cumhuriyet on January 4, 1988. Interview with Vedat Dalokay.
Note. Cumhuriyet, January 4, 1988. Cumhuriyet Newspaper Archive.

Mosque proponents renewed their application for the municipal parcel within the block, but Dalan conditioned the allocation on the municipality receiving a share in the commercial program of the complex, indicating that, after the Ziraat Bank, the municipality also sought to capitalize on the project. The project's non-realization during Dalan's tenure (1984-1989 has been attributed either to prolonged negotiations or to the absence of any mosque requirement in the 1987 Taksim Square Urban Design Competition, which instead defined the Taksim Maksem and surrounding historic structures as elements to be preserved. While the brief did not prohibit a mosque, it also did not mandate one (Ekinci, 1997).

1987 Taksim Square Urban Design Project Competition

Over time, the increasing number of commercial areas in and around Taksim Square led to a significant rise in both vehicular and pedestrian traffic. The fragmentation of spaces due to urban development made the use of tram lines increasingly difficult, ultimately leading to the complete removal of the tram system. Following this development, numerous bus routes connecting Taksim to various parts of Istanbul were introduced. The reorganization of the square and its surroundings gradually transformed the area into a traffic junction due to the growing dominance of motor vehicles. The intensive use of space by vehicles negatively affected pedestrian zones, causing pedestrian flows to accumulate in specific areas (Çınar Altınçekiç, Ergin & Tanfer, 2015).

The 1987 Taksim Square Urban Design Competition attracted wide public and professional attention. The jury consisted of representatives from the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and a consulting committee including leading architects of the period (İşözen, 1987). The first prize was awarded to Vedat Dalokay and Hakan Dalokay (birth date 1962), the second to Behruz Çinici (1932-2011), Altuğ Çinici (1935-2024), and Can Çinici (birth date 1962), and the third to Necati İnceoğlu (birth date 1937), Mine İnceoğlu (birth date 1942), Hasan Şener, and Ahmet Cengiz Yıldızcı (1980-1992 Yarışmalar Dizini, 1993). Notably, despite its international scope, all main prizes went to Turkish

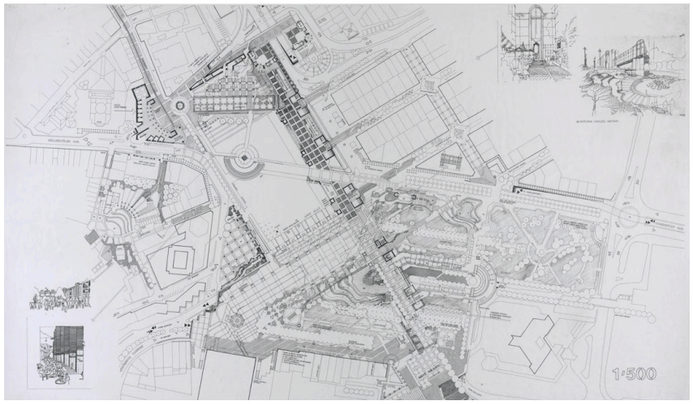


Figure 71.
Master plan proposal by Çinici et al. for the Taksim Square Urban Design Competition (TSUDC), 1987
Note. SALT Research, Altuğ-Behruz Çinici Archive.

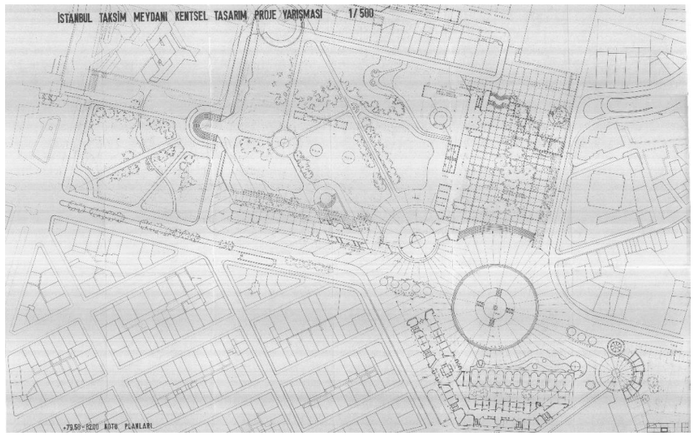


Figure 72.
Master plan proposal by İnceoğlu et al. for the Taksim Square Urban Design Competition (TSUDC), 1987
Note. Hasan Şener's personal archive. From H. Özkan (2024), An inquiry into visual representation in urban design: Taksim Square urban design competitions in 1987 and 2020 (master's thesis), Middle East Technical University, Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences.

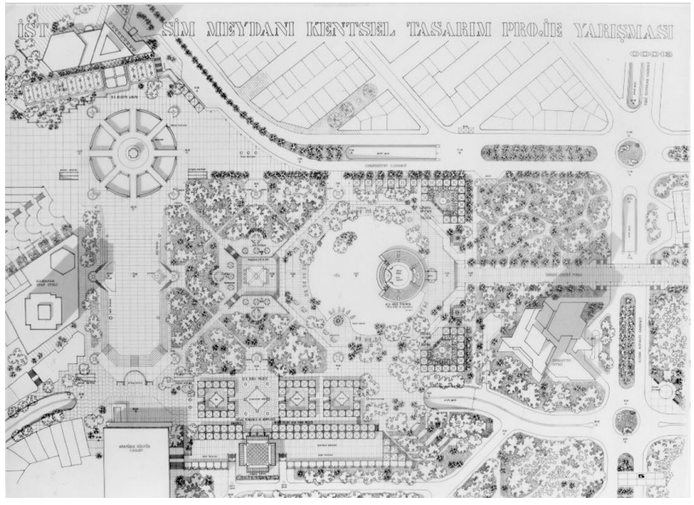


Figure 73.
Master plan proposal by Dalokay et al. for Taksim Square Urban Design Competition (TSUDC), 1987
Note. SALT Research, Vedat Dalokay Archive. From H. Özkan (2024), An inquiry into visual representation in urban design: Taksim Square urban design competitions in 1987 and 2020 (master's thesis), Middle East Technical University, Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences.

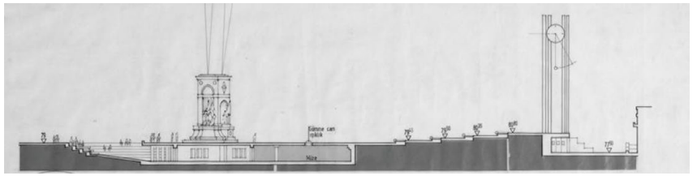


Figure 74.
Republic Monument proposal by Çinici et al. for the Taksim Square Urban Design Competition (TSUDC), 1987
Note. SALT Research, Altuğ-Behruz Çinici Archive.

teams, while only two of the six honorable mentions were awarded to non-Turkish participants (Özkan, 2024).

The competition brief addressed the Republic Monument, Gezi Park, the Historic Water Distribution Building, and traffic circulation, while also calling for new retail, exhibition, flower, and food-and-beverage spaces. Emphasis was placed on creating a dynamic square through smooth spatial transitions and the reorganization of transportation, with a particular focus on enhancing pedestrian mobility (Özkan, 2024). Most proposals, including Dalokay's, sought to divert vehicular traffic underground and pedestrianize the square. Dalokay proposed underground connections between Mete Street, Gümüşsuyu, and Sıraselviler, a large pool occupying nearly half of the İnönü Promenade, the mosque parcel left open for cultural use, and a skyscraper on the adjacent plot. His scheme also included the demolition of buildings along Mete Street and the slopes toward Kazancı Hill to create new multifunctional structures and viewing terraces, the Bosphorus Window and the Marmara Window. These proposals, however, were not implemented due to a change in government (Yıldırım & Erdem, 2016).

The *Cumhuriyet* newspaper, in its January 4, 1988, issue, discussed the design competition, Vedat Dalokay's proposal, and the ongoing project to construct a mosque in Taksim. Notably, neither the competition brief nor Dalokay's design included a mosque on the site. The article highlighted aspects of the project such as the undergrounding of traffic and transportation networks, and the creation of a viewing terrace, which required significant demolition along one of the façades overlooking the Bosphorus. Another feature mentioned was a proposed skyscraper. The article also noted that the Republic Monument would be elevated and illuminated to become more prominent.

The newspaper report did not address the architectural debates surrounding the potentially destructive demolitions envisioned by the designer, nor the impact that the proposed skyscraper might have had on the perception of the square. Instead, public attention was primarily focused on the future of the mosque project and whether it would be incorporated into Dalokay's proposal.

The *Cumhuriyet* newspaper highlighted the issue through the words of the Mayor of Beyoğlu, who advocated for a mosque in Taksim that would impress foreign visitors and be worthy of the square's prestige, even suggesting a design similar to the Süleymaniye Mosque. Dalokay, however, expressed a more cautious position:

> This is a very sensitive issue. I would be pleased if a contemporary-style mosque were constructed here. But it should not be a prestige mosque, such as a Süleymaniye Mosque. It does not need to dominate the square, because the square is composed of heterogeneous buildings.

All the submitted projects approached Taksim Square as a cultural, artistic, and urban living space integrated with the identity of the Republican era. Consequently, none of the proposals included a mosque, while the historic water distribution building, the Taksim Maksem, and its immediate surroundings were redesigned as a recreational area intended to strengthen its relationship with the square and to foreground its symbolic and historical value (Ekinci, 1997).

The projects reflecting the programmatic vision for Taksim Square were grounded in a conception of multipurpose urban space. According to the design proposals, different zones within the square were allocated to diverse public functions, encompassing social, cultural, and commercial activities. While this approach aimed to accommodate a wide range of uses and user groups, the spaces were largely organized around predefined and static functions. As a result, the capacity of the square to adapt to changing or unforeseen uses was limited, rendering subsequent functional transformations more difficult.

An examination of the competition panels indicates that the program was predominantly structured around predefined functions, with a stronger emphasis on spatial organization than on programmatic dynamics. In the designs developed by Dalokay and

Figure 75.
Newspaper front page from Tercüman dated November 5, 1982, titled "If September 12 had not happened, Taksim would have become the Red Square" ("12 Eylül olmasaydı, Taksim kızıl meydana olacaktı").
Note. Tercüman, November 5, 1982. Tercüman Newspaper Archive.

Figure 76.
Newspaper clipping titled "Laws obstruct mosque construction" ("Cami yapımına yasalar engel"), featuring the news item "Green light from DYP for a mosque in Taksim" and statements by the Istanbul Chamber of Architects questioning the seriousness of the project.
Note. Sabah, May 28, 2021.

his team, the explanatory notes accompanying the panels prioritized static conditions over the evolving or performative aspects of the program. Their proposals were characterized by a clearly articulated grid system, which functioned as the primary framework for representing individual behavior within the space.

The historical significance of the square and its role in collective memory were conveyed largely through symbolic devices and illustrative references to key historical events. Moreover, the inclusion of designated assembly and ceremonial spaces suggests an attempt to acknowledge and incorporate the square's political and social dimensions within the design framework. Nevertheless, although traces of the socio-political context of the period are discernible, these concerns were not foregrounded as central representational or conceptual priorities. As a result, broader considerations related to socio-political processes and everyday human interaction remained secondary within the overall design approach.

The implementation of the Taksim Square design competition was ultimately suspended for two principal reasons. First, the then mayor, Bedrettin Dalan, declared that construction would proceed only if he were re-elected, effectively postponing any action until the March 1989 local elections. Second, following the elections, the newly elected administration under Nurettin Sözen prioritized the initiation of the Istanbul Metro project. With Taksim Square designated as the primary hub of the metro network, the site acquired an entirely new infrastructural function. Because neither the competition brief nor the submitted proposals had accounted for large-scale metro infrastructure, their implementation became practically unfeasible (Ekinci, 1997).

This case illustrates the extent to which urban architectural projects are dependent on municipal power structures. The design process, scale, and even the feasibility of interventions-particularly the mosque project-were profoundly shaped by decisions taken by local authorities, including the Beyoğlu Municipality and other state actors.

The Re-Emergence of Protest in Taksim Square

Until March 1989, Taksim Square had largely ceased to function as a site of political demonstration. This situation changed with the Spring Protests (*Bahar Eylemleri*), widely recognized as the first major wave of labor mobilization following the 1980 military coup.

These protests unfolded through a diverse repertoire of inventive collective actions, including mass sick leave, barefoot marches, symbolic bodily performances, boycotts, and coordinated telegram campaigns (Beşeli, 1993; Yazıcı, 1996). Simultaneously, revolutionary groups insisted on reclaiming May Day celebrations in Taksim Square. As trade unionist Sami Evren later recalled, access to the square was rendered nearly impossible due to an extensive police blockade (Evren, 2021). The demonstrations were met with violent suppression; one protester was killed by police gunfire, marking May Day 1989 as another traumatic episode in the square's history. This event underscored both the persistence of post-coup authoritarian governance and Taksim's enduring role as a highly charged arena of political confrontation (Evren, 2021).

Throughout the 1990s, May Day celebrations remained officially prohibited. Trade unions repeatedly demanded permission to hold commemorations in Taksim Square, yet these requests were consistently rejected and met with harsh police interventions. This sustained pattern of repression illustrates the state's resolute determination to prevent the square from being reactivated as a locus of mass political assembly and dissent (Kaynar, 2023).

Following the 1989 local elections, during which the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality passed to the Republican People's Party strategies surrounding the Taksim Mosque project underwent a notable shift. Rather than being pursued through direct state authority, efforts increasingly focused on establishing broader social legitimacy through civil initiatives. In this context, the Taksim Mosque Culture and Art Foundation was founded in 1991 to advance the project. In the same period, the True Path Party emerged as the dominant

TAKSİM'E CAMİ RÜYALARIMI SÜSLÜYOR

Taksim'e cami yapmanın rüyalarını süslediğini söyleyen RP İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediye Başkan adayı Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, camiyi yapacağı yeri gösterirken...

Türkiye
20 ocak 1994

Tayyip Erdoğan'dan gövde gösterisi

SELAMİ ÇALIŞKAN

İSTANBUL- Refah Partisi'nin İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediye Başkan adayı R. Tayyip Erdoğan, "İstanbul'u Avrupa şehri yapacağız" dedi. Sheraton Otel'inde bir basın toplantısı ile seçim kampanyasını başlatan Erdoğan, İstanbul'un alt yapısı ve temizliği açısından Avrupa şehirlerine benzemediğini, metro projesini devam ettireceğini, Taksim meydanına yakışan bir İslam Kültür kompleksi içinde muhteşem bir cami yapmanın da rüyalarını süslediğini bildirdi. R. Tayyip Erdoğan, "Eğlence yerlerini kapatacak mısınız?" şeklindeki bonzcu meseleyi eğlence yerleri değil. İstanbullular bizden su, ulaşım, çöp meselesini nasıl çözeceğimizi sordular ve bunu bekliyor" cevabını verdi. Ehliyetli ve ülkücü insanlardan bir ekip kurduklarını, bunların bir kısmının bürokrasiden, bir kısmının da özel sektörden olduğunu bildiren Erdoğan, şöyle devam etti: "Ekibimin isimini açıklamam şimdi doğru olmaz. İstanbul'un su meselesini biz çözeriz. İSKİ devamını takipçisi olacağız. Yetimin hakkını kimseye yedirtmeyiz. Hakkın üstünlüğüne inanmış bir insan olarak şimdiki yönetimin Park otel için yapıklarına

Figure 77. Newspaper article from Türkiye dated January 20, 1994, titled "Erdoğan's show of strength" ("Tayyip Erdoğan'dan gövde gösterisi"), featuring the statement "Taksim'e cami rüyaları süslüyor". The image circulated widely via Twitter/X. Note. Türkiye, January 20, 1994. Image circulated via Twitter.

and Taksim's enduring role as a highly charged arena of political confrontation (Evren, 2021).

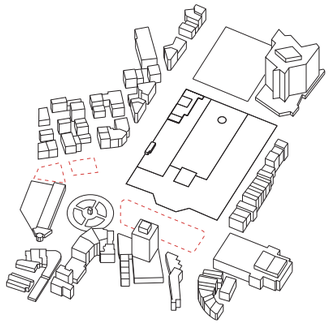
Throughout the 1990s, May Day celebrations remained officially prohibited. Trade unions repeatedly demanded permission to hold commemorations in Taksim Square, yet these requests were consistently rejected and met with harsh police interventions. This sustained pattern of repression illustrates the state's resolute determination to prevent the square from being reactivated as a locus of mass political assembly and dissent (Kaynar, 2023).

Following the 1989 local elections, during which the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality passed to the Republican People's Party strategies surrounding the Taksim Mosque project underwent a notable shift. Rather than being pursued through direct state authority, efforts increasingly focused on establishing broader social legitimacy through civil initiatives. In this context, the Taksim Mosque Culture and Art Foundation was founded in 1991 to advance the project. In the same period, the True Path Party emerged as the dominant political force, and Süleyman Demirel was subsequently elected President, reshaping the political landscape within which debates over Taksim continued to unfold (Kaynar, 2023).Although the environment seemed prepared, ownership issues persisted again. The transfer of the land belonging to Ziraat Bank and the area owned by the municipality had not been finalized (Ekinci, 1997).

Following all these developments, the process extended until the local elections on March 26, 1994. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, the candidate of the Welfare Party based on Islamist ideology, was elected Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. With Erdoğan's mayoralty, discussions intensified in Istanbul regarding identity construction through both infrastructure and religious symbols. The first development after the elections occurred in the Beyoğlu Municipality. The District Municipal Council accepted a zoning plan amendment, allowing the construction of a mosque and marketplace on zoning the Block. Around the same time, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan made a statement to the press expressing that a permit would be granted for the mosque and that the groundbreaking ceremony would be conducted by President Süleyman Demirel (Ekinci, 1997).

In nearly every context where the Taksim mosque project has been discussed, no rationale or discourse has been articulated that links it to broader notions of civilization and culture. For instance, by introducing a mosque that reflects the contemporary architecture of the 20th century and the Islamic thought of this period to Istanbul has never been discussed. On the contrary, rather than envisioning a design suited to the spatial and urban conditions of the site in Taksim, municipal authorities and party leaders who pursued the dream of building a mosque in Taksim insisted that it should be monumental in scale and replicate the grandeur of Ottoman precedents.

If the intention had been to construct a mosque that carried the traces of Turkish architectural identity into the 20th century, other locations across Istanbul would have offered far more suitable and even grander sites for such an undertaking. Nevertheless, both religious circles and politically liberal-appearing groups had attributed a specifically political meaning to the project by the end of the century. In this way, the construction of a mosque in Taksim Square, a place symbolizing the secular and democratic urban life of Republican-era Istanbul, displaced the architectural, cultural, and urban concerns necessary for envisioning a mosque of historical significance, replacing them instead with political expectations and contentious debates. As Dalokay's example reminds us, architectural production cannot be separated from the power of municipal authority. It is therefore not coincidental that a figure as politically adept as Erdoğan was eventually able to impose definitive decisions on Taksim Square and the city.



1994-2012: Spatial Reconfiguration

Renewed Debates Regarding the Taksim Mosque Project

The radical secularism of the Kemalist Republic clearly failed in its mission to reach every segment of Turkish society. As the liberalization of the political system and the transition to multi-party democracy in 1946 showed, mainstream conservative parties began to dominate. This political front, often described as center-right or Islamist, adopted a discourse that referenced religion to gain votes (Bozdogan & Akcan, 2012).

This "modern" and moderate Islamist movement, represented by the Welfare Party, rose to prominence despite the resistance of the military, which had long seen itself as the guardian of Atatürk's legacy of secularism and modernization, and the masses who treated Kemalist ideology as sacred. In the 1994 local elections, the Welfare Party won the municipalities of major cities, bringing Tayyip Erdoğan to power as the Mayor of Istanbul (Bozdogan & Akcan, 2012).

During his campaign, Erdoğan promised to "conquer Istanbul for the second time," pledging to "bring the city from darkness into light." These so-called second conquerors argued that the Westernization process, especially during the early years of the Republic, had dragged Istanbul into cosmopolitan corruption and a loss of collective memory. For this reason, the Welfare Party's municipality claimed it would restore the city to its essence by introducing new Islamic symbols and carefully preserving Ottoman heritage (Baykal Büyüksaraç, 2007). With this period, efforts to integrate Islamic elements into the secular-republican image of Taksim Square entered a new phase. One of Erdoğan's first proposals was to build a new mosque in Taksim Square, the symbol of the Republic's secular modernism (Bozdogan & Akcan, 2012).

An excavation permit was granted in the hope of accelerating construction, yet the uncovering of Ottoman and Byzantine remains, including a necropolis and part of the *maksem* water system, rendered building on the original mosque site impossible (Okta, 2021).

Cumhuriyet

Dinozor'dan 'MEGA' promosyon

DYP'de fireler başladı

RP, Çiller'i kurtardı

'Şevket Kazan kışkırtıcı'

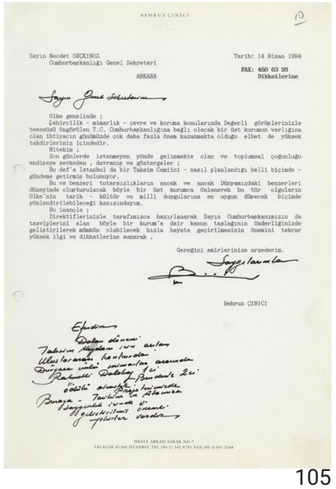
Taksim'e cami yerine 'turistik park'

Avukatlardan cüppeli eylem

Figure 78.
Newspaper article from Cumhuriyet dated February 19, 1997, titled "A touristic park instead of the Taksim Mosque" ("Taksim Camii yerine turistik park"), reporting on debates surrounding alternative proposals for the Taksim Mosque site.
Note. Cumhuriyet, February 19, 1997. Cumhuriyet Newspaper Archives.

Figure 79.
Billboard overlooking Taksim Square in the late 1990s, featuring a photograph of the Republic Monument with the phrase "Buluşma noktamız" Note. "Buluşma noktamız" translates as "Our meeting point." Photograph by Güldem Baykal Büyüksaraç.

Figure 80.
Letter from Necdet Seçkinöz to architect Behruz Çinici regarding the proposal to construct a mosque in Taksim Square, 1994
Note. SALT Research.


BEHRUZ ÇİNİCİ

Sayın Necdet SEÇKİNÖZ
Cumhurbaşkanlığı Genel Sekreteri
ANKARA

Tarih: 14 Nisan 1994
FAX: 466 63 08
Dikkatlerine

TAKSIM SQUARE AS A CONTESTED SPACE

Milliyet
BASINDA GÜVEN
KALE ÇELİK KAPI
8 Mart
Hem şenlik Hem dayak
Kadınlar dün mutfaktan çıktı, meydanları doldurdu
Taksim'de çatışma
12 polis yaralandı
Dargeçit'te şölen
Ecevit: Türban kılıçla çözülmez
Coş, kan, çiçek, coşku...
KADINIZ KEZİNİZ
Milliyet muhabirleri Balkanlar'ı saran ateşin odak noktasında
Kosova krizine üçlü Türk planı
Makedonya sancılı
Trafik terörü
Karayolları savaştan beter. Bir yılda 5 bin kişi kazaya kurban gitti. Önlemler yetersiz
Sivasspor'in acı günü
Leonard Heyden 3'lü Bavul Seti

Figure 81.
Newspaper article titled "Both festivity and beating" ("Hem şenlik hem dayak"), published in Milliyet on March 9, 1998, reporting on public gatherings and police interventions in Taksim Square.
Note. Milliyet, March 9, 1998. Milliyet Newspaper Archive.

With this setback, alternative locations were debated, and the municipal council proposed an Islamic Cultural Center in Gezi Park, shifting the controversy to the very center of the square (Baykal, 2000). This choice was shaped not only by ideology but also by spatial and aesthetic considerations: envisioned by Prost as a Bosphorus-facing viewing terrace and positioned at a higher elevation.

With the proposed mosque project, the open, horizontal, and permeable public character of Taksim Square and Gezi Park, shaped by modernist design principles, would be transformed into a more vertical, enclosed, and boundary-producing spatial order. Such a monumental structure would physically segment the square, constraining routes of gathering, movement, and protest, and disrupting the spontaneous organization of collective action. Its height and landscaped perimeter would also intensify surveillance, rendering the square more easily controlled yet less. Consequently, protest would shift from a mass collective practice to a spatially framed display.

Moreover, while the park's topography and greenery had enabled a fluid bodily experience of public space, the new structure would replace this openness with thresholds, shadows, and spatial barriers, reshaping not only the skyline but also the corporeal relationship between bodies and the square.

The proposed Islamic Cultural Center in Gezi Park was envisioned as a hub for seminars, international conferences, and events aimed at linking Turkey with the Islamic world. Even before the mosque project materialized, the Welfare Party implemented this agenda through a series of cultural activities held in the park. Each year, the Beyoğlu Municipality erected a large Ramadan tent for public iftar meals, followed by concerts, exhibitions, and Karagöz performances (Baykal, 2000). Through these practices, Gezi Park was gradually redefined not as a secular-modern public space but as the visible stage of Islamic collectivity. Drawing on the work of historian and cultural theorist Michel de Certeau, who conceptualizes everyday practices as "tactics" through which ordinary users appropriate and reinterpret dominant spatial orders, these activities can be read as acts of spatial reappropriation (de Certeau, 1984). In this sense, Ramadan tents, traditional concerts, and Karagöz performances functioned as tactics of everyday life that rewrote a formally secular urban space through repetitive and embodied practices, producing what de Certeau describes as an alternative form of public use.

The reconfiguration of public space through Islamic activities, together with national debates on mosques and headscarves and the Welfare Party's radicalizing discourse, triggered strong reactions among secular circles, economic elites, and those who viewed the military as a guarantor of order. On February 28, 1997, the military issued a memorandum to the government; under mounting public, media, and bureaucratic pressure, the Erbakan government accepted the demands in March and was soon forced to resign. In 1998, the Welfare Party was dissolved by the Constitutional Court on grounds of anti-secular activity, a decision widely criticized for weakening democratic representation (Tunahan, 2015). This so-called "postmodern coup" led to the collapse of the Welfare Party's coalition and the suspension of the Taksim Mosque project (Cihangir, 2023).

Acts of Resistance and Symbolic Reclaiming of Public Space

In the late 1990s, the international mobile phone company Turkcell hung a massive billboard on one of the buildings along Sıraselviler Street facing Taksim Square. The advertisement, designed in nostalgic sepia tones, depicted a crowd turning toward the Republic Monument, forming an image that symbolized devotion to the Republic. The billboard carried a slogan

Figure 82.
Police surrounding the Saturday Mothers during their sit-in protest at Galatasaray Square, September 12, 1998
Note. The image captures a moment of state intervention in the group's demonstration. Retrieved from https://bianet.org/yazi/cumartesi-nasil-basladi-neden-ara-verildi-159385

Figure 83.
Police vehicles on İstiklal Avenue during the Saturday Mothers' protest, December 19, 1998
Note. The photograph shows police presence on the pedestrianized street, which was normally closed to traffic. Retrieved from https://bianet.org/yazi/cumartesi-nasil-basladi-neden-ara-verildi-159385

ANAYASA MAHKEMESİ İPTAL DEDİ, HÜKÜMET YANIT VERDİ:

Çankaya turlarına Gül ile devam

Erken genel seçim haziran sonu veya temmuz başı

Başbakan Erdoğan, 'Cumhurbaşkanını halkın seçmesi' düzenlemesinin de yer aldığı bir Anayasa değişikliği paketiyle birlikte erken seçim kararı alınacağını açıkladı. Kısık seçimi turlarının ise yarın devam edeceğini belirtti

Milliyet

BASINDA GÜVEN

PAKETTE NELER OLACAK?

VALİLİĞİN 1 MAYIS YASAĞI İSTANBUL'U FELÇ ETTİ

Resmi zulüm

Anayasa Mahkemesi'nden '367 şart' kararı

TÜSİAD'dan sağduyu çağrısı

NE ŞERİAT NE DARBE

'Kriste pazubiri demokrasi'

Abdi İpekçi ödülleri Çekirge ve Özsoy'a

Fener'e ceza yağmuru

Figure 84. Newspaper Milliyet dated May 2, 2007, featuring the headline "Official oppression" ("Resmi zulüm"), reporting on police interventions during May Day demonstrations in Taksim Square. Note. Milliyet, May 2, 2007. Milliyet Newspaper Archive.

inviting the Turkish nation to join Turkcell: "Our meeting point" (Baykal Büyüksaraç, 2007).

The advertisement reproduced Taksim's idealized image, glorifying the Republic Monument as a symbol of unity, public life, and collective belonging. Yet, at the same time, the police barricades surrounding the monument in real life undermined this ideal. The scene exposed the sharp disconnection between the representation and the lived experience of public space: on one hand, an image promising "togetherness," and on the other, a reality enforcing "separation."

The scene captured by Güldem Baykal Büyüksaraç seems to have struck not only me but many others as well, as it has resurfaced in various contexts. The metaphor of "meeting" is, of course, not merely a product of neoliberal discourse. Throughout history, Taksim Square has been a site of many real "meetings": cultural, artistic, and touristic events, as well as demonstrations, protests, and commemorations. Taksim has long been a space where different social groups, for different reasons, have crossed paths, and it still is. Even during the period of protest bans that followed the postmodern coup of February 28 Taksim did not completely lose this meaning; on the contrary, it became a symbol that resisted the impossibility of gathering, embodying the very idea of collective presence.

One of the most striking unauthorized demonstrations in Taksim took place on International Women's Day in 1998. According to *Milliyet* newspaper's report while March 8 was celebrated in a festive atmosphere across other regions of Turkey, the police intervened in the protest at Taksim. The march, which began in front of Galatasaray University, encountered police barricades upon reaching the square (Milliyet, 1998).

The fact that the protest began in front of Galatasaray University was not coincidental; the area had already been politicized through the regular demonstrations of the *Cumartesi Anneleri** (Saturday Mothers). Since 1995, families of the disappeared have gathered there every Saturday in search of justice, a practice that gave the group its name and continues to this day (Genç Yılmaz, 2014).

One of the main reasons these protests began in Galatasaray Square was likely the ongoing ban on demonstrations in Taksim Square. However, Galatasaray's proximity to Taksim and its location along the main pedestrian axis of İstiklal Street made it both visible and easily accessible, turning it into a strategic alternative public space for demonstrations.

The Saturday Mothers' protest was designed as a sit-in. The group, which initially consisted of around 30 people, grew into gatherings of thousands over time. The protesters sat on the pavement in front of the Galatasaray High School entrance facing İstiklal Street, hanging banners and photos of their missing loved ones on the iron gate. Over the weeks, numerous police vehicles began to appear in the pedestrianized area of İstiklal Street every weekend, transforming the square into a space of tension between the authoritarian spatial order of the state and the quiet persistence of civil resistance.

In the November 2002 elections, the Justice and Development Party (AKP) won 34% of the vote and formed a single-party government, with Recep Tayyip Erdoğan becoming Prime Minister. This result was widely interpreted as a social reaction to the February 28 process, during which secularism came to be perceived as a mechanism of oppression, while religious identity regained legitimacy through a discourse of political victimhood. This tension continued to shape Turkey's political and cultural landscape throughout the 2000s (Tunahan, 2015).

By the fifth year of AKP rule, The *Milliyet* newspaper, in its May 2, 2007 issue, ran the headline *"Official Brutality."* The article reported that the standoff between DİSK and the Istanbul Governorship over celebrating May 1 in Taksim had virtually paralyzed the city. To prevent participation in the protests, the governor's office suspended metro, bus, and ferry services. Closing Taksim, located at the heart of the city, to transportation effectively cut off connections between many of Istanbul's neighborhoods.

This situation affected not only the demonstrators but also daily life: people

***Cumartesi Anneleri (since 1995):** A civil protest movement consisting of relatives of forcibly disappeared persons, holding weekly silent vigils demanding truth and justice.

Cumhuriyet

"Demokrasi" maskesi düşen hükümetin emriyle polis, İstanbul'u savaş alanına çevirdi. Halkın üzerine gaz bombaları yağdı. Orantısız güç kullanan polis yurttaşların suratını tekmeledi. Turistler bile coplandı

1 Mayıs'ta AKP terörü

Provokasyona alet olmadılar

Muhabirimizin kolunu kırdılar

'Düşmana bile yapılmaz'

Ankara ve Adana'da sert müdahale

GÜNCEL

GÜNDEM

Figure 85. Newspaper article titled "AKP terror on May 1" ("1 Mayıs'ta AKP terörü"), published in Cumhuriyet on May 2, 2008, reporting on clashes between police and demonstrators in Taksim Square. Note. Cumhuriyet, May 2, 2008. Cumhuriyet Newspaper Archive.

were unable to get to work, school, or hospitals. As a result, the May Day demonstrations evolved from being a simple labor celebration into a broader protest the governor's policy. Throughout the day, clashes erupted between police and protesters across several districts, and 695 people were detained (Milliyet, 2007).

The situation remained unchanged in 2008. On 2 May, *Cumhuriyet* reported the events under the headline *"AKP Terror on May 1,"* documenting detentions and police violence not only in Taksim Square but also at an alternative rally held in Tandoğan Square, where some unions chose to gather. As a result, May 1, 2008 became a symbol of a public celebration fragmented both spatially and ideologically (Cumhuriyet, 2008).

In 2009, celebrations were still not allowed in Taksim Square and instead took place in alternative venues such as Kadıköy (Milliyet, 2009). In 2010, after years of struggle by labor movements, the government was finally forced to allow May Day celebrations in Taksim Square (Cumhuriyet, 2010). This marked the first legal celebration in the square after 32 years. Yet, this decision was not merely about reconciliation with the unions; it was also shaped by the AKP government's ongoing EU accession negotiations and its desire to project a democratic image concerning freedom of expression and human rights.

A press archive analysis focusing on the period 2002-2013, when the AKP held power, reveals a marked polarization in media representations of Taksim. Pro-government newspapers routinely criminalized protestors, frequently deploying terms such as "terrorists" to describe those participating in unauthorized demonstrations (Bugün, 2012). Even authorized gatherings were framed through narratives of vandalism, public disorder, or threats to security, reinforcing a securitized discourse around dissent in the square.

The celebration, attended by nearly 200,000 people, ended without major incidents, creating a sense of public relief and symbolic reclaiming of the space. Millions of people pouring into Taksim once again transformed the square into a truly "public" space. A similar atmosphere continued through 2011 and 2012, until October 2012, when the AKP announced its "New Turkey Vision" (Topal, 2016).

2013 TAKSIM

This map is produced through the superimposition of two primary sources representing the spatial configuration of Taksim Square prior to its major urban transformation.

The first source is a *2012 Google Earth satellite image,* providing an accurate aerial record of the square's physical layout at the time of the Gezi Park protests.

The second source is *the hand-drawn plan of Taksim Square by Baykan & Hatuka* (2010), a schematic drawing produced for the spatial analysis of Taksim as a site of public contestation.

The superimposition of these two sources was adapted by the author to reconstruct the built environment and circulation patterns of the square as they existed before the implementation of the Taksim Pedestrianization Project. This reconstructed plan serves a dual analytical purpose. It documents the pre-transformation spatial conditions of the square , its programmatic layout, pedestrian and vehicular flows, and the relationship between Gezi Park and the surrounding urban fabric, while simultaneously providing the spatial framework within which the 2013 protests unfolded.

Greenery in Gezi Park
Green Areas
T Tram station
Pedestrian way
M Metro entrance
Bus station
Buildings
Parcels
Walls
Tree

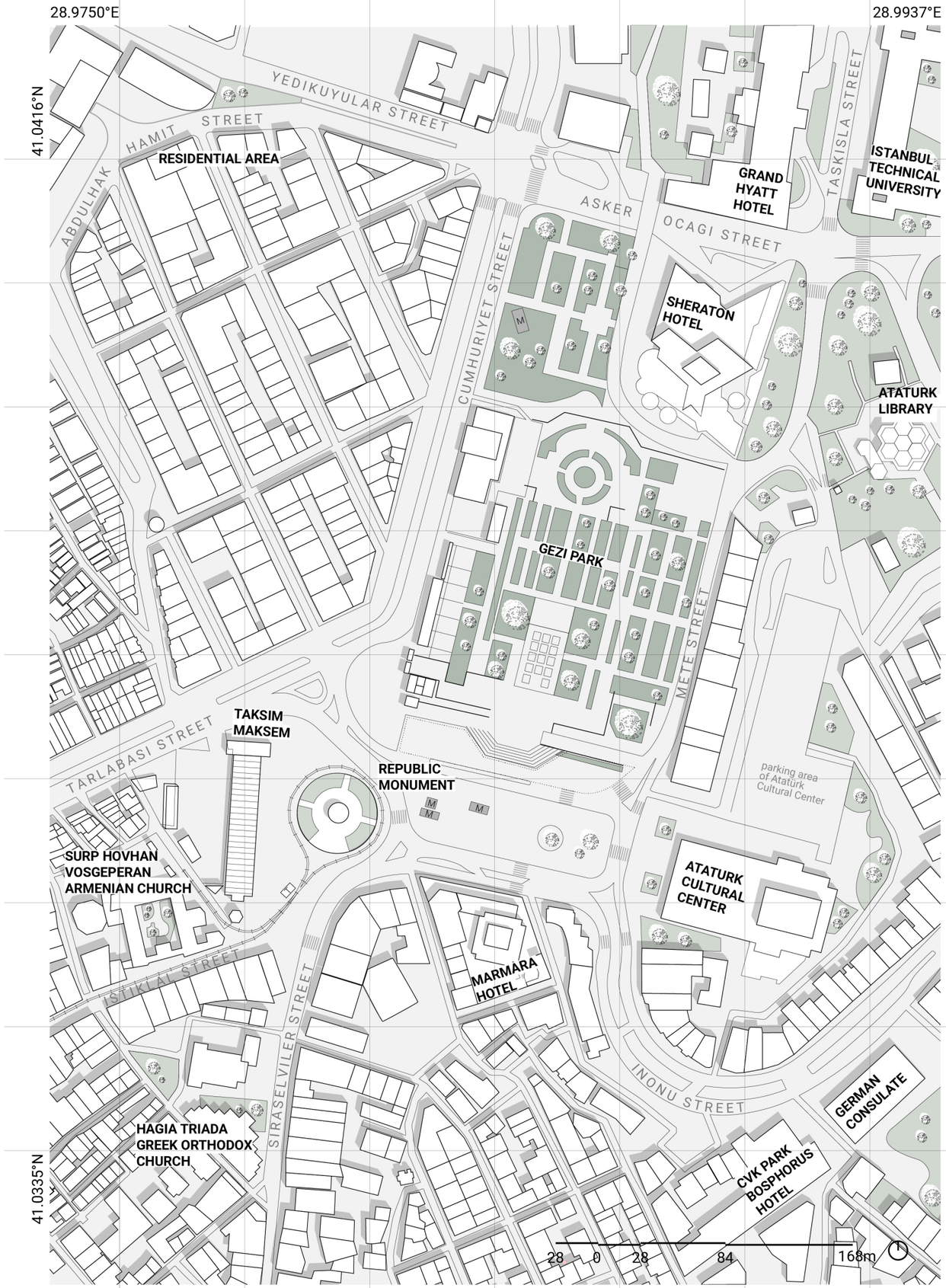


Figure 86.
Newspaper article titled "May Day anarchists", published in Bugün on May 2, 2012, adopting a sensational framing of Taksim demonstrations and emphasizing noise and disorder as central themes. Note. Bugün, May 2, 2012. Newspaper Archive.

CHAPTER 2: GEZI AND CONTEMPORARY SPATIAL POLITICS

The Rise of Political Islam and Its Spatial Expressions

Announced in 2012 and personally presented by Prime Minister Erdoğan, the "New Turkey Vision" included the comprehensive transformation of Taksim Square and its surroundings, along with many other large-scale projects. However, before discussing the details of this vision, it is important to recall the strategic steps that made such an extensive transformation possible in Taksim Square.

According to architect Can Bilsel, in the early years of its rule, the AKP revised preservation legislation to promote the revitalization of historic centers; with the 2004 amendments, public funding was mobilized and property owners were incentivized to restore historic buildings. Although the law initially ensured expert supervision through conservation boards and required municipalities to establish dedicated conservation offices, this framework soon shifted toward a market-oriented model that aligned conservation with real estate development. The decisive break came with Law No. 5366 (2005), which authorized the demolition, reconstruction, and repurposing of historic areas designated as "urban renewal zones." Coupled with extensive financial incentives, this legal turn triggered a nationwide wave of speculative urban regeneration and aggressive 'restoration' practices across Turkey's historic city centers (Bilsel, 2017).

Taksim Square was not exempt from this vision of transformation. The first target was the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM). Erdoğan claimed that the building's architectural structure was "not sound" and argued that, considering Istanbul's earthquake risk, it should be rebuilt. The plan was to replace the existing structure with a new, grand baroque-style opera house (Topal, 2016).

According to a media review covering the years between 2002 and 2013 (mainly *Cumhuriyet* and *Milliyet* newspapers), public discussion of AKM resurfaced in 2005 after a statement by the then-Minister of Tourism, Atilla Koç*, who declared, "We will demolish and rebuild the AKM." From that point on, debates over whether the building should be demolished, renovated, or reinforced became a constant topic of public and media attention.

*Atilla Koç (born 1946): A Turkish politician who served as Minister of Culture and Tourism, associated with cultural policy and heritage administration in the 2000s.

By this time, AKM's architect Hayati Tabanlıoğlu had passed away, and the firm was represented by his son, Murat Tabanlıoğlu (birth date 1960). Following Minister Koç's statements, Murat Tabanlıoğlu emphasized that the project concerned restoration rather than demolition. In 2005, Sabah reignited public debate with the headline *"Is Living History Being Demolished?"* quoting Tabanlıoğlu's remark: *"AKM is sick but not dead; we will heal it"* (Sabah, August 12, 2005). The controversy intensified through 2007, drawing opposition from intellectuals, artists, architects, conservationists, and the Chamber of Architects. In 2008, the building was closed under the pretext of renovation, yet no restoration was undertaken for the following three and a half years (Topal, 2016; Özyurt, 2012).

On February 9, 2011, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality applied to have the long-demolished Taksim Artillery Barracks retroactively registered as cultural heritage. In a strikingly posthumous decision, the Conservation Council placed the already destroyed structure under legal protection 71 years after its demolition, thereby creating the legal basis for its reconstruction as a historical replica (Bilsel, 2017).

This move was reinforced by the May 16, 2012 amendment to Law No. 5366, which granted municipalities expropriation powers in conservation zones and enabled the consolidation of historic parcels for large-scale redevelopment. Together, these measures marked a decisive shift from conservation toward neoliberal urban renewal,

Figure 87.
Proposed project for reconstructing the historic Topçu Barracks as a shopping mall on the site of Gezi Park Note. The plan illustrates the government's redevelopment vision that sparked public opposition in 2013. Source: CNN Türk.

MİLLİYET, TARTIŞILAN AKM'YE GİRDİ

Saatli bomba gibi

Atatürk Kültür Merkezi'nin duvarları nemden çürümüş durumda. Kalorifer kazanları patlama riski taşıyor. Tahmini onarım bütçesi ise 118 milyon YTL

5 barı geçerse patlayacak

Tamir edecek usta yok

Koç, tepki göstermişti

Figure 88.
Newspaper article from Milliyet (2007) discussing the technical and structural problems of the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) and public debates on its possible demolition. Note. Milliyet, 2007. SALT Research.

accelerating gentrification, displacing the urban poor, and rendering migrant labor increasingly invisible. In the decade leading up to 2013, heritage and urban transformation were strategically mobilized to inflate real estate values, brand the city for global capital, and reclaim central neighborhoods for tourism, while public spaces and historical sites were systematically subordinated to capital-driven development and ideological-symbolic power (Bilsel, 2017; Bozkurt, 2015).

In June 2011, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan publicly unveiled the new Taksim Square project, which included the reconstruction of the Artillery Barracks (Bilsel, 2017). The AKP increasingly articulated its Islamic-oriented governance through large-scale construction, materialized in skyscrapers, shopping malls, highways, airports, and tunnels (Topal, 2016). On October 31, 2012, the Taksim Pedestrianization Project was launched under the pretext of expanding pedestrian space; yet its heavy concrete infrastructure effectively prepared the ground for broader spatial transformation.

By May 2013, these intentions were made explicit when Erdoğan announced plans for a new mosque and the rebuilding of the Artillery Barracks as a shopping mall within Gezi Park (Topal, 2016).

The AKP's neo-Ottoman vision promised to restore Istanbul to its 19th-century grandeur by embracing both its Muslim and non-Muslim imperial heritage (Bilsel, 2017). The proposal to replace the AKM with a grand baroque-style opera house was likely linked to this vision. The AKP's cultural "restoration" policies directly opposed those of the Republican era; whereas the early Republic sought to suppress overt expressions of religious difference in public spaces, the new approach explicitly politicized them (Bilsel, 2017).

This project sparked intense public debate and led to the formation of Taksim Solidarity, an activist coalition composed of civil society organizations, professional chambers, political groups, academics, architects, urban planners, students, activists, artists, journalists, and writers (Sadri, 2017). The group opposed the project, emphasizing issues such as the inappropriateness of underground traffic tunnels, the difficulty of pedestrian access to the square, and the risk of losing the square's historical identity and the city's collective memory (Sadri, 2017).

The destruction of Gezi Park, one of the few remaining shared green spaces in central Istanbul, to rebuild the Taksim Artillery Barracks sparked heated debates across multiple dimensions. The project was interpreted in various ways: as an issue of the right to the city and its occupation by capitalist structures, as part of the ecological struggle, and as an ideological confrontation between Gezi Park, a symbolic legacy of the Republic, and the Artillery Barracks, a structure from the Ottoman modernization period. At the same time, the proposal to reconstruct a building that had been destroyed 71 years earlier raised a major question within architectural circles: Is such a restoration even possible? These discussions evolved into a broader intellectual debate around what, why, and how heritage should be preserved, questioning the very meaning and limits of restoration.

In this context, architect Alioğlu (2013) critically examined the idea of reconstructing the Artillery Barracks. He argued that preservation means safeguarding both tangible and intangible elements of cultural heritage as part of social life. However, when it comes to immovable heritage, it is not possible to preserve a structure that no longer physically exists. What is being attempted today, he suggested, is merely the production of a mass-scale replica of the barracks. Such an endeavor cannot be considered a genuine reconstruction, since no detailed plans exist that would allow for an accurate rebuilding of the structure. The surviving engravings and photographs only provide a rough idea of its general form. Under these circumstances, any new construction would not truly resemble the original barracks but would instead become a real estate project driven by profit motives in one of the city's most valuable areas. Thus, the reconstruction process represents not an act of revival, but rather a manifestation of gentrification-oriented urban transformation (Alioğlu, 2013).

If the barracks had survived in their final 1812 form, valuable insights could have been gained about the architectural style, materials, construction techniques, and decorative approaches of the time. Archaeological excavations might have revealed details about its foundations, spatial layout, and craftsmanship. However, with its demolition in 1939, such opportunities were lost, as the remaining documentation is extremely limited. Only a few engravings and photographs allow for an understanding of its general mass and silhouette (Alioğlu, 2013).

Nevertheless, new architectural drawings were produced for the project, reflecting the appearance of the 1860s buildings. Ottoman architects of that era, inspired by European eclecticism*, had developed a self-Orientalizing* architectural language. As Ahmet Ersoy explains, this style incorporated architectural motifs from a broad "Islamic geography" onto façades, creating an "Ottoman Renaissance" that emphasized the empire's claim to spiritual and cultural leadership over the Muslim world (Bilsel, 2017).

By attempting to demolish Prost's Gezi Park, the AKP government opened a new front in its cultural war to erase Turkish modernism from collective memory. The reconstruction of the Artillery Barracks, and the shopping mall planned within it was publicly framed as a way to "restore history" or "repair the loss" inflicted on the city's Ottoman heritage (Bilsel, 2017).

For precisely these reasons, in 2013, the AKP government banned May Day celebrations, citing the pedestrianization project associated with the reconstruction of the Artillery Barracks as justification (Bilsel, 2017). This decision further mobilized the opposition against the project. While Taksim Square remained empty at the beginning of May, by the end of the month it would host one of the largest crowds in its history.

European eclecticism: An architectural approach blending diverse historical styles, such as Renaissance, Baroque, and Neoclassical, typical of 19th-century European influence on Ottoman and early Republican urban forms.

May - June 2013: Reclaiming the Urban Commons

Spaces of Resistance

Contrary to popular belief, the Gezi Protests were not a spontaneous or sudden uprising. The mobilization was the outcome of nearly two years of strategic organizing, shaped by the collaboration of professional chambers, neighborhood associations, and civil society groups. The initial protest was planned under the initiative of Taksim Solidarity (*Taksim Dayanışması),* a platform jointly formed by Taksim residents and the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects* (*TMMOB*) (Toktamış, 2015).

According to Can Bilsel, the year 2012 had already been a period of intense activism for Taksim Solidarity. Before 2013, at least three large-scale demonstrations had been organized to protest redevelopment and commercialization projects in the area.

The movement managed to maintain its focus on issues of heritage conservation and state intervention (Bilsel, 2017). During a major demonstration in early March, the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions of Turkey (DİSK) underlined the symbolic importance of the square for the labor and socialist movements (David & Toktamış, 2015).

Taksim Solidarity not only demanded the protection of Gezi Park but also called for halting the government's attempts to demolish the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) (Bilsel, 2017). Overall, the platform criticized the government's neoliberal policies and fought to preserve the last green public space in central Istanbul (Toktamış, 2015; Alonso, 2015). Moreover, the transformation of this Neo-Ottoman space into a shopping mall was perceived as a symbol of Turkey's integration into the global consumer culture (Ayata, 2002, as cited in Walton, 2015).

In addition, Taksim Solidarity demanded that urban decisions be made with the participation of city residents and called for the establishment of urban assemblies. Their statements explicitly opposed the authorization of hydroelectric or nuclear projects without public consent, urged the closure of shopping malls, and called for the regulation, or even relocation, of plazas and retail streets that reinforce global capitalism. They also rejected central government interference in local urban policies (Bergen, 2014).

As their demands and declarations reveal, environmental awareness and the critique of capitalism were deeply intertwined. Abstract concepts such as capitalism, global finance, and neoliberalism, often distant and intangible to the ordinary citizen, became concrete and visible in Turkey through the image of the shopping mall (AVM). The proposed construction of a mall in Gezi Park came to symbolize, in the eyes of Istanbul's residents, the direct expropriation of public space by private capital. Yet, Taksim Solidarity extended its struggle beyond the Gezi Park issue, insisting on protecting public access to urban spaces across Turkey. In this sense, the movement cultivated a new public consciousness at the intersection of participatory democracy and urban space, revealing that the city is not only a physical but also a political and ethical site of production, and that design and planning can only gain legitimacy through citizen participation.

Together with students from the Istanbul Technical University Faculty of Architecture*, Taksim Solidarity began organizing collective Sunday breakfasts at the park starting on January 26, 2013. By May, vigils were held every Saturday between 3:00 and 6:00 p.m. (David & Toktamış, 2015). Between late May and June 2013, approximately fifty activists established an encampment in Gezi Park to protest the privatization of the space and the planned cutting of around 600 trees. What began as a typical urban social movement for the defense of public space soon transformed into a nationwide anti-government uprising after police forces violently evicted the group on 27 May.

The resistance spread across 79 of Turkey's 81 provinces, mobilizing between 2.5 and 3 million people (David & Toktamış, 2015). The state's attempt to generate symbolic capital through architectural reconstruction was thus met with unprecedented public resistance (Bilsel, 2017). The Gezi protests exposed the authoritarian character of the ruling AKP government, shattering its global image as a liberal democratic party capable of reconciling Islam and democracy (David & Toktamış, 2015).

Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB): A national professional union organizing engineers and architects, central in public-interest planning, environmental advocacy, and urban rights debates.

Istanbul Technical University Faculty of Architecture: One of Turkey's leading architecture schools, influential in modern architectural education, urban research, and professional discourse.

Milliyet
9 Haziran 2013
Pazar

OPARE'DEN OPERA'YA, KÜLTÜR MERKEZİNDEN AKM'YE UZUN BİR HİKÂYE

İSTANBUL'UN OPERA BİNASIYLA İMTİHANI

Osmanlı *opera kavramıyla Paris elçisi 28 Çelebi Mehmet Efendi sayesinde tanıştı. İstanbul'un büyük bir opera ile tanışması ise 1969'u buldu. AKM ise 2000'li yıllara kadar aktif kullanıldı*

İstanbul'daki opera binalarından Atatürk Kültür Merkezi'nde 505. yıldönümüne yetiştirilmeye çalışılan tamamlanmamış bir Osmanlı operasının hikâyesine dönüldü. 1969'dayıkılan bina 2008'de yeniden açılmıştı.

NEZİH BAŞGELEN

Osmanlı'nın opera kavramıyla tanışmasının Osmanlı'nın Paris'teki 28 Çelebi Mehmet Efendi sayesinde olduğu, Avrupa'da 1750'de Paris'te ilk kez gösterişli operaevi ilgili bilgi veren ilk Osmanlı'nın da bu elçi olduğu, Grand Meaulnes'un operaevi inşa ettiği kahkülü olduğu, Ayrıca Fransız Tiyatrosu olmak üzere iki gösteri mekânı yapılmasına rağmen Osmanlı'nın Paris'teki operaevine hiç gitmediği, Grand Meaulnes'un Paris'teki Opera Binası'nda Fransız Tiyatrosu'nda oyun oynadığı, diğer 2 Osmanlı Park'ta Açıkhava Tiyatrosu olmak üzere iki gösteri mekânı yapılmasına rağmen Osmanlı'nın hiç gitmediği, Grand Meaulnes'un Paris'teki Opera Binası'nda Fransız Tiyatrosu'nda oyun oynadığı, diğer 2 Osmanlı Park'ta Açıkhava Tiyatrosu olmak üzere iki gösteri mekânı yapılmasına rağmen Osmanlı'nın Paris'teki operaevine

Figure 97.
Front page of BirGün dated June 2, 2013, featuring the headline "Put your mall down slowly and run away from here" ("AVM'ni yavaşça yere bırak ve koşarak uzaklaş buradan"), commenting on public resistance during the Gezi Park protests.
Note. BirGün, June 2, 2013. Image retrieved from GasteArşivi.

withdraw from both the park and the square (Sadri, 2017).

The methods of protest were conventional yet highly effective: gathering in major public squares, organizing demonstrations, and constructing barricades to block police access to Taksim Square. During the clashes with the police, shops quickly ran out of gas masks, while pharmacies were depleted of antacid medications used to alleviate the effects of tear gas (Özkaynak, Aydın, Ertör-Akyazı & Ertör, 2015).

During the ten days following the withdrawal of police forces from the park and the square, Taksim transformed into a space where people from different social classes, ethnicities, genders, and sexual identities came together to defend a public space. In contrast to the top-down "restoration" of the Ottoman Barracks, this public space hosted temporary shelters, counter-monuments, and aesthetic performances created by the participants themselves (Bilsel, 2017).

During this period, Gezi Park evolved into a vast communal area filled with tents, featuring a first-aid station, food and medicine supply zones, an open-air library, and a children's area. Everything in this space was provided free of charge, and everyone worked voluntarily. Supplies such as food, medicine, and books were donated by supporters from Istanbul and around the world, coordinated through the internet (Sadri, 2017).

In those days, Gezi Park became a public forum where meetings, yoga sessions, whirling dervish performances, children's workshops, reading corners, and piano recitals intertwined with ongoing police interventions (Sadri, 2017; David & Toktamış, 2015). Taksim Square, likewise, turned into an arena where education, art, and state repression coexisted in a constant dialogue. These forums soon spread to other cities across Turkey, becoming a new form of local resistance focused on issues of urban transformation and democratic participation at the neighborhood scale (David & Toktamış, 2015).

At the same time, the government sought to redefine the "proper use" of a public park. In June, Hüseyin Avni Mutlu* stated to the press: This is not an area for forums, slogans, or occupations. This is not a place for marches; it is a place to rest, to meet, and to have conversations" (Tuysuz & Russell, 9/7/2013). Erdoğan similarly remarked, Gezi Park is a park, not a place to occupy (Altan, 2013). While this communal life was being enacted, young participants shared the protest skills and knowledge they had gained from previous movements. One participant, an LGBTI activist, recalled the use of water mixed with Talcid* (an antacid) as a remedy against tear gas: These people didn't suddenly discover Talcid water. It was something we had already used in previous protests. For the May Day march the year before, we had prepared a five-liter container. Without that prior know-how, it would have been difficult for the group to learn everything from scratch (Gümüş & Yılmaz, 2015).

How did Gezi Park reflect a collective aspiration for a different kind of city? Human geographist Clara Rivas Alonso puts important

Figure 98.
People keeping vigil and sleeping in Gezi Park during the protests
Note. Photograph by Gürcan Öztürk (AFP). Retrieved from Yeşil Gazete.

Figure 99.
Police intervention to the Tent area, Gezi Park
Note. Photograph by Gürcan Öztürk (AFP). Retrieved from Yeşil Gazete.

Figure 100.
Collective dinner at İstiklal Caddesi
Note. Sencer Vardarman Archive.

Figure 101.
The Gezi Library set up by protesters in Gezi Park during the 2013 protests
Note. Sencer Vardarman Archive.

Figure 102.
A first aid center established by volunteer medical teams during the Gezi Park protests
Note. The image documents the organization of grassroots medical support within the occupied park area. Sencer Vardarman Archive.

Figure 103.
People hangout at Gezi Park.
Note. Photograph by Gürcan Öztürk (AFP). Retrieved from Yeşil Gazete.

***Hüseyin Avni Mutlu (born 1956):** The Istanbul Governor during the 2013 Gezi Park protests, known for his controversial handling of public demonstrations.

Figure 104.
Front page of Cumhuriyet dated June 3, 2013, featuring the headline "Everywhere is Taksim" ("Her yer Taksim"), documenting the nationwide spread of protests during the Gezi events.
Note. Cumhuriyet, June 3, 2013. Retrieved from Cumhuriyet Newspaper Archive.

insights related with Gezi Park Protests. It did so by collectively organizing all the services that an autonomous urban zone might provide, from food and medical support to cultural and social activities. Although the use of space remained fluid, certain areas within the park became identified with specific communities. This dynamic spatial negotiation embodied a vision of an alternative city, one where multiple identities and ways of life could coexist, interact, and reimagine urban space together (Alonso, 2015).

The occupation of Gezi Park put the concept of the right to the city into practice: it created a mahalle (neighborhood) character where different identities and social groups intersected, and space itself was constructed through coexistence and plurality. In this sense, the practices of everyday life became the core arena of contemporary political struggle, politics was no longer confined to institutions but was being produced through the spatial experience of living together and sharing space (Alonso, 2015).

When examined in a global context, the Gezi Park protests both resembled and diverged from other new social movements around the world. Globalization has led even acts of resistance to resemble one another, making uprisings part of a global repertoire that can, in a sense, be marketed across borders (Bayhan, 2014).

Social Media and Public Space

Like the Arab Spring* and Occupy movements*, Gezi Park shared key features such as the occupation of public and urban spaces, the heterogeneity of participants, and the central role of social media in organization. Spaces such as Zuccotti Park* in New York, Tahrir Square in Cairo, and the periodically erupting streets of Kiev, Rio de Janeiro, Tel Aviv, Athens, and Sarajevo all point to a similar geography of resistance (Walton, 2015). The 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement*, the London student protests*, the English riots of August 2011, the youth movements in Athens and Madrid, and the Arab Spring uprisings that began in Tunisia and spread to Egypt and Libya, together with the eighteen-day Gezi Park protests that began in Istanbul on May 31, 2013, can all be understood within the framework of "new social movements" (Bayhan, 2014).

***Arab Spring (2010–2012):** A wave of uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa demanding political reform and social justice.

***Occupy movements:** A global protest wave beginning in 2011, emphasizing economic inequality, public space, and horizontal democratic practices.

***Zuccotti Park:** The New York site of the 2011 Occupy Wall Street movement, symbolizing the global diffusion of protest in urban spaces.

***Tahrir Square:** The central square in Cairo associated with the 2011 Egyptian Revolution and mass pro-democracy mobilization.

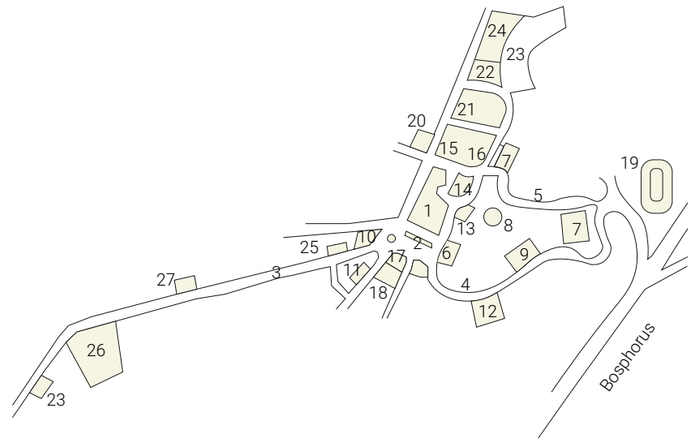


Figure 105.
Map of the area in Beyoğlu occupied by protesters ("Gezi Empire")
Note. Image courtesy of Oscar ten Houten, #OccupyGezi Digital Edition v1.130725. Adapted from Alonso (2015), Everywhere Taksim.

1) Gezi Park
2) Taksim Square
3) Istiklal Street
4) Barricade Road (1)
5) Barricade Road (2)
6) Atatürk Cultural Centre
7) Technical University
8) Atatürk Library
9) Military Hospital
10) Taksim Mosque
11) Trinity Church
12) German Embassy
13) Gezi Hotel
14) Intercontinental Hotel
15) Divan Hotel
16) Hyatt Hotel
17) Taksim Hill Hotel
18) Marmara Hotel
19) Beşiktaş Stadium
20) Armenian Hospital
21) Italian Embassy
22) Hilton Hotel
23) St. Anthony's Church
24) Convention Centre
25) French Embassy
26) Galatasaray High School
27) Hüseyin Ağa Mosque

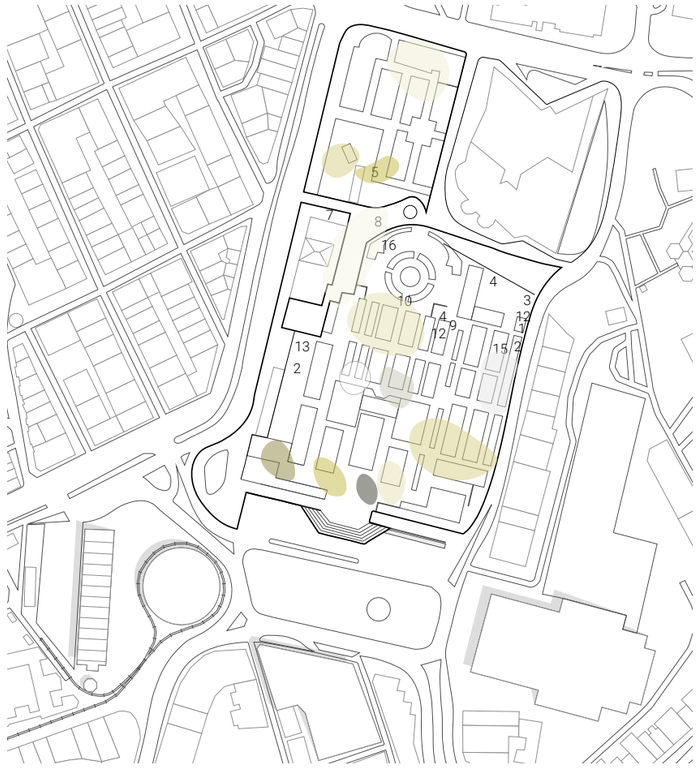


Figure 106.
Functional map of the occupation of Gezi Park ("Gezi Republic")
Note. Image courtesy of Oscar ten Houten, #OccupyGezi Digital Edition v1.130725. Adapted from Alonso (2015), Everywhere Taksim.

During Gezi, the police used excessive amounts of tear gas and pepper spray, heightening public outrage and anxiety. The scenes closely echoed the Occupy and Arab Spring movements, where social media had been used as a critical tool of resistance. Activists in Taksim adopted similar tactics, on June 1, 2013 alone, over two million tweets were posted, forming a digital network of solidarity (Barbera & Metzger, 2013, as cited in Gül, Dee & Cünük, 2014).

On May 31, 2013, when the police intervened in Gezi Park, approximately 3,000 tweets were posted every minute. Eighty-eight percent of these tweets were in Turkish, and half originated from Istanbul. Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook enabled instant mobilization and coordination of crowds. Moreover, social media played a vital role in showcasing the alternative, peaceful urban culture experienced in Gezi Park and in sharing this atmosphere with the world (Bayhan, 2014). Through these online exchanges, protestors informed one another about police locations, meeting points, and makeshift infirmaries, transforming digital communication into an indispensable element of urban resistance (Gül et al., 2014, p. 69).

When a new mass movement emerges, casual observers often turn to the role of new media technologies in reshaping collective protest. Some commentators enthusiastically highlight their liberating potential, their capacity to broaden participation, facilitate rapid mobilization, and enable new forms of organization. Others adopt a more skeptical stance, reminding us of the enduring significance of deeply sedimented histories and the politics of place. From this perspective, digital platforms do not simply enhance protest; they also generate mechanisms that question how individuals or communities are represented, and how physical and digital relations are negotiated. These debates have even prompted a broader discussion about whether digital platforms might, in certain contexts, come to substitute for public space. Jeffrey S. Juris (2012) argues that the Occupy movement generated a "dual-layered public sphere" by mobilizing both physical space and social media simultaneously. Social media enabled rapid coordination, real-time information flows, and the production of symbolic frames, whereas the physical occupation of public squares constituted the material grounding of an alternative public sphere. While spatial occupation relied on the embodied and collective experience of resistance, digital platforms facilitated horizontal organization, diffusion, and the formation of collective identities. Juris conceptualizes this interplay through the "logic of aggregation": social media brings individuals together quickly and at scale, yet political transformation requires their physical co-presence. In this view, digital platforms do not replace public space but rather augment it; digital coordination and physical occupation together produce a new spatiality of protest. The Occupy case thus illustrates a "square + social media" model that strongly resonates with movements such as Gezi.

José van Dijck and Thomas Poell (2015) argue that social media platforms are transforming public communication in ways that fundamentally reshape both local and global public spheres. Their notion of a "platform society" highlights how the boundaries between public and private are redrawn through the commercial logics embedded in platform infrastructures. Social media becomes deeply integrated into core public functions, protest, news production, civic participation, but this integration is never neutral. Platforms govern key parameters of public communication such as visibility, reach, ranking, and relationality. In doing so, they constitute the new infrastructural backbone of the public sphere, one that is driven not by democratic principles but by algorithmic and market-oriented imperatives.

Building on this critique, Mark Carrigan and Lambros Fatsis (2021) conceptualize how digital platforms restructure the very conditions of being "public," giving rise to platform-mediated publicness. Public space is no longer exclusively tied to physical environments but is increasingly shaped by socio-technical architectures in which algorithms, data flows, velocity, and real-time engagement mediate visibility and participation. They argue that this new public sphere is simultaneously

Figure 107.
Front page of Radikal dated June 9, 2013, featuring the headline "No mall and no residence, maybe a museum" ("AVM ve rezidans yok, müze belki"), reporting on shifting redevelopment proposals during the Gezi Park protests.
Note. Radikal, June 9, 2013. GasteArşivi.

enabling and constraining: while social media expands opportunities for civic expression and connectivity, it also narrows publicness through mechanisms associated with the attention economy, surveillance, and platform capitalism.

Carrigan and Fatsis thus shift debates on the public sphere from a spatial paradigm to a platform-centric one. Digital platforms, they contend, do not merely host publics; they actively shape public behavior. The production of publicness now emerges from the tension between front-end experiences of visibility and participation, and the back-end architectures, opaque algorithmic and infrastructural forces, that condition and guide these experiences.

These debates resonate strongly with the work of philosopher and critical theorist Judith Butler, whose theorization of public assembly conceptualizes the street as a site where bodies publicly assert political claims. Butler (2011) emphasizes that public spaces are not merely pre-given containers; they are continuously produced and contested through collective "in alliance" enact political claims by occupying and reconfiguring the material environment, while digital media extend the scene of protest beyond its local instantiation, rendering the street both a physical and a mediatized domain. As Butler notes, "the scene" of protest exists simultaneously here (in the square) and elsewhere (through its global circulation), as digital devices transmit embodied action across spatial scales. In this sense, the appearance of bodies in public, together with the images, videos and messages they generate, constitutes a dual performance of political visibility. The occupation of Taksim Square and Gezi Park created an embodied space of appearance, while the circulation of images, hashtags and livestreams generated a platform-based counter-public that challenged state narratives and extended the protest's reach. Understanding Taksim therefore requires an analytical approach that attends simultaneously to its material urban geometry and its digital representations, both of which shaped the square's political meaning during and after the events of 2013.

Art and Aesthetic Politics

As Jeremy F. Walton (2015) also notes, the carnival "is not a spectacle observed by the audience; it is lived in, and everyone participates because the idea of the carnival inherently embraces all people." The carnivalesque thus blurs the boundaries between observer and participant, shaping a social aesthetic that resists hierarchical and goal-oriented politics.

Within this atmosphere, political art emerged, drawing its strength from the creative humor circulating across social media, and expressing itself most vividly through the language of graffiti. Graffiti, especially humorous ones, played a crucial role. Numerous graffiti pieces appeared (and were soon erased) in and around Gezi Park during the protests (Yanık, 2015).

One of the most iconic symbols of the resistance was the penguin figure, frequently depicted in wall drawings, an ironic reference to the penguin documentary aired on CNN Türk during the height of police violence. ***The Standing Man*** (***duran adam***), who stood silently and motionless for eight hours, became one of the heroes of Gezi, alongside figures such as the ***Talcid Man*** (the protester using antacid against tear gas) and the Woman in Red (the woman sprayed in the face with pepper gas in the early days). These figures were transformed into collective symbols through widely shared graphics on Facebook. The performance,

***The Standing Man (Duran Adam):** A silent standing protest initiated during the Gezi Park events, becoming a symbolic form of non-violent resistance.

***Talcid Man:** A protester associated with Gezi Park demonstrations, known for distributing antacid (Talcid) to counter tear-gas effects.

Figure 108.
Protesters painting the stairs in rainbow colors as an urban intervention during the protests
Note. The act functioned as a form of resistance integrated into the urban fabric. Sencer Vardarman Archive.

Figure 109.
Rainbow colors Note. Sencer Vardarman Archive.

Mahkemede cinayet karakolda ihmal

Radikal

Kışla inadı

Başbakan Erdoğan, Topçu Kışlası'ndan vazgeçmiyor. Tunus'ta bulunan Erdoğan, "Muhteşem bir eseri tekrar yapıyoruz" diye konuştu. Arınç'ın istir açıklaması için de "Gazla alakalı ürünümüzü dile getirdik" dedi. §12

Günay: Artık Gezi Parkı yıkılamaz

Park şenliden müzelik!

RADİKAL KİTAP GÜNÜ BUGÜN VE HER CUMA

Figure 110.
Front page of Radikal dated June 7, 2013, featuring the headline "The insistence on the barracks" ("Kışla inadı"), discussing government insistence on rebuilding the Ottoman Artillery Barracks in Taksim.
Note. Radikal, June 7, 2013. GasteArşivi.

initiated by choreographer Erdem Gündüz, introduced a new form of resistance, one that relied solely on the act of standing still. In the calmer days that followed, protesters painted public staircases in the colors of the rainbow, inscribing their resistance into the city's very fabric (Baykal & Ergin, 2013).

Art, while making social divisions visible, simultaneously creates a sense of universal unity through scenes that penetrate the depths of collective consciousness. The visual and spatial traces of this collective form of art continue to live on in the city's memory (Baykal & Ergin, 2013).

Figure 111.
Protesters filling Taksim Square during the Gezi Park movement, with the façade of the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) covered in banners and flags
Note. The image documents the symbolic appropriation of the AKM façade during the protests.
Halk TV, February 18, 2020.

The AKM as a Cultural and Political Symbol

During the Gezi Resistance, the façade of the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) became the "collective face" of the movement, much like the iconic images of May Day celebrations from previous decades. The building transformed into both a symbolic platform covered with protest banners and an operational base for police interventions. Although the demolition of the AKM had been on the agenda since 2007, the building had long remained abandoned and emptied; during this period, legal battles over its demolition continued, while the government's stated justifications shifted repeatedly (Bilsel, 2017). After the protests ended, authorities removed the banners hung by demonstrators and replaced them with Turkish flags.

One of the most powerful symbols of the Gezi Resistance was the Standing Man protest. On June 18, 2013, a young man staged a silent performance in Taksim Square, standing motionless for eight hours facing the AKM. The act quickly gained wide public attention, transforming into a symbol of peaceful resistance and inspiring similar performances across Turkey, particularly in front of Atatürk monuments in various cities (Topal, 2016).

Figure 112.
The "Standing Man" protester silently demonstrating in front of the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) during the Gezi Park movement

Figure 113.
Counter-performance titled "Duran Adam'a Karşı Duran Adam," staged in front of the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM)
Note. "Duran Adam'a Karşı Duran Adam" translates as "The Man Standing Against the Standing Man." The participants wore T-shirts bearing this slogan and stood motionless with their backs turned to the AKM, expressing opposition to the "Standing Man." The performance reflects ideological tensions between conservative and secular groups in Turkey.
CNN Türk, June 19, 2013.

Environmental Activism and Urban Justice

During the decade of the Justice and Development Party's (AKP) rule, then-Prime Minister Erdoğan proudly declared:

> We have planted nearly 2.5 billion [more likely 2.5 million] trees across Turkey. The ruling party is doing its job well and swiftly. If people are interested in planting trees, there will be no problem. We assign them places, 'Here is a 500,000 square-meter plot. Come here and plant your tree! For free!' Why? Because we are environmentalists (Erdoğan, 2013).

In the 2012 Environmental Performance Index, Turkey ranked 109th overall and fell to 121st in biodiversity and habitat conservation (Özkaynak, Aydın, Ertör-Akyazı & Ertör, 2015). Environmental protection cannot be reduced to planting trees; it requires comprehensive policies addressing biodiversity, climate change, renewable energy, and sustainable water management. Yet over the past decade, Turkey has made progress only in reducing air pollution and managing fish stocks. This failure stems from a state ideology that equates economic growth with progress, ignores ecological limits, and confines environmentalism to symbolic acts (Özkaynak et al., 2015).

In Istanbul, the increasing commodification of urban space has transformed the city into a focal point of social and economic conflict. The closure of urban commons became most visible in the case of Gezi Park. The public consensus was clear: citizens of Istanbul did not need another shopping mall or luxury hotel, they needed a green public space where everyone could coexist without social exclusion (Azem, 2011, as cited in Özkaynak et al., 2015). Gezi Park symbolized not only a cluster of trees but also the political and social memory of the city. Second, they demanded recognition for their diverse ways of experiencing urban life and expectations from the city. The government, however, imposed its redevelopment plan for Taksim Square and Gezi Park, both widely perceived as public spaces, without any form of public consultation or transparency. The issue was not merely the lack of participation, but the deliberate exclusion of citizens from decision-making processes (Özkaynak et al., 2015)

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Denied participation rights and deprived of their entitlement to a clean environment, livelihood, and cultural integrity, communities have long resisted construction and energy companies, and often the police. Villagers and urban residents alike guarded their lands day and night, set up tents, and lay down in front of bulldozers in acts of passive resistance (Erensü, 2013, as citen in Özkaynak et al., 2015). The link between these localized environmental struggles and the Gezi Resistance became more visible when groups such as *Karadeniz İsyandadır** (The Black Sea is in revolt), *Kent Hareketleri** *(Urban M*ovements), *3. Köprü Yerine Yaşam Platformu** (Life Platform Instead of 3. Bridge), and *İstanbul Barınma Hakkı Meclisi** (Istanbul Right to Shelter Assembly) publicly supported the protests, either through direct participation in the park or parallel demonstrations (Özkaynak et al., 2015).

The Gezi spirit entered history as a defining moment in Turkey's urban and environmental politics, a protest whose influence endures. Gezi was not only a defense of a park, but a radical redefinition of public

Kent Hareketleri (Urban Movements): A civic platform advocating for participatory planning, environmental rights, and urban commons in Istanbul.

Karadeniz İsyandadır: A grassroots environmental movement opposing destructive infrastructure and mining projects in Turkey's Black Sea region.

3. Köprü Yerine Yaşam Platformu: A civic initiative formed to protest the construction of the 3rd Bosphorus Bridge and its ecological and social impacts.

space itself, a metaphor and source of inspiration for other protests worldwide and popularizing the notion of the commons in an unprecedented way. It also marked a turning point in ecological thought: the resistance revealed that environmental problems are not merely technical or local but deeply political, rooted in the entanglement of power, capital, and nature. This awareness empowered local environmental movements to critically question the social and ecological costs of Turkey's growth-oriented development model.

Perhaps most importantly, Gezi became a space where diverse social movements coexisted for the first time, environmentalists, feminists, LGBTQ+ activists, workers, artists, and students stood together in solidarity. This encounter illustrated how collective resistance could generate a shared political language and reminded society that democracy extends far beyond the ballot box, it is lived and enacted in the struggle for public space.

In the aftermath of Gezi, a new page opened in Turkey's collective imagination: a belief in the possibility of a more just and sustainable life built on coexistence and diversity. But one question remains: Can this experience inspire a renewed unity among Turkey's social movements, a transformative collective force capable of change? Perhaps there is no definitive answer, yet the traces of that possibility, as this thesis suggests, are to be sought in the next and final chapter.

Gezi Park remained under occupation until June 15, 2013, when it was violently evacuated by the police. Following the protests, the park was kept closed for some time but was eventually reopened to the public on August 8, 2013 (Gül, Dee & Cünük, 2014). Despite being repeatedly shut down by the authorities at the slightest rumor of a gathering or demonstration, it has continued to exist as a public park.

The Taksim Pedestrianization Project and the reconstruction of the Artillery Barracks were both annulled by the Council of State in May 2014. However, the tunnels constructed beneath the square as part of the pedestrianization scheme were completed and remain in use to this day (Karasulu, 2015).

The Gezi Park protests also marked a turning point in Turkey-EU relations. The more Turkey drifted away from democratic norms after Gezi, the more the European Union increased its emphasis on fundamental freedoms and the rule of law. Consequently, issues such as civil liberties and political rights, particularly the freedom of assembly, as illustrated by Gezi, became central to Turkey's EU accession process (Saatçioğlu, 2015).

Gezi and Contestation

David Harvey argues that in an era when the state has become a mechanism that primarily protects the interests of the minority, the streets have turned into the new battlegrounds for democratic rights. He states that "capitalism needs urbanization to absorb the surplus products it perpetually produces" (Harvey, 2012, p. 5). One of the most striking examples of Harvey's analysis of advanced urban capitalism is Istanbul. Particularly under the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), neoliberal hegemony has been constructed directly through the use of space. This process has simultaneously reinforced the expansion of a government-aligned construction sector (Alonso, 2015).

Historian William H. Sewell (2001, p. 55) defines the role of space in social movements through the concept of spatial agency, referring to the ways in which spatial constraints can be turned into political advantages and how struggles can transform the meanings and strategic uses of space. Space, in this sense, is also an object and a matrix of power, constantly mapped, monitored, and controlled by the administrative apparatuses of the state (Sewell,2001, pp. 54-71). From this perspective, the centrality of Gezi Park and particularly Taksim Square in the Gezi resistance can be understood through this spatial logic. Moreover, these protests can also be interpreted as a collective reaction to the gentrification of Tarlabaşı and İstiklal Street, the pedestrianization of Taksim Square, and the reconstruction of the Artillery Barracks as a shopping mall, processes that sought to reshape the area into a purified commercial and residential zone (Alonso, 2015).

Figure 114.
Police intervention around the Republic Monument in Taksim Square during the Gezi Park protests Note. Photograph by Osman Orsal. Sencer Vardarman Archive.

Today, many neighbourhoods have been emptied and reconstructed to be branded for middle- and upper-class capital investment. The logic of the gated community has created a fabricated fear of the outside world, while the continuous proliferation of shopping malls caters to and reinforces a consumerist lifestyle (Alonso, 2015). In this way, the city, particularly Istanbul, has been branded as a site of investment and opportunity. Consequently, popular neighborhoods located in profitable areas are being demolished both physically and socially. Those unable to afford rising living costs are rendered invisible and displaced elsewhere. This brings forth a fundamental question: Who is the city for? The institutional approach adopted by the AKP in shaping Istanbul serves the interests of an already privileged minority. Given that the system is ecologically, socially, and economically unsustainable, there is only so much social fragmentation a government can pursue without provoking urban resistance, particularly when its hegemonic structure depends on, and reinforces, historical constructions of identity (Alonso, 2015). So, what happens when cities are shaped through exclusionary policies? Various stories of urban struggle, emerging from neighborhood associations, civil society organizations, academics, and citizens, have helped establish strong networks of solidarity. The “right to the city” discourse has contributed to redefining urban citizenship and solidarity by transcending the boundaries set by the intersection of neoliberal agendas and identity politics. Urban citizenship, in this sense, has come to be understood as an open identity grounded in solidarity and the idea of public spaces as arenas of possibility (Alonso, 2015)

2025 TAKSIM

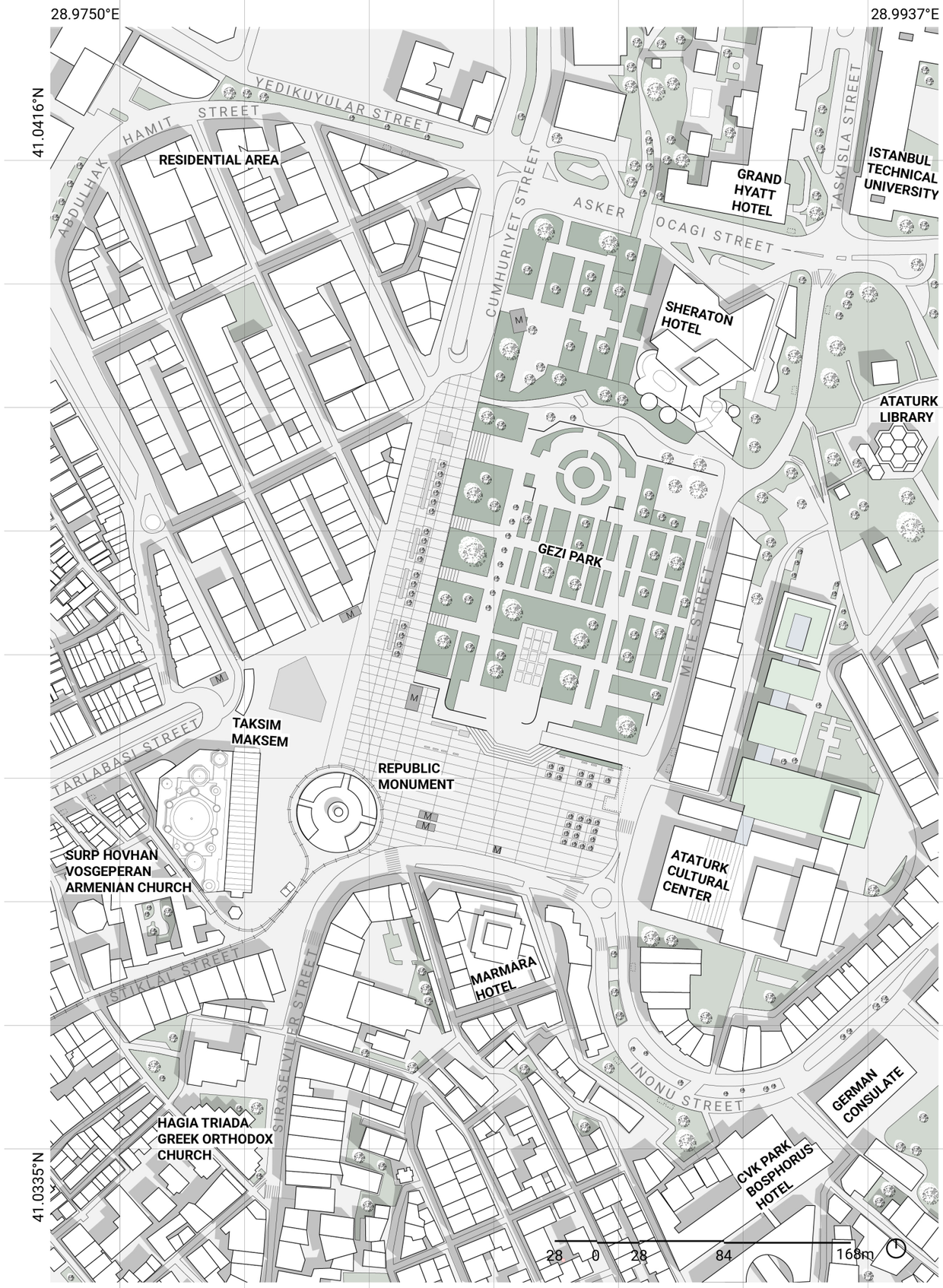
This map is produced through the superimposition of two contemporary sources representing the current spatial configuration of Taksim Square following its comprehensive urban transformation.

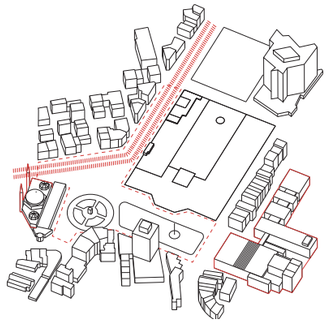
The first source is a *2025 Google Earth satellite image,* providing an up-to-date aerial record of the square's physical layout.

The second source is *OpenStreetMap (OSM) vector data,* processed in QGIS to extract and verify street networks, building footprints, and land use boundaries.

The superimposition of these two sources was adapted by the author to produce an accurate representation of the square's present-day built environment. This reconstructed plan documents the cumulative effects of the Taksim Pedestrianization Project, including the redesigned pedestrian surface, the construction of the new Taksim Mosque, and the addition of the Atatürk Cultural Centre (AKM) in its rebuilt form. Read alongside the 2013 map, it allows for a direct comparative analysis of the square's spatial transformation.

- Glass Roof
- Green Roof
- Greenery in Gezi Parkk
- Green Areas
- T Tram station
- Pedestrian way
- M Metro entrance
- Bus station
- Walls
- Buildings
- Parcels
- Street Furniture
- Tree





2013 - present: Aftermath of Gezi Protests

Post-Gezi Transformations and Sociopolitical Ramifications

Gezi Protests were followed by a series of significant social and political transformations across the country. Many of these developments were tied to contentious and polarized elections (for instance, the local elections of 2014 and 2019, and the general elections of 2015 and 2018) and further encompassed: the arrival of millions of refugees from Syria's civil war; the collapse of the peace process with Kurdish guerrilla forces; the 2016 coup attempt; the rise of terrorist attacks both globally and in Turkey; and the intensification of political authoritarianism in the country (Uluğ et al., 2022). Yet the Gezi Protests were not solely a moment of political rupture; they also marked a threshold that deeply reshaped Turkey's cultural production. As debates on democracy, freedom of expression, and the nature of public space expanded in the aftermath of the uprising, this new political atmosphere found a powerful resonance in art, music, and literature.

This influence became particularly visible in the 13th Istanbul Biennial*, titled *"Mom, Am I Barbarian?"*, which had been scheduled for November-December 2013. The biennial's curator, Fulya Erdemci, sought to open a discussion on urban transformation, public space, democracy, and freedom of expression in Istanbul, and aimed to distribute the exhibitions across five major sites of gentrification: Gezi Park, Taksim Square, Tarlabaşı*, Karaköy*, and Sulukule*. However, the Gezi uprising, erupting merely three months before the opening of the biennial and rapidly spreading nationwide, rendered all the themes the biennial intended to address radically visible on the ground. The question of what position the biennial should adopt amid such a political crisis became unavoidable. Under these circumstances, Erdemci proposed withdrawing the biennial from public spaces in and around Beyoğlu, Tophane*, and Unkapanı* and relocating it to enclosed venues (Smith, 2013).

Erdemci justified this withdrawal as a deliberate strategy of protest, arguing that obtaining municipal permits would now amount to "recognizing and cooperating with an authority that suppresses freedom of expression" (Smith, 2013). Although this decision may be deemed legitimate on principled grounds, it was also interpreted by some as a form of "retreating from public space." For this reason, the question of how fully the biennial could be felt within the very public spaces it sought to animate remains unresolved today.

The waning of the protest movement after 2013, coupled with increasing pressure on all forms of opposition to the Erdoğan government, generated profound disappointment among activists. Heightened police measures around Taksim likewise began with the Gezi Protests. In the aftermath of these events, the government implemented a series of authoritarian practices.

First, as part of the Taksim Pedestrianization Project, all vehicular traffic was moved underground, transforming the square into a vast concrete expanse devoid of greenery or any distinct identity (Öncel, 2023). In 2014, the municipality undertook a second project to complete pedestrian areas created by the infrastructural alterations. This 2014 project was executed through an invited design tender organized by the municipality. According to the project, trees would be planted across various parts of the square, and ornamental pools and seating areas would be installed (Milliyet, 2014). The project, once again implemented without consulting any stakeholders, prompted criticism from architects and urban planners.

Figure 115.
Taksim Square after the pedestrianization project Note. The image shows the extensive concrete surface and the transformation of the square following the removal of vehicular traffic. From Bayhan, B. (n.d.), İktidarın korkusu: Toplumsal aktörlerin kent meydanları üzerinden siyaset alanını genişletmeleri. Arkitera / Politeknik.

***Istanbul Biennial (since 1987):** An international contemporary art exhibition held biennially in Istanbul, shaping the city's global cultural presence and engaging with critical social, political, and spatial themes.

***Tarlabaşı:** A historic inner-city neighborhood near Taksim, known for its multicultural past and later for large-scale urban renewal projects that transformed its social and

***Karaköy:** A historic port district on the Golden Horn, shaped by trade, multicultural communities, and contemporary art

***Sulukule:** One of the oldest Romani neighborhoods in Istanbul, demolished in the 2000s as part of controversial urban renewal

***Tophane:** A waterfront district historically associated with Ottoman military industry, later becoming a mixed residential and cultural

***Unkapanı:** A Golden Horn district known for its historical grain market and, later, its role as a center of music production.

**Mücella Yapıcı (born 1951):* A prominent architect and activist, known for her role in professional chambers and for her involvement in the Gezi Park movement.

Architect Mücella Yapıcı* stated that the project had again been prepared "behind closed doors," and that the "square" character of Taksim was being deliberately eroded. Yapıcı emphasized that "These trees would inhibit collective use of the square; therefore, the project aims to alter the square's function" (Politeknik, 2014). The project was partially realized until 2019, after which it was halted (Acar, Demet, & Kaynar, 2023). Fortunately, Gezi Park was preserved thanks to the strong public reaction in 2013.

Following the Gezi Park protests, various commemorations, events, demonstrations, and protest activities held in Taksim were systematically banned. In the early 2000s, Taksim Square functioned as a public space where numerous political groups expressed themselves. In 2003, the first Feminist Night March was organized in Taksim (Osmanağaoğlu, 2022), resembling international examples such as Take Back the Night and Reclaim the Night. That same year, the LGBTİ+ Pride March, held in June, Pride month, also took place here for the first time; participants gathered in Taksim Square and marched along İstiklal Avenue (Aramızda, 2021). However, with the acceleration of democratic backsliding in Turkey, these celebrations were gradually prohibited: the May Day celebrations were banned in 2013, and the Pride March in 2016 (Uluğ et al., 2022).

On July 15, 2016, a military coup attempt aimed at overthrowing the government took place, and it was suppressed the following morning. On July 24, 2016, the Republican People's Party organized a rally in Taksim Square under the title "Republic and Democracy Rally" (Kodan, 2016). This mobilization is not interpreted as a protest in the classical sense but rather as a state-backed counter-mobilization organized through the government's explicit call. Following the cancellation of the May Day celebrations in 2016 and the 2016 Pride March, the fact that the main opposition party was granted permission to hold a rally in Taksim, and that people from different constituencies participated, albeit in limited numbers, can be considered one of the early repercussions of the July 15 coup attempt.

Figure 116.
The "Cumhuriyet ve Demokrasi Mitingi" held by the Republican People's Party (CHP) in Taksim Square, July 24, 2016
Note. "Cumhuriyet ve Demokrasi Mitingi" translates as "Republic and Democracy Rally." From Kodan (2016), Gazete Kadıköy.

All forms of opposition protest came to be perceived as threats to the government (Uluğ et al., 2022). By 2019, the Feminist Night March was added to the list of events banned from taking place in Taksim. Yet over the past decade, the police have normalized the use of disproportionate force against protesters. Social media users also faced the consequences of increasing authoritarianism (Uluğ et al., 2022); every year, thousands of individuals were detained and prosecuted for their posts on social media (Human Rights Watch, 2023).

These developments revealed the deep fragility of social media usage: the ease with which activists could now be tracked through digital traces demonstrated how rapidly the visibility afforded by social media could transform into a space of surveillance, and how precarious that visibility was under constant state scrutiny.

The rapid spatial interventions in Taksim following the Gezi Park protests and the July 15 coup attempt clearly reflected the government's determination to consolidate a display of power in public space. During this period, the square became not only a site where security policies were intensified but also a stage upon which the ruling power materialized its new ideological vision. In this context, the foundation of the Taksim Mosque was laid in February 2017 (Basın İlan Kurumu, 2023); and in October of the same year, following the demolition of the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM), the architectural project for the new AKM, prepared by Tabanlıoğlu Architects, was introduced to the public (Hasol, 2021). These two interventions constituted pivotal moments in the reshaping of Taksim's modernist and secular memory, and in the redefinition of the square's political significance.

Figure 117.
Front page of Milli Gazete dated June 16, 2013, featuring the headline "This Taksim wants a mosque" ("Bu Taksim cami istiyor"), reflecting public statements supporting the construction of a mosque in Taksim.
Note. Milli Gazete, June 16, 2013. Retrieved from GasteArşivi.

Çamlıca Hill: A major hill on the Asian side of Istanbul, noted for its panoramic views and symbolic role in urban and religious landscape debates.

Completion of the Taksim Mosque Project

Throughout this study, Taksim Mosque has been examined along two principal axes. The first concerns the positioning of the "public" as a social actor independent of the state. Supporters of the mosque project argue that the government undertook this construction solely to meet the natural and inevitable needs of society. Critics, by contrast, contend that the project represents an attempt not to respond to civil society's needs but to construct a new form of 'public' through investment, education, and urban-transformation instruments controlled by the government. The second axis relates to debates on visibility and spatial representation. Although supporters and opponents differ in their interpretations of the public-state relationship, they converge on the understanding that urban landscapes possess the power to carry and transmit ideological meanings. Within this framework, Taksim Mosque should not be viewed merely as a place of worship but also as a component of the spectacular urbanism practices that have increasingly characterized contemporary Turkey (Koch, 2018; Batuman, 2018). Indeed, monumental projects such as the vast mosque on Çamlıca Hill*, the Presidential Complex in Ankara, the third Bosphorus bridge, and the new Istanbul Airport constitute outputs of a similar ideological-spatial production logic.

Accordingly, Taksim Mosque must be understood not as an isolated case, but as part of the broader wave of large-scale and ideologically charged mosque constructions produced in Turkey in recent years. The country's largest mosque, Çamlıca Mosque, was announced in May 2012, on the 559th anniversary of the Conquest of Istanbul, by President Erdoğan, and completed in 2019. Introduced by Erdoğan with the emphasis that it would be "visible from all parts of the city," the project carries a strong symbolic weight due to its commanding presence over the Bosphorus skyline. Its location in the district where Erdoğan resides further imbued the project with an additional layer of political meaning (Uzer, 2024; Batuman, 2016).

In the brief of the architectural competition organized for the project, designs that would reflect the Ottoman-Turkish architectural style and connect tradition with the future were explicitly demanded. The competition was boycotted by the Chamber of Architects and many professionals; both the legitimacy of constructing a mosque of such scale and visibility, and the credibility of the competition itself, were called into question. Indeed, the results proved contentious: no first prize was awarded, and two second-place proposals, one an Ottoman replica and the other a modernist interpretation, stood out despite being entirely different from one another. Erdoğan ultimately selected the Ottoman-replica proposal, thereby directly determining the project (Batuman, 2016).

The distinction between modern and traditional mosque typologies was discussed earlier in relation

Figure 118.
View of the Çamlıca Mosque in Istanbul
Note. From Asiyan Sanat.

Figure 119.
Perspective view illustrating the spatial relationship between the Taksim Mosque and the Republic Monument in Taksim Square
Note. July 29, 2021. DW.

Figure 120.
Front page of Yeni Akit dated May 29, 2021, covering the opening of the Taksim Mosque with the headline "A salute to Hagia Sophia, a gift to the conquest" ("Ayasofya'ya selam fethe armağan"). Note. Yeni Akit, May 29, 2021. Image retrieved from the Yeni Akit Newspaper Archive.

to Kocatepe Mosque. While Kocatepe Mosque (1987) may be regarded primarily as a functional place of worship, Çamlıca Mosque, due to its scale, location, and high visibility, clearly bears the character of an ideological religious structure. Evoking the monumental mosques of Ottoman sultans, this typology aligns with broader strategies during the Erdoğan era aimed at strengthening Islamic visibility in public space. The reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque in 2020, the encouragement of mosque construction on university campuses, and similar interventions constitute further examples of policies geared toward the Islamization of public space (Uzer, 2024).

In this contentious atmosphere, architect Ahmet Vefik Alp, who was associated with the Nationalist Movement Party, developed an alternative mosque proposal for Taksim. Criticizing approaches that reproduced "fake copies" of traditional Ottoman mosques, Alp argued that if the building were designed through an avant-garde interpretation, secular opposition to the construction of a mosque in Taksim could be softened. His project was described as a "meaningful rupture" that sought to preserve the symbolic values of Ottoman-era mosques while also offering an original contribution to modern mosque architecture (Batuman, 2016).

The project proposed a programmatic interfaith coexistence by incorporating worship spaces for Christians and Jews as well as a library. In Alp's carefully

Figure 121.
Photograph showing the construction of the Taksim Mosque, taken during the period when the AKM building had been demolished and the new structure was beginning to rise.
Note. Retrieved from Yeni Şafak

prepared sectional drawings, the proposed mosque was presented in a visual and symbolic dialogue with both the Aya Triada Church and the Republic Monument. In the proposal, the worship space was designed as a self-supporting spherical glass dome, enveloped by an irregular structure rising behind the historic Maksem building. This sphere was placed on a platform supported by Y-shaped structural elements reminiscent of figures raising their arms toward the sky. Seen from above, the entire composition was arranged to reveal the crescent and star form of the Turkish flag. According to the designer, the sphere reflected the sun during the day and the moon at night, thereby granting the space a symbolic sense of cyclicality (Batuman, 2016).

The single minaret was completed not with a traditional conical form but with a group of crescents that evoked the Ottoman military banner tradition and, at the same time, appeared within the symbolic repertoire of the Nationalist Movement Party. The three-storey Museum of Religions was to be located in the basement, with each floor dedicated respectively to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; this vertical "ascent" created a symbolic hierarchy by positioning Islam above the other religions. Alp's proposal aimed to move beyond both the political contention surrounding the construction of a mosque in Taksim and the professional debates regarding how a mosque should be designed. Rejecting classical Ottoman replicas, Alp argued for a post-modern reinterpretation rather than imitation and for replacing traditional iconography with a higher symbolic meta-narrative (Batuman, 2016).

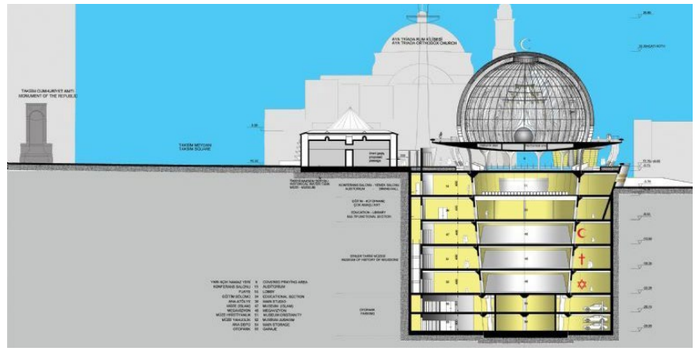
Nonetheless, the project was rejected by Erdoğan on the grounds that it was "too modern." Approximately one year later, in April 2013, Alp stated that revisions were being undertaken in line with suggestions conveyed indirectly by the Prime Ministry. In the revised project published in September, the most visible modification was the removal of the multiple crescents from the minaret; a new and simplified proposal was presented to the public (Batuman, 2016). This example clearly demonstrates that mosque-building politics in Turkey have been strongly embraced not only by Islamist groups but also by

conservative nationalists and traditionalists. Accordingly, Taksim Mosque stands out, both spatially and ideologically, as a crystallization of the shared orientations within the contemporary right-wing political bloc in Turkey. Alp's design can, of course, be debated in architectural terms, functionality, technical infrastructure, formal coherence, and whether it is genuinely strong is a separate matter. However, his explicit rejection of producing a direct replica is crucial. Another key point highlighted by this example is the prime minister's personal involvement in mosque architecture. There is an unusual situation in which political authority appears to determine stylistic preferences almost as if choosing an aesthetic template. Tensions between modernist and neo-classical mosque architecture must be analyzed not only through the lens of ideological gatekeepers and politicians but also through the aesthetic and innovative concerns of architects, urbanists, and citizens.

These reservations toward modernism ultimately resulted in the selection of a new Ottoman-inspired mosque design for Taksim Square, an outcome that openly reveals the desire to construct a symbolic bridge to a nostalgic past evoking historical grandeur. After the 2016 coup attempt, new proposals for Taksim Mosque emerged, incorporating expanded programs such as conference and exhibition halls, as well as larger parking areas. Finally, on January 19, 2017, Istanbul's heritage conservation committee approved the expanded project, and construction began immediately on February 17, 2017. The mosque was inaugurated by President Erdoğan in May 2021, drawing a large crowd for the first prayer despite Covid-19 restrictions (TRT, 2021). Thus, this construction process, representing the final stage of a long-standing debate, has profoundly transformed the spatial character of the square.

Rising rapidly on the western side of the square, the new mosque was constructed on three parcels located directly behind the Taksim Maksem. The structure constitutes a pronounced vertical intervention in Taksim's urban landscape not only due to its location but also

Figure 122.
Exterior renders of Ahmet Vefik Alp's proposed design for the "Taksim Cumhuriyet Camii ve Dinler Müzesi," highlighting the spatial relationship between the Republic Monument and the Aya Triada Church Note. Retrieved from https://www.idesignawards.com/winners/zoom.php?eid=9-6140-13



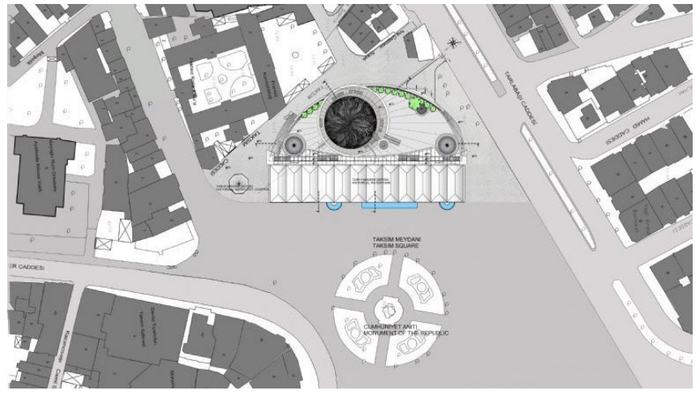


Figure 123.
Drawings of Ahmet Vefik Alp's proposed design for the "Taksim Cumhuriyet Camii ve Dinler Müzesi," highlighting the spatial relationship between the Republic Monument and the Aya Triada Church Note. Retrieved from https://www.idesignawards.com/winners/zoom.php?eid=9-6140-13

because of its scale and mass (Hammond, 2019). With its substantial volume, the mosque visually overpowers the Republic Monument and radically alters the perceptual unity of the square. Although it was evident that the new mosque would introduce a strong vertical emphasis into the silhouette on the western edge of Taksim Square, some actors claimed that the building would harmonize with its surroundings. Indeed, when introducing the project in February 2017, the Mayor of Beyoğlu, Misbah Demircan, stated: "A structure will emerge that seems as if it has always been here, both in terms of its architecture and its size; people will feel as though it has always belonged to this place" (Yeni Şafak, 2017). According to its architects, Chief Architect Şefik Birkiye and Dr. Architect Selim Dalaman, the design approach of Taksim Mosque is based on blending the Art Deco influences frequently encountered in the early 20th-century architectural character of Taksim Square and Beyoğlu with formal references drawn from Seljuk and Ottoman architecture, articulated through a contemporary stylistic language (Demir & Başer, 2017). The primary point of departure for the design is the spatial and visual relationship established with the Taksim Maksem, dated 1731. The architects treated the maksem as a historical reference that provides a "base" for the mosque on the square-facing side, both in terms of scale and silhouette; through the continuity established between the podium and the maksem, they aimed to ensure that the building would integrate harmoniously with the cultural heritage of the area (Demir & Başer, 2017).

The main mass of the mosque presents a composition that settles into the square's silhouette in a tiered manner through its central dome framed by two minarets, its lateral domes, and the domed units positioned at the ends of the podium that follows the line of the maksem. This configuration reinforces orientation while offering a modernized reinterpretation of the classical Ottoman mosque typology (Demir & Başer, 2017).

The use of materials reflects a contemporary reinterpretation of Seljuk and Ottoman stone craftsmanship. The Bursa Emparador Light and Isparta Aero Cream stones chosen for the façades were selected to harmonize with the Horasan mortar of the Maksem; in this way, the building establishes a visual resonance with the light-toned architectural character of Beyoğlu from the late Ottoman and early Republican periods (Basın İlan Kurumu Yayınları, 2023). Although the titanium-zinc alloy used in the dome and roof covering is a modern material, it evokes traditional lead cladding and, with its greenish hue, integrates compatibly into the urban context (Basın İlan Kurumu Yayınları, 2023).

The main dome, perceived from the exterior at a height of 33 meters, is complemented inside by a second inner dome. This double-shell structure enhances acoustic performance while providing controlled natural light distribution within the interior. The proportions and structural elements used in the dome transitions can be interpreted as a contemporary reading of the post-Hagia Sophia classical dome-space relationship (Basın İlan Kurumu Yayınları, 2023). Inside the mosque, calligraphic works were prepared by calligrapher Davut Bektaş and illuminator Adem Turan; the use of green, reddish-brown, and black tones behind the inscriptions reconstructs the visual atmosphere of the traditional mosque interior through a modern color palette (Basın İlan Kurumu Yayınları, 2023). Floor-to-ceiling windows emphasize vertical lines while enhancing the effectiveness of natural light within the space (Demir & Başer, 2017).

The mosque was constructed using the Top-Down method, a technique adopted in response to the area's dense infrastructural conditions. This approach reduced the need for extensive deep excavation in a highly constrained urban environment such as Taksim. By initiating construction at the upper structural levels while excavation progressed downward, the method aimed to maintain the stability of both the square and the surrounding buildings throughout the construction process (Basın İlan Kurumu Yayınları, 2023). The mosque complex accommodates not only functions of worship but also public uses such as a library, a multipurpose hall, exhibition spaces, and cultural-arts facilities. Particular reference is made to the rhythmic façade order and spatial permeability characteristic of 19th-century Beyoğlu architecture (Basın İlan Kurumu Yayınları, 2023).

Figure 124.
Front page of Sabah dated October 30, 2021, featuring coverage of the new Atatürk Cultural Center with the headline "The new symbol of modern Turkey" ("Çağdaş Türkiye'nin yeni sembolü"). Note. Sabah, October 30, 2021. Image retrieved from GasteArşivi.

Reconstruction of the AKM and Its Symbolic Implications

In 2007, the debates surrounding the demolition of the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) justified its removal by claiming that the building had reached the end of its economic lifespan and that its technical infrastructure and materials had become obsolete. During the same period, however, AKM, registered as a "cultural asset", was legally protected under the 1999 registration decision, which was grounded in the principle of continuity in conservation policies (Tabanlıoğlu, 2013).

In 2010, statements asserting that the building would be restored temporarily diffused these debates. In an article published in *Mimarlık* magazine, Murat Tabanlıoğlu emphasized the necessity of preserving both the material and intangible value of AKM; he stressed that while every building naturally ages, those with significant architectural and cultural value "should be maintained rather than discarded." Indeed, AKM had been registered in 1999 by the Istanbul No. I Council for the Conservation of Cultural and Natural Assets as a "cultural property requiring preservation," and due to its symbolic status as an example of modern architecture from the Republican period, it was elevated in 2007 to the status of "1st-degree cultural asset" by the Istanbul No. II Conservation Council (Tabanlıoğlu, 2010).

In this context, on December 20, 2009, a protocol based on the principle of "restoration faithful to the original" was signed between the Ministry of Culture, the 2010 European Capital of Culture Agency, the Chamber of Architects, and the project author Tabanlıoğlu Architects. According to the protocol, the AKM was to be structurally strengthened in accordance with the new earthquake regulations; its entire technical infrastructure, including mechanical, electrical, stage technologies, and acoustics, was to be updated; and its heating-cooling and fire-safety systems were to be adapted to contemporary standards. Although AKM had not sustained physical damage during the earthquake, it was deemed necessary to reinforce the building in line with post-1999 revised regulations (Tabanlıoğlu, 2010).

However, shortly after the strengthening works began, the building's "conservation registration decision" was abruptly revoked through a top-down intervention, and the structure, kept closed for ten years, was ultimately demolished in February 2018. The project commissioned to Tabanlıoğlu Architects, the successors of Hayati Tabanlıoğlu, was subsequently implemented, and the new Istanbul AKM was reopened on October 29, 2021. This time, the total cost had reached 2.2 billion TL (Hasol, 2022).

The original AKM preserved all its values up until its demolition. Since the new AKM was rebuilt on the same site, with the same function and name, and inspired by the original while offering a different

Figure 125.
The new Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) building following its reconstruction Note. From Tabanlıoğlu Architects (2017).

Figure 126.
The top view of the new Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) building following its reconstruction Note. From Tabanlıoğlu Architects (2017).

Figure 127.
Front page of Diriliş Postası dated October 30, 2021, featuring the headline "Erdoğan's second seal on Taksim" ("Erdoğan'dan Taksim'e ikinci mühür"), reporting on ceremonies related to the Taksim Mosque and AKM.
Note. Diriliş Postası, October 30, 2021. Image retrieved from GasteArşivi.

interpretation, it can be argued that it retains a partial degree of social-memory value.

M. Tabanlıoğlu likewise emphasized that producing a design radically different from the original would be detrimental in terms of collective memory. For this reason, the new AKM was reinterpreted by referencing elements and design criteria of the earlier building, while being adapted to meet contemporary needs (İtez, 2021, as cited in Öncel, 2023).

Like its predecessor, the new AKM attracted significant public attention not only in architectural publications but also in mainstream media, and it became the subject of extensive debate. The design and construction process were examined in detail in architectural journals, and much of today's architectural commentary draws on the discussions developed within these specialized platforms. At the same time, the building garnered intense interest on social media; particularly on Twitter (now X), a large volume of posts discussed the new AKM, turning the structure into an object of public debate.

The new AKM was redesigned in two parts: the main opera building and the secondary units that support it. The main opera structure was reinterpreted in a way that makes symbolic references to the massing, proportions, and façade character of the former AKM, particularly by adhering to the original building's height limit. The incorporation of original details, such as façade elements, staircases, and balustrades, into the new project aimed to ensure continuity of urban memory (İtez, 2021, as cited in Öncel, 2023).

While the new AKM, like its predecessor, continues to define the edge of Taksim Square, it has been expanded toward the former parking area, extending in the direction of Taksim Gezi Park and Istanbul Technical University. This expansion is integrated through a semi-open public cultural route called "Culture Street." Culture Street includes a gallery, music platform, studio, multipurpose hall, children's art center, design shop, library, Yeşilçam cinema, café, and restaurants. The main program of the building consists of three halls: the opera hall in the form of a red sphere, a theater hall,

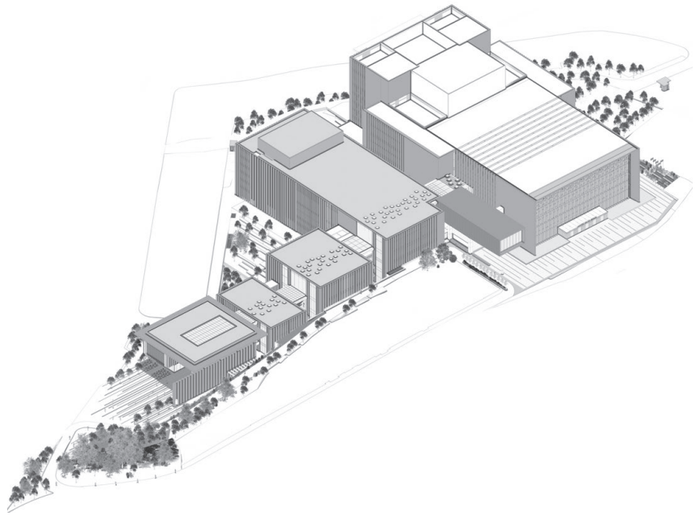


Figure 128.
Axonometric view of the reconstructed Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM)
Note. From Mimarizm (2017).

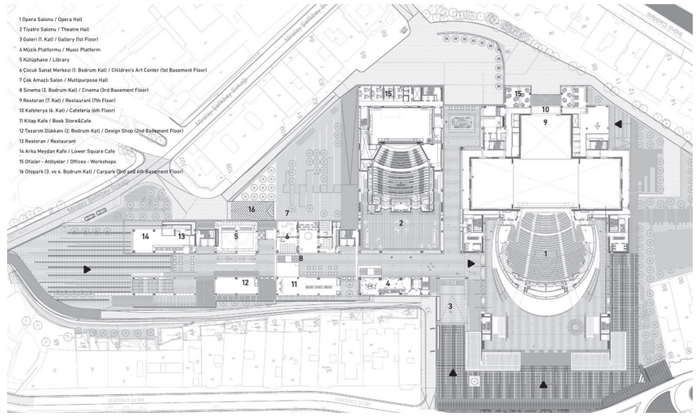


Figure 129.
Ground floor plan of the new Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM)
Note. From Mimarizm (2017).

and a multipurpose hall, complemented by support units such as backstage areas and storage rooms (Öncel, 2023).

The new AKM is a structure designed with highly contemporary engineering and architectural technologies, from its structural system and material selections to its furnishings and sound-light-acoustic systems. Its most characteristic feature, the opera hall shaped as a red sphere, is clad in small ceramic modules, designed to enhance both visual impact and acoustic performance (Öncel, 2023).

The interior furnishings were selected to meet international standards of contemporary opera and theater venues. Beneath the Theater Hall, alongside the dressing-room functions, there are workshops such as carpentry, ironworking, painting, and tailoring, enabling all stage-set production processes to be carried out within the building itself. The Multipurpose Hall features a divisible layout with movable wall systems, allowing three different events to be held simultaneously. This space offers the spatial flexibility required for diverse activities

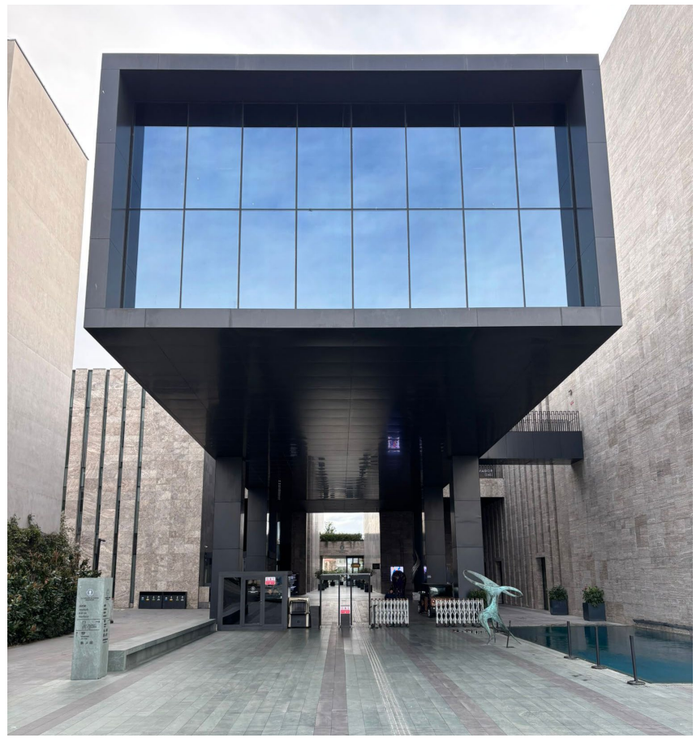


Figure 130.
Restricted entry to the new AKM complex at the "Kültür Sokağı" (Culture Street) section
Note. Photograph by the author.

such as brand launches, exhibitions, fashion shows, and various performances. The Children's Art Center, consisting of four classrooms and shared units, accommodates simultaneous activities and provides experiential spaces where children can engage with music and the arts.

The Art Gallery, oriented toward Taksim Square, ensures public visibility. Gallery spaces can be reorganized for each exhibition under the guidance of the curatorial team, with the building offering a neutral design language that does not overshadow the exhibition itself.

The Music Platform, with its two-story structure, hosts long-term music-focused exhibitions and is managed by specialists. The mini stage on the ground floor is used for talks, solo performances, and workshops, while the recording studio is accessible to all via an appointment system. Technical requirements are coordinated under the supervision of music specialists working within the platform.

*Yeşilçam** Cinema is a dedicated screening venue designed to revive Beyoğlu's tradition of independent cinema and the spirit of the old Yeşilçam. To support this broader program, secondary spaces such as the design shop, restaurant, and café reinforce the continuity of the cultural center's functions. Multiple entrances were planned to facilitate access to different parts of the building; meanwhile, access to management units and floors requiring privacy is controlled through encrypted card systems, thereby maintaining a balance between public use and institutional operations (Öncel, 2023).

The controlled, restricted, and surveillance-oriented spatial regime that has become institutionalized in Taksim Square in recent years is directly reflected in the operational practices of the new AKM. Although the building claims to integrate with the city through its main volume, referencing the original AKM, and through the semi-public cultural corridor known as "Culture Street," this discourse of publicness weakens significantly in practice. The architect's initial intention was to create a permeable, open, and accessible cultural building directly connected to Taksim Square. However, the actual functioning of the structure contradicts this intention. The control of entrances through turnstiles, the limitation of access to specific time intervals, and the requirement of prior permission for entry into many parts of the building all cast doubt on the building's

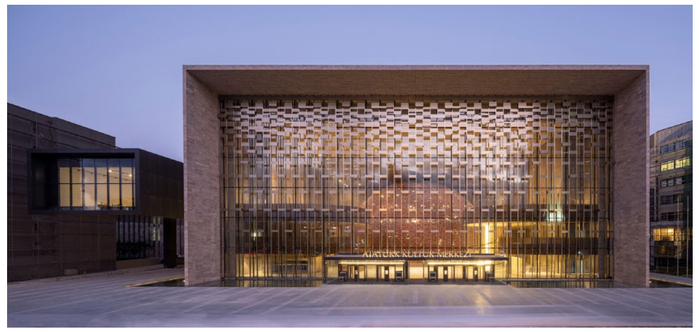


Figure 131.
Front façade view of the new Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM), showing the illuminated red spherical volume housing the opera hall
Note. From Tabanlıoğlu Architects.

Figure 132.
Interior of the new Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM), showing the illuminated red spherical volume housing the opera hall
Note. From Tabanlıoğlu Architects.

***Yeşilçam:** The popular Turkish film industry centered in Istanbul during the mid-20th century, known for its mass-produced cinema and cultural influence.

public character. Indeed, when the turnstiles are closed, one must walk around the entire block to descend from Taksim Square to İnönü Street, an arrangement that constitutes a structural contradiction for a space intended to be public.

The alternative pedestrian axis established by "Culture Street" appears at first glance to offer Taksim a new point of entry and exit, creating a seemingly fluid public route. However, the economic accessibility of the spaces along this axis is highly limited. The services and commercial programs offered do not address a broad user base; instead, they are designed for a more privileged group. As a result, the claim to publicness is overshadowed by the socio-economic boundaries embedded in the space. These contradictions are not merely design-related; they also point to the nature of programmatic decisions. When the public framework suggested by architecture is not supported by usage scenarios and operational models, its public character inevitably erodes. In this sense, the designer is expected to consider not only formal qualities but also the social implications.

Within this context, the luxury restaurant on the top floor of the new AKM, overlooking the Bosphorus, constitutes one of the most concrete examples underlying these criticisms. As part of a public institution, the operation of such a space with a program targeting high-income groups and lacking broad accessibility creates a clear tension with the building's public character. This situation reveals how the public-private boundary within the new AKM is being redefined and how the logic of surveillance and control has come to permeate cultural infrastructures.

First and foremost, cultural and arts management is a critical issue for any cultural center. The presence of qualified experts in the relevant units of the new AKM's administration is a positive aspect. The inclusion of certain ministerial units within the new AKM, a public building, reinforces its condition as a controlled space. The building is used in a restricted and regulated manner. It is always not fully open; only areas where events are taking place remain accessible. Entry into the entirety of the building requires prior authorization (Öncel, 2023). The core issue here is that a public space can only be visited with permission when no event is being held. Despite being designed with contemporary technological possibilities, the controlled, limited, and time-bound operating system of the new AKM does not allow for the effective use of the building.

One of the most striking, yet also most contested, elements of the new AKM is the red sphere housing the main stage. The sphere was the part of the building that took the longest to complete; even after the official opening, work continued for a period. Much of the criticism revolves around the claim that this sphere visually competes with the characteristic façade structure of the old AKM. Its prominence under night lighting has sparked debate, with critics arguing that it overshadows the building's overall mass (Öncel, 2023).

Considering that the new AKM is not a reconstruction but an entirely newly designed building, debates concerning its façade can also be interpreted through the lens of how its architectural identity is being rearticulated.

Another dimension of the controversy concerns forms and urban context. Given that the new AKM and Taksim Mosque were constructed almost simultaneously, the reciprocal positioning of these two buildings has inevitably prompted what some describe as a "square of domes" critique. When the sphere's formal language and dominant volume are considered together with the mosque's domes, it may be argued that a new symbolic competition has emerged over the square's modern and secular memory.

One of the most significant elements of the old AKM, the spiral staircase in the foyer, was an important feature for its architect, Hayati Tabanlıoğlu. Spiral staircases, especially those found in public buildings of the Republican era, were among the most striking components of architectural design during that period. For the new AKM, a replica of the spiral staircase was constructed in the same location. Assessments indicated, however, that the staircase could be safely used by at most two people at a time, and that its structural performance might pose problems under heavier use (Öncel, 2023).

Figure 133.
Winning selection from the 2020 Taksim Urban Design Competition, featuring the slogan "Taksim senin, karar senin"
Note. "Taksim senin, karar senin" translates as "Taksim is yours, the decision is yours." Source: Konkur İstanbul. Retrieved from https://konkur.istanbul/kararsenin/

The issue here is not that the original staircase was demolished and replaced with a replica. Rather, despite claims that contemporary technical possibilities were fully utilized, the staircase, one of the most defining elements of the AKM's foyer, cannot be used due to structural concerns and has instead been reduced to a sculptural object.

2020 Taksim Square Urban Design Project Competition

Local elections in Istanbul, have always held decisive significance for political parties. In this context, the 2019 Istanbul municipal election was widely interpreted as a major political turning point nationwide; the opposition candidate Ekrem İmamoğlu's clear victory strengthened expectations for economic and political transformation in the city (Ellyat, 2019).

With this new administrative approach, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality launched in 2020 a two-stage urban design competition for Taksim Square, similar in spirit to the 1987 competition but incorporating significant methodological innovations. Unlike the previous competition, the process was structured not as an invited competition but as an open, international, and voluntary-entry format (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality & Directorate of Cultural Heritage, 2020). A second innovation was the explicit requirement in the brief for a multidisciplinary team structure; beyond architecture and urban planning, the inclusion of specialists from landscape architecture, art history, and sculpture as consultants was expected (Özkan, 2024). The third major difference was the introduction of a public voting component. While this mechanism aimed to enhance civic participation, final decision-making authority ultimately remained with the municipality (Akıncı, 2023).

Teams advancing to the second stage were required to include at least one specialist each in urban planning, architecture, and landscape architecture. The competition brief defined in detail the concepts to be evaluated at this stage, expecting proposals to address multidimensional criteria such as spatial coherence, public-space quality, continuity of green systems, transportation integration, spatial memory, atmosphere, safety, accessibility, disability considerations, lighting, and material use (Özkan, 2024).

The Kavuşma Durağı (Convergence Stop), placed in Taksim Square in February 2020, was designed as a temporary structure that enabled city residents to share their views and suggestions regarding the space; in doing so, it made visible the continued applicability of participatory design practices in the public realm. This removable structure included an exhibition on the historical development of the area on its ground floor and quickly became a focal point of debates, across various media platforms, concerning the meaning and function of participatory design (İtez, 2020).

As a result of the two-stage competition, three projects were selected from among a total of twenty submissions and were opened to a public vote in November 2020. However, the fact that only approximately 200,000 people voted in a city of 16 million raised significant questions regarding the level of participation (Karakoç, 2020). The competition drew various criticisms both in relation to the quality of participatory mechanisms and to the spatial and political adequacy of the selected designs. Batu Kepekçioğlu (2020) pushed the debate beyond the park-square dichotomy, criticizing

Figure 134.
Render from Süveydan et al., Taksim Square Urban Design Competition (TSUDC), 2020
Note. Source: IPA, Konkur İstanbul. Retrieved from https://konkur.istanbul/projeler

the pre-competition planning decisions and fragmented interventions; he characterized the overall process with the provocative metaphor of "putting makeup on corpses." The Istanbul Branch of the Chamber of Architects emphasized the square's historical-political role by declaring that "Taksim Republic Square is not a park; it is the square of labor, struggle, and democracy" (Chamber of Architects Istanbul Branch, 2020), a statement that was co-signed by fifty NGOs and evolved into a broad institutional consensus.

Hakkı Yırtıcı (2020), however, criticized the competition through the lens of populism, arguing that the finalist projects relied excessively on the publicly perceived demand for "green space," while overlooking the socio-political concerns of professional actors. Beyond the park-square debate, Batuman and colleagues (2020) noted that the design brief largely ignored the political context.

The jury, for its part, defended its evaluation criteria, stating that the decisive factors were the conceptual frameworks of the projects, their responses to Taksim's multilayered history, and the relationship they proposed between Gezi Park and the square. Jury members emphasized that proposals for expanding the park area were not the result of their guidance but rather the natural outcome of the submitted projects (Acar, Demet & Kaynar, 2023).

The second area of debate concerned the design of the participatory process. Criticism focused on the ineffectiveness of the participation tools used and on the low level of public engagement in the voting phase. According to Yiğit Acar, the Taksim competition reduced participatory processes to a mere act of "choosing," sidelined expert perspectives, and consequently missed an opportunity to enhance the scope and depth of participation, thus failing to contribute to the advancement of architecture and urban planning in Turkey (Acar, 2022). Similarly, Hakkı Yırtıcı characterized the competition as a populist example, arguing that the participation model responded superficially to public demands while neglecting professional concerns (Yırtıcı, 2020).

Figure 135.
"Kavuşma Durağı" installation located in Taksim Square
Note. The installation functions as a contemporary urban intervention designed to encourage gathering, visibility, and spatial interaction within the square. February 17, 2020. Arkitera.

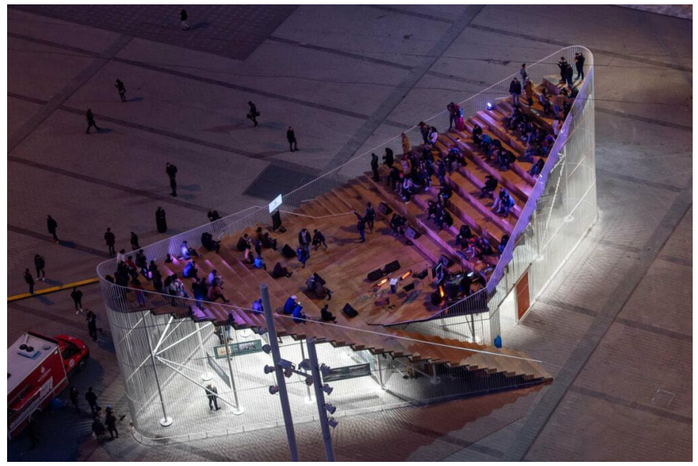


Figure 136.
"Kavuşma Durağı" installation located in Taksim Square
Note. February 17, 2020. Arkitera.

Drawing on Arnstein's Ladder of Participation, Meryem Taşdemir contended that the process offered the public only the right to "select," producing merely symbolic participation at the tokenism level (Taşdemir, 2020).

Another pattern highlighted in the symposium discussions was the strong involvement of NGO representatives from Taksim and surrounding neighborhoods. These NGOs expressed concrete concerns, especially regarding spatial details such as the Maksem, transportation infrastructure, street fabric, and adjacent buildings. The Ayaspaşa Foundation underscored the weakness of the Taksim-Gümüşsuyu connection, while the Taksim Collective presented critiques related to the square's physical components. In contrast, professional participants, architects and planners, tended to focus on urban planning, policy, and conceptual frameworks. This dynamic clearly illustrated the tendency of non-designer participants to engage with spatial details, whereas

**Ayaspaşa Foundation:*
A charitable endowment historically associated with the Ayaspaşa district, supporting local religious and social facilities.

professionals gravitated toward more abstract and conceptual issues (Acar, Demet & Kaynar, 2023).

A municipal representative emphasized that Turkey lacks an institutionalized culture of participation in design competitions and stated that design problems carrying significant social weight cannot be managed solely through technical tools, as such an approach often "results in coercion." It was noted that initiatives such as the Kavuşma Durağı and Almanak Taksim were developed precisely for this reason (Acar, Demet & Kaynar, 2023).

Although the 2020 Taksim Square Urban Design Competition, with the project selected through public voting, initially promised a strong vision for renewal, the critical turning point that determined the fate of the process was the transfer of Gezi Park's ownership from the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (İBB) to the General Directorate of Foundations (Güvemli, 2022). This transfer directly affected the conservation council approvals required for implementing the competition proposal. The relevant council suspended its evaluation of the project due to the new ownership structure and announced that no progress could be made unless a formal opinion was received from the General Directorate of Foundations. As a result, the competition became effectively frozen due to an administrative and political intervention in property ownership.

Consequently, the Taksim 2020 process, which began as one of the most visible examples of public participation, never reached the implementation stage after the bureaucratic deadlock triggered by the Gezi Park transfer, and the entire process ultimately remained suspended.

ARE.NA AS A DIGITAL ARCHIVAL METHODOLOGY

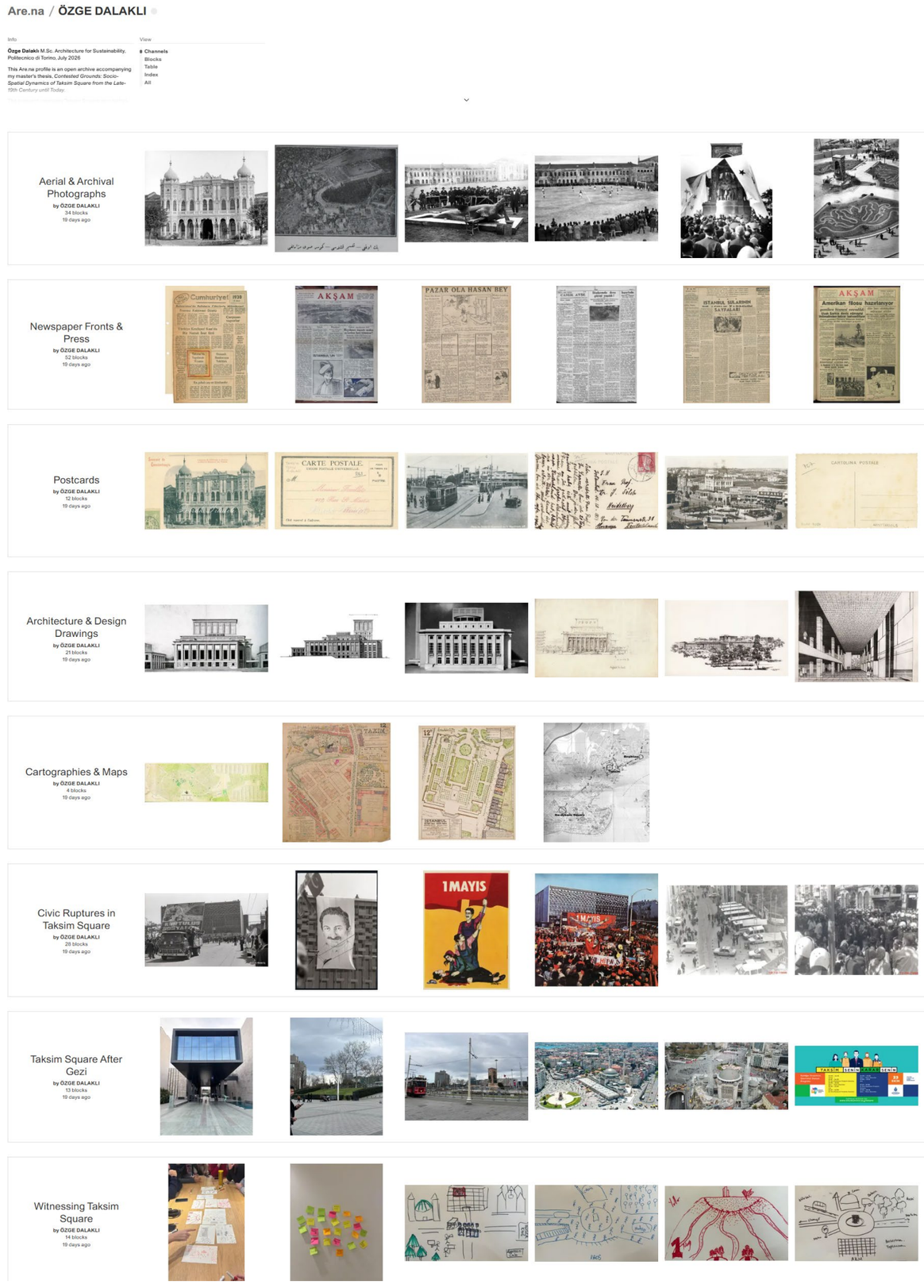
Are.na is a web based platform for collecting, organizing, and contextualizing visual and textual material through user generated “channels,” functioning simultaneously as a research tool and a public knowledge infrastructure. Unlike conventional databases that impose rigid taxonomies, Are.na allows materials to be associated across multiple thematic groupings, reflecting the layered and often contradictory nature of urban historical research. This flexibility makes it particularly suited to a subject such as Taksim Square, where spatial, political, and architectural narratives intersect and resist linear categorization.

For this thesis, Are.na has been used to construct a parallel visual archive that extends the written research into an open, accessible format. The archive at:

are.na/ozge-dalakli/channels

is organized into thirteen thematic channels, including Cartographies and Maps, Aerial and Archival Photographs, Political Gatherings and Protest, and Architecture and Design Drawings, each addressing a distinct dimension of Taksim Square’s socio spatial history. Materials drawn from institutions such as SALT Research, the Istanbul Research Institute, Centre d’Archives IFA, GasteArşivi, Cumhuriyet Arşivi, and Milliyet Gazete Arşivi have been compiled alongside personal and family photographs, situating the square’s transformation within both institutional memory and lived experience.

Each item in the archive is accompanied by a title and a descriptive entry that situates the image within its historical, political, and representational context, allowing the visual material to function analytically rather than merely illustratively. In this sense, the Are.na archive operates as an extension of the thesis argument itself, making the evidentiary basis of the research visible and traceable while also offering a resource that remains open to public engagement beyond the boundaries of the academic document.



CHAPTER 3: ASSEMBLING URBAN TESTIMONIES

Witness Seminar: Contemporary Spatial Experiences of Taksim Square

The witness seminar is positioned in this study not as a representative data-gathering exercise, but as an analytical tool for accessing lived and situated experiences of Taksim Square among its contemporary users. Rather than aiming to document individual memories in isolation, the seminar was designed to foreground collective processes of meaning-making, allowing spatial perceptions, affective responses, and interpretations to emerge through interaction, discussion, and shared reflection. In this sense, the witness seminar functions as a complementary layer to the historical and media-based analysis, making visible everyday encounters and embodied experiences that remain largely absent from archival sources.

The seminar was conceptually inspired by the witness seminar methodology developed by the research collective Aktion Arkiv, particularly as articulated in their work on housing struggles and lived experience in Denmark and Sweden. I encountered this research during my time at KTH, where Aktion Arkiv's work circulates both as an academic reference and as a methodological example of engaged, public-facing scholarship. While witness seminars organized by Aktion Arkiv focused on housing policies and residents directly affected by state-led interventions, this seminar adapts the methodology to the context of Taksim Square. The aim was not to replicate the method in a strict sense, but to draw inspiration from its core principles: privileging experiential knowledge, treating narration as a political act, and understanding the seminar itself as a moment of archival production. In this sense, the seminar functions as a situated space of testimony, where participants collectively reflected on protest, everyday use, spatial transformation, and memory in relation to Taksim Square, contributing to a bottom-up reading of the square that complements the historical and media-based analysis of the thesis.

The participant profile, composed of individuals who have directly experienced the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul or other city and who have lived in Istanbul for varying durations, constitutes an intentional analytical focus. This configuration prioritizes users who have witnessed the recent physical and political transformation of Taksim Square, while not necessarily possessing extensive knowledge of its longer historical layers. This positionality is analytically productive, as it foregrounds how Taksim is understood, used, and contested in the present, primarily through lived experience rather than inherited historical narratives. By analyzing the material generated in the seminar through thematic concentration, the study shifts attention from individual testimony to recurring patterns, shared tensions, and collective spatial imaginaries, situating the witness seminar as a key component in understanding Taksim Square as an ongoing and contested public space.

Visual Representations: Drawing Taksim

Prior to the witness seminar, participants were not provided with any historical, political, or conceptual framing of Taksim Square, beyond being informed that the session was part of a workshop focusing on the square. This deliberate absence of preliminary explanation aimed to minimize potential steering or manipulation during the discussion. To further foreground participants' own spatial perceptions before collective interaction began, they were first invited to represent Taksim Square using simple drawings, diagrams, symbols, or short written expressions. Using only pen and paper, and within a limited time frame of approximately fifteen minutes, this exercise encouraged intuitive and immediate spatial representations rather than refined or discursive accounts. Only after these individual representations were completed were the drawings laid out collectively and used as the starting point for discussion, allowing spatial meanings to emerge relationally rather than being pre-defined.

The workshop was conducted on January 4, 2026 in a coffee/co-working space located on İstiklal Avenue. Choice of venue was deliberate, as it offered an accessible and informal setting within the immediate spatial and symbolic context of Taksim Square. Semi-public character of the space created a neutral and comfortable environment conducive to extended conversation.

The participant group can be broadly situated within the early Generation Z and late Generation Y cohorts, many of whom were in high school or university during the Gezi Park protests. The participant group represents a heterogeneous set of professional and educational backgrounds, spanning both qualified professions and service-oriented occupations. The group includes a dentist, a pharmacist, a lawyer, an engineer, two architects, a musician, a doctoral student in history, two sociology graduates at the undergraduate level, and individuals working in the fields of marketing and retail. Within this group, three participants were students at Beyoğlu Anatolian High School during the period of the Gezi Park protests, a secondary school located on İstiklal Avenue within approximately a fifteen-minute walking distance of Taksim Square. In addition, the participant operating a clothing retail chain runs a store directly on İstiklal Avenue, indicating a sustained economic and spatial proximity to the square and its immediate surroundings. Seven participants are originally from Istanbul. Among the group, five individuals directly participated in the Gezi Park protests in Istanbul, four took part in demonstrations in other cities, while the remaining participants followed the events primarily through social and mainstream media.

While not all participants were residing in Istanbul at the time, several engaged with the protests from their own cities, expressing support through local demonstrations and networks, while others were physically present in Taksim Square during the events. Importantly, the group includes individuals who were already regular users of Taksim Square prior to 2013 and who continued to frequent the area during and after the Gezi Park protests, even as major spatial interventions, such as the pedestrianization project, the construction of the mosque, and the transformation of the Atatürk Cultural Center, were underway. Many participants reported visiting Taksim Square at least once a month throughout this period. This generational positioning is analytically significant, as it reflects a cohort that directly experienced Gezi and witnessed the square's subsequent transformation,

Figure 137.
Discussions based on the drawing exercise conducted during the witness seminar

yet often lacks an embodied connection to its earlier historical layers. As such, spatial change is not necessarily perceived as a rupture with a deeply known past, but rather as part of an ongoing and normalized condition of transformation. As such, the drawings offer a valuable entry point for examining how spatial transformation, protest, and everyday use are internalized and translated into visual form.

The analysis of the drawings reveals recurring spatial perceptions and selective modes of remembering Taksim Square, highlighting how everyday use, political symbolism, and mediated imagery intersect in the production of urban memory. Approximately half of the twelve drawings depict the square primarily as a space of convergence, emphasizing connections, crossings, and the coming together of roads and flows.

Participants living on the European side of the city (three drawings) tended to represent Taksim predominantly as a transit hub, an interchange zone connecting metro, funicular, and tramway lines, foregrounding patterns of everyday movement rather than symbolic or monumental elements.

Figure 138.
Drawing produced by one of the participants during the witness seminar
Note. Photograph by the author.

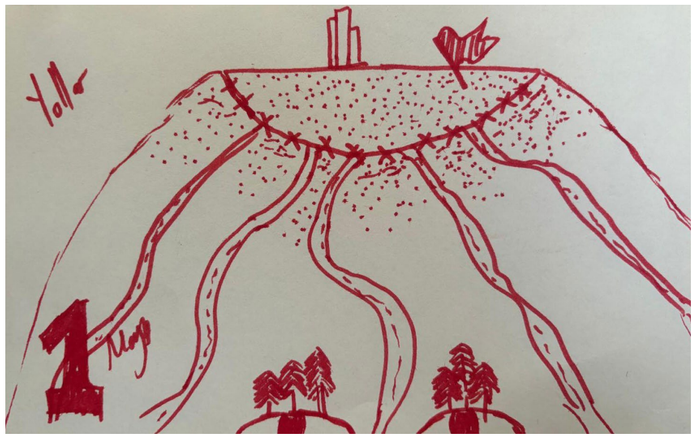


Figure 139.
Drawing produced by one of the participants during the witness seminar
Note. Photograph by the author.

Several drawings that focused on the built environment revealed notable absences and asymmetries. Most strikingly, the Taksim Mosque was entirely omitted in multiple drawings, and during the discussion some participants reported difficulty recalling its presence, despite having recently passed through the square. This absence is analytically significant, particularly when contrasted with architectural and professional debates that emphasize the mosque's scale and dominant spatial presence. Rather than indicating a lack of spatial awareness, this selective omission points to how participants tend to recall and foreground-built elements that they perceive as meaningful, representative, or aligned with their own spatial attachments. In this sense, memory and representation are not organized around physical prominence alone, but around structures that resonate with participants' sense of belonging, identification, and everyday relevance within the square.

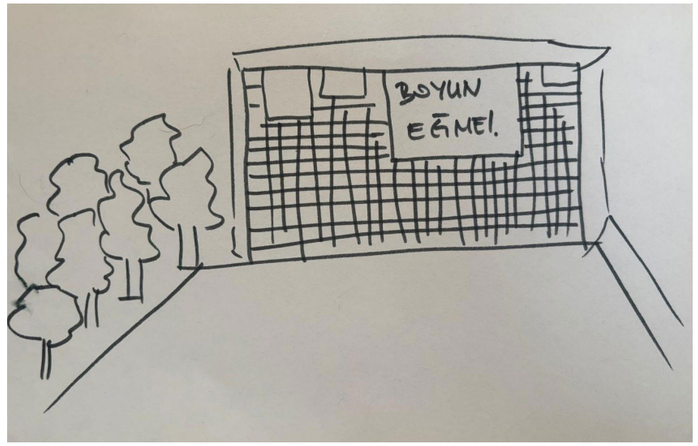


Figure 140.
Drawing produced by one of the participants during the witness seminar
Note. Photograph by the author.

By contrast, the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) appeared in most of the drawings, often represented through its façade. Notably, some participants depicted the building together with one of the iconic banners hung on its façade during the 2013 Gezi Park protests, an image that circulated widely on social media at the time and became symbolically charged.

Interestingly, participants who had not physically taken part in the Gezi Park protests in Gezi Park itself appeared more likely to recall AKM through this mediated image, whereas those who had been present in the park during the protests did not emphasize this moment in their recollections. This contrast points to the role of photography, social media circulation, and digital dissemination in shaping collective memory, demonstrating how buildings can acquire symbolic meaning not only through lived experience but also through mediated visual representations.

Another notable asymmetry concerns the Marmara Hotel, which visually dominates the square yet appeared in only one drawing. The relative absence of the Marmara Hotel

Figure 141.
Circulated image during the Gezi Park protests featuring the slogan "Boyun Eğme"
Note. "Boyun Eğme" translates as "Don't Bow Down." Retrieved from https://yurtsever.org.tr/2016/roportaj-pankarti-asanlar-oykusunu-anlatti-45332/

is analytically significant, as it suggests that despite its strong physical presence and its potential association with neoliberal urban development, the building does not carry a comparable political or symbolic meaning for participants and therefore remains largely absent from their spatial memory. Conversely, the Republic Monument was included in every drawing that attempted a spatial depiction of the square, regardless of whether the drawing leaned toward political interpretation or everyday use. Despite this consistent visual presence, the monument was not explicitly discussed by participants during the conversation, indicating a disjunction between what is repeatedly drawn and what is verbally articulated as meaningful.

Gezi Park itself was frequently depicted as densely wooded, often more so than its actual physical condition would suggest. In several drawings, the park was shown as an inaccessible or restricted area, marked by barriers, boundaries, or police presence. More broadly, many drawings referenced themes of control, disrupted circulation, and blocked flows, pointing to perceptions of surveillance, restriction, and spatial interruption as central features of the square's contemporary experience.

Commercial elements, such as international coffee chains, fast-food restaurants, exchange offices, and retail spaces, were largely absent from the drawings, appearing in only a single instance. Even then, brand names

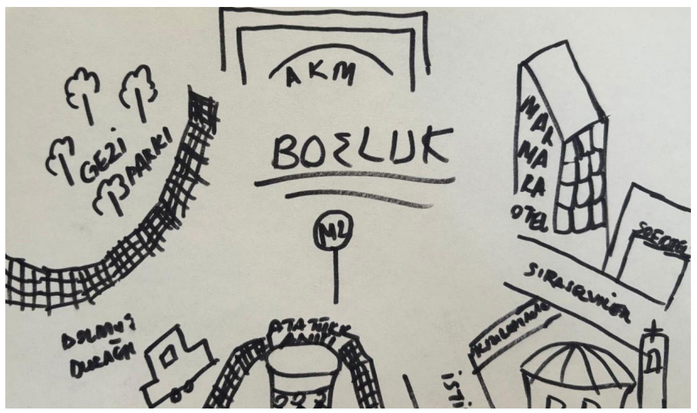


Figure 142.
Drawing produced by one of the participants during the witness seminar
Note. Photograph by the author.

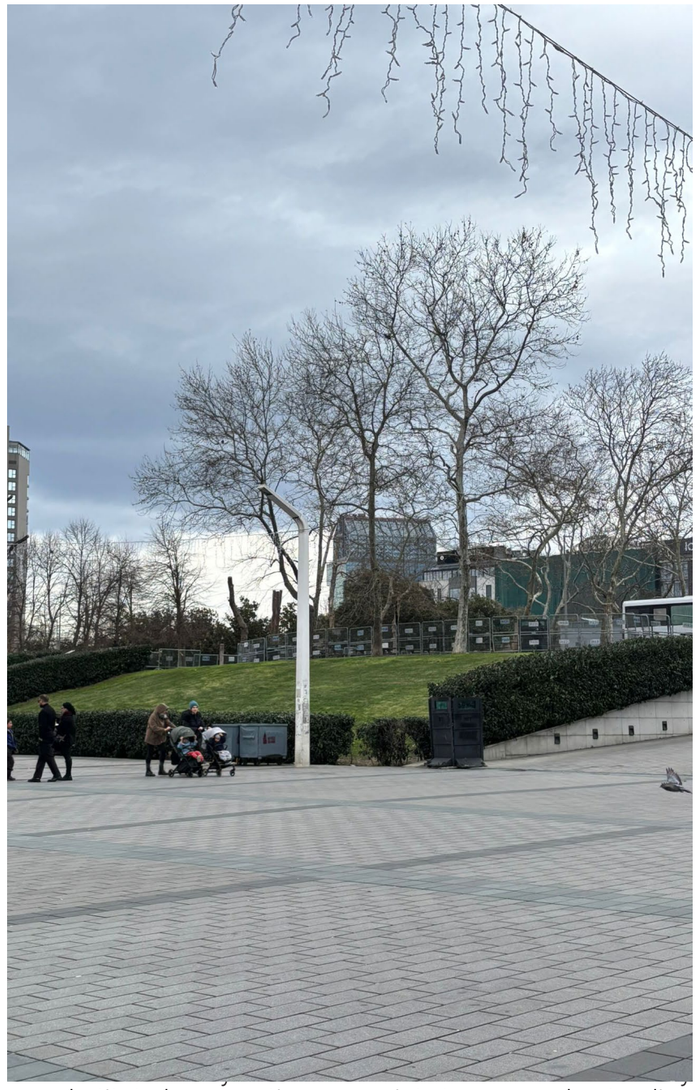


Figure 143.
Police barriers surrounding Gezi Park, January 4, 2026.
Note. Photograph by the author.

or substituted, suggesting a form of mnemonic slippage or selective forgetting. This relative absence contrasts with the actual commercial saturation of the area and further underscores how certain spatial elements are normalized or rendered invisible in everyday memory.

Finally, several participants annotated their drawings with keywords such as meeting, gathering, chaos, randomness, roads, emptiness, I'm at the monument, and inaccessible.

point to an understanding of Taksim Square as a space characterized by simultaneity and tension: a site of encounter and assembly, but also of disorder, fragmentation, and obstruction. Taken together, the drawings reveal how Taksim is remembered and represented less as a coherent spatial whole than as a layered assemblage of movements, absences, symbols, and interruptions shaped by lived experience, political events, and mediated images.

Figure 144.
Police barriers surrounding Republic Monument, January 4, 2026
Note. Photograph by the author.

Collective Discussion

The discussion accompanying the drawing exercise revealed several recurring points of tension regarding the contemporary experience of Taksim Square. A dominant theme concerned the pedestrianization project, which participants widely associated with the transformation of the square into an expansive, grey concrete surface. This spatial condition was frequently described as producing a sense of emptiness and discomfort, rendering the square a place where people no longer wished to linger. The perception of spatial void and material harshness was thus closely linked to critiques of recent urban design interventions.

The Gezi Park protests emerged as another major reference point shaping perceptions of the square. In post-Gezi discussions, the most frequently mentioned change concerned the persistent presence of police forces, barriers, and security infrastructures. Participants described adopting altered bodily comportments while moving through the square, such as walking faster, appearing inconspicuous, or adjusting their posture, in response to perceived surveillance and control. While post-2012 transformations were often framed through the Gezi experience, the construction of the mosque was generally interpreted as a more substantial and explicitly political intervention. However, this shift was not always perceived as visually disruptive. Participants suggested that the near-identical reconstruction of the Atatürk Cultural Center's façade, combined with the fact that this generation had largely experienced the former AKM only from the exterior due to its long closure, contributed to a relative normalization of architectural change in the square.

The presence of the mosque itself was discussed less in explicitly political terms and more through debates around architectural necessity and material impact. Several participants noted that the building intensified the square's already dominant concrete character. Notably, only one participant reported having entered the mosque since its completion, and this was solely for the use of the underground parking facility, suggesting a limited degree of everyday engagement with the building. Despite critical views on pedestrianization, participants who regularly use Taksim Square as a transit hub emphasized the functional advantages of the project. For these users, the square's role as an interchange point was described as efficient and even preferable, indicating a tension between experiential discomfort and infrastructural convenience in everyday use.

Questions of ownership and belonging, articulated through phrases such as *"Who does the square belong to?"* or "Is it for everyone *or for no one?",* were also central to the discussion. While a general sense of withdrawal and detachment from the square was expressed, an important exception emerged in relation to queer experiences. Participants highlighted that queer communities have historically claimed and reappropriated Taksim not only as a political space but also through everyday practices linked to nightlife, entertainment venues, cafés, and social gathering, sustaining a sense of attachment across time.

Concerns over safety were repeatedly raised, with participants associating feelings of insecurity with the square's openness, its accessibility to "everyone," and the surrounding social atmosphere. The heavy presence of tourists was similarly described as contributing to a diminished sense of belonging and alienation from the space.

Finally, when discussions turned toward the future of Taksim Square, participants articulated a more hopeful outlook. Despite prevailing critiques, the square was frequently described as a space of ongoing transformation, characterized by constant change rather than final

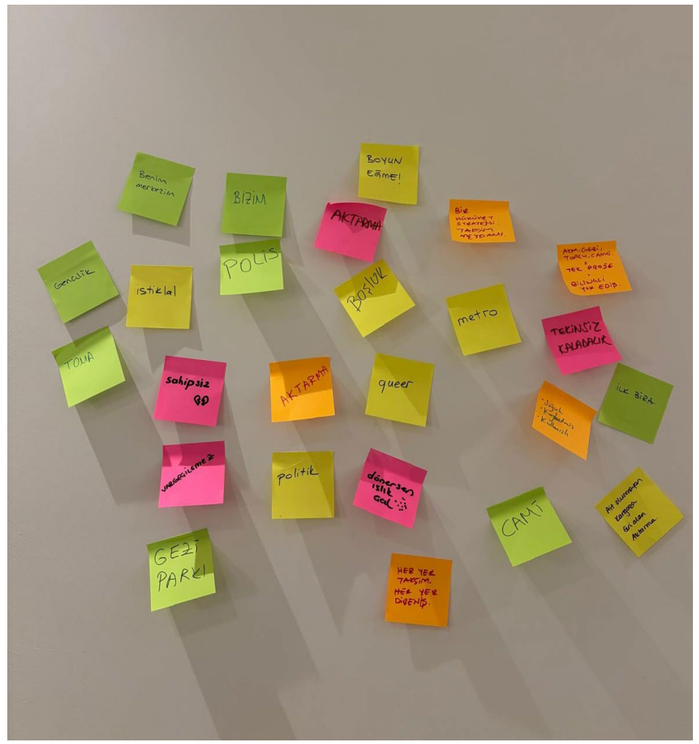


Figure 145.
Post-it keywords generated by participants during the witness seminar, including: "central / my center (merkezim), ours (bizim), transfer / transit (aktarma), submission (boyun eğme), a government strategy (bir hükümet stratejisi), Taksim Square (Taksim Meydanı), a single project (tek proje), conscious destruction (bilinçli yok ediş), youth (gençlik), İstiklal Avenue (İstiklal), police (polis), emptiness (boşluk), metro (metro), uncanny crowd (tekinsiz kalabalık), first beer (ilk bira), cold (soğuk), lost (kaybedilmiş), useful (kullanışlı), queer (queer), unowned (sahipsiz), water cannon / TOMA (TOMA), indispensable (vazgeçilmez), political (politik), Gezi Park (Gezi Parkı), "everywhere is Taksim, everywhere is resistance" (her yer Taksim her yer direniş), "whistle if you turn back" (dönersen ıslık çal), mosque (cami), unbelonging (ait olunamayan), grey area (gri alan), and fragile (kırılgan)
Note. Photograph by the author.

closure, leaving open the possibility for new forms of use, appropriation, and meaning.

At the conclusion of the discussion, participants were invited to articulate the notions that remained most salient to them by writing keywords on post-it notes. The resulting set of keywords revealed a dense constellation of spatial, political, and affective associations, pointing to the multiplicity of meanings attached to Taksim Square. Several terms emphasized control, surveillance, and state power, such as police, TOMA, bowing one's head, government strategy, single project, and deliberate erasure, suggesting a perception of the square as a highly regulated and politicized environment. Others foregrounded movement and infrastructure, including transfer, metro, interchange, and useful, reflecting Taksim's continued role as a key node of everyday mobility despite broader critiques.

Affective and experiential keywords, such as emptiness, grey space, chaos, crowded, uncanny, cold, lost, and unclaimed, point to ambivalent emotional responses, oscillating between alienation and familiarity. Questions of belonging and ownership emerged through expressions like my center, belongs to no one, and non-place, underscoring unresolved tensions around who the square is for. At the same time, references to specific landmarks and events, AKM, Gezi, Gezi Park, Topçu Barracks, the mosque, İstiklal, first beer, and youth, highlighted how personal memories, political moments, and architectural symbols intersect in the collective imagination of the square.

Notably, explicitly political and resistant expressions such as "Taksim is everywhere", "everywhere is resistance", political, and indispensable coexisted with terms emphasizing withdrawal and detachment, revealing a fragmented yet layered understanding of the space. The presence of queer among the keywords further points to alternative modes of spatial attachment and appropriation that persist despite dominant narratives of control and exclusion. Taken together, the post-it keywords encapsulate Taksim Square as a contested assemblage of infrastructure, memory, affect, and political struggle, rather than a singular or stable public space.

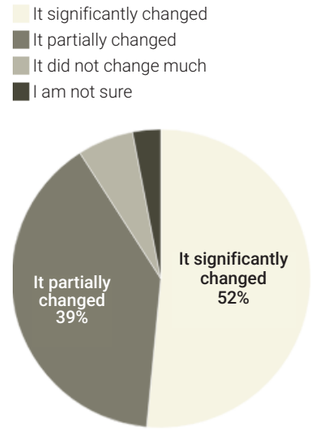
Survey Findings

The survey was conducted as a complementary research tool to quickly engage a broader and more diverse group of participants across different age groups and backgrounds. Its primary purpose was to capture general patterns of everyday use, levels of historical awareness, and baseline perceptions of Taksim Square prior to the in-depth qualitative components of the study. By reaching 64 participants beyond the workshop setting, the survey enabled a more rapid and accessible mapping of how key historical layers, architectural elements, and political events are recognized, forgotten, or selectively remembered. Rather than producing statistically representative findings, the survey functioned as an exploratory instrument that informed the design of the drawing exercise and discussion, helping to situate more situated, embodied, and narrative-based insights within a wider field of shared perceptions.

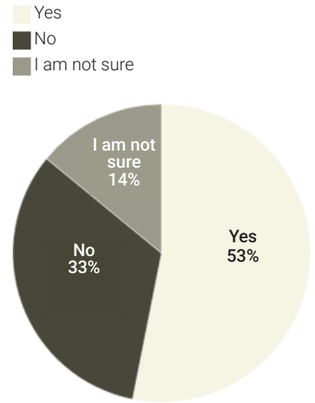
Overall, the findings indicate that Taksim is predominantly experienced as a space of movement and transition rather than

*all survey results shared as percantages

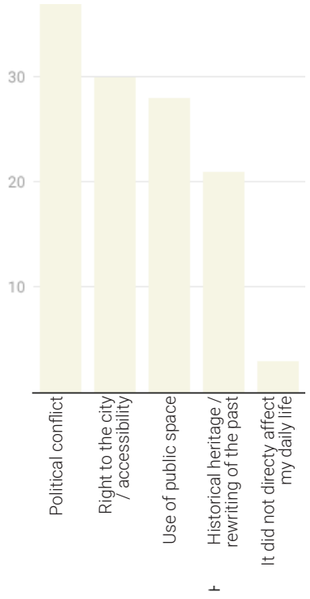
How has your perception of Taksim Square changed over time?



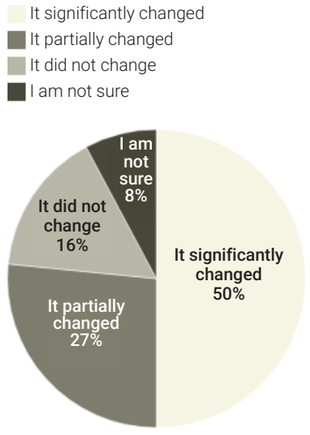
Do you consciously change your behavior when you are in Taksim Square?



What was the Artillery Barracks / shopping mall discussion primarily associated with for you?



How did the Gezi Park process affect your perception of Taksim



prolonged occupation, while its political and symbolic meanings remain unevenly distributed across different spatial elements.

In terms of everyday use, a significant proportion of participants reported frequent engagement with Taksim Square both before and after the 2010-2013 period, though patterns of use have shifted over time. While Taksim continues to function as an important interchange node, particularly for public transport transfers, many respondents indicated a decrease in lingering, socializing, or recreational use. This suggests a growing distinction between functional use and affective attachment to the space.

The survey also revealed partial and uneven awareness of the historical layers of Taksim Square. While a majority of respondents were aware of the Gezi Park protests and the debates surrounding the reconstruction of the Topçu Barracks, knowledge of earlier histories, such as the presence of the Armenian cemetery, was more limited and often mediated through secondary sources such as media, academic contexts, or interpersonal communication. For many participants, learning about this past did not fundamentally alter their everyday relationship with the square, indicating a separation between historical knowledge and spatial practice.

Responses related to key architectural and symbolic elements further highlight selective modes of perception. The Republic Monument was widely recognized as a historical and national symbol as well as a meeting point; however, its influence on participants' overall perception of the square was often described as partial rather than decisive. Similarly, the Atatürk Cultural Center (AKM) occupied a complex position in collective memory. While many participants had experienced the former AKM primarily from the outside due to its long period of closure, the demolition and reconstruction process was widely acknowledged and frequently cited as having affected perceptions of Taksim Square, even among those who had limited direct engagement with the building.

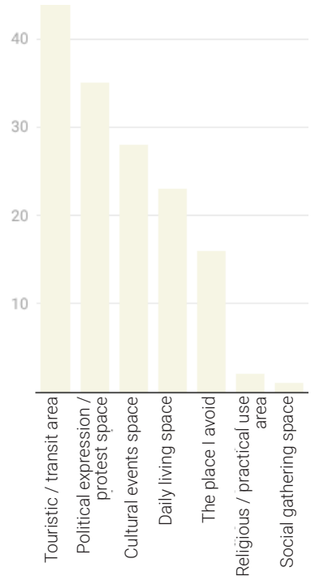
The Gezi Park protests emerged as a critical turning point in shaping contemporary experiences of the square. A majority of respondents reported that the protests significantly altered their perception of Taksim, particularly in relation to security, surveillance, and the presence of police and barriers. Following the protests, many participants indicated changes in their behavior while using the square, including moving more quickly, avoiding certain areas, or being more attentive to their surroundings. These responses point to a heightened bodily awareness and a recalibration of everyday spatial conduct.

Perceptions of recent interventions, including the construction of the Taksim Mosque and the increase in tourism and hotel development, further reflect ambivalent attitudes toward belonging and publicness. While the mosque was often acknowledged as a visible and impactful intervention, it was less frequently associated with everyday use, and for many respondents its presence did not translate into regular engagement. Similarly, increased tourism was commonly linked to feelings of crowding and alienation, contributing to a perception that Taksim is a space that belongs to "everyone and no one" rather than to a clearly defined community.

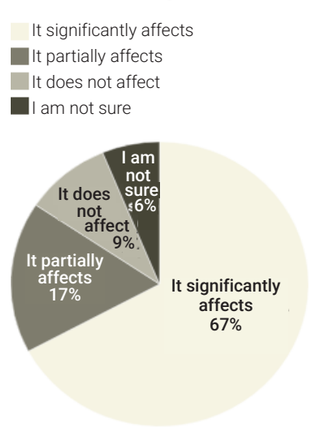
Finally, when asked to evaluate Taksim Square as a public space today, participants' responses clustered around notions of partial openness and control. While some continued to view the square as a possible site of public expression, many emphasized constraints related to policing, political climate, and spatial design. At the same time, a notable proportion of respondents expressed the belief that public protests and collective gatherings have shifted to alternative locations, indicating a perceived displacement of political expression from Taksim to other urban spaces.

Taken together, the survey results portray Taksim Square as a space characterized by functional centrality but weakened affective attachment, shaped by layered histories, mediated memories, and post-Gezi transformations. These findings provide an important backdrop for interpreting the visual representations and discussion dynamics explored in the following sections.

What does Taksim Square represent to you?



Do hotels and tourist-oriented development affect the sense of "who Taksim belongs to"?



Taken together, the survey, drawing exercise, and group discussion offer a multi-layered reading of Taksim Square that cannot be captured through a single method alone. While the survey provided a rapid overview of everyday use patterns, historical awareness, and shifting perceptions across a broader and more heterogeneous group, the drawings and discussions made visible the embodied, affective, and often unarticulated dimensions of spatial experience. The comparison between what participants explicitly stated in the survey and what emerged visually or implicitly in the drawings revealed notable gaps, absences, and asymmetries, particularly in relation to memory, symbolic recognition, and feelings of belonging. Rather than converging toward a unified narrative, the findings point to a fragmented and contested understanding of Taksim Square, shaped by overlapping histories, mediated images, everyday practices, and political interventions. This layered empirical material reflects on Taksim Square not as a fixed or completed public space, but as an open-ended and continuously negotiated socio-spatial formation.

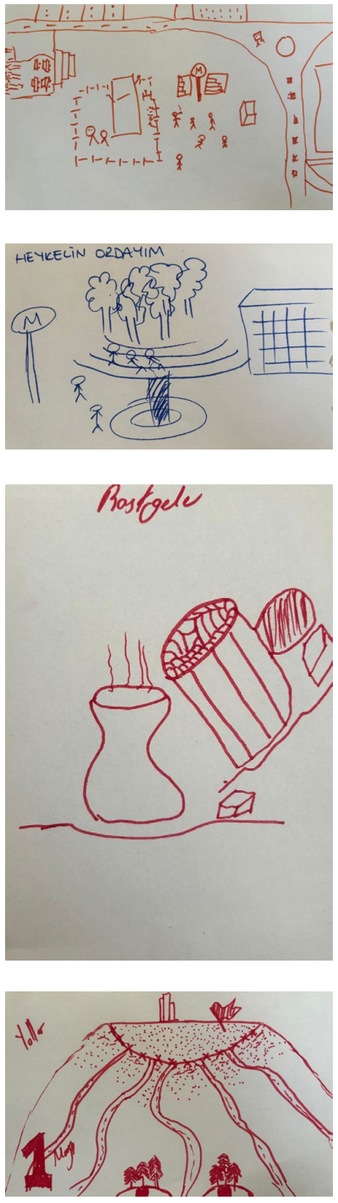


Figure 146.
All drawings produced by participants during the witness seminar as part of the visual elicitation process Note. Photographs by the author.

CONCLUSIONS

This thesis has examined Taksim Square as a critical urban site through which broader political, ideological, and spatial transformations in Turkey can be traced. Rather than approaching Taksim as a singular or exceptional public space, the study has treated it as a historically layered terrain where state projects, architectural interventions, media narratives, and everyday practices intersect. Taksim's importance lies precisely in this capacity to condense national political shifts into spatial form, making it one of the few sites in Turkey where changes in power relations, cultural policy, and public visibility can be observed with clarity.

The central argument advanced in this thesis is that Taksim Square is not a fixed or stable public space, but a socio-spatial formation continuously produced through historical, political, and material processes. Drawing on the critical theories of space and publicness developed by Lefebvre, Harvey, and Nora, the analysis demonstrates that public space should not be understood as a given condition that can simply be preserved or lost, but as an outcome of ongoing struggles over representation, access, and memory.

The longitudinal reading undertaken across the late nineteenth century, the early Republican period, and the contemporary moment confirms this hypothesis, while also revealing that the transformation of Taksim Square did not unfold as a single continuous process but through distinct periods, each governed by a different logic of intervention. The early Republican period is best understood as a moment of ideological transformation, in which the square was mobilised as a stage for the symbolic and spatial articulation of a new national identity. The interventions of the 1950s and 1970s, by contrast, were driven less by ideological programming than by rent-based and economic interests, most visibly expressed through hotel construction and large-scale infrastructural works. The most analytically significant finding of this periodisation, however, concerns the 2010s. The pedestrianisation project announced in 2013, and the broader transformation it set in motion, cannot be adequately explained as a discrete event. Its legal, administrative, and political groundwork can be traced back to the policy shifts initiated in 2002, several of which were articulated in the vocabulary of urban restoration and even sustainability. The subsequent translation of this policy infrastructure into a rent-oriented, interest-driven model of urban transformation during the 2010s constitutes one of the more unexpected findings of this research, and complicates any reading of the square's recent history as a sudden or exceptional rupture.

Summary of findings

The cartographic analysis undertaken across the Huber Map (1887-1891), the Pervititch insurance maps (1925), and contemporary satellite and field documentation (2013-2025) reveals that the square has undergone transformation along two distinct registers. The first concerns the underlying urban fabric: the 1925 maps already display the parcellation logic that anticipates later densification, while spaces historically tied to collective memory, including cemetery grounds, were destructively erased in ways that registered as significant ruptures in the social fabric of the area. The second register concerns the square itself, where the spatial envelope - the open void at the centre of Taksim and its overall dimensions - has remained comparatively stable across more than a century, even as its internal configuration changed substantially. The relocation of traffic flow underground, the construction of a mosque on the square's edge, the rapid completion of the new Atatürk Cultural Centre, and the conversion of a significant portion of the square's surface into a continuous concrete plane together produced one of the most dramatic reconfigurations recorded in the study, particularly when the 2013 and 2025 conditions are compared. That Gezi Park itself remains physically intact, despite having been at the centre of the very conflict that gives this thesis its title, stands as a significant - if partial - counterpoint to this broader narrative of erasure.

The media analysis and social media analysis produced findings broadly consistent with the thesis's initial expectations: both confirmed that Taksim functions as a highly mediatised political space,

with coverage of events such as the fire at the Atatürk Cultural Centre articulated through a markedly romanticised narrative register. What had not been fully anticipated was the sheer intensity of this mediatisation, and the extent to which it shapes - rather than merely reflects - public perception of the square.

The survey data point to a more unsettling finding: Taksim Square has increasingly become a space that residents actively avoid rather than seek out. Respondents consistently described moving through the square quickly, avoiding lingering, and treating it as a site to be crossed rather than inhabited. This withdrawal is, however, not uniform. The recent visibility of queer appropriation of the square and its surrounding nightlife geography introduces a countervailing dynamic of attachment and use that complicates a straightforwardly declensionist reading of the square's publicness.

The witness seminar produced the most analytically generative findings of the four methods, precisely because of an internal differentiation within the participant group that had not been anticipated at the outset. Participants who had taken part in the 2013 Gezi Park protests directly, in Taksim and Gezi Park itself, frequently did not recall - or actively de-emphasised - the square's physical presence during the events; for them, the protest was remembered primarily through action and atmosphere rather than through the spatial setting itself. Participants who had followed or participated in solidarity actions from other cities, by contrast, articulated a markedly more romanticised spatial imaginary of Taksim, one visibly shaped by the small set of iconic images that circulated on social media at the time. A second, related differentiation concerned attitudes toward the mosque built on the square following the protests: roughly half of the witness seminar group expressed strong discomfort with its presence, while the other half reported barely registering the building during their time in the square, despite its scale. This split did not consistently track the broader political alignment of participants, suggesting that architectural presence and political memory do not always travel together in the way the literature on contested public space tends to assume.

Methodological contribution and limitations

Methodologically, the thesis deliberately shifted the analytical focus away from expert-driven or purely architectural readings toward a citizen-centred perspective. By combining media analysis, social media analysis, a witness seminar, drawing-based methods, and a survey, the research was able to capture both dominant representations of Taksim and the more fragmented, embodied, and often contradictory experiences of those who encounter the square in everyday life.

The witness seminar format itself was adapted from the methodology encountered during research conducted in the context of the Aktion Arkiv project at KTH, although the application developed here departs from that precedent in important respects. Where the original methodology was designed for larger groups working on housing rather than public space, the present study deliberately worked with a smaller group of thirteen activist participants, aged between twenty-five and thirty-two, all of whom had participated in the 2013 Gezi Park protests. This smaller scale allowed for a more personalised methodological design, combining drawing exercises with extended discussion, and produced a depth of individual narrative that a larger-format seminar would have been unlikely to generate.

This depth came at the cost of representativeness, a limitation the thesis acknowledges directly. The witness seminar's participant group, while methodologically productive, cannot be read as representative of the broader population that engaged with the 2013 protests, let alone of Istanbul's residents more generally. The survey, by contrast, reached sixty-four respondents drawn from a comparatively unselected and heterogeneous population; this breadth, combined with the limited sample size, means that the survey cannot be read as statistically representative across demographic categories, but this was not its purpose. The survey was designed to capture personal perception rather than to produce a statistically generalisable account, and its findings

should be read accordingly. No major source access limitations were encountered during the research, although the reliance on French-language cadastral material and Ottoman-era toponymy required additional translation and verification work that should be acknowledged as part of the study's methodological process.

Considered as a transferable methodology, media analysis appears to be the most readily generalisable of the four methods, given the foundational role media narratives play in shaping the trajectory of contested public spaces. The witness seminar, by contrast, is more clearly site-specific in its design: in highly polarised political contexts, discussion can gravitate toward entrenched positions, and the composition of the participant group requires careful, possibly staged, construction - for instance, by first administering a short survey and using its results to identify a more deliberately diverse set of representative participants for subsequent seminar sessions. The methodology developed here is therefore transferable in its logic, but not in its specific configuration, which must be calibrated to the political and social texture of each site.

Beyond its methodological contribution, the research also necessitates a refinement of the definition of publicness with which the thesis began. Rather than treating publicness primarily as a function of physical access or formal openness, as is implicit in much of the literature this thesis engages with, the evidence gathered here suggests that publicness is more accurately understood as a condition produced through affective attachment and embodied memory, which may persist, weaken, or shift independently of a space's formal accessibility. A square can remain nominally open and pedestrianised while becoming, in practice, less public in this affective and embodied sense - precisely the condition the survey data describe.

The recurrence of the phrase "Taksim is everywhere" across media and activist discourse, referenced throughout this thesis, should be read not as evidence of a literal displacement of resistance to other sites, but as a symbolic generalisation: an extension of Taksim's meaning beyond its physical boundaries into a wider repertoire of political reference. This finding reinforces the thesis's broader argument that Taksim's significance operates simultaneously at the level of lived, localised experience and at the level of national political symbolism, and that these two levels do not always align.

A further theoretical contribution concerns the square's contemporary political character, which the research found to be genuinely paradoxical rather than singular. The square exhibits clear features of a post-political space: depoliticised through redesign, securitisation, and the substitution of expert-driven planning narratives for contested public debate. At the same time, the square is being actively repoliticised through feminist and queer modes of appropriation, particularly in relation to its nightlife geography, which have reconfigured what attachment to and use of the square can mean. The witness seminar's internal split over the mosque's presence reproduces this same paradox at a smaller scale: a single space, and even a single protest cohort, can sustain both a depoliticised relationship to the built environment and a highly charged, politically inflected one. Taksim should accordingly be theorised not as either a post-political or a highly political space, but as a site that holds both conditions in unresolved tension, with different publics, and sometimes the same individuals, occupying different positions within that tension at different moments.

Comparative context and policy implications

While this thesis has focused on Taksim Square as a singular case, its findings resonate with - and are most productively read alongside - struggles in Turkey that link environmental activism, rent-driven urban and territorial transformation, and the appropriation of sustainability discourse for developmentalist ends. The solidarity expressed toward the Gezi Park protests from environmental movements such as the Akbelen Forest resistance and the Mount Ida (Kaz Dağları) anti-mining and anti-tower resistance is not incidental: these movements share with the Taksim case a common structural logic, in which environmental and public-space politics, rent-

seeking development, and the selective deployment of sustainability vocabulary are mutually entangled. Rather than situating Gezi Park within a global lineage of square occupations - a comparison that has already been extensively made in the literature on movements such as Tahrir or the broader Occupy wave - this thesis suggests that Taksim's more analytically productive comparative frame is internal to Turkey: a set of cases in which policy production around land, sustainability, and mega-projects converts shared spatial and environmental resources into rent. Read together, these cases suggest that the rent-environment-sustainability-mega-project nexus identified in the Taksim case is not an isolated feature of this particular square, but a broader pattern in the production of contested space in contemporary Turkey, one that would benefit from sustained comparative attention in future research.

These structural parallels carry direct implications for how future interventions in Taksim Square, and in comparable contested public spaces, should be approached. The first and most fundamental implication is that such spaces must not be depoliticised through their treatment as primarily technical or aesthetic design problems. Taksim Square is not a landscape project, nor merely a square-design project; it is, irreducibly, a public project in the political sense of that term, and any planning process that proceeds as though expert judgement alone can resolve its future risks reproducing precisely the depoliticisation this thesis identifies as one of the square's defining contemporary conditions.

Participatory planning processes are accordingly necessary, but this thesis cautions against treating participation as self-evidently democratising. Participatory mechanisms can also be instrumentalised to retroactively justify decisions already taken, or to diffuse institutional responsibility for contested outcomes without genuinely redistributing decision-making power. Guarding against this requires that participation be structured as substantively, rather than procedurally, democratic: bottom-up initiatives and small-scale interventions should first be tested as situated case studies or street-level experiments, with their findings feeding into policy formation as a supporting input rather than functioning merely as legitimating cover for decisions made elsewhere. This requires sustained, genuinely deliberative engagement with local communities, including structured seminars and discussion formats of the kind piloted in this research, rather than one-off consultation events.

A further implication concerns the scope of policy itself. Because the outcomes of participatory and witness-based processes are inevitably case-specific and site-specific, policy frameworks for contested public space should be oriented toward the process through which decisions are made rather than toward prescribing particular spatial outcomes in advance. A process-oriented policy framework - one that mandates how deliberation should occur, who must be involved, and over what time frame - is more defensible, and more transferable across sites, than an outcome-oriented framework that attempts to specify in advance what a "successful" public space should look like. In the specific case of Taksim, this implies that any future redesign - including the unrealised 2020 urban design competition proposal, or subsequent iterations potentially framed through United Nations sustainability and climate frameworks - should be evaluated first and foremost on the legitimacy and inclusiveness of the process that produces it, rather than on the formal qualities of the resulting design alone.

Directions for future research

This research opens several directions for future inquiry. The most immediate concerns Taksim Square itself: any future redesign of the square, whether arising from a revival of the unrealised 2020 competition or from a new proposal framed through global sustainability and climate-policy discourse, warrants close analysis of how such policy vocabularies are translated - or fail to be translated - into the square's actual spatial and political conditions. Given this thesis's finding that the square's current, heavily paved condition is unlikely to be experienced positively by those who use it, future redesigns claiming a sustainability orientation

should be assessed critically against the lived, embodied evidence this research has gathered, rather than against their stated intentions alone.

A second direction concerns the broader comparative frame proposed above. Future research could apply this thesis's combined methodology - media and social media analysis, witness seminars, and survey work - to cases such as the Akbelen Forest and Mount Ida resistances, in order to test whether the rent-environment-sustainability nexus identified here operates similarly across sites with different spatial typologies and different relationships between protest and place.

A third, more methodological direction concerns the witness seminar format itself. Repeating this method with a deliberately diversified participant group - varying in age, political position, and relationship to the 2013 protests - could clarify whether the bond between individuals and contested space is primarily shaped by direct presence at the site during moments of conflict, or by other factors this thesis has not fully isolated. The strength of the seminar lies in its capacity to surface exactly this kind of differentiated, embodied knowledge; whether its findings would hold across a more heterogeneous group remains, deliberately, an open question this thesis does not resolve.

Rather than presenting Taksim Square as a concluded or exhausted public space, however, this thesis argues that it remains an open-ended and contested formation. The persistence of expressions such as "Taksim is everywhere" reflects not only the displacement of publicness beyond the square itself, but a continuing process through which broader questions about public space, memory, and political agency are negotiated. Taksim's current condition, marked by tension between control and appropriation, abstraction and embodiment, does not signal the end of public space, but rather foregrounds the need to rethink how publicness is produced, constrained, and reimagined under contemporary urban and political conditions.

DICTIONARY

PEOPLE

Atilla Koç (born 1946): A Turkish politician who served as Minister of Culture and Tourism, associated with cultural policy and heritage administration in the 2000s.

Fevzi Pasha (1876–1950): A senior commander who played a major role in the War of Independence.

Hafız Mehmed (c. 1600–1651): An Ottoman bureaucrat and military figure, representative of the administrative elite shaping imperial governance in the early modern period.

Hüseyin Avni Mutlu (born 1956): The Istanbul Governor during the 2013 Gezi Park protests, known for his controversial handling of public demonstrations.

İsmet Pasha (1884–1973): A key military leader and statesman of the early Republic.

Kösem Sultan (c. 1589–1651): One of the most powerful women in Ottoman history, exercising significant political influence as Valide Sultan and regent during the 17th century.

Lütfi Kırdar (1887–1961): A physician and politician who served as the Mayor of Istanbul and played a major role in shaping early Republican urban development.

Mücella Yapıcı (born 1951): A prominent architect and activist, known for her role in professional chambers and for her involvement in the Gezi Parka movement.

Sultan Mahmud II (1785–1839): An Ottoman sultan known for centralizing reforms and the abolition of the Janissaries, marking a decisive phase of imperial modernization.

Sultan Murad IV (1612–1640): An Ottoman sultan noted for authoritarian rule and efforts to restore state authority during a period of internal turmoil.

Sultan Selim III (1761–1808): An Ottoman sultan associated with early modernization initiatives, particularly the Nizam-ı Cedid reforms.

Sultan Süleyman (1494–1566): Suleiman the Magnificent, an Ottoman sultan whose reign marked the empire's political, territorial, and cultural zenith.

Talcid Man: A protester associated with the Gezi Park demonstrations, known for distributing antacid (Talcid) to counter tear-gas effects.

PLACES

Ayaspaşa: A residential neighborhood near Taksim, historically linked to elite housing and late Ottoman urban development.

Beyoğlu: A central district of Istanbul historically shaped by European influence.

Çamlıca Hill: A major hill on the Asian side of Istanbul, noted for its panoramic views and symbolic role in urban and religious landscape debates.

Cihangir: A hillside neighborhood overlooking the Bosphorus, known for its intellectual, artistic, and residential character.

Dolmabahçe: An area along the Bosphorus associated with imperial modernization, most notably through the Dolmabahçe Palace.

Eminönü Square: A historic urban square functioning as a major transportation and commercial hub on the Historical Peninsula.

Galata: A historic port district with Genoese origins, long associated with trade, cosmopolitan populations, and layered urban identities.

Golden Horn: A natural harbor dividing the European side of Istanbul, central to the city's industrial, commercial, and social history.

Istanbul Biennial (since 1987): An international contemporary art exhibition shaping Istanbul's cultural geography.

Istanbul Technical University Faculty of Architecture: One of Turkey's leading architecture schools, influential in modern architectural education, urban research, and professional discourse.

Istiklal Street: A major pedestrian avenue and cultural spine of Beyoğlu.

Karaköy: A historic port district on the Golden Horn, shaped by trade, multicultural communities, and contemporary art spaces.

Kazancı Hill: A sloping area connecting Taksim to lower districts, known for its dense urban fabric and layered social history.

Kasımpaşa: A working-class district along the Golden Horn, historically associated with shipbuilding, industry, and migration.

Maçka Valley: A green corridor between Taksim and Nişantaşı, functioning as an urban park and ecological break.

Mete Street: A major street in Taksim connecting the square to hotels, public buildings, and the Dolmabahçe axis.

Parmak Kapı: A historic passage or gateway in Beyoğlu.

Pera: The historical name of Beyoğlu.

Sıraselviler: A street and surrounding area linking Taksim to Cihangir.

Singen: A German town frequently referenced in European industrial/migration contexts.

Sultanahmet Mosque: A landmark imperial mosque emblematic of Ottoman religious and urban symbolism.

Selimiye Mosque: An iconic imperial mosque by Sinan, used frequently in comparative architectural discourse.

Sulukule: One of the oldest Romani neighborhoods in Istanbul, demolished in the 2000s during urban renewal.

Taksim Garden: A landscaped public garden historically located near Taksim Square.

Tarlabaşı: A historic inner-city neighborhood near Taksim, later transformed by urban renewal.

Tepebaşı: A historic area associated with entertainment venues, theaters, and early modern urban life.

Tophane: A waterfront district historically associated with Ottoman military industry, later a mixed-use cultural zone.

Tramway Street: A street shaped by the historic tram line between Taksim and nearby districts.

Unkapanı: A Golden Horn district known for its historical grain market and later music industry.

Yeşilçam: The center of Turkey's mid-20th-century film industry in Istanbul.

TERMS

19 May celebrations (since 1919): National youth and sports holiday commemorations linked to the War of Independence.

1952 Temporary Revision Commission (1954): A short-lived governmental body revising early Republican regulations.

3. Köprü Yerine Yaşam Platformu: Civic action platform opposing the 3rd Bosphorus Bridge.

32. Gün (1985–2016): Politics-focused Turkish TV program shaping public memory.

Action Army (Hareket Ordusu) (1909): Force mobilized to suppress the 31 March Incident.

Aida: Opera by Giuseppe Verdi, symbol of Western cultural presence.

Arab Spring (2010–2012): Wave of uprisings across the Middle East and North Africa.

Arkitekt: Influential Turkish architecture journal (1931–1981).

Arçelik (founded 1955): Industrial/household appliances company symbolizing post-war modernization.

Cumartesi Anneleri (since 1995): Civil protest movement demanding justice for the disappeared.

DİSK (founded 1967): Confederation of progressive trade unions in Turkey.

European eclecticism: Architectural approach blending Renaissance, Baroque, and Neoclassical styles.

European Recovery Program (Marshall Plan) (1948–1952): U.S. post-war reconstruction program.

First National Architectural Movement: Ottoman–Seljuk revivalist architectural ideology.

Grand Théâtre: Early Republican monumental theater proposal for Taksim by Perret.

Halay: Collective Anatolian folk dance symbolizing communal solidarity.

Karadeniz İsyandadır: Environmental movement against destructive Black Sea projects.

Kent Hareketleri (Urban Movements): Platform advocating participatory planning and environmental rights.

Kıble (qibla): Direction Muslims face during prayer.

Küfeki stone: Local limestone in Ottoman/Republican architecture.

Law for the Encouragement of Industry (1927): Republican industrial incentive law.

Municipal Council: Local governing and administrative body.

Occupy movements: Global protest wave beginning in 2011.

Protests against the visit of the U.S. Sixth Fleet (1968–1969): Anti-imperialist demonstrations in Istanbul.

Schmoll: Early 20th-century European industrial/commercial brand.

Second Architectural Movement: Monumentalist Republican architectural ideology.

Second Constitutional Monarchy (1908–1918): Final constitutional era of the Ottoman Empire.

Standing Man (Duran Adam): Non-violent protest form during Gezi Park.

Tanzimat-era (1839–1876): Major legal and administrative reform period.

Turkish Monuments Association (Türk Anıtlar Derneği): Heritage conservation institution.

Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB): National professional union.

Urbaniste: French term for urban planner/designer.

Visual Artists' Association: Professional organization advocating artistic rights.

War of Independence: Struggle (1919–1923) founding the Republic of Turkey.

Ziraat Bank (founded 1863): Major state-owned bank.

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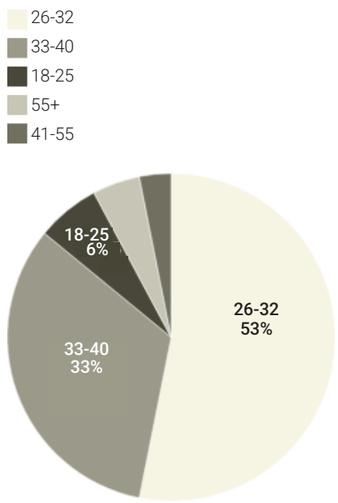
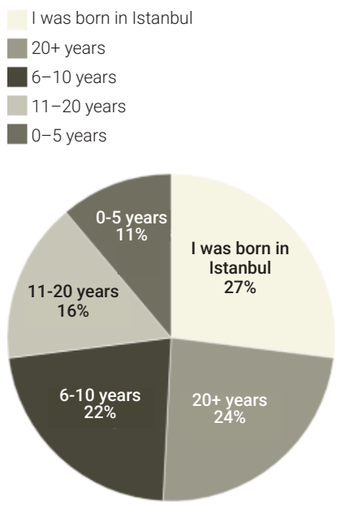
APPENDIX. Survey Questions and Answers

Taksim Square:
Spatial Witnessing and Experience Survey

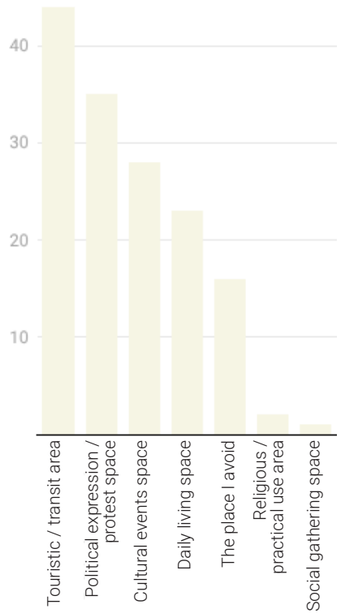
1- Age range



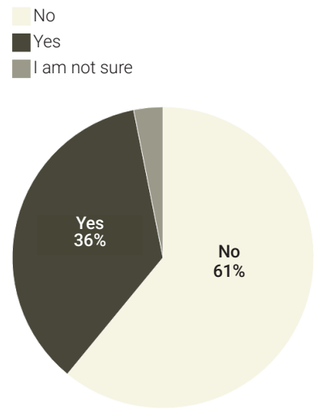
2- How long have you been living in Istanbul?



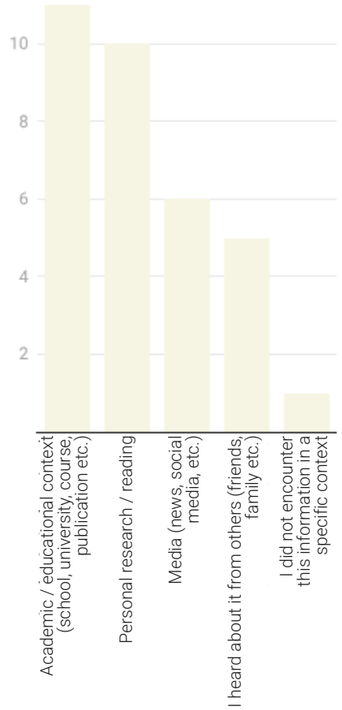
3- What does Taksim Square represent to you?



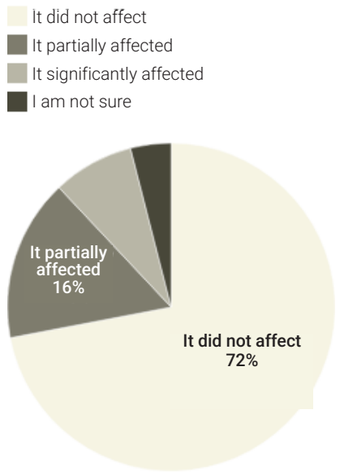
4- Were you aware that part of Gezi Park and its surrounding area used to be a cemetery in the past?



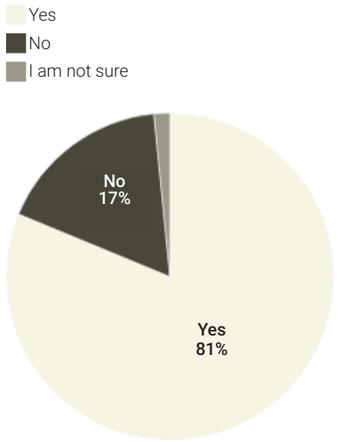
5- In what context did you learn that part of Gezi Park and its surrounding area used to be a cemetery in the



6- Did this information affect your relation with Taksim Square?

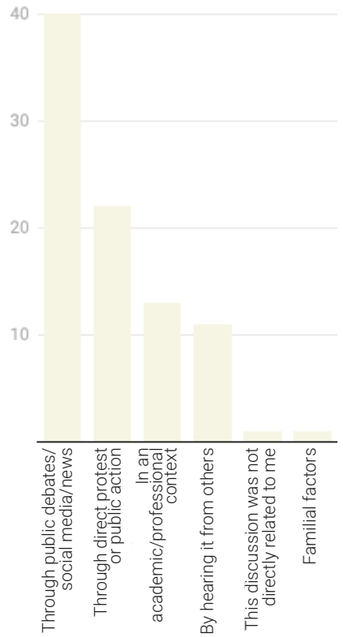


8- Were you aware of the discussions about reconstructing the Artillery Barracks and/or building a shopping mall on the site of today's Gezi Park?

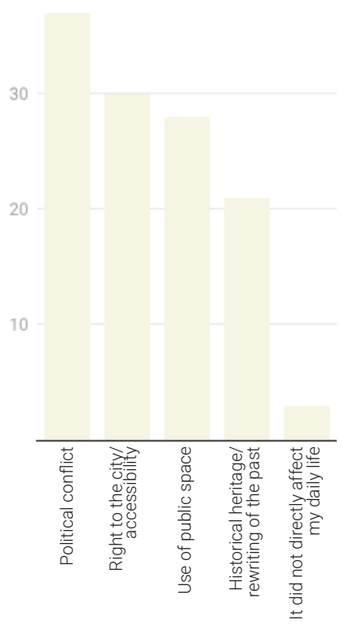


7- When did you learn this information?

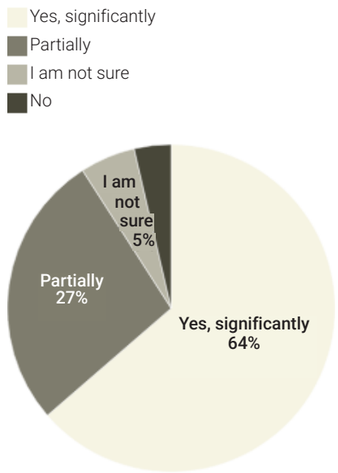
9- How did you encounter the discussion about reconstructing the Artillery Barracks and/or building a shopping mall on the site of today's Gezi Park?



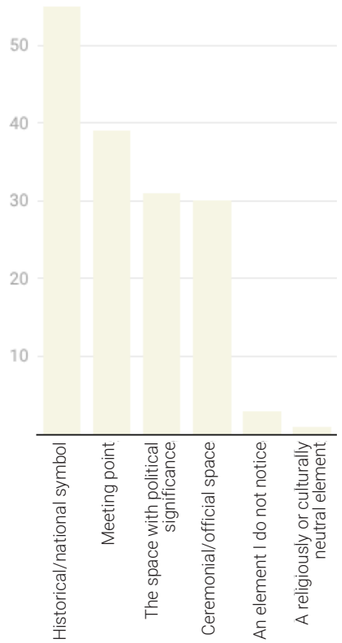
10- What was the Artillery Barracks / shopping mall discussion primarily associated with for you?



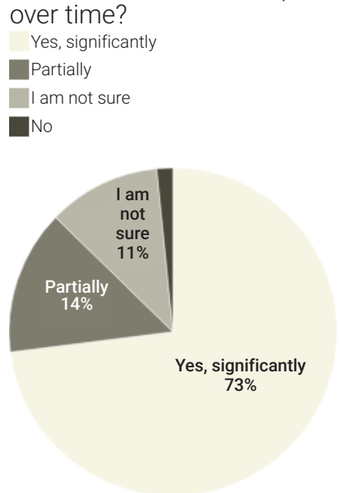
11- Did this discussion affect your perception of Taksim's future?



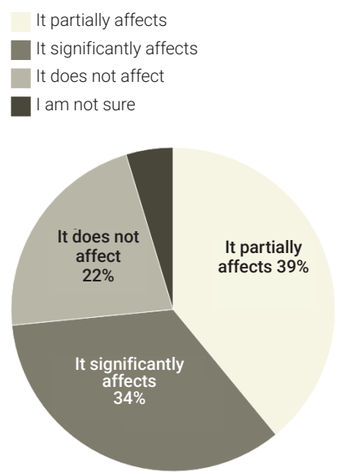
12- Which of the following is the Republic Monument associated with for you?



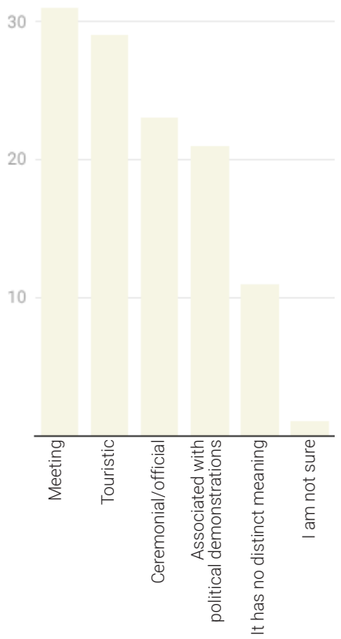
13- Is the Republic Monument perceived as an unchanging element of Taksim Square over time?



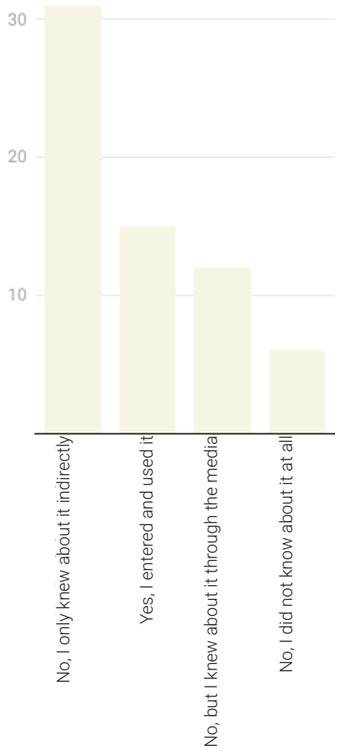
14- Does the Republic Monument affect your perception of Taksim



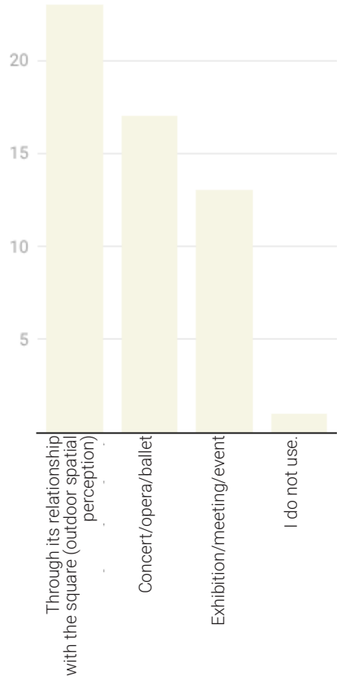
15- What does the area surrounding the Republic Monument feel like to you



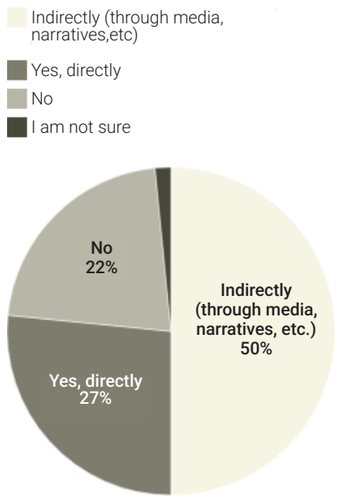
16- Did you experience the old AKM (before its demolition)?



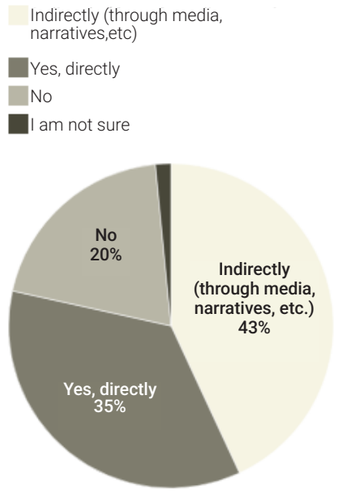
17- In what contexts did you use the old AKM?



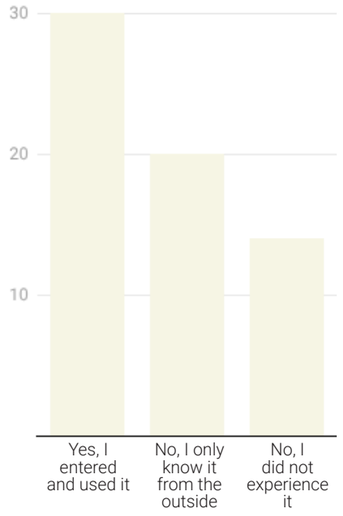
18- Did you witness the demolition process of the



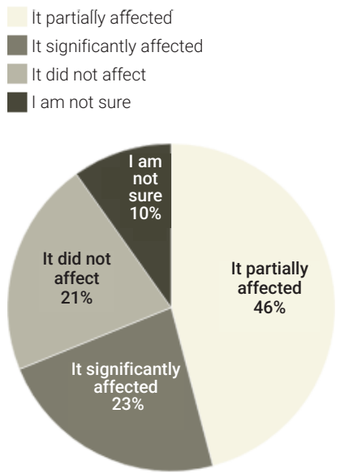
19- Did you witness the construction process of the new AKM?



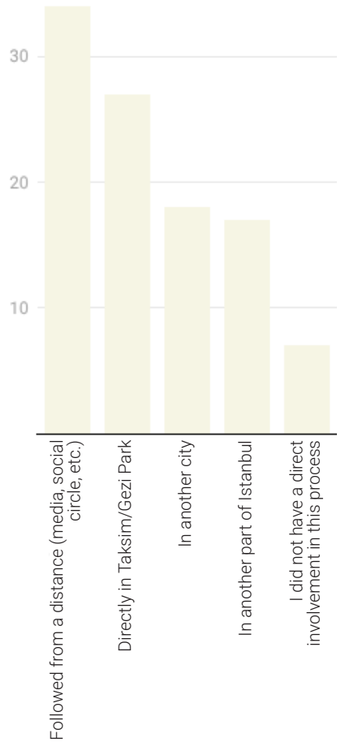
20- Have you experienced the new AKM?



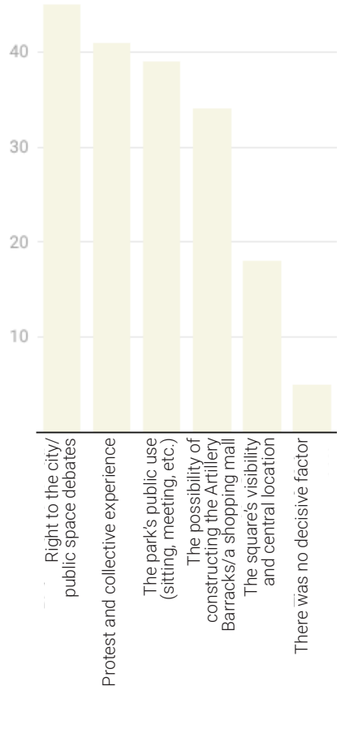
21- Did the demolition and reconstruction of the AKM affect your perception of Taksim Square?



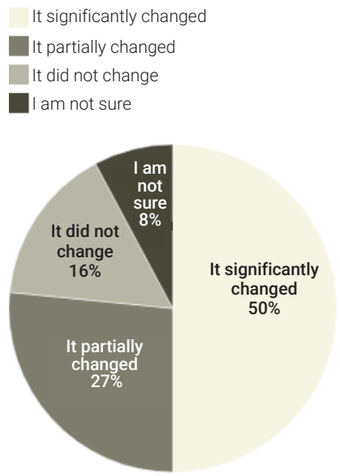
22- How did you experience the Gezi Park process spatially?



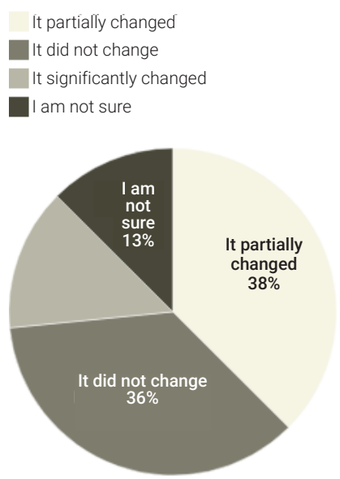
23- Which of the following were more influential for you during the Gezi Park process?



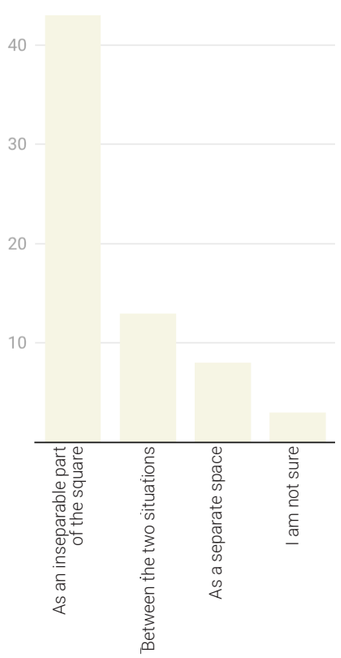
24- How did the Gezi Park process affect your perception of Taksim



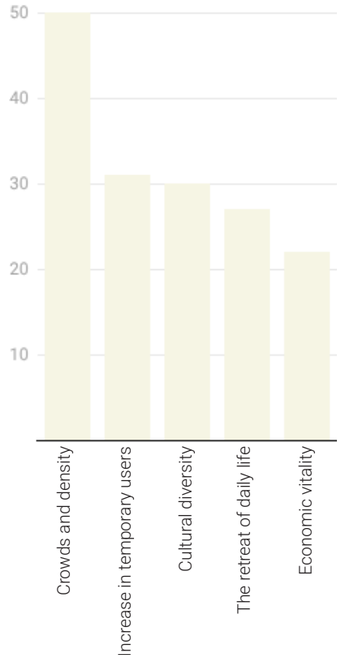
25- Did your way of using Taksim Square change after the Gezi Park process?



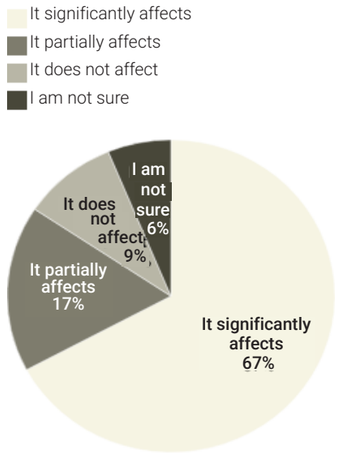
26- Do you see Gezi Park as an area independent from Taksim Square, or as an inseparable part of the



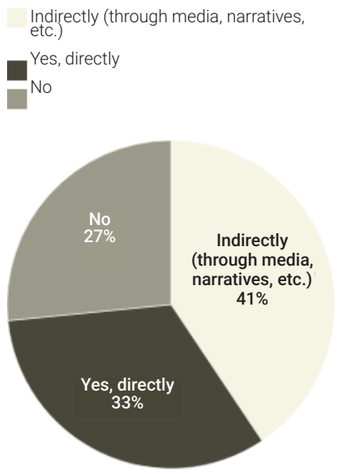
27- What is the tourist density around Taksim associated with for you?



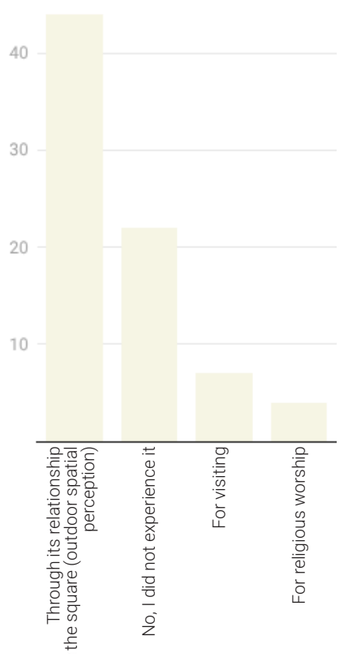
28- Do hotels and tourist-oriented development affect the sense of "who Taksim belongs to"?



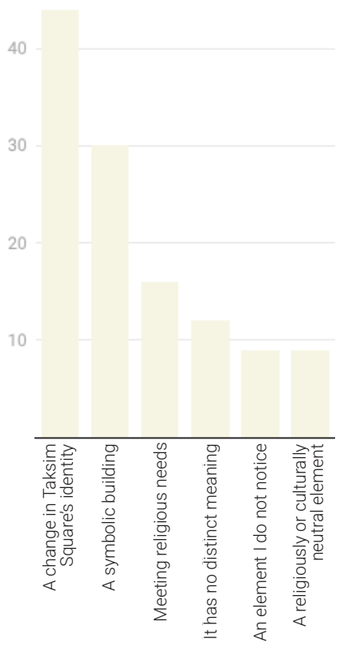
29- Did you witness the construction process of the Taksim Mosque?



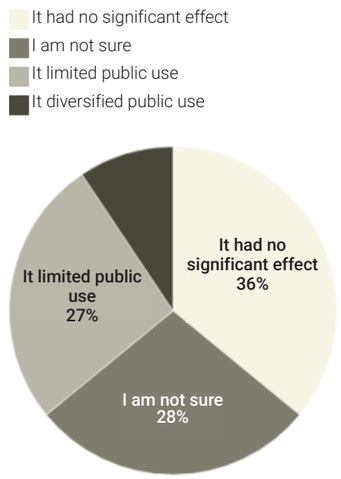
30- In which of the following contexts have you experienced the Taksim



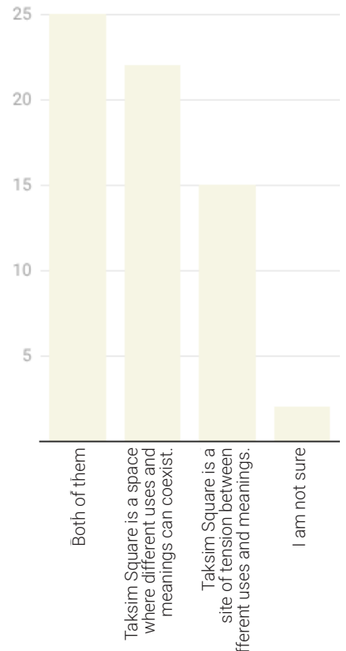
31- Which of the following is the Taksim Mosque associated with for you?



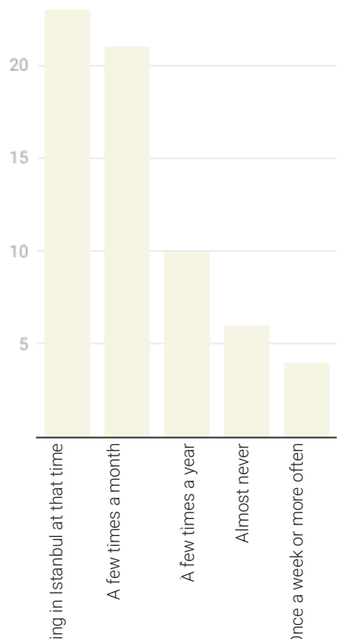
32- In your opinion, how has the presence of the Taksim Mosque affected the public use of Taksim Square?



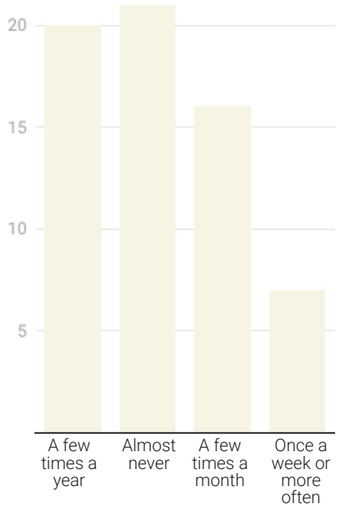
33- Which of the following is closer to your view?



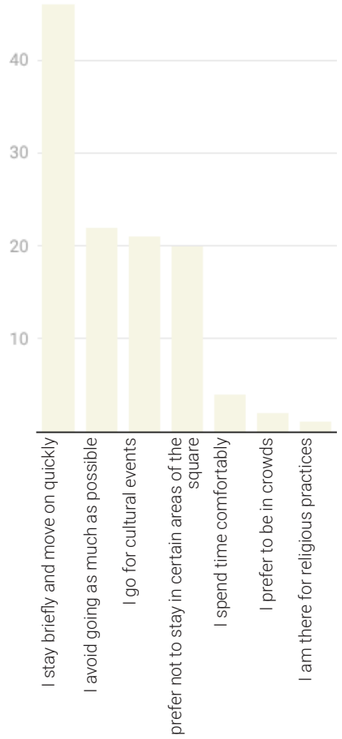
34- How often did you use Taksim Square before 2010–2013?



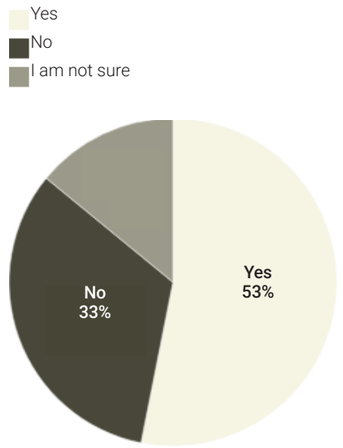
35- How often do you use Taksim Square today?



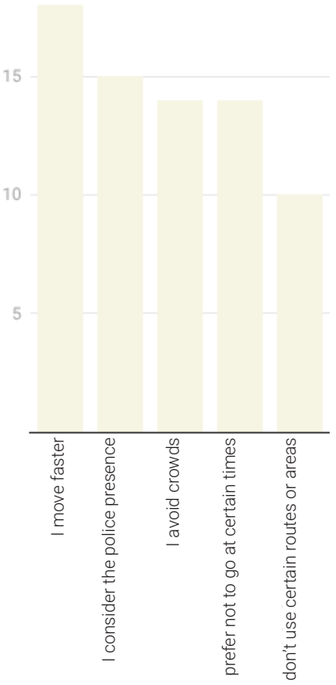
36- When you are in Taksim Square today, which of the following apply to you?



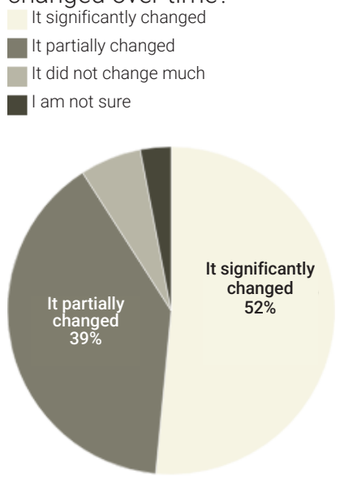
37- Do you consciously change your behavior when you are in Taksim Square?



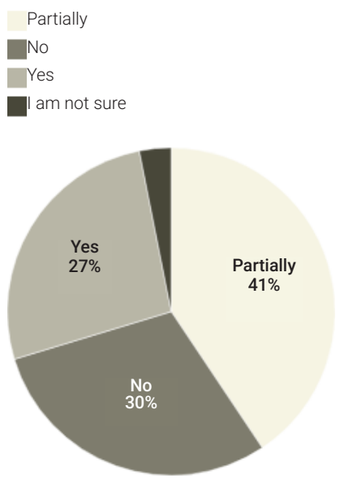
38- Which of the following apply to you?



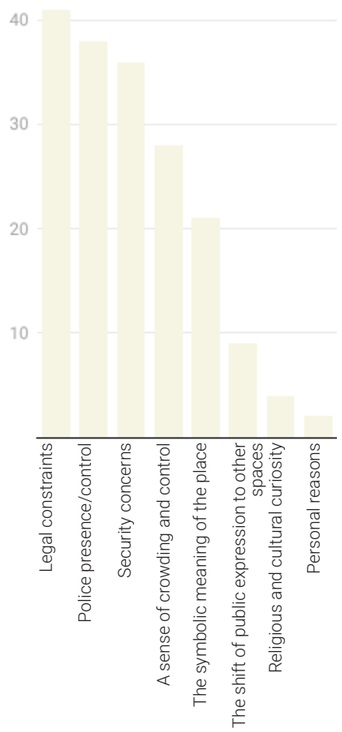
39- Overall, how has your perception of Taksim Square changed over time?



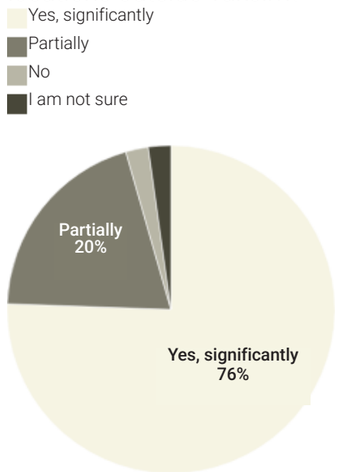
40 Do you consider Taksim Square to be a viable space for public expression today (such as celebration, gathering, religious practice,



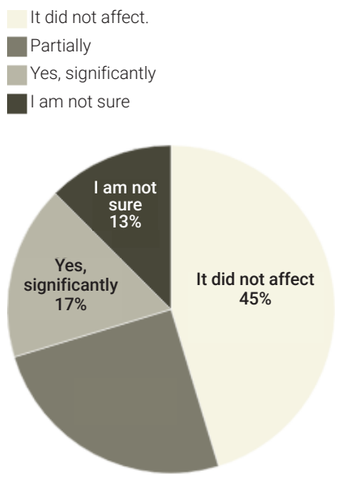
41- What are the main factors influencing this situation?



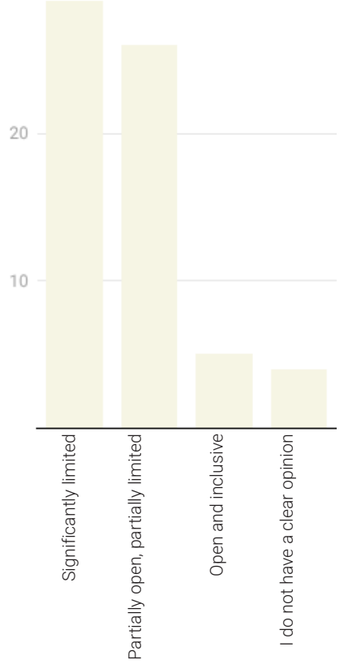
42- Do you think in recent protests have shifted to locations outside Taksim?

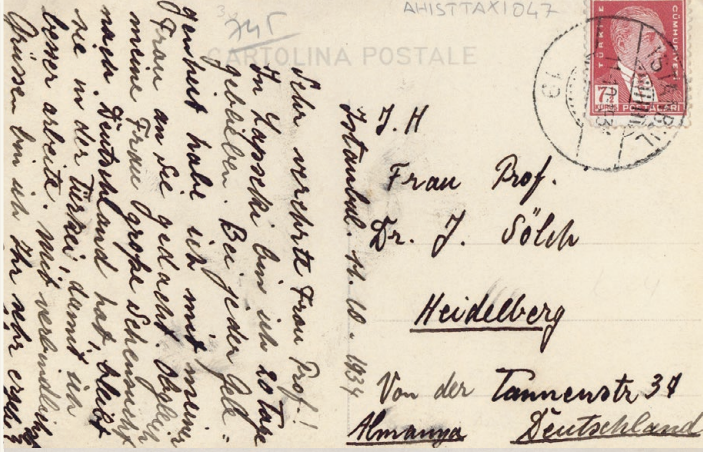


43- Did the shift of protests and public gatherings to locations outside Taksim affect your way of participating in public space?



44- Overall, how do you perceive Taksim Square as a public space today?




AHISTTAKI047

CARTOLINA POSTALE

345

Türkiye Cumhuriyeti

Posta Kartı

Ihr werthe Frau Prof.! Ihr Kärtchen, das ich so sehr gewünscht habe, ich mit meiner Frau an sie gedacht. Dürfen wir meine Frau grosse Sehnsucht nach Deutschland hat, bleibt sie in der Türkei; damit ich lerner arbeite. Mit verbindlichen Grüssen bin ich Ihr ergebener

J. H

Istanbul. H. 10. 1934

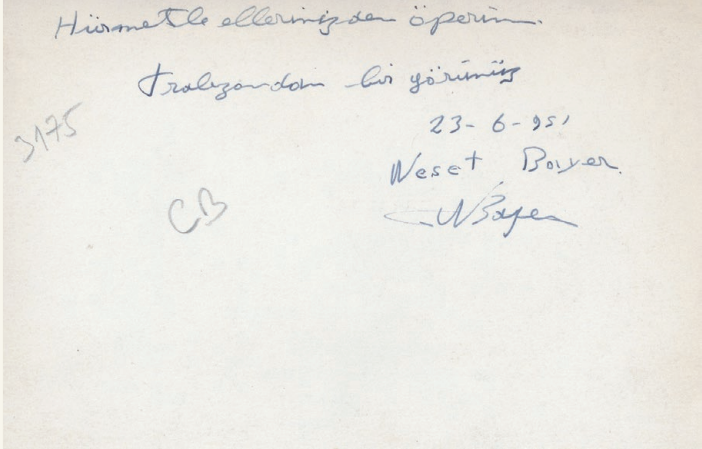
Frau Prof.

Dr. J. Söllh

Heidelberg

Von der Tannenstr 34

Almanya Deutschland


Hürmetle ellerinizden öperim.

Iralizandan bir görüntü

23-6-95

Veset Boyer

3175

CB

AHISTTAKI010

OSMANLI BANKASI

Arşivleri

Ilgili

Hacı Bekir Han No. 8,

Rue Voivode Alexandre,

Pera - Pk. 1

7/5/55 Mide yanabı

30 KURUŞ ZİYA GÖKALP

TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ POSTA PULLARI

TÜRKİYE CUMHURİYETİ

2

TAKSIM TOPÇU KIŞLASI

CARTE POSTALE.

UNION POSTALE UNIVERSELLE.

FIXER UN TIMBRE DE 1/2 PIASTRE.

863

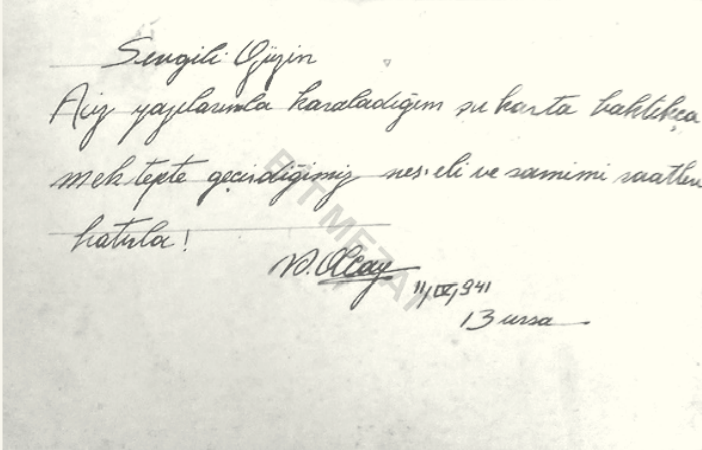
M

Monsieur Feuillet

237 Rue St-Martin

Burak Tahtadibi

Côté reservé à l'adresse.


Sevgili Ojim

Aciz yazılarımla karaladığım şu kartla bahtiça mektepte geçirdiğimiz neşeli ve samimi saatleri hatırla!

11/08/941

13 ursa