

## **The effect of national and local authorities in the context of the transformation of parks as public spaces: Ankara case study**

Kadriye Burcu Yavuz Kumlu<sup>1</sup>, Sezen Aslan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1-2</sup>*Gazi University, City and Regional Planning Department, Ankara, Turkey*

<sup>1</sup>*k.burcuyavuz@gmail.com*

<sup>2</sup>*sezensavran@gmail.com*

Public spaces are the spatial units of cities which are constituted for various purposes as meeting, recreation, leisure, relaxation and recovery for inhabitants of cities. Urban parks are considered as one of these mentioned public spaces here. The history of parks goes beyond to the earlier parts of the old times in the history. For different countries, the historical background, usage, management and spatial structure of parks may constitute different characteristics. For Turkey, the history of parks is not an old issue and the evolution of parks, including their usages and spatial forms, have been highly related with the governmental policies.

In the context of Turkey, the evolution of parks has been depended on the effects of national and local authorities and several dynamics belongs to at that specific time periods for different national and local authorities. For instance, the usage of parks could transform one to another due to the decisions made by the actors of the national and local authorities. In accordance with their ideology and specific targets on space, national and local authorities can modify the usages and spatial boundaries of parks by means of legal and executive measures developed by themselves. One of the significant tools used by national and local authorities to adjust the spatial rules is the urban planning practice, as well as planning law. In the context of Turkish urban planning practice, parks are considered for the recreational purposes and included in the master plans are designed to meet the needs of social infrastructural areas and limited to certain spatial amounts by necessity defined by the related law, remains inadequate most of the time. Namely, this kind of legal necessity causes the formation

of incorrect location decisions on the master plans in the context of parks. For example, these public spaces, namely parks, are located on the master plans where the inhabitants of cities cannot access easily, but those kinds of public-social areas should locate on the places where each of the citizens can easily access. This situation increases the significance of the existence of centrally located parks, although parks in general do not have sufficient importance in the urban planning practice in the country. To sum up, Turkish urban planning approach and legal structure of planning regulated by national and local authorities form a flexible basis for changing the usage and spatial form of parks as public spaces. These changes have caused the formation of various social movements; most of them are related with environment. Gezi Park in Istanbul is a great example of this situation. The intervention of national and local authorities to Gezi Park has resulted in a huge social reaction against to the authorities.

In this paper, Ankara, the capital city of Turkey, is selected as the study area. The reason why Ankara is selected is based on the fact that the city reflects the ideological change on space of national and local authorities from the period of establishment of Republic to the current period. The selected parks for the study are Gençlik Park, Güven Park and Kuğulu Park. These parks are selected because they are located on the central areas of the city in a specific timely manner, respectively. These parks have a significant place in the formation of macroform of the city. In other words, these parks are located in the current central area of the city. Therefore, they are considered as accessible for the whole public and economically valuable in land rent theory. So, national and local authorities tend to approach these parks as vacant places for the various development projects or other related purposes.

In this study, first of all master plans of Ankara will be examined with their historical evolution in order to indicate the development of central areas related with the development of these parks. Second, planning law, municipal government act and illegal occupancy situations will be examined to determine which changes or related changes could be implemented on the parks. In the end, arbitrary and illegal or so-called-legal implementations without compromising the public interest on the parks will be discussed. In addition to this, mentioned various social movements as a reaction to



the decisions of national and local authorities on the parks are worth to state in this study.