

## SPACE AND MEANING CHANGE IN URBANIZATION AND MODERNIZATION PROCESS: An Urban Park in the First Capital of the Ottoman Empire

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### **Abstract**

*The foundations of Westernization Movement in Turkey were laid in late Ottoman Empire. Following the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the proclamation of the republic, urban space became highly important and modernist architects from the west planned a large number of Turkish cities. The concept of urban park was introduced and parks became significant components of modern life in this period. Bursa, too, was influenced by this movement; it was planned by western planners and an urban park was built. However, the meaning of urban parks within the ideal of modern life in Turkey and in Bursa has changed over time. This study is based on urban development periods in Turkey and it presents the change Bursa Kültürpark in Bursa, the early modern city of Turkey, underwent during the process from modernization to globalization.*

**Keywords:** *Urban park; modernization; urbanization; space.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

After the Industrial Revolution, parks became spaces open to whole segments of society and distinctive elements of modern urban planning as city governments sought healthy open areas as a countermeasure to the cramped neighbourhoods of the working class and the poor, and spare time phenomenon spread to all layers of the society (Demir, 2006).

Industrial revolution, which took place in the Atlantic Coast of Europe, and the project of modernity developed in Europe after enlightenment started to alter the economy and organizational structure of the Ottoman Empire as of 1840s. It is only natural that these changes reflected on urban space. The transformations in Europe necessitated significant transformations in Ottoman cities as well. The Ottoman Empire was, on the one hand, changing its governing structure by means of central reforms in order to accommodate itself to the new conditions; on the other hand, it was having transformations in its economic structure by opening its economic structure to foreign countries. These changes necessitated significant changes in cities. Business centers of cities were being restructured, and public transport vehicles were taking the place of cars. Populations of cities were increasing, and cities were expanding to new areas (Tekeli, 2010).

In the process commenced with the proclamation of republic, cities shaped by urban plans designed by western modernist planners and architects made up the space stage of Turkish modernization. Public spaces were one of the most important components of this stage and the earliest examples of urban park emerged in this period as a new type of public space. Several studies have been made about urban parks in Turkey. These studies are generally empirical studies aimed at measuring the park users' expectations of the park and their level of satisfaction through surveys (Erkip, 1997; Oguz, 2000; Yılmaz et al, 2007; Çakıcı, 2009; Yavuz & Kuloglu, 2010). There are very few studies about the meaning of parks from the perspective of changing socio-economic level (Uludağ, 1998; Özer, 2005; Demir, 2006).

Bursa, which dates back to 8000 BC, was the first capital and early modern city of the Ottoman Empire. This study aims to present the factors paving the way for the emergence of Kültürpark, built in Bursa in the republican period, as a space characterizing modern city and the changes it went through based on the transformation periods of urban space in Turkey.

## METHODOLOGY

The transformation of cities in Turkey has been reviewed in five different historical periods by Tekeli (1998). By this study, the social and spatial change of the park has been analyzed based on Tekeli's review. To determine the role of the park in public life in the past, newspaper reports and other written sources has been examined and the texts in these sources mentioning the role of the park in peoples daily life has been put together. Moreover, an oral historical study has been made in order to compare the way of use between the period of time when the park was used as focal public space and the way of use at present time. People to be interviewed has been choosen among those who have witnessed the construction of the park. Questions about how they have used the park in the past and now has been directed to these poeple, the interviews have been recorded and resolutions of these records have been made later. Totally 6 persons have been interviewed.

The park has been visited and photographed periodically since it was opened for the competition in 2001. During these visits the users way of using the park has been observed and interviews has been made. Written sources, oral historical study and the results of observations and interviews made at different times in the park has been associated to the Tekeli's classification. The transformation of the park has been put forward in five different urban development periods and the results has been discussed.

## TRANSFORMATION OF THE TURKISH CITIES AND BURSA KÜLTÜRPARK

The first urbanization period of Turkish cities, covers the time between the second half of the nineteenth century, when Ottoman Empire opened the doors to world capitalism, and the proclamation of the Republic. With its weaving industry and production system extending to villages, Bursa represents the first modernizing face of the empire in this period (Ortaylı, 2010). On the other hand, Bursa also occupies an important place as the first capital city of the Ottoman Empire and a symbol of the classical period (Laurent, 1999). The conquest of Istanbul and later Istanbul becoming the new capital did not reduce the importance of Bursa (Gabriel, 1958). Owing to its geographical position, the city has always had relations with Istanbul (Kırayoğlu & Tanyeli, 1999).

When Bursa, which was of capital importance to the Ottoman Empire, was largely destroyed in an earthquake in 1855, planning was imperative. Figure 1 presents a map of the city produced in 1924. The first governor to be appointed to the city in this period was Ahmet Vefik Paşa, who had served as the ambassador to Paris for a short time. During his service as ambassador, Ahmet Vefik Paşa was influenced by the reforms implemented in Paris by Baron Hausmann and he introduced significant reforms in Bursa throughout his short service as the governor. He initiated and oversaw the construction of buildings such as hospitals, a government office and a theatre<sup>1</sup> and he also realized wide street expansions and reorganization of the roads connecting the city to the neighbouring areas (Laurent, 1999).





Figure 1. 1924 map of Bursa (Source: Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Archive, 2012).

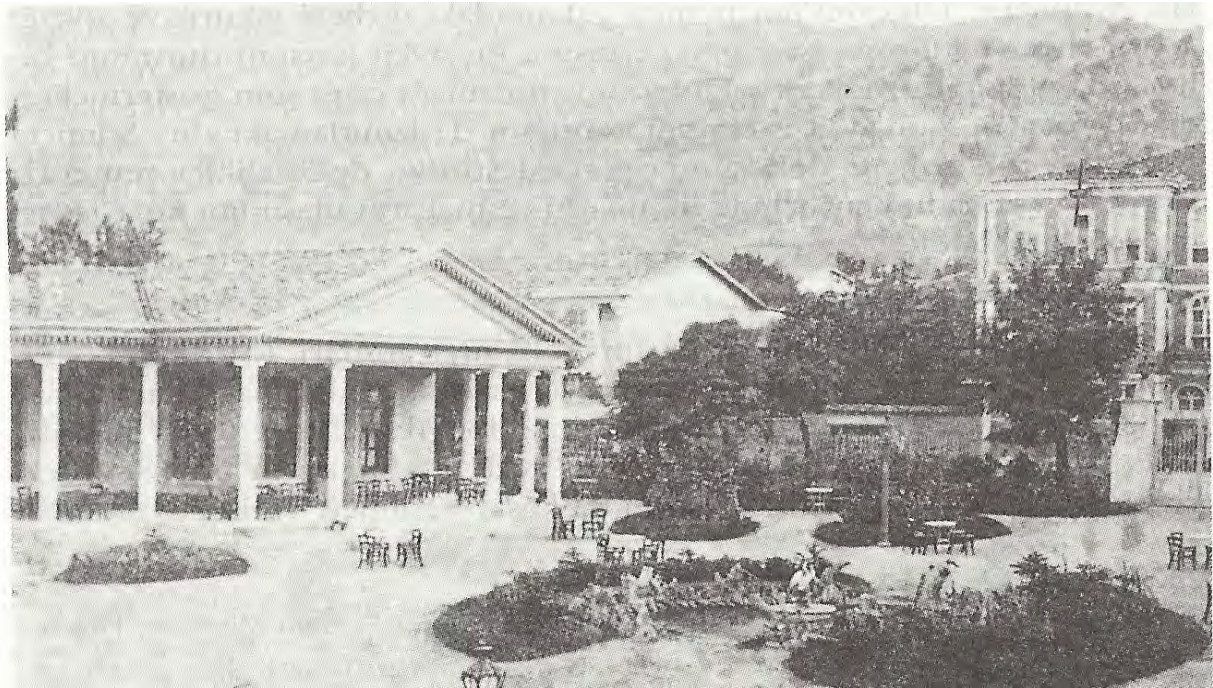


Figure 2. Ahmet Vefik Paşa Theatre (Source: Istanbul University Archive, 2012).

New public spaces appeared in Bursa in this period. These were places not quite familiar to Bursa or Ottoman world until then. For instance, institutional buildings such as the park in front of the government office, the theatre and the town hall appeared for the first time in this period (see Figure 2). We can say that these are very early examples for Anatolian scale (Kırayoğlu & Tanyeli, 1999). Kültürpark, subject of this study, is situated in Çekirge neighbourhood. In those times, Çekirge was a village in Bursa. Ahmet Vefik Paşa had a new road constructed which connected the village of Çekirge with Bursa; as a result, made the village and thus the area where the park is located a part of the residential area of the city of Bursa.

The second period to change the structure of urban space was the period between the proclamation of the republic and the end of Second World War (Tekeli, 1998). This period can be defined as a time of crisis and uncertainty between the two world wars (Bilgin, 1996). In the process following the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the end of the Turkish War of Independence and the Proclamation of the Republic, Turkey faced with two planning problems. The first one was the need to plan and reconstruct the Western Anatolian cities that had been burned by the Greek army while retrieving, and the second was the decision to declare Ankara as the new capital city. Declaring Ankara as the capital was a revolutionary decision. Declaration of a new capital in central Anatolia instead of Istanbul, one of the biggest cities in the world and the capital of three great empires, presented the Republic with the challenge of planning a big city (Tekeli 2010). However, there were no planners or architects available in Turkey to meet this challenge of planning. Therefore, European planners and architects were invited to Turkey for the reconstruction of Anatolian cities and towns particularly of Ankara.

The plans of Ankara, accepted as the physical and social leading city of the modern Republic (Sey, 1998; Keleş & Duru 2008; Aslanoğlu, 2010), was prepared by German planner Herman Jansen. There was a large park area in the plan. This park, previously a marsh, was named Gençlik Parkı (Youth Park). Some projects were produced so as to revive the social life in the park, and a magazine about the social life in the park was issued. The movement of constructing parks which started with the construction of Gençlik Parkı spread to other Anatolian cities and this process resulted in many urban parks constructed all over the country.

The first urban plan for Bursa was drawn up by a western planner. This plan, drawn up by German urban planner Karl Löcher in 1924, bears the traces of garden city trend (Batkan, 1996). The plan did not take account of the urban fabric which led to implementation problems, and as a result, Henry Post, who was working on the plan of Istanbul, was asked to draw up a new plan for Bursa. However, Prost's plan could not be implemented due to similar reasons. In this period inhabitants of Bursa kept their contact with open and green spaces in areas called promenade (see Figure 3). The tradition of promenade goes back a long way. Promenades are not designed areas. They are natural green spaces that the public uses, and they naturally exist in the considerably rich nature of Bursa. Yayıclar promenade is one of such areas. This area also constituted the core of Kültürpark. "There was a sycamore and a fountain in front of it in the area. There was a small pond in front of the fountain and around it there was seating accommodation and a meadow area. This promenade was surrounded by various kinds of trees. On summer days, the inhabitants, exhausted from the heat, would go to this nearest promenade, try to cool off in the shadow of the grand sycamore or the woods, and have picnics" (BGC, 2012a). The sycamore mentioned above is now within the boundaries of the park, and it has been officially registered as monumental tree. The fountain said to have been around it, however, is not there any longer (see Figure 4).





Figure 3. Promenade Tradition in Bursa (Source: Bursa Municipality Archive, 2012).

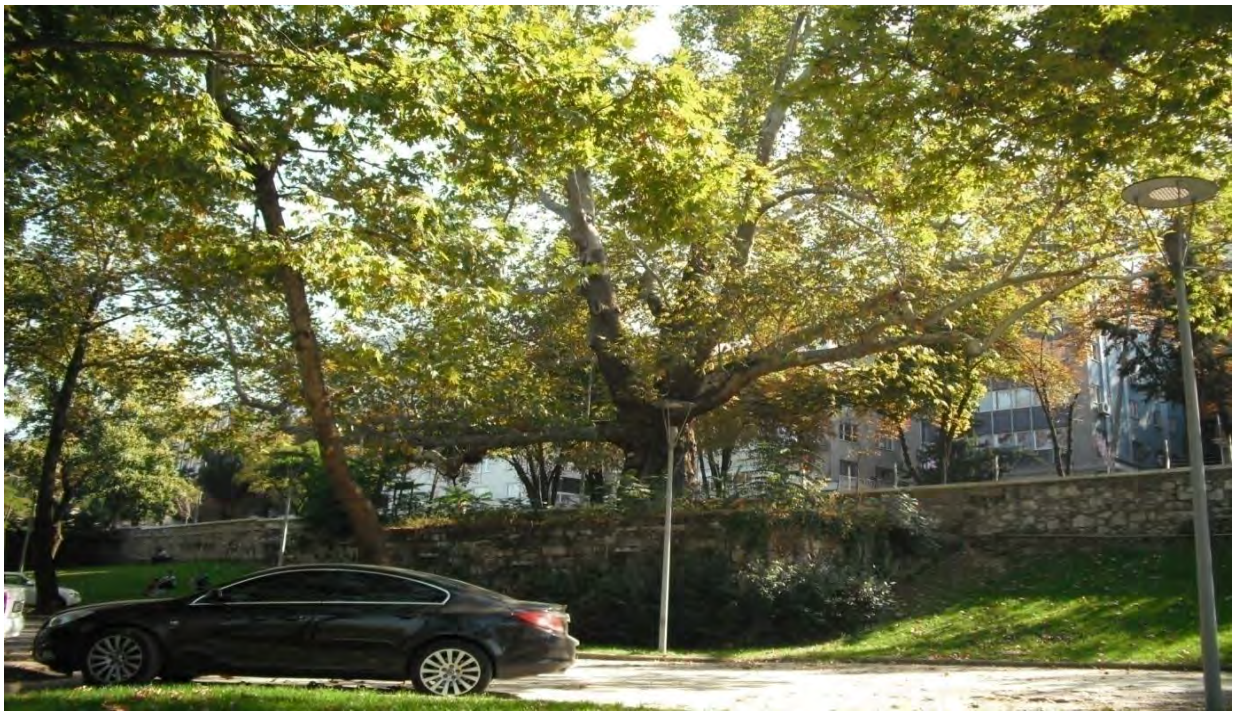


Figure 4. Yayıncılar Sycamore 2012 (Source: Atanur, 2012).

Turkey's transition to western civilization also changed the rhythm of daily life, appearance and use of spaces (Göle, 1994). In this period, modernization of daily life was conducted by the state. The state tried to perform this duty by way of bureaucrats, intellectuals, mass media and institutions like community house (Demir, 2006). Moreover, documents were prepared to educate people on issues such as how villages would flourish, and what the rules of utilizing parks and gardens would be (Bursa Municipality, 1930; Anonymous, 1939). In this period, when Kültürpark core area was used for recreation, the influence of the movement to construct parks, which

started in Ankara and spread all over Turkey, was felt in Bursa. However, in Bursa, there was yet not an area large enough to build a park in the city. Therefore, expropriation work started in order to enlarge the park area starting from Yaycılar Promenade.

The period between the Second World War and 1980s is the third stage of urban development in Turkey (Tekeli, 1998). Bursa Kültürpark was constructed in this period. Single party period in Turkey ended in 1946. In 1950s, remarkable changes took place in public spaces and user profile of public space changed as well (Demir, 2006). Within this framework, in addition to the white-collars, middle class, who occupied in trade, expanded and started to mark daily life.

The third urban plan of Bursa was prepared within this political environment and by another western planner, Piccinato, in 1957. The plan envisaged a population of 250.000, and aimed the preservation of natural and historical assets of the city. While preparing the plan Piccinato was also asked to prepare a plan for a new park in Yaycılar Pınarı. However, to build the park a national project contest was held as suggested by Piccinato (Olay Newspaper, 1998a). A new park was constructed in Izmir in this period. The name of the park is Izmir Kültürpark. An international fair was held in this park and it attracted considerable attention. The governor of Bursa, Çağlayangil, and the mayor, Oyal, were present at the opening of the fair and they were highly impressed by Izmir Kültürpark. They wanted to build a similar park and hold a fair which could compete with Izmir fair in Bursa.

Izmir Kültürpark has a plan scheme where an amusement park, a tea garden, a music hall (gazino) and a restaurant are located side to side. The Governor and the Mayor decided that the same scheme was to be implemented in the park to be built in Bursa and they invited the manager of Göl Cafe in Izmir Kültürpark to Bursa. Özgen managed tea gardens not only in Izmir but in Ankara Gençlik Parkı as well. Today, the tea garden is still in the park and managed with the same name (Ademoğlu, 2011).

Expropriating work was accelerated so as to obtain the needed park area. The 2.6 hectare area including Yaycılar Pınarı was found insufficient and the adjacent 3.3 hectare area was also expropriated despite the objections in the city council. One of the main reasons for the objections was that such a huge investment for the city was costly and unnecessary. In spite of the objections, expropriation was completed and the park was opened on 6 July 1955. 'Domestic Industry Exhibition' was held in the Yaycılar Pınarı section of the park in the same year (BGC, 2012b). In this period, a large pond was built in the park and great effort was exerted to bring water into the pond Olay Newspaper (1998b). A stadium was built next to the park in 1955 (see Figure 5). The fourth period is between 1960s and 1980s. With the commence of car production in Turkey in this period, car ownership increased rapidly and industry moved away from the center and immediate surroundings of the city thanks to the organized industrial zones being built (Tekeli, 1998).

Bursa has a pioneering role as regards organized industrial zones. The first organized industrial zone in Turkey came into service in Bursa in 1964 (CTUP, 1997). The automotive factory set up as a Turkish-Italian partnership in 1968, following the organized industrial zone, is a first in Turkey. The investments made in organized industrial zones and automotive industry in Bursa changed the population balance of the city completely. Rural population fell dramatically especially in 1970s, while urban population increased. Migration from the country to town increased the urban growth pressure. A new urban plan was prepared by Turkish specialists in this period.





Figure 5. Bursa Atatürk Stadium (Source: Bursa Metropolitan Municipality Archive, 2012).

The growth of the city influenced social life as well. The city contains patterns that do not exist in rural life such as weekend, holiday, spare time, trip, consumption and the like. Naturally, these new city-dwellers tried to benefit from these modern facilities offered by city life. New city-dwellers tried to explore and get to know the city in various ways especially at the weekend. As a symbol space the park, easily accessible and offering reasonable consumption possibilities, introduced them to the modern life (Demir, 2006).

In 1969 there were 45 hotels, 27 of which being thermal hotels, and 16 restaurants in Bursa. There were 12 gardens on the sightseeing routes in the city. Some of them served only tea and beverages, while some others served food and drinks. Kültürpark was defined as the entertainment venue of Bursa (Erler, 1978).

What we called going out was to go to Kültür Park. We used to pet the animals in the zoo there. Moreover, prisoners of Bursa Prison would be taken to the park. Prisoners would sell their handiwork of weaving and beading, which they learned to make in prison. There would be wardens guarding them. They would be making handiwork and they would sell them if anyone wanted to buy. We found it interesting that they were prisoners. It would touch us (Özdemir, 2009). In this period, places called 'gazino' (places where you dine and listen to famous singers live at the same time) opened in the parks in Ankara and Izmir, and also in Bursa Kültürpark. Gazino culture created a sense of entertainment peculiar to Turkey, where western and traditional entertainment patterns coexisted. This popular sense of entertainment was at times criticized. These criticisms even reflected on the art of painting. One of the prominent singers of this period was born in Bursa. The painting which can be seen in Picture 6 was inspired by this singer's performance on stage (see Figure 6).

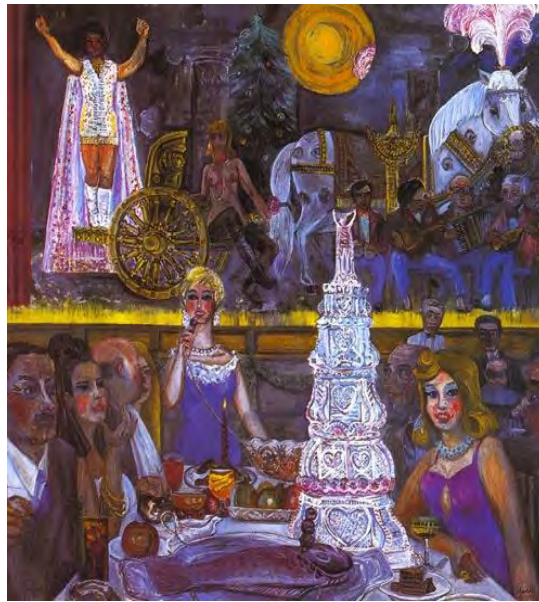


Figure 6. 'Our Actions' (Source: Collection of Ankara Art and Sculpture Museum, 2012).

In spite of the entertainment provided by gazino in Bursa Kültürpark, the most popular and favourite place for public was tea gardens. Tea gardens are places like cafes of today. The whole family specially got ready to go to the tea garden where they had a chat while drinking tea from a samovar in open air. In those years, the park was as popular as malls are today. Furthermore, Kültürpark was the 'Outdoor Mall' of that time (Ademoğlu, 2011).

The scope of fair organizations which started with 'Domestic Industry Exhibition' in 1955 began to broaden in this period. In 1964, the First Bursa National Fair was opened with the participation of 104 business firms. It was held in a 1.7 hectare section of the park. There was a rush to Bursa, especially from neighbouring cities, to visit the pavilions in Kültürpark. Accommodation was a problem as there were no big hotels apart from Çelikpalas. During fair seasons, the gazinos, Taylan and Romans, would offer programs featuring stars of the time. Participant business firms regarded Bursa, in a sense, as a passageway to Izmir Fair, and they went on to Izmir Fair next. As of the first half of 1980s, both the concept of fair and the scope of the festival have changed (Olay Newspaper, 1998c).

Between 1960 and 1980, the park was the focal point of the social life of public in Bursa. The development on the physical structure of the park continued. Expropriation work was also in progress in order to enlarge the park. The area of the pond reached 11,000 m<sup>2</sup>, infrastructure was constructed, and the number of gates increased to 7 (Baykal, 1972). The scheme made up of Taylan Gazino, Özgen Tea Garden, Amusement Park and Restaurant characterized the indoor recreation spaces for a long time. However, the entertainment venues were quite modest and small compared to their scale today (Berent, 2011; Saker, 2011).

The last urbanization period in Turkey, which commenced in 1980s, carries the universal characteristics of multi-centricity and globalization, while the local characteristic is the emergence of liberal politics (Bilgin, 1996). Many small parks started to appear around new, decentralized housing zones. Out-of-town recreation areas appeared, as they became accessible as a result of increased car ownership. Moreover, big shopping malls, offering a wide variety of consumption possibilities, became center of attraction (Demir, 2006).

In early 1980s, the park had many functions. There was even a zoo in the park. Towards the mid 1980's, however, this multifunctional structure was subject to some changes. For instance, the amusement park was moved to the South end of the park, thus changing the Amusement Park, Gazino and Tea Garden array. Moving of the Amusement Park was an inconvenience for



tea gardens as it caused a fall in the number of customers (Ademoğlu, 2011). On the other hand, it pleased the inhabitants of the prestigious residential district near the park (Berent, 2011). Although Gazinos were still in demand as entertainment venues, new forms of entertainment also emerged. For instance, concert areas where more people could listen to music without dining were needed. As a result of this, the first Open Air Theatre of Bursa was constructed in the park.

The scale of the fair organizations widened to such an extent that these organizations outgrew the park. For this reason, in 1986, a contest was held in order to organize the fair buildings scattered in the park (CTA, 1986). However, these efforts yielded only temporary relief. In 1997, a Fair and Congress Center, to be used only for fair organizations, was constructed in another section of the city. The buildings in the park were given over to small social clubs working for the city (see Figure 7).



Figure 7. Fair Buildings Assigned to Clubs 2001 (Source: Atanur, 2001).

In 1998, a new urban park, almost as big as Kültürpark, and a zoo were built side to side in Bursa. The purpose of construction of this park is the thought that Kültürpark isn't enough for the whole city and the need of increasing the green spaces per person (Saker, 2011). In spite of being located quite far from the city center, both buildings received influx of local visitors. Yet, another contest was held for Bursa Kültürpark in 2001. This contest aimed, in contrast to the earlier ones, the organization of the park as a whole rather than organizing merely the fair buildings (CTA, 2001). The winner project had proposed pulling down all the buildings apart from a few, and building them in another section of the park. However, the businesses reacted against it. The winning project was not carried out (see Figure 8).



Figure 8. Kültürpark Contest First Prize (Source: BMM, 2001).



Figure 9. Photos taken at the same point in the park in 2001 and in 2012 (Source: Atanur, 2001, 2012).

The project not being carried out prompted the Municipality to seek for new solutions. In 2004-2005 Bursa Metropolitan Municipality carried out a project named 'Kültürpark Rehabilitation and Restoration Project' in the park. The aims of the project were defined as: improvement of infrastructure, green areas and roads, and modification and renewal of the urban furniture and the buildings belonging to the enterprises in the park. Demolition of idle buildings reduced building areas by 5000 m<sup>2</sup> (Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, 2001). However, observations of the park revealed that some buildings had grown larger, and pedestrian roads were unnecessarily wide and were being used by vehicles (see Figure 9). Furthermore, many trees were cut down which led to disputes.

Recently, it has been figured in the press that some international companies have submitted proposals to organize the park in a way similar to that of Disneyland. A new stadium with much larger capacity is being built and demolition of the old yet still relatively new stadium, built only in 1955, has been intensely argued over by public.

The park, which was almost in the center of the city in the past, has now become a green island within the expanding urban area. Urban development has accelerated, and as well as alternative urban parks, many small parks appealing to decentralized residential districts have been built. The interviews show that people who have been visiting the park regularly since the opening and people living near the park has over time moved to different residential districts and the number of park visits for these people has decreased (Türkün 2011, Yüzen 2011). Yet, Kültürpark is still one of the most significant and largest green areas in Bursa (see Figure 10). Despite the change of the user profile Kültürpark is still actively used (see Figure 11).





Figure 10. Bursa Kültürpark (Source: Bursa Metropolitan Municipality, 2012).

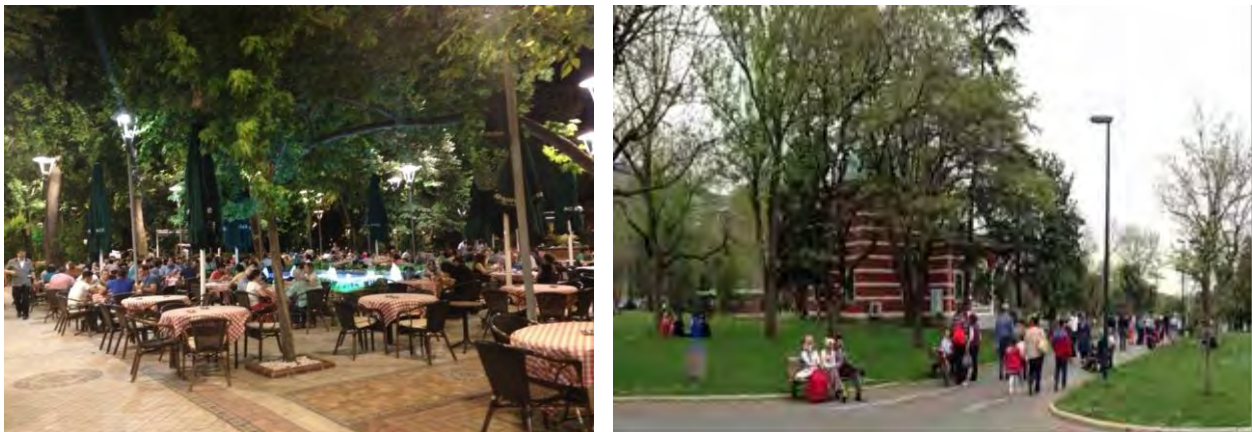


Figure 11. Current usage of the Park (Source: Atanur, 2014).

## CONCLUSION

Social and economic conditions of societies change over time and these changes reflect on the urban space. The meaning of public space in the period when the park was built is considerably different from the meaning it has today. The growth and development of the city has also changed the significance of the park in daily life.

In Turkey, urban parks were constructed in order to define the idealized western and modern world in the early years of the republic. Kültürpark, on the other hand, was constructed in the eclectic period in which local and western daily life patterns coexisted, and it has been the center of social life in the city. At this point, the uses in Kültürpark that have changed over the years are significant as to document the change of daily life throughout the process from the modernization created by the government to globalization. In the global cities of today, focal points of social life have been shifting to places like big shopping malls, and the values that parks represent have thus been changing (Karadag, 2013). However, parks and green spaces are of importance at the present time as key element of individual and social life quality and sustainable city (Thompson 2002).



Changes experienced in Turkey and in dynamic countries like Turkey, rapidly reflect on urban space. The transformation of public spaces in Turkey in the last few years is an important debate issue with architectural, social and political dimensions (Catterall, 2013; Civaner, 2013, Gül et. al, 2014). “In the city, social life is recreated and held together by means of associations, routines and interactions that take place in public spaces” (Uludag, 1998). For this reason the transformation of public spaces in the city and their new roles in the future must be analysed. This isn't necessary only for documenting the changes in the social structure but also for the emergence of quality urban conservation and renewal work, the development of democracy culture and to offer the society better living standards.

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