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Political Space As The Host Of Social Movements: Istanbul, Beyoğlu

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Abstract— When the time factor is included, the double-sided bond between politics and space depicts daily life in three dimensions. Space not only provides a representation of society but also allows for the penetration of political power. For today's neoliberal political-economic ideology, public spaces and the commons are regarded as objects that can be used directly in capital cycles, independent of the memory underlying them. Istanbul is a city with a wide variety of cultural, social, and geographical features, which has been the subject of various conscious and unconscious operations throughout history. Beyoğlu district is a social and political place that directly reflects the ideologies of various power groups in Istanbul and the whole country throughout history. It is equally important to examine Beyoğlu, which has experienced ups and downs over time, on the axis of social resistances. This study will briefly reveal how Beyoğlu was shaped through political-economic relations and how the instrumental intervention in a public space concluded territorial.

Index Terms — Beyoğlu, Istanbul, political space, social movements

I. INTRODUCTION

The social, economic, sectoral, institutional, environmental, structural, cultural, political, and physical formation of urban space is the subject of urban science studies. Each of these does not develop independently of each other; on the contrary, it develops in conjunction. The city is the space of production and accumulation and the context of the reproduction of capitalist society [1]. In this direction, various ideologies and strategies have been developed to shape urban space and, therefore, society. The global crises experienced in 2000-2001 and the following 2007-2009 periods brought the new economy to the agenda. Five basic facts play a role in the formation of this structure. These are technological change, new growth model, shortening of distances, a new phase of capitalism, and management transformation [2]. Urbanization patterns, which are widely discussed in the neoliberal agenda, find reflections in society. In order to protect the commons, it becomes necessary to reevaluate the existence of collective movements both with the dimensions of space and the dimension of these movements themselves. With this study, we aim to position the political dimension of the space in Istanbul, Beyoğlu, within the social

movements. While doing this conceptual and concrete reading, we synthesize information from secondary data sources and conclude.

II. Political Space

The power authority can dominate over the forms of production and, therefore, society and space. Various relationships shape the organizational structure, which is defined through different scales and different boundaries. Brenner proposes the state and space relationship in narrow perception as territoriality and internal territorial differentiation, integral perception as spatial targeting, and indirect spatial effect [3]. Spatially embodied political strategies provide a dynamic character to state policies. Lefebvre categorized the space as physical with its material dimension, social with its intangible dimension, and mental with its representative dimension [4]. Political space can be included in each of these. On the other hand, the organizing character of the political space consists of three essential elements: ideological, practical, and tactical. In addition to these space features, the purpose of use of the space is also essential. The three most basic elements necessary for the continuity of political power are money, time, and space [5]. These three dimensions shape the basic policies applied to social power.

Various theses have been developed on the organization of political space. Soja collects these theses under two headings. The first is that the western conceptualization is ethnocentric or culture-bound and the rigid and geometrically defined territorial property brought about by Western experiences. The second is the tendency to universalize Western concepts and the spatial perception of political organization [6]. Nevertheless, all these do not develop independently of the conjuncture. Capitalist modes of production and consumption processes are the basic situational phenomena that must be observed. Although the most basic requirement of the capitalist system to sustain itself is the self-renewal of labor power, the commodities that need to be developed accordingly do not have an attractive profitability ratio to invest in [7]. The situation is similar when we consider the capitalist system with the city. Being able to attract investments along with large-scale projects is essential for both international and local governments. In this direction, city administrations have shown a transition from managerialism to entrepreneurship resulting in the marketing of cities as commodity [8]. These are related to the dimension expressed as 'tactical' in Lefebvre's thesis of political space, which was mentioned earlier.

Power relations that make cities open to external interventions can lead to conflicts in cities. In particular, the public space is one of the key actors as it hosts them. Public spaces that have the power to represent collective actions involving resistance and solidarity are both a physical element in which these movements develop with their spatial dimensions and a stakeholder alongside social action with their character and functions [9]. The multidimensionality of urban space and society necessitates a detailed view. In the next section, we will discuss the concept of social movements in more detail.

III. Social Movements

Soja considers geographical development in two different phases. These are respectively; exogenous geographies that contextualize the global division of power relations and endogenous geographies formed in line with the decisions taken spatially [10]. All decisions taken over space stand out as the primary variable of spatial justice and injustice. The urban problem takes its foundations from two different phenomena. The first of these is the city itself and the second is the urbanization process. For most urbanists, this point represents a critical threshold feature. While Lefebvre's work focuses on city-based problems, it shows a radical transition towards urbanization [11]. Based on this situation, urbanization itself is a phenomenon that should be questioned in terms of both process and causality. The social

dimension of space is affected by society and it affects the society itself, as well. In this direction, it also hosts the expression of many social problems with the dimension of representing urban space. Touraine's analysis of social conflicts consists of social interest, identity, political power, defense, social control, and revolution steps [12]. All these steps are also evaluated concerning the cultural orientations, organizational processes, and political structures of social life.

Social organization against problems and the concretization of the need for a new order or solution brings unprecedented networks. Social movements are the collective effort of individuals and organized groups to achieve their common goals unconventionally [13]. This brings with it many partnerships, from connections to strategies. Mayer examines social movements in the global context under three main periods. The first is the social movements that developed against the crisis of Fordism in the 1960s, the second is the movements that developed against the austerity policies intensifying in the 1980s, and the third is the social movements that organized against the roll-out neoliberalism patterns of the 1990s [14]. Social movements organized to achieve their common goals by increasing the pressure on authorized institutions have various sub-classifications such as process, organization, stakeholder, and purpose. However, at this stage, the classification developed by Castells for the analysis method of social movements has three stages: being unique, being independent of social patterns, and Touraine's descriptive principles (identity, opposition, and imagination) mentioned earlier [15]. The following section focuses on what Mayer refers to as the third period in his conceptualization in terms of society, context, and process

IV. Political Space as a Space of Social Movements

Cities contain contradictory processes in many issues, from administration to income distribution. Social problems arise because the equal distribution of surplus-value cannot be achieved in capitalist urbanization processes. Fainstein lists the main factors as democracy, diversity, and equity to realize the 'Just City' approach, which developed to understand urban questions [16]. The relationship between these three fundamental factors also forms the basis of a just city. However, as aforementioned in the development of social movements, society's political-economic situation changes over time. Neo-liberal policies show creative destruction effects on space. Within the neoliberal agenda, cities are areas where administrations implement the most courageous and advanced strategies; consequently, they are areas where movements against governments are organized and alternatives are produced [17]. It is necessary to understand the significance of making a classification.

“The axis runs from the complete absence of urbanization on the left to completion of the process on the right. A signifier for this signified -the urban- this axis is both spatial and temporal; spatial because the process extends through space, which it modifies; temporal because it develops over time. Temporality, initially of secondary importance, eventually becomes the predominant aspect of practice and history. … division of time both abstract and arbitrary… [18] (pp. 7)”

The quote above, in which Lefebvre has defined the dimensions of space, allows us to classify under space and time. In addition, it emphasizes the nature and importance of time. However, the concept of 'collectivity', which is included in this section, shows another space dimension. Urban commons are lost due to privatization, enclosures, spatial controls, policing, and surveillance that affect the quality of life [19]. The society's search for an organized collective solution to these losses reveals this new dimension concretely. Dikeç and Swyngedouw conceptualize the politicization of collective movements and the encounter of politicized subjects through space [20]. Urban space shows the power of the spatial

dimension on representation, as it is the space where the society puts its collective effort. The urban justice crisis makes cities central to social organization. In addition to bringing together various actors, groups, and organizations living in the urban space, it becomes the space of social organization by bringing together politically activated and marginalized social groups [21]. The city encompasses society, public space, and various dynamic dimensions that bring them together reveals the necessity of examining through concrete examples to reach a clear conceptual conclusion. The following section analyzes the conceptual relations discussed earlier through political space and social movements in Beyoğlu, Istanbul.

V. READING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN POLITICIZED SPACE OF ISTANBUL, BEYOGLU

Istanbul has hosted different civilizations, societies, and cultures throughout history. Its geographical and political importance are the main determining factors in the multidimensionality of its development. Tekeli examines the urban transformation of Istanbul in three main phases. After the 1865 Hoca Pasha fire, the CBD of Istanbul, the leading site of the reforms that developed under Ottoman rule at the beginning of the 19th century, shifted towards the Galata-Beyoğlu region. The second stage includes the establishment of the Turkish Republic, the radical modernity movements that came with it, and accompanied by Prost's Istanbul Master Plan. The last stage is the erosion of modernity that started with the 1980s and the continuation of World City adjectives [22]. We examine Beyoğlu through the three main periods Tekeli presented for Istanbul. In the first period, Galata Harbor and the consulates located on Grand Rue de Pera (Istiklal Street) brought with it the non-Muslim population. The fires of 1830 and 1871 resulted in the destruction of more than 3000 buildings, which enabled the upper-income group to build new mansions in the western part of Beyoğlu [23]. In the second phase, large-scale and motor vehicle-based new boulevards, which were proposed within the plans prepared by Prost in the 1930s, were delayed due to high costs. They could be developed within the Menderes Operations in the 1950s, and Galata and Karaköy regions were particularly affected by this process [24]. Finally, in the 1980s, Beyoğlu presented a manifestation directly affected by the political-economic situation of the state. The operations to be carried out by Dalan, who was elected as the first mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in 1984, aimed to turn the city into a global metropolis, which can be seen as an important milestone in understanding the priorities of today's Beyoğlu [25]. 1984 marks the beginning of radical changes in Beyoğlu with the new ideology. Beyoğlu's first neighborhood association, BEY, was established this year. However, contrary to expectations, this initiative tended to support policies that would benefit the high-income group it contains and introduced development projects to the Municipality, rather than being against redevelopment policies [26]. Beyoğlu hosted the most extensive representations of the zoning operations carried out under the Dalan administration during this period. With the opening of Tarlabaşı Boulevard by pulling down numerous historic buildings, a profound distinction was created by leaving Tarlabaşı in the shadow of Beyoğlu, showing the dark side of globalization [27]. Then, Istiklal Street between Taksim Square and Tünel was pedestrianized, the nostalgic tram line was re-established, and Beyoğlu became one of the liveliest urban life places with its restored buildings.

By increasing its popularity until the 2000s, Beyoğlu maintained its agenda after the laws changed in the early 2000s. In 2004 and 2005, the government made various legal arrangements to decentralize the central power for accession to the European Union [26]. In 2005, 'The Renewal and Re-use of Deteriorated Historic Building Stock' Act No. 5366 brought new tools for local governments to intervene in the historic building stock in Beyoğlu [28]. After these legal arrangements, the city land of Beyoğlu has become an attractive feature for national and international large-scale real estate projects. Tarlabaşı was

one of the most dramatic projects developed estate-led in Beyoğlu such as Bedrettin Neighborhood, Beyoğlu Town Hall Surroundings, Galata Tower Surroundings, Tophane Area, and Cezayir Çıkmazı. The international capital's interest in Tarlabaşı, to realize projects including shopping malls, residences, boutique hotels, and hostels, was projected under names such as 'Rehabilitation of Beyoğlu Depression Areas' and was justified because it was the region with the highest crime rate in Istanbul [29]. The poor and immigrant population living intensively in Tarlabaşı was vulnerable to developing projects because they did not own any property. Although objections were raised in Tarlabaşı, some groups had an interest in the projects and many Tarlabaşı residents were displaced as the different agreements offered by the Municipality created a divide and rule effect on the groups [30]. This situation was only one of the traces presented by the neoliberal urbanization agenda in Beyoğlu.

As of the early 2000s, neoliberal policies visibly affected space reorganization with massive projects. In addition to the increase in housing production with the adoption of Law No. 5582, also known as the mortgage law, in 2007, the amendment of Law No. 2863 in 2011 transferred the management of areas with the natural character directly to the ministry [31]. Gezi Park was among the areas whose status was changed under this law. The ideological background of Gezi Park, which will change the Turkish agenda, reflects a multi-layered urban memory. Artillery Barracks, designed by Kirkor Balyan and completed in 1806, is the oldest building in Taksim Square after Maksem (water distribution center). The barracks became unusable after the revolt of the barracks in April 1909 against the re-declared Ottoman constitution in 1908 and then violently disposed of by the opposing forces on April 24, 1909 [32]. First, the barracks were used to meet the public open space needs of the city that developed in the Ottoman Early republican period and to provide an area to host various activities. The non-Muslim cemeteries in this region were moved and various expropriation processes were completed, from Maksem to Maçka, to provide the area included in Prost's Istanbul Master Plan [33]. Until the Taksim Square Pedestrianization Project was proposed by the Metropolitan Municipality in 2011, Gezi Park, which responded to the open public green space need of the region, faced a threatening process. Within the scope of this project, it was planned to reconstruct the old Artillery Barracks with a commercial function.

İnceoğlu presents the Gezi Park Events in five primary stages, which started on May 27, 2013. Firstly, Taksim Solidarity stopped the construction machines and camped in the park; secondly, the groups gathered in the first days due to the need for green public space took on a different structure after the police raids; thirdly, PM Erdogan and MPs from two parties became aggravated by political aspect; fourthly, as an alternative to mainstream media seeing the power of social media; fifthly, changing spirit of the movement in terms of scale and demand that all results in symbolization of the Park as a reaction against authoritarianism [34]. The Gezi Park movement carried various traces of the social movements of the new period within itself. Social groups that are considered to be almost hostile against each other cooperated towards a collective ideal and formed a new shared identity. The practices such as resisting piano (German pianist Davide Martello), resisting man (Erdem Gündüz), and Table on Earth (collective iftar tablet hat settled on the first day of Ramadan) both refreshed spatial memory and reinvented space with their collective organizations [35]. However, the events were not limited to all these. In the period following the Gezi Movement, collective movements such as Istanbul City Defense, Our Commons, and Pride Parade continued, as well as the following stages of the Taksim Pedestrianization Project, the construction of a mosque overlooking Taksim Square next to Maksem, the extensive restoration of Narmanlı Han and the Processes such as the rebuilding of AKM continued [36]. We need to put these emerging social movements in a different framework [37] in the conceptualizations made about the reasons for the emergence of new social movements. Because, although it is a movement that emerged because of spatial contradictions deepened by globalization and neoliberal policies, it offers a

multi-layered social projection from the demand for democracy to the opposition to injustice with its multi-actor and collective solution-seeking structure. As a result, although the dominance of political forces over social space is considered necessary for self-preservation and consolidation, it seems to maintain its place in our lives as a phenomenon that needs to be reconsidered.

CONCLUSION

Beyoglu; is a distinct area for Istanbul with its time, society, and space dimensions. Although a general manifestation of Beyoğlu is tried to be conveyed in this study, it is not possible to fit Beyoğlu even in large-volume encyclopedias. Today, although it presents the most visible examples of the urban problem in the neo-liberal agenda, from Galataport to Culture Road, this is not limited to the time we live inside. Beyoğlu, which has experienced similar processes countless times throughout history, also offers a dynamic structure within itself. The political dimension of the space on dynamism stems from the fact that the organs of power elites attempt to reshape the memory by means of the change of the physical space. However, as seen in the process, each decision taken to shape the space can potentially lead society and space to greater deadlocks.

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