

## Recent “Nation Gardens” and Historical Development of Public Green Spaces in Turkey

### Türkiye’deki Kamusal Yeşil Alanların Tarihsel Gelişimi ve Yeni “Millet Bahçeleri”

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#### Abstract

Focusing on contemporary Turkey’s “nation gardens” and the state and governmental policies to build them, this study investigated the development processes and design features of these public green spaces with respect to those from past eras of Turkey (extending to Ottoman and pre-Ottoman history) and the development of public green spaces as the state’s symbolic and spatial tools. The study relied on secondary sources about public green spaces from past eras of Turkey and also on the review of online news about “nation gardens” initiated after President Erdoğan’s announcement in May 2018. Our findings suggested that public green spaces in Turkey have played an important role in displaying the state’s power nationally and internationally as well as to transfer the state’s ideologies to people and thus, to build new identities of ‘citizens.’ Interestingly, in sharing these intentions of past policies for public green spaces, the recent introduction of nation gardens differs from those in the 19th and 20th century. Without any emphasis on modernization goals in the western-style, recent official talks described nation gardens as a way to raise Turkey and the government’s reputation both nationally and internationally, while also referring to past eras but with other characteristics as the source of “traditions” extending to today.

#### Keywords

Nation gardens, Public green spaces, Park planning and design, Ottoman Empire, Turkey

#### Öz

Çalışma, günümüz Türkiye’sindeki ‘millet bahçeleri’ ve bunları üretmeye yönelik devlet ve hükümet politikalarına odaklanırken; kamusal yeşil alanların devlet tarafından sembolik ve mekânsal araçlar olarak geliştirilmesini ve bu süreçlerdeki plan ve tasarım kriterlerini Türkiye tarihinin eski dönemleri (Osmanlı ve Osmanlı öncesi) ile ilişkilendirerek araştırmıştır. Çalışma, kamusal yeşil alanların tarihi dönemlerdeki özelliklerini ikincil yazınsal kaynaklara ve Mayıs 2018’de Başkan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’ın duyurduğu “millet bahçesi” projelerine ve uygulamalarına dair internet haberlerini incelemeye dayanarak gelişmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarına göre, kamusal yeşil alanlar devletin uluslararası ve ulusal platformlarda gücünü sergilemesinde, devlet ideolojilerinin halka aktarılmasında ve yeni ‘vatandaş’ ve toplum kimlikleri oluşturmakta önemli rol

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oyunmaktadır. Her ne kadar bu niyetler kamusal yeşil alanlarla ilgili geçmiş ve günümüz politikalarıyla örtüşse de, günümüz "millet bahçesi"nin sunumu 19. ve 20. yüzyıldaki örneklerden farklılık göstermektedir. Batı stili modernleşme hedeflerine vurgu yapmayan resmi açıklamalar, millet bahçelerini Türkiye'nin ve hükümetin uluslararası ve ulusal itibarını tekrar arttırmak amacıyla kullanmakta ve geçmiş dönemleri ise "gelenekler"in günümüze uzanmasını sağlayan kaynaklar olarak görmektedirler.

#### **Anahtar Kelimeler**

Millet bahçeleri, kamusal yeşil alanlar, park planlama ve tasarımı, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, Türkiye

### **Genişletilmiş Özet**

Kamusal yeşil alanlar toplumlara demokratik, sosyal ve ekonomik yararlar ve sağlık ve ekolojik sürdürülebilirlik alanlarında katkılar sağlar. Üretildikleri dönemlerin sosyo-politik ve ekonomik özellikleri ile şekillenen kamusal yeşil alanların geliştirilme süreçleri ve tasarım kriterleri incelendiğinde, bu kamusal alanların o dönemlerdeki iktidar ve güç sahiplerinin sosyo-politik ideolojilerini yansıtan önemli araçlar olduğu ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu çalışma Türkiye'de 'millet bahçeleri' (nation gardens) üretmeye yönelik devlet politikalarını ve bu alanların fiziksel planlama ve tasarım özelliklerini tarihsel süreç içinde incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu amaçla araştırma, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti dönemlerindeki kamusal yeşil alanların tasarlanmasına yönelik gelişen ve her dönem değişen politikaların üretilmesine neden olan temel politik ve ekonomik durumları analiz etmektedir.

Bu çalışmada, kamusal yeşil alanların Türkiye, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve öncesi tarihi dönemlerdeki ekonomik, politik ve sosyal süreçlere dayalı gelişimleri ikincil kaynaklara dayanarak araştırılmış ve elde edilen bilgiler ilişkilendirilerek sunulmuştur. Ayrıca, Mayıs 2018'de Başkan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan'ın duyurduğu 'millet bahçesi' projelerine dair internet haberleri ile plan ve uygulamalara dair görseller beraber incelenmiş ve günümüzde millet bahçelerinin üretilmesine yönelik karar mekanizmalarının nasıl işlediği ve bu kamusal yeşil alanların hangi tasarım ve planlama özelliklerini barındırdığı araştırılmıştır.

Makalenin ilk bölümü Türkiye'deki kamusal yeşil alanların gelişimini, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu ve öncesi ve Cumhuriyet dönemlerine uzayan tarihsel gelişimin bir parçası olarak alma niyetiyle şekillenmiştir. Yeşil alanlar dâhil olmak üzere tüm kamusal alanlar, çeşitli dönemlerdeki ekonomik, politik ve sosyal özelliklere bağlı olarak devletin politika ve araçları olarak geliştirilir ve tasarlanır. Osmanlı İmparatorluğu öncesi dönemde Anadolu ve Ortadoğuya yayılan birçok farklı kültürün özelliklerini ve sembollerini içeren Anadolu 'bahçe'leri vardır. İmparatorluk zamanında özellikle Lale Devri ve Tanzimat Devri'ndeki modernleşme adımları ile önce mesire alanları ve saray bahçeleri ve ardından parklar geliştirilmiştir. Erken Cumhuriyet dönemindeki modernleşme ve "millet" yaratma girişimleri sonucu ortaya yeni tür parklar ve günümüzde duyurulan millet bahçesi projeleri kendi zamanlarının koşullarını yansıtarak

gelişmişlerdir. Cumhuriyet'in ilanı ile II. Dünya Savaşı sonuna kadar süren ve 'Türk Milleti'ni oluşturmaya yönelik devrimler ve modernleşme projelerinin geliştiği dönemde, kentlerin mekânsal planları ve uygulamaları içinde kamusal yeşil alanlar bu hedeflere yönelik geliştirilmiştir. Kentlere kırsal göçün ve sanayileşme ile kentleşme seviyelerinin arttığı 1960 ve 1980 arasında, yerel yönetimlerin de kamusal alanların üretiminde etkin olduğu ve mahalle parklarının da geliştirildiği görülmektedir. Neoliberal yani piyasa odaklı gelişen iktisadi ve siyasi yaklaşımlarla şekillenen ve 1980lerden günümüze uzanan dönemdeyse, özel sektör eliyle alışveriş merkezleri gibi 'tüketim odaklı' mekânların yanısıra genelde büyükşehir belediyeleri eliyle büyük metrekareli ve ticari kullanımları barındıran park alanları, arazi değerleri göreceli düşük ama halk erişimine uzak kent çeperlerinde yer bulmuştur. 'Millet bahçeleri' ise çok yeni (2018) olarak ve merkezi hükümet eliyle uygulanmak üzere gündeme gelmiştir.

Gündemdeki millet bahçesi projelerini daha iyi anlayabilmek için, makalenin ikinci kısmı Başkan Erdoğan'ın bu konu üzerine yaptığı bazı konuşmaları incelemekte ve projenin Türkiye ve hükümetin uluslararası ve ulusal itibarı ve 'gelenekler' üzerinden önceki dönemlerle olan ilişkisini analiz etmektedir. Başkan Erdoğan'ın Türkiye'nin her şehrine bir millet bahçesi yapılması projesini açıklamasının ardından, farklı birçok şehirde millet bahçeleri açılmış ve Mekânsal Planlar Yapım Yönetmeliği'ne 'Millet Bahçeleri' maddesi eklenmiştir. Bu maddedeki millet bahçesi tanımı, ağırlıklı park alanı büyüklüğüne referansla yapılmıştır. Cumhurbaşkanlığı seçimleri sonrası hükümetin "ilk 100 gün" programı ve vaatleri içinde, Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı on adet millet bahçesi geliştirmiş ve açmıştır. Bu çalışmanın tamamlandığı Kasım 2019 tarihi itibarıyla, uygulaması bitmiş ve açılmış millet bahçesi sayısı sadece İstanbul'da beş ve diğer illerdekilerle beraber 25 civarındayken, tüm Türkiye'de 100 kadarının plan ve projesi bitmiştir. Ancak Çevre ve Şehircilik Bakanlığı tarafından hazırlanmakta olan ve millet bahçeleri için yer seçimi ve tasarım kriterlerini tarifleyecek Millet Bahçeleri Kılavuzu henüz yayınlanmamıştır. Mevcutta uygulanmış veya planlanmış millet bahçelerine dair çok sayıda parça parça gazete, televizyon ve internet haberleri vardır.

Bu haberleri inceleyerek; günümüzdeki millet bahçelerine dair karar verme süreçleri, yer seçimleri ve plan ve tasarım kriterlerine dair ne tür ortaklık ve benzerlikleri ortaya koyabiliriz? Bu soruya odaklanan makalenin son kısmı, öncelikle millet bahçesi projelerine dair konuşmaları ve ardından uygulanmış millet bahçelerinin inceleyerek karşılaştırmaktadır. Sonuçlara göre; ne Yönetmeliğe millet bahçesi tanımının eklenmesi basit teknik bir konudur, ne de Başkan Erdoğan'ın yaptığı açıklamalar sadece kişi başına düşen yeşil miktarının arttırılmasını amaçlamaktadır. Bu konuşmalar millet bahçelerinin Türkiye'nin uluslararası platformdaki itibarı ve hükümetin yerel ve küresel rakiplerine karşı gücü ve değerler ve gelenekler açısından önemli olduğuna vurgu yapmaktadır. Bu hâliyle günümüz millet bahçeleri, Türkiye'de geçmiş ve günümüzdeki dönemlerde farklı isimler ile kamuya sunulan ve devlet tarafından

özellikle uluslararası ve ulusal platformlarda güç ve politik ideolojilerini ifade etmeye yönelik kamusal yeşil alanlar farklı değildir. Ayrıca, bu sembolik mekânlar gündelik sosyo-mekânsal pratiklerin eş zamanlı bir şekilde tekrar tekrar yapılandığı sahneler olmuşlar ve vatandaş, millet ve toplum gibi kavramlara dayalı yeni kimliklerin gelişmesine aracılık etmişlerdir. Bu tariflenen iki niyet günümüz ve geçmiş dönemlerin kamusal yeşil alanlara dair politikalarında tekrarlanmaktadır. Ancak günümüzdeki millet bahçelerinin sunumu, özellikle 19. ve erken 20. yüzyıldaki örneklerden Batı stili modernleşme hedeflerine vurgu yapmayarak da farklılaşmaktadır.

Açılmış millet bahçeleri genelde 20.000 metrekare ve üstündeki alanlarda gerçekleştirilmiştir. İlk aşamada yapılanlar ağırlıklı kent içinde kalmış, toplu taşıma olanaklarına yakın ve artık kullanılmayan futbol stadyumlarında yapılırken, ikinci (mevcut) aşamadaki millet bahçeleri ise, imar planlarında da tariflenerek ve genellikle şehir dışındaki büyük alanlarda yer bulmuştur. Mevcut millet bahçeleri çok çeşitli kullanım ve faaliyet alanlarını barındırırken, ağırlığın açık aktivite alanlarına (spor ve oyun alanları olarak) ve ayrıca “doğal elemanların” özellikle su öğeleri (genellikle gölet) ile birbirinden farklılaşmış çiçek bahçeleriyle bir araya getirildiği alanlara verildiği görülmektedir. Yapılı çevre elemanları ise genellikle bir cami, ‘millet kıraathanesi’ (okuma salonu ve çay evi beraber) ve kapalı/ açık otoparktan oluşmaktadır. Çalışmamızın sonuç kısmında tüm bulgular birlikte değerlendirilmiş ve millet bahçelerinin plan ve tasarım kriterlerinin geliştirilmesinde yerel ihtiyaçlar ve isteklerin de karar verme süreçlerine entegre olmasının altı çizilmiştir.

## Introduction

In 2018 during the presidential election campaign for Turkey, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, announced the building of "nation gardens" (*millet bahçeleri*) in each city for the first time. Complaining about 'concreteness' and the lack of public greens in cities, this talk<sup>1</sup> identified abandoned city stadiums as initial candidates for being developed as nation gardens.

Since the 1960s, Turkish society has known public green spaces with recreational purposes as public parks, but this recent introduction of "nation gardens" as a state and governmental project to green-up cities has raised public curiosity. Besides being announced by the President, this project's name and its landscape and physical elements (such as *kıraathane* and kind of flowers and trees) with references to the past have pushed this curiosity even more. To denote public green areas, the name "nation garden" is being used for the third time Turkish history extending to the Ottoman Era.

Meanwhile, in fulfilling election promises, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, built ten nation gardens during "the first 100 days" of the post-election. By October 2019, more than 100 projects were ready to be implemented. However, the Ministry has still not announced a Guide for Nation Gardens, to set location and design criteria for future nation gardens whereas numerous newspaper and TV news sources have talked about the establishment of nation gardens and provided some understanding of these criteria.

This paper aimed to provide an analytical view of this contemporary process of nation gardens, while investigating the contemporary period as part of the historical eras of Turkey with the state's distinct understanding of 'public green spaces.' It relied on the argument that the production methods, design characteristics, and symbols of public green spaces are shaped by economic, political, social, and cultural ideologies of previous eras<sup>2</sup>. Moreover, public green spaces play an important role in transferring the state's and rulers' ideologies to people<sup>3</sup>.

Deploying a content analysis of data, the study relied on secondary sources about the development of public green spaces in the past eras of Turkey. Moreover, we reviewed online news sources about the nation gardens initiated after the President's announce-

1 President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's Speech: "We say that let us transform the old locations of the newly built stadiums into (nation gardens). These locations shall be lush green (areas that) our people can visit. That is, people shall visit such kind of places comfortably. They shall eat-and-drink and lay down with their children. There is a need for these (activities). (Everywhere) is just concrete, concrete, concrete". Accessed 12 October 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MoFBkxaxFU>

2 Jason Byrne and Jennifer Wolch, "Nature, Race, And Parks: Past Research And Future Directions For Geographic Research", *Progress in Human Geography*, 33/6, (2009), 743-765; İlhan Tekeli, "Atatürk Türkiyesinde Kentel Gelişme ve Kent Planlaması", *Arredamento Mimarlık* 10 (1998), 61-63.

3 Galen Cranz, "Women in Urban Parks", *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5/3 (Spring 1980), 79-95.

ment in 2018 and investigated how the decision making processes for nation gardens evolved and what planning and design features these public green spaces have.

The first part of the paper is a historical review about the development of public green areas in Turkey since the pre-Ottoman, Ottoman and Republican eras. It relates the contemporary process to the past eras with the state's modernization efforts during the economic and political changes at the national and international level. The second part details the current projections for nation gardens by analyzing talks by the President, criticisms about the project, and examining criteria about the locations, planning, and design features. The conclusion evaluates the results and compares the recent introduction of nation gardens to public green spaces from past eras.

### **Development of Public Green Areas in The Past Eras of Turkey**

Public green spaces carry and symbolize the political, cultural, and social ideologies of the eras from which they were produced. They played an important role in expressing the political power and transfer ideologies of rulers to citizens and also of states and governments at national and international competitions. They can be utilized for keeping up the morale of the public and ensuring both physical and mental health of a society<sup>4</sup>.

Public spaces were developed and shaped by state and governmental policies during each era with its own economic, political, and social conditions<sup>5</sup>. This is exemplified by the Anatolian gardens in the pre-Ottoman era to the recently announced nation garden projects in contemporary Turkey. The reflections of the political, social, and cultural ideologies that shaped public green spaces during the Ottoman Empire can be examined in three eras. In the Pre-Ottoman era, the structure of society and public green spaces were influenced by the Middle Asian, Persian, Islamic, and Anatolian cultures<sup>6</sup>. The modernization and westernization movements during the Tulip Period (1718-1730) started to affect Ottoman cities' physical and social characteristics, including the characteristics of gardening, and designing green spaces. The third era (1839-1923) which started in the Tanzimat Period with new modernization attempts in reshaping the Empire's administrative, social, and cultural structure and ended with the establishment of The Republic of Turkey.

After the proclamation of the Republic, there are four eras with distinctive understandings and provisions of public green spaces. The state's efforts, between the proclamation of the Republic and the end of the Second World War, was aimed at re-structuring the 'Turkish nation' with reforms and projects ranging from public

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4 Cranz, "Women in Urban Parks", 79-95.

5 Tayfun Gürkaş, "Bir Mimarlık Tarihi Alanı Olarak Türkiye'de Peyzaj Mimarlığı Tarihi ve Peyzaj Mimarlığı-Devlet İdeolojisi İlişkisi", *Türkiye Araştırmaları Literatür Dergisi* 13 (2009), 171-190.

6 Koray Özcan, "Anadolu'da Selçuklu Dönemi Yerleşme Sistemi ve Kent Model(Ler)i", (PhD diss., Selçuk University, 2005), 3-15.

education to spatial planning of cities. The periods between the Second World War and the 1960s and then between the 1960s and the 1980s had high urbanization rates supported by the huge migration from rural areas to cities and also municipal planning efforts for developing neighborhood parks. The contemporary period since the 1980s has witnessed neoliberal policies and the changing production methods of urban space. Market-oriented approaches have dominated location selection and design criteria of public green spaces. Bigger urban parks with commercial uses have emerged at the city fringes with high security concerns<sup>7</sup>.

### **'Green' and 'Public' In Pre-Ottoman and Ottoman Eras**

As a result of the nomadic lifestyle among Turkish groups, gardening activities in the culture during the pre-Ottoman era developed quite late. Through their nomadic lives, Turks developed strong relationships with nature between summer pastures and winter quarters. "Turkish Gardens" were developed under the influence of different cultures and regions that Turkish groups visited. Not limited to the borders of gardens, the focal areas of Turkish gardening culture included meadows, rivers, and hills.<sup>8</sup> As Turks started to settle down in Anatolia and move away from a nomadic lifestyle, they continued their connection to and respect for nature. This was reflected in the settlement and gardening habits in Anatolia. Geographic factors (such as climate, soil fertility, and rich flora and fauna) and cultural factors (such as the acceptance of Islam and the philosophy of "Paradise Garden") shaped the main characteristics of Turkish gardens in Anatolia<sup>9</sup>.

In traditional Ottoman culture, 'green spaces' referred to unbuilt open spaces or greenery without design. Including orchards, gardens, and forested areas, these played key roles in shaping the social and cultural interaction between people<sup>10</sup>. As they evolved on the lands with the histories of Seljuk arts and Byzantine works, the early days of the Ottoman Empire had gardening styles influenced by this cultural background. Similar to Seljuki, Sultans keen on large palace gardens and courtyards built on lands with rich water and plant resources, the Ottoman Sultans paid attention to gardening. Also, other factors such as religion, family, traditions, and personal views affected the layouts of cities and public green spaces. For instance, the need for women's privacy led to the design of courtyards and especially house gardens as visually isolated spaces with high walls from public view. Thus, Ottoman gardens in the early days of the Empire were gardens for "living inside" rather than for "watching" and "strolling"<sup>11</sup> (F. 1).

7 Tekeli, "Atatürk Türkiyesinde Kentsel Gelişme ve Kent Planlaması", 61-63.

8 İlkden Tazebay and Nevin Akpınar, "Türk Kültüründe Bahçe", *Bilgi* 54 (Summer / 2010), 243-253.

9 Sedat Hakkı Eldem, "Türk Bahçeleri" (İstanbul: Milli Eğitim Basımevi, 1976), 340-371.

10 Gürkaş, "Bir Mimarlık Tarihi Alanı Olarak Türkiye'de Peyzaj Mimarlığı Tarihi ve Peyzaj Mimarlığı-Devlet İdeolojisi İlişkisi", 171-190.

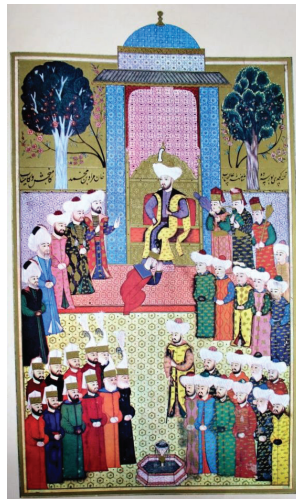
11 Veli Ortaçlaşme and Buket Şenoğlu, "Turkish Islamic Gardens in Antalya, Turkey", paper presented at *Aspects*





**F. 1.** A classical Ottoman-Turkish house garden  
(<https://www.plantdergisi.com/prof-dr-murat-yazgan/turk-bahce-sanati.html>)

The “description of Heaven in religion and the desire of creating heaven in the world” was an important reference for the design of Turkish-Ottoman gardens. Besides the use of water features and various kinds of alive and inanimate materials (such as four-cornered marble pools, big fruit trees, rose and tulip gardens, terrace and stairs, water dispensers, fountains and statues), a physical layout with an axis connecting different parts of the garden with suitable floor materials shaped these gardens<sup>12</sup> (F. 2).



**F. 2.** Miniature showing the use of palace gardens in the early days of Ottoman Empire Sultan Murat the 2<sup>nd</sup>'s Culus Ceremony – Topkapı Palace Museum  
(<https://www.oguztopoglu.com/2014/04/ikinci-muradn-bursada-culusu-hunername.html?sref=pi>)

*of Islamic Gardens: Multi-meanings of Paradise, Kavala, Greece, 10 - 12 October 2014.* 1-8; Tazebay and Akpınar, “Türk Kültüründe Bahçe”, 243-253.

12 Yıldız Aksoy, “Gardening in Ottoman Turks”, *International Journal of Electronics; Mechanical and Mechatronics Engineering* 2/4 (2011), 345.



Following the Conquest of Istanbul in 1453, the art of gardening developed significantly under the influence of the geography of Istanbul and the Bosphorus. Still keeping the effects of their nomadic culture, gardening activities were important in each new settlement. From the smallest house garden to palace gardens, officials paid attention to a gardens location, land characteristics, slope of the terrain and view<sup>13</sup>. Palace gardens as important art works of the Ottoman Empire were applied to Istanbul's natural landscape. Topkapı Palace (1457) was significant with its garden's layout on the naturally descending slopes and harmony with the sea on three sides of the site. An axis with multiple green courtyards served as the core of the palace. This green axis and the surrounding buildings were encapsulated by a larger garden. The Sultan's private garden was terraced with several smaller gardens for flowers and vegetables<sup>14</sup> (F. 3).



F. 3. Gardens of Topkapı Palace and Bosphorus  
(<https://yedikita.com.tr/satilik-hazine-1924/>)

The Sultans and their family continued with the nomadic tradition of travelling for the summer and winter months. They used the gardens on the waterfront (such as Beşiktaş and Üsküdar ) during the summer and the gardens with rich natural landscape (such as Vidos and Çubuklu) as hunting manors. All these gardens were functional areas with fruit trees and vegetable gardens and fulfilled the needs of a palace community, whereas other gardens (such as Davudpaşa) served as training and gathering areas for military forces before excursions<sup>15</sup>.

Apart from the private uses of gardens, publicly used green spaces, "*mesire*" (or the promenade) was first developed by Suleiman the Magnificent in Istanbul in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The meaning of *mesire* comes from the word picnic. Looking like today's parks, *mesires* were considered the core areas for an open air system with its natural

13 Tazebay and Akpınar, "Türk Kültüründe Bahçe", 243-253.

14 Nurhan Atasoy, "Introduction to the Catalogue of Ottoman Gardens", accessed 17 March 2020, <https://www.doaks.org/resources/middle-east-garden-traditions/introduction/introduction-to-ottoman-gardens>

15 Muzaffer Erdoğan, "Osmanlı Devrinde İstanbul Bahçeleri", *Vakıflar Dergisi* 4 (1958), 149-182.

form. One of the first and most frequently used *mesires* in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Yenibahçe was around the Bayram Pasha Creek<sup>16</sup>.

Although the Tulip Era (1712-1730) was considered the beginning of the decline of the Empire's political structure, the Empire during this era was very productive in establishing new arts of gardening and other fine arts. With the effects from western cultures, the Turkish gardens' simple and functional layout was transformed from a natural design into a more figural and aesthetic oriented one. During this era, *mesires*, meadows, and gardens open to the public became important<sup>17</sup>. In this era, Sadabad, Göksu, Çubuklu, Alibey, Okmeydanı, Karabali, and Büyükdere, Kırkagac Bendler were significant open green spaces. To develop Sadabad, the bed of Kağıthane Creek was transformed with a newly built canal along which manors were built. Sadabad Palace and Garden were constructed in 1721. The design of the Sadabad, with the size of its gardens, relationship between structures and gardens, the architecture of water cascades, fountains, and structures and its bringing together residents of the sultan and Ottoman officials, is reminiscent of the design of French gardens. However, with its natural and asymmetric layout and use of water as a reformed version of a creek, the design of Kağıthane creek also differed from its French inspired roots<sup>18</sup>.

During the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century with more interaction and influence from western cultures, the Ottomans started to alter the meaning, design, and function of existing green spaces and added new ones. This was the period when Ottoman officials started to relate the western world's power and success to its own governing and urban structures. To import the symbols of this 'superiority' of Europe, the Ottoman Empire started to change its governing and urban structures, which was also to fix the state's authority over the public<sup>19</sup>. New establishment of sea-fronted palaces, manor houses, sea-side residences and gardens resulted in the transformation of Istanbul as the "city of gardens and water"<sup>20</sup>. Water (in the form of a canal, river or sea) was a significant element of the design and used for boating. These gardens developed as new social places for pleasure and recreation of society (F. 4). The Sultan's garden was staged with social events, such as weddings and circumcision celebrations<sup>21</sup> (F. 5).

16 Gülhan Benli, "The Use of Courtyards and Open Areas in the Ottoman Period in Istanbul", *Advances in Landscape Architecture* (2013), 803-820.

17 Eldem, "Türk Bahçeleri", 52.

18 "Mimarlık: Batılılaşma Döneminde Osmanlı Mimarlığı", *Tanzimattan Cumhuriyete Türkiye Ansiklopedisi*, vol. 4, Ed. Fahri Aral (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1985), 1040-1041.

19 Edhem Eldem, "Osmanlı Dönemi İstanbul'u", *İstanbul'a Armağan III: Gündelik Hayatın Renkleri*, Ed. Mustafa Armağan (İstanbul: İ.B.B Kültür İşleri Daire Başkanlığı Yayınları, 1997), 179-197.

20 Aysun Tuna, Parisa Aliasghari Khabbazi and Murat Ertuğrul Yazgan, "The Tulip Era Gardens at Ottoman Empire", *Düzce University Journal of Science and Technology* 3 (2015), 162-166.

21 Nurhan Atasoy, "Hasbahçe: Osmanlı Kültüründe Bahçe ve Çiçek" (İstanbul: Aygaz Yayınları, 2002).



F. 4. Life in waterfront gardens in the 18<sup>th</sup> C. Painting by Gerard Jean Baptiste Scotin (<https://www.art-prints-on-demand.com/a/scotin/turkishmarriageprocession.html>)



F. 5. Waterfront Garden (at Kağıthane) with the Circumcision Bridge (<https://www.istanbul.net.tr/istanbul-rehberi/istanbul-fotografllari/siyah-beyaz-eski-istanbul-fotografllari/2/10>)

Meanwhile, the use, access, and degree of publicness of *mesires* changed during the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Besides Kağıthane with its easy access to crowded neighborhoods, other *mesires* (e.g., Florya and Soğukkuyu) too became popular with their nice views, water features, large meadows, groves, flowers, and various bird species because of new neighborhoods and improved transportation opportunities in Istanbul. Open to the public by the Sultan's will, each *mesire* became known for a type of food attracting public visits<sup>22</sup> and communal events, such as entertainments for births, weddings, and

22 Oya Şenyurt, "Arşiv Belgeleri Işığında Osmanlı'nın Son Dönemlerinde "Gezinti"nin Mekânları ve Millet Bahçeleri", *Journal of Architecture and Life* 3/2 (2018), 143-167.

religious ceremonies<sup>23</sup>. One of the most popular *mesires*, Göksu Mesire, was located in the meadow between the Big and Small Göksu rivers (or, “The Sweet Waters of Asia”). Evliya Celebi described this mesire with the beauty of its ‘health-giving’ water and high trees with shade. It was an important entertainment location for state officials, princes, and aristocrats until the period of Abdulhamid II. and then for the common people<sup>24</sup>.

As important area for social life in the 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century, *mesires* (including Tepebaşı, Çamlıca and Fenerbahçe) were depicted in novels and paintings. For instance, “the Landscape from Fenerbahçe,” a painting by Süleyman Seyyid Bey, depicts a harmonious scene with water (sea), greenery (mature trees, grass) and people (F. 6).



F. 6. Fenerbahçe’den Peyzaj, 1906, Canvas / Oil Paint (32 x 55 cm.)  
(<https://www.tarihnotlari.com/suleyman-seyyid/>)

Open to the public in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the *mesires* belonged to the Sultan and only selected segments of society could use them for leisure activities<sup>25</sup>. Additionally, since the Ottoman people valued their communities’ privacy due to religious and traditional reasons, *mesires* were used separately by Moslem and non-Moslem communities<sup>26</sup>.

This limited sense of ‘publicness’ of the *mesires* and also of other public spaces was more apparent for women during this era. With the Tulip Era, Ottoman women started going out more than they used to. They were visiting *mesires*, such as Sadabad Garden (F. 7), yet only women of selected societal groups could attend this public space<sup>27</sup>.

23 Aslıhan Yılmaz, “Changing Publicness of Urban Parks Through Time: The Case of Güvenpark, Ankara”, (Master Thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2015), 1-131.

24 Benli, “The Use of Courtyards and Open Areas in the Ottoman Period in Istanbul”, 803-820.

25 Aysun Tuna, Parisa Aliasghari Khabbazi and Murat Ertuğrul Yazgan, “The Tulip Era Gardens at Ottoman Empire”, 162-166.

26 Yılmaz, “Changing Publicness of Urban Parks Through Time: The Case of Güvenpark, Ankara”, 1-131.

27 Zühal Ekinci and Hakan Sağlam, “Meanings And Social Roles of the Republic Period Urban Parks in Ankara”, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 216 (2016), 610-621.





F. 7. A painting of women enjoying in Sadabad Garden in the Tulip Era  
(<https://ataforum.net/lale-devri1718-1730/>)

In describing Çamlıca Garden with its topography, plants, and natural elements, the novel “Intibah” by Namık Kemal (1876) calls this *mesire* a reflection of Heaven on earth and the water (sea) in Çamlıca as the source of life (ab-ı hayat)<sup>28</sup>. Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar’s novel “Şık” (1889) details how people paid attention to their outfits and behavior at their visits to Tepebaşı Garden and even taking dance lessons there<sup>29</sup>. Such details in “Şık” indicate these *mesires* as meeting places especially for the elites.

The economic and political changes in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century influenced changes in the Ottoman Empire’s governing and economic structures and also raised the need for restructuring Ottoman cities physically and socially<sup>30</sup>. Following Tanzimat Fermanı (the Rescript of Gülhane) in 1839, the changes in organization and architecture of Ottoman cities were inspired by those in Europe. During this era, the city was perceived as a stage for presenting the power and prestige of the Empire, so new built public parks and gardens were located especially next to state buildings and designed with physical features similar to those in the western world<sup>31</sup>.

This era witnessed a transition from traditional gardening culture to parks as an important design tool of western civilization to create “publics” and thus, a decline in the Ottomans’ moderateness and modesty in their garden design within nature. These reconstructed parks symbolized the end of traditional Turkish gardening culture with the rising influence of formal French and English gardening

28 Alphan Akgül, “Osmanlı-Türk Romanında İstanbul Tasvirleri ve Perspektif Kullanımı”, *Uluslararası Osmanlı İstanbul’u Sempozyumu IV*, Ed. Feridun M. Emecen, Ali Akyıldız, Emrah Safa Gürkan (İstanbul: İstanbul 29 Mayıs Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2017), 495-520.

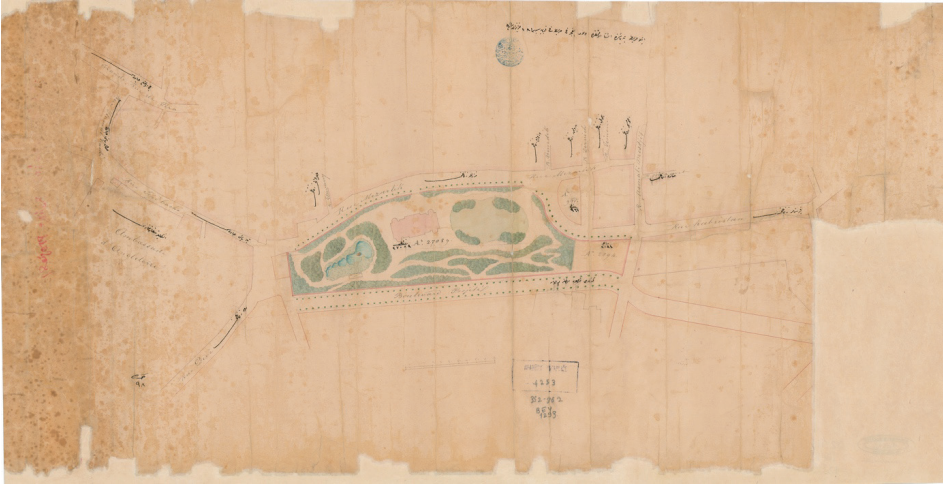
29 Ayşe Melda Üner, “Hüseyin Rahmi Gürpınar’ın Romanlarında “Şık” Delikanlılar”, *Türklük Bilimi Araştırmaları* 24 (Güz 2008), 251-269.

30 Tekeli, “Atatürk Türkiyesinde Kentsel Gelişme ve Kent Planlaması”, 61-63.

31 Gürkaş, “Bir Mimarlık Tarihi Alanı Olarak Türkiye’de Peyzaj Mimarlığı Tarihi ve Peyzaj Mimarlığı-Devlet İdeolojisi İlişkisi”, 171-190.

in the Ottoman Empire<sup>32</sup>. Inspired by the design style of French nation gardens, new public green spaces in Istanbul and then in other Anatolian cities were called ‘*millet bahçesi*’ (or, nation garden). Some *mesires* (such as Tepebaşı Garden) were reconstructed as nation gardens.

This was the first time in the Empire when the word of ‘*millet*’ (or, nation) was used in the name of a public space. Taksim Millet Bahçesi, the first nation garden, was opened in 1866 and was followed by others in Istanbul, such as Sarıkaya Millet Bahçesi in Uskudar (1868-1869), Sultan Ahmet Millet Bahçesi (1871-1872), Tepebaşı Millet Bahçesi (F. 8), Kısıklı Millet Bahçesi, and then others in Adana, Ankara, Aydın, Bursa, Edirne, Erzurum, Kars, Kayseri, Konya, Mersin, Sinop, and Sivas during the 19<sup>th</sup> century<sup>33</sup>.



**F. 8.** A view of the plan of Tepebaşı Millet Bahçesi (İ.B.B Atatürk Kitaplığı ve Arşivi – HRT\_004253)

It was observed first in Istanbul and then in other Anatolian cities, the official efforts in the Tanzimat Era for restructuring the physical and social structure of Ottoman cities were developed for four main reasons<sup>34</sup>. Firstly, next to the need for improving the sanitation and hygiene in the cities by new spatial designs, the state also aimed to re-state its control over cities and represent its ruling power there. Here the design of green public spaces shifted from *mesires* with seating- and watching-oriented functions to parks in the French style with mostly walking-oriented functions. However, a significant part of the people with traditional life styles continued to use *mesires*, rather than the new modern parks which were used mostly by people defending the

32 Eldem, “Türk Bahçeleri”, 340-371.

33 Yalçın Memlük, “Anadolu’da Türk Bahçesi ve Bahçe Kültürü”, *Plant Dergisi*, 10 Eylül 2013, accessed 12 August 2019, <https://www.plantdergisi.com/prof-dr-yalcin-memluk/anadolu-da-turk-bahcesi-ve-bahce-kulturu.html>.

34 İlhan Tekeli, “Türkiye’de Cumhuriyet Döneminde Kentsel Gelişme ve Kent Planlaması”, *75 Yılda Değişen Kent ve Mimarlık* (İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 1999), 106-134.

westernization trends in society<sup>35</sup>. Thirdly, with population increases, cities started to expand physically and required city plans with new transportation alternatives to solve their accessibility problems. Apart from the improvements in traditional urban form, new centers with modern land uses were planned. To connect new city parts to the center, large boulevards were designed with institutional buildings in large green spaces<sup>36</sup> such as Büyükdere Caddesi (F. 9).



F. 9. Büyükdere Caddesi  
(<http://constantinople.cards/the-collection/>)

Finally, the new planning projects in cities were to empower the image of the Empire in the western world. Thus, architectural and landscape design became important tools to represent the ruling power of the Empire to its western opponents and prove that the Empire's authority was the only power to shape, modify, and modernize its society<sup>37</sup>.

### Public Parks for Modernization Ideals of a Republic

The deployment of public green spaces as an instrument for political and modernization goals of the Ottoman Empire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century continued after the establishment of the Turkish Republic in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet, the political and ideological goals of the Republic were aimed at the social and cultural transitions of people from being the vassals of the Sultan to being citizens of the Republic. A major aim was to reform the state and society in order to empower the Republican ideology and establish a modern nation relying on western institutions and notions<sup>38</sup>. These alterations in the social and institutional structure were reflected in urban spaces significantly, as in the case of Ankara<sup>39</sup>. More than physical and geometric forms, the plan and design

35 Gürkaş, "Bir Mimarlık Tarihi Alanı Olarak Türkiye'de Peyzaj Mimarlığı Tarihi ve Peyzaj Mimarlığı-Devlet İdeolojisi İlişkisi", 171-190.

36 Tekeli, "Türkiye'de Cumhuriyet Döneminde Kentsel Gelişme ve Kent Planlaması", 106-134.

37 Gürkaş, "Bir Mimarlık Tarihi Alanı Olarak Türkiye'de Peyzaj Mimarlığı Tarihi ve Peyzaj Mimarlığı-Devlet İdeolojisi İlişkisi", 171-190.

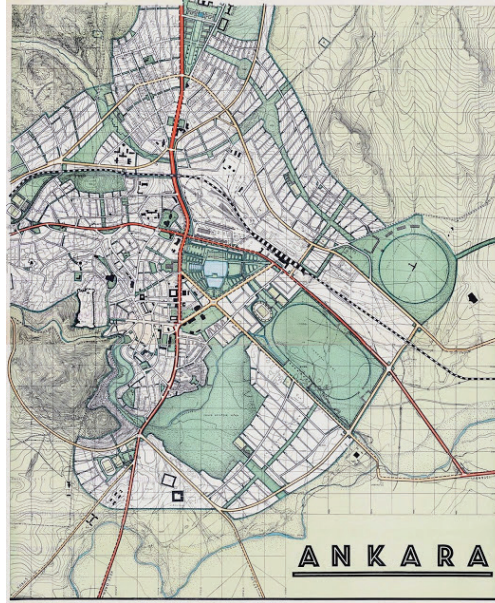
38 Ekinci and Sağlam, "Meanings and Social Roles of the Republic Period Urban Parks in Ankara", 610-621.

39 Gönül Tankut, *Bir Başkentin İmarı Ankara: 1929-1939* (Ankara: Middle East Technical University, 1990), 1-283.



of cities became a tool and a spatial setting of the Republican policies and ideals to shape the society and create a new identity for people as ‘Turkish citizens’<sup>40</sup>.

Architecture and urban planning disciplines played a major role in ‘building a nation.’ Ankara as the capital city of the Republic became the spatialized symbol of new modernization ideals and projects of Turkish society, after Istanbul’s dominance in the social and political structure of the Empire<sup>41</sup>. With a modern city planning approach, Ankara was planned and built with avenues, tree-lined boulevards and parks for the construction of publicness and according to Hermann Jansen’s plan that won the international design competition for Ankara 1932. With a specific focus on community health, Jansen’s plan for Ankara proposed a series of recreation and sports areas with artificial lakes and ponds. He designed this series of green infrastructure also as an alternative pedestrian circulation route connecting house gardens to schools, sports areas, city center, ministry buildings, and the airport<sup>42</sup> (F. 10).



**F. 10.** Hermann Jansen’s urban development plan  
(<http://artikisler.net/geridekalanlar-iii-haritanin-eksiginde-ankara/>)

Parks in Ankara and in all other cities were planned as open to all citizens. Moreover, because social interactions among all social groups were crucial to spread mod-

40 Berrin Akgün Yüksekli, “Balıkesir Atatürk Parkı: Erken Cumhuriyetten Günümüze Türkiye’de Değişen Söy-lem ve Tasarımın Bir Kent Parkı Üzerinden Örneklenmesi”, *The Journal of International Social Research* 6/25 (2013), 33-47.

41 Tekeli, “Türkiye’de Cumhuriyet Döneminde Kentsel Gelişme ve Kent Planlaması”, 106-134.

42 Sinan Burat, “‘Yeşilyollarda Hareketle İstirahat’: Jansen Planlarında Başkent’in Kentsel Yeşil Alan Tasarımları ve Bunların Uygulanma ve Değiştirilme Süreci (1932-1960)”, *İdealKent 4* (Eylül 2011), 100-127; Tankut, “Bir Başkent’in İmarı Ankara: 1929-1939”, 100-127.

ernization attempts, the selection of locations and the design of parks and other public spaces were to enable these interactions<sup>43</sup>.

To succeed with modernization and nation-building projects, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, as the leader of the Republic, proposed two major types of urban parks to be built throughout Turkey: Cultural parks were to lead society with socialization processes and enrich cultural enlightenment and the youth parks were to create a new, modern, and westernized young generation. These projects were interpreted as the lead of a green revolution across the country<sup>44</sup>. Names of early examples of public green spaces symbolized this aim, including Millet Bahçesi (Nation Garden) in the 1920s, Gençlik Park (Youth Park) in 1943, Zafer Parkı (Victory Park) and Güvenpark (Trust Park) in the 1930s in Ankara and Kültür Park (Culture Park) in 1936 in Izmir.

In Ankara, Millet Bahçesi (F. 11) was located at Station Street across from the building of the First Grand National Assembly next to Ulus Meydanı (or, Nation Square). It had a restaurant and a teahouse that attracted most of the parliamentarians. Also, with cultural and social activities that included dance events and theater shows, it was a public space with a western notion.



**F. 11.** Nation Garden (Millet Bahçesi) in Ankara in the 1930s, a view from Ulus Meydanı towards İstasyon Caddesi (Vekam Kütüphanesi ve Arşivi)

The location and design of Gençlik Park aimed both to capture the visitors' image of Ankara as the capital and modern (westernized) city upon their arrival to city by train, and also to improve a modern urban social life. Including an auditorium, a club house for water sports, a casino, an ice rink, a small train line and multiple recreation

43 Erol Demir, "Toplumsal Değişme Süreci İçinde Gençlik Parkı: Sosyolojik Bir Değerlendirme", *Planlama* 4/9 (2006), 77.

44 Memlük, "Anadolu'da Türk Bahçesi ve Bahçe Kültürü", accessed 12 August 2019. <https://www.plantdergisi.com/prof-dr-yalcin-memluk/anadolu-da-turk-bahcesi-ve-bahce-kulturu.html>.

areas, Gençlik Park's facilities were proposing a simulation of the modern life of western societies<sup>45</sup>. Located on the Atatürk Boulevard, the main axis of the city center (Kızılay) of Ankara and with their design features (such as the staged sculptures), Zafer Park and Güvenpark (F. 12) represented not only a modern city but also the power and authority of the Republic<sup>46</sup>, an approach similar to that adopted during the Tanzimat Era. Other cities too had similar public parks, such as Atatürk Park (1942, Balıkesir) with public balls, social gatherings, formal ceremonies, and parades to represent the “modernized” face of the city<sup>47</sup>.



F. 12. Güvenpark in late 1920s

(<https://i.pinimg.com/originals/78/7b/f9/787bf9470f9460ce74d634e30c8f92c0.jpg>)

In the post-1950s with increased levels of industrialization and rural migration, Turkish cities had uncontrolled population increases. Accompanied by economic, political, cultural, and spatial changes, especially major cities (Istanbul, Ankara and Izmir) had physical expansions along with informal settlements or squatter areas, new neighborhoods with apartments, high rise buildings, and an increasing number of industrial areas, all of which caused significant decreases in the amount and quality of urban public spaces in cities<sup>48</sup>.

In the 1970s with the dominance of leftist approaches in the local municipalities of major cities, parks were planned under the influences of municipal socialism. Design of these parks was ‘organic,’ that is, without any linear axis and integrated more with natural elements, such as water features, planting, and permeable surfaces. They had

45 Ekinci and Sağlam, “Meanings And Social Roles of the Republic Period Urban Parks in Ankara”, 610-621; Uludağ, “The Social Construction of Meaning in Landscape Architecture: A Case Study of Gençlik Parkı in Ankara”, 60.

46 Yılmaz, “Changing Publicness of Urban Parks Through Time: The Case of Güvenpark, Ankara”, 1-131.

47 Yüksekli, “Balıkesir Atatürk Parkı: Erken Cumhuriyetten Günümüze Türkiye’de Değişen Söylem ve Tasarımın Bir Kent Parkı Üzerinden Örnekleme”, 33-47.

48 Tekeli, “Atatürk Türkiye’sinde Kentsel Gelişme ve Kent Planlaması”, 61-63.

ornamental pools and amphitheatres and were easily accessible from surrounding sidewalks. Botanik Park in 1970 and Seğmenler Park in 1983 (F. 13) in Ankara and also Maçka Park in Istanbul are significant examples from this period.



F. 13. Seğmenler Parkı, Ankara  
(<http://www.anfa.com.tr/parklarimiz/segmenler-ve-botanik-parki>)

Overall, the design of parks during this period was for recreational purposes, such as strolling and enjoying nature, rather than with group activities -such as balls, theater plays, and concerts- at the Early Republican era. In other words, parks of this period were to fulfill individuals' daily integration with nature, rather than being a symbol of state power and ideologies.

With the shift to neoliberal policies since the 1980s, urban land in Turkey had become a significant commodity along with changes in the production methods of urban space. Also, supported by the new policies discouraging agricultural production and the State's armed war with terror on the eastern and southeastern regions, there were new major migration fluxes in the mid-1990s to the cities especially in western and mid-regions. Ultimately, existing open public spaces in cities, including park spaces, have been threatened and even invaded by new residential and commercial areas, such as shopping malls and other consumption spaces that shifted the senses of being in public and perceptions of social life. Owned and managed by private companies, such privatized public spaces of the recent era are preferred for providing many shopping and entertainment options in a climate-controlled environment, but also criticized as 'false' public spaces serving only customers (rather than citizens) and prohibiting people from any connection with nature and also people with identities different from 'ours'.

Meanwhile, the surveillance technologies (e.g., gates, cameras, and private security guards) of shopping malls have become a part of the design of public parks and



streets. Also, because the neoliberal era considers any occasional protests as ‘nuisance’ to ‘peaceful’ social life in consumption spaces, the spatial organization and design of parks of this era have evolved to avoid large gatherings and to provide easy surveillance and control over space, and such as fewer plantings and gathering areas in small sizes.

Built usually by metropolitan authorities, Altınpark, Göksu Park, and Mogan Park in Ankara (F. 14) are significant examples of this period. Located at the city fringes with lesser land values, these parks have plenty of spaces for large and multiple buildings (such as youth centers, car parking, cultural facilities, wedding halls, and amusement parks) that can simultaneously house multiple big events<sup>49</sup>.



F. 14. Altınpark, Ankara  
(<https://seyyahdefteri.com/altinpark-nerede-nasil-gidilir/>)

### Policy Making Through Reinterpreting The Idea of “Nation Garden”

Next to various economic, social, and political changes, the planning laws and regulations since 1933 have affected the provision of public green spaces but been limited to identifying the minimum acreage of green areas per capita. Defined as 4m<sup>2</sup> (with groves, meadow, lake, and play grounds) in 1933, this minimum acreage per capita changed in 1956 to 7m<sup>2</sup> (including 1.5m<sup>2</sup> for playgrounds, 2m<sup>2</sup> for play and sports areas, 1m<sup>2</sup> for neighborhood park, 1m<sup>2</sup> for district stadium, and 1.5m<sup>2</sup> for urban park). In 1999, it was revised to 10 m<sup>2</sup> (1.5m<sup>2</sup> for playgrounds, 2m<sup>2</sup> for neighborhood park, 2m<sup>2</sup> for sports area, 1m<sup>2</sup> for district stadiums and 3.5m<sup>2</sup> for urban parks)<sup>50</sup>.

After President Erdoğan’s announcement about building nation gardens, the Regulation for Development of Planned Areas added an article (dated 01/3/2019 and numbered 30701) describing ‘*Millet Bahçeleri*:’

49 Yılmaz, “Changing Publicness of Urban Parks Through Time: The Case of Güvenpark, Ankara”, 1-131.

50 Aksoy, “Gardening in Ottoman Turks”, 345.

The large green areas that make people meet with nature, provide with recreational needs, might be used also during the hazards as the city's meeting points (and) whose characteristics like their allocation, areal size, functions and design to be determined and issued by the Nation Gardens Guide that will be prepared by the Ministry<sup>51</sup>.

However, neither this addition to the Regulations was out of a simple technicality, nor President Erdoğan's talk was just an announcement for increasing urban green areas per capita. His talks at the election campaign in 2018 presented the "nation gardens" as necessary for staging Turkey's reputation at the international level and the government's power to its local and global rivalries. Followed by a short film about public green areas in Germany, England, the United States, and Brazil, one of his talks announced Atatürk International Airport as a new nation garden emphasizes the former point:

*"England has this kind of gardens; others have that kind of ones. We'll say that "we do have too"."*

*"Those burning and destroying under the name of environmentalism, those making Gezi protests, those standing against each work for the benefits of the Country shall come here to see these nation gardens (and) see what real environmentalism is."<sup>52</sup>*

Other talks declared the establishment of nation gardens with references to "our" traditional (i.e., either Islamic or national) values:

*"In nature, colors have a language. For instance, the color of green is the language for healing, peace, safety, spaciousness. That is why at our civilization, the color of heaven is green. (Heaven) itself too is described as the garden composed of all beauty of nature".<sup>53</sup>*

References to Islamic notions by this talk appeared also at ceremonial openings of nation gardens symbolized by the opening of mosques in those gardens. The talk about the planned Ankara Nation Garden referred to significant old and new public buildings and spaces of Ankara as the capital city competes with other capital cities at the international level:

*"(Ankara Nation Garden) will start at the junction in front of Ankara Police Headquarter (and) include the old Hippodrome, Atatürk Cultural Center, newly planned stadium, Arena Sport Center, Youth Park and surround the area with the new building for Presidential Symphony Orchestra, the Courthouse and extend to Melike Hatun Mosque and then to Ulus Sculpture. We are building (this) nation garden in a giant area.*

51 Planlı Alanlar İmar Yönetmeliği, Ek:RG-01/3/2019-30701, accessed 7 October 2019, [www.mevzuat.gov.tr](http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr).

52 "Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan Millet Bahçesi projelerini ilk kez TRT Haber'de açıkladı" accessed 18 July 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0MoFBkkxaFU>

53 Accessed 12 October 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4glsNrflTM>

*Including a stadium, a concert hall, sport hall, mosque and other significant buildings, this place will be a real great area and an original work of art. (...) If British has Hyde Park on 200.000 m2, yes, then we will have a giant nation garden here.*<sup>54</sup>

These presidential talks have triggered certain economic expectations about these newly built park areas with their effects on real estate values and local economy. Some news identified the land and rent values around newly built nation gardens as increasing<sup>55</sup>. Yet the projects for nation gardens are also criticized for being primarily a governmental tool to reboot the construction sector supported by the government for more than a decade and even to expropriate private land for building parks with the facilities serving major upper income groups. Referring to the neoliberal policies of the government, these criticisms underline that the new nation gardens are located and designed in ways that might ignore the locations and amount of locally existing open and green spaces, availability of sufficient public transportation, and the specific needs of local groups<sup>56</sup>.

Such criticisms also relate to the on-going process for establishing nation gardens. With a lack of comprehensive public information about planning and design criteria for nation gardens, the online news (as of 01.11.2019) announced around 5 nation gardens as open in Istanbul and less so in Izmir, Adana, Artvin, Mardin, Kahramanmaraş, Gaziantep and in other cities<sup>57</sup> and ultimately, around total 100 completed projects in more than 30 cities<sup>58</sup>. Some of them were built before the date of the issued article about the Regulation for nation gardens. Moreover, “the Nation Gardens Guide” as a framework for selecting suitable locations and design features of nation gardens is in the preparation process by the Ministry but still has not been issued<sup>59</sup>.

In order to investigate and describe common points about the on-going process and planning and design features of parks, we reviewed news about the nation gardens that had opened. Firstly, rather than the municipalities, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanism is in charge of coordinating the process for establishing nation gardens.

54 Accessed 12 October 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NtPeXzq1Fbo>

55 Accessed 30 July 2019, <https://www.gunes.com/emlak/millet-bahcesi-prim-yaptirdi-gayrimenkul-sektorunde-yuzde-20-deger-artisi-bekleniyor-933394>

56 Accessed 30 July 2019, <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/yazarlar/2019/03/14/millet-bahceleri-kentin-yesil-yamalari/>

57 Accessed 30 July 2019, <https://www.yenisafak.com/ekonomi/istanbulda-5-millet-bahcesi-hizmete-aciliyor-3409444>; Accessed 30 July 2019, [http://www.yapi.com.tr/haberler/mardin-kamor-millet-bahcesi-acildi\\_171691.html](http://www.yapi.com.tr/haberler/mardin-kamor-millet-bahcesi-acildi_171691.html); Accessed 30 July 2019, <https://www.gaziantepusula.com/webtv/hasan-celal-guzel-millet-bahcesi-acildi-videosu-2416.html>; Accessed 30 July 2019, <http://www.bizimtorbali.com/haber/torbalinin-millet-bahcesi-acildi-8877>; Accessed 30 July 2019, <https://www.anadolupress.com/yerel/receptayyip-erdogan-millet-bahcesi-acildi-h18517.html> ; Accessed 30 July 2019, <https://www.pusulahaber.com.tr/sakin-sehir-savsatta-millet-bahcesi-acildi-1074669h.html>; Accessed 30 July 2019, <https://www.cnnturk.com/yerel-haberler/adana/merkez/yuregir-millet-bahcesi-acildi-958128>

58 Accessed 30 July 2019, <https://www.toki.gov.tr/haber/tokiden-30-ile-41-millet-bahcesi>

59 Accessed 30 July 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/millet-bahceleri-rehberi-hazirlanacak/1406468>



Next to some significant areas (such as Atatürk International Airport (F. 15) and Ege University Forestry) proposed by the Ministry, municipalities can also propose areas to be developed as a nation garden. The Ministry gives permission, if the area is big enough, that is, more than 20.000 m<sup>2</sup>. For developing and implementing the projects, municipalities can and do usually ask for financial support from the Ministry. Here TOKİ (Housing Development Administration of Turkey) is the manager for implementing these projects financially.



F. 15. Project proposal for Atatürk Airport Millet Bahçesi  
(<https://haber.aero/havacilik/ataturk-havalimani-millet-bahcesi-oluyor/>)

Secondly, nation gardens are implemented in large areas (20.000+ m<sup>2</sup>) usually in and sometimes out of cities. The first group of built and planned nation gardens are located in football stadiums abandoned for new spaces, for instance, in Ordu (F.16), Konya, Eskişehir, and Gaziantep<sup>60</sup>. In cities, these stadium-oriented nation gardens have better accessibility to transportation options. The second group of nation gardens, the suggested areas are park areas assigned by the development plans of municipalities and usually far from city centers.

60 Accessed 30 July 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/pg/foto-galeri/eski-statlar-millet-bahcesi-olacak/0>



F. 16. Ordu Stadium to be designed as Millet Bahçesi

(<https://www.star.com.tr/yerel-haberler/eski-statlar-millet-bahcesi-olacak-3603123/>)

Thirdly, similar to the *mesires* in the Ottoman Era, nation gardens are planned with natural elements (like trees, shrubs, and groundcover elements) in their natural forms and in large areas. Large scale water features are part of the design too. In contrast to the natural creeks used for boating through mesire areas, water elements in nation gardens are for ornamental purposes. Moreover, commonly the projects for nation gardens have certain buildings and structures (such as mosques and nation libraries, or *millet kiraathanesi*, that is, a public library with a teahouse), entrance gates and statues with symbolic meanings (such as 15 July or Democracy and National Unity Day) (F. 17, F. 18).



F. 17. Torbalı, İzmir Millet Bahçesi

(<https://www.haberler.com/izmir-in-en-buyuk-millet-bahcesi-torbalı-da-11876693-haberi/>)



**F. 18.** Hoşdere Millet Bahçesi

(<https://gezilmesigerekenyerler.com/hosdere-millet-bahcesi-ozellikleri-nerede-neler-var>)

Limited to information published in online news, our summary at Table 1 shows these public green spaces as built in large sizes and holding a wide variety of uses. Their open spaces for activity areas are usually for various kinds of sports and playgrounds. Their “natural elements” are elaborate with water features usually in the form of a pond and with designated gardens displaying multiple kinds of flowers. Other common features of nation gardens are certain built elements, such as a mosque, a *millet kiraathanesi* and indoor/ outdoor parking areas.

**Table 1**

The first examples of the built nation gardens and their features according to newspaper headlines<sup>61</sup>

Name & City	Size & Location	Characteristics of Park Amenities
Başakşehir MB İstanbul (Başakşehir)	360.000 m <sup>2</sup> At the center of mega projects such as İkitelli City Hospital, Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, Northern Marmara Highway, Canal İstanbul	<b>Buildings / Structures:</b> Mosque, Indoor Parking, Millet Kiraathanesi (Reading Room & Cafeteria), Café, Fountain <b>Open Activity areas:</b> Walking and Bicycle Trails, Play Areas, Activity Meadow, Amphitheater <b>Natural elements:</b> Biological Pool, Thematic Gardens (Smell, Color, Butterfly)
Kayaşehir MB İstanbul (Başakşehir)	350.000 m <sup>2</sup> City center	<b>Buildings / Structures:</b> Outdoor Parking <b>Open/Activity areas:</b> Walking and Bicycle Trails, Observation Deck, Stage, Picnic Areas, Activity Platforms, Play Areas, <b>Natural elements:</b> Biological Pool, Groves, Thematic Gardens, Hobby Gardens
Hoşdere MB İstanbul (Bağçeşehir)	142.000 m <sup>2</sup> City center	<b>Buildings / Structures:</b> Mosque, Solar Panels <b>Open Activity areas:</b> Walking Trails, Fruit Gardens, Activity Meadow, Thematic Gardens, Basketball Courts <b>Natural elements:</b> Biological Pond
Baruthane MB İstanbul (Ataköy)	60.000 m <sup>2</sup> City center	<b>Buildings / Structures:</b> Historical Ottoman Baruthane Building, Restaurant, Café, Outdoor Parking <b>Open Activity areas:</b> Walking Trails, Vista Points, Play Areas, Fitness Area, Skateboarding Area <b>Natural elements:</b> Pond, Roses, Fruit Trees, Annual Flowers
Çurupcı MB İstanbul	465.000 m <sup>2</sup> City center	<b>Buildings / Structures:</b> Social Facility <b>Open Activity areas:</b> Walking Trails, Play Areas, Fitness Area, Basketball and Tennis Courts, Soccer Field, Picnic Areas <b>Natural elements:</b> Biological Pool
Nakkaştepe MB İstanbul (Üsküdar)	50.000 m <sup>2</sup> City center	<b>Buildings / Structures:</b> Elevated Trails, Wooden Bridge <b>Open Activity areas:</b> Picnic Areas, Walking Trails, Resting Areas, Adventure Park, Fitness Areas, Indoor and Outdoor Play Areas, Amphitheater, Observation Deck <b>Natural elements:</b> Biological Ponds
Mardin Kamor MB Mardin (Kamor)	65.000 m <sup>2</sup> City center	<b>Buildings / Structures:</b> Restaurant, Café, Outdoor Parking <b>Open Activity areas:</b> Picnic Areas, Soccer Field, Basketball & Volleyball Fields, Open Air Wedding Area, Amphitheater, Play Areas <b>Natural elements:</b> -
Hasan Celal Güzel MB Gaziantep	250.000 m <sup>2</sup> City neighborhood	<b>Buildings / Structures:</b> Millet Kiraathanesi, Semi-Olympic Pool <b>Open Activity areas:</b> Picnic Areas, Walking Trails, Soccer Field, Basketball Court, Walking and Bicycle Trails <b>Natural elements:</b> -
Torbali MB İzmir (Torbali)	22.000 m <sup>2</sup> At the center of Torbali District	<b>Buildings / Structures:</b> Cafe <b>Open Activity areas:</b> Amphitheater, Ornamental Pool, Walking Trails, Fitness Area, Play Areas <b>Natural elements:</b> -
Esenler 15 Temmuz MB İstanbul (Esenler)	240.000 m <sup>2</sup> Former Metris Barracks (First nation garden that is built on a land that is transferred from the Turkish Armed Forces)	<b>Buildings / Structures:</b> Millet Kiraathanesi, Ladies Mansion <b>Open Activity areas:</b> Sports Valley, Culture Valley, Walking and Bicycle Trails, Picnic Areas, Play Areas, Activity Areas, Hobby Gardens, Fruit Gardens, <b>Natural elements:</b> Pond
Recep Tayyip Erdoğan MB Kahramanmaraş (Elbistan)	100.000 m <sup>2</sup> By Ceylan River	<b>Buildings / Structures:</b> Millet Kiraathanesi <b>Open Activity areas:</b> Play Areas, Walking Trails, Resting Areas, Sport Areas <b>Natural elements:</b> -

## Conclusion

Public green spaces are important public service areas with environmental amenities, and also places for maintaining social relations among diverse groups. Shaped by socio-political and economic conditions of each era, these spaces' development process and design are embedded within the intentions of power holders of societies to display their socio-political ideologies. For these displays, as emphasized by this study, state officials can initiate policies for (re)developing green spaces with certain locational and physical features, space management strategies, and levels of public accessibility.

61 Table prepared by authors



Focusing on contemporary state and governmental policies in Turkey for building ‘*millet bahçeleri*’ or nation gardens, this study investigated the development process and design features of these spaces with respect to those from the past eras of Turkey extending to Ottoman and pre-Ottoman history. In each era, this paper detailed the political and economic conditions leading to the policies for developing a ‘new kind’ of public green spaces and their spatialized results in cities. In the past and present eras of Turkey, the types of public green spaces have been introduced under various names and planned by the state to stage its power and political ideals at both national international and platforms. Moreover, these places have simultaneously performed as the daily stage for ‘re-making’ everyday socio-spatialized practices and building identities of ‘citizens’ and societies.

Interestingly, sharing these two intentions of the past policies about public green spaces, and the recent introduction of nation gardens differs from those in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early-20<sup>th</sup> century. For instance, those policies in the Tanzimat Era and Early Republican Era were commonly intended for the westernization and modernization of the state and society. Planning and design features of public green spaces and of urban space in general resembled certain western examples and thus, acted as tools for spatializing the state’s modernization projects in a western-style. However, with no emphasis on modernization goals of the western world, recent policies for nation gardens are to re-raise Turkey and its government’s reputation nationally and internationally. Ironically, the presidential talks and some design features (including the name itself, ‘*kıraathane*’ and gardens of flowers) of nation gardens refer to other characteristics of past eras as the sources of “traditions” to preserve.

Regardless of any underlying political, ideological, or economic intentions, the recent policy for nation gardens is an opportunity to increase green areas per capita in cities. Our cities have limited amounts of public green areas that are decaying due to the redevelopment pressures on urban land with increasing values and the increasing number of urban population. Moreover, with design features inconsiderate of the needs of potential users, most of the public green areas are either in small sizes scattered in urban spaces or in large sizes out of the limits of walking distance. Whereas, the nation gardens promised for improving the amount and number of public green areas and quality of public life, their planning and design process and related features and tools must be supported by a publicly announced planning and design guide. These guides should also provide criteria for local participation in decisions about design features of each nation garden and thus, comprehend and respond to local public needs for green spaces.

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