



The Scale of Public Space: Taksim Square in Istanbul

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ABSTRACT

This article aims at following the traces of the transformation of public sphere in Turkey through its manifestations on urban public spaces with the case study of Taksim Square. In this attempt, the article illustrates how Taksim square, as a public space, has been shaped by struggles between different ideologies, discourses, political decisions and daily activities taking place at personal, interpersonal, local, national, supranational and global scales. Through this way this article also aims at understanding how these contestations at different scales are affecting people, individually and collectively, from daily life practices to political integration. The article also discusses that our daily life practices and preferences are political decisions and our participation in public sphere occurs through those daily actions of the personal spheres. Therefore, the article suggests that a paradigm shift is needed in the design and production of the built environments that will facilitate the coexistence of multiple counter publics.

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1. Introduction

Today the role of public spaces in the exchange of ideas and creation of public opinion has started to be discussed extensively. Public spaces such as Tahrir Square in Egypt, Sintagma Square in Greece, the buffer Zone in Cyprus, or the Azadi Square in Tehran have more than what they occupy as physical spaces. Images reflecting those huge urban areas with millions of people inside are circulating all over the world through news agencies or social media, as the messengers of new social orders or new regimes. Those images help to create and sustain a

feeling of strong resistance and solidarity through the representation of the materialization of political ideas with real people and real places in them. Although it is impossible to deny the importance of internet and social media in the formation of public opinion, organization of protests and demonstrations, and circulation of news and information, the need for the physicality of place (a public space), and the

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