

## Architectural Public Space, Spaces of Modernity: “Cumhuriyet Meydanı” (Gazi Meydanı) İzmir, Turkey

Ayşe Durukan Kopuz<sup>1</sup>,

<sup>1</sup>(Civil Engineering Department, Namık Kemal/ University Name, Turkey)

---

**Abstract :** During the formative years of the Turkish Republic, urban spaces which were built as a key instrument for the State, played an important role in cities of Turkey as well as modern buildings. As the settlement of Republic was enlarged, the urban spaces of the nation-state has received significant attention. This article focuses on one of the urban spaces of squares in Turkey named “İzmir Cumhuriyet Meydanı” located in Konak neighborhood between Alsancak and Çankaya regions which I consider relevant for the aspect of new state. It was originally designed in 1932 by German architect and city planner Hermann Jansen as “Gazi Meydanı” and then transformed to “Cumhuriyet Meydanı” at the mid 50’s of twentieth century in the third largest city in Turkey

**Keywords** - İzmir, İzmir Cumhuriyet Meydanı, İzmir Gazi Meydanı, İzmir squares, Squares

---

### I. INTRODUCTION

The modern architectural heritage of Early Republican Period could not be considered without the presence of city planning activities and urban space designs in Turkey. However In 1930’s most studies about Early Republican Period architecture focus on public and civil buildings in the memory of architectural history. Because the typical tendency of architectural history to focus on the modern buildings of the 1930’s, escapes the presence of urban designs. It is constantly overlooked that popular public spaces, particularly recreational spaces and *squares* played an equally significant role for the establishment of new republic.

A concrete objectification of Early Republican Period of Turkey, the “Cumhuriyet Meydanı” exemplifies the public places of cities in signifying the ideas of the state. The architectural development and settlement of the square, as well as the practices it has showed, maps the concepts of modernity in a Turkish context. Identification of modern architecture with modern spaces such as squares was a nation building phase also. This tangible urban spaces/squares which introduced new types of practices, shaped the routines of community and created new networks between people and government.

Therefore, I examine the Cumhuriyet Meydanı not only as a spatial place that influences western norms and architectural design, but also as a medium through which the state could perform and express their modernity project. Because the square advocates the idea of modern architecture as a spatial place.

### II. EARLY REPUBLIC PERIOD IN İZMİR

#### 1920’s

İzmir stands on the top of cities giving a good example of the modern development through modernity project in Turkey. The city which stands by the Aegean Sea, faced transformation from Ottoman Period to Republic period in the physical and cultural environment due to the political issues of new state.

Since the establishment of republic in 1923, İzmir has been a leading city representing contemporary values of Turkey to the world. So the importance of İzmir city is also a symbol city both representing establishment and liberation of the country by the fact that leader Atatürk announced all his messages for the establishment of Republic through this city [1]. Ironically, it was the newness of İzmir that celebrated as a Republican icon.

However one of the most important events for the urban history of İzmir is the big fire which occurred after the liberation of the city razing approximately 300 hectares at the center of the city in 1922. So the rebuilding of İzmir has been a primary priority for the government (fig 1).

The ethos of new İzmir after the big fire, was intimately connected with the work of foreign architects and planners who were invited to Turkey, starting with French urban planner Rene Danger, Henry Prost and Le Corbusier<sup>1</sup>. During 1924-25’s, Rene Danger with the supervisor of Henry Prost have designed not only the places that have been fired but also a functionalist and spatial places for the revival of economic growth of city as well [2].



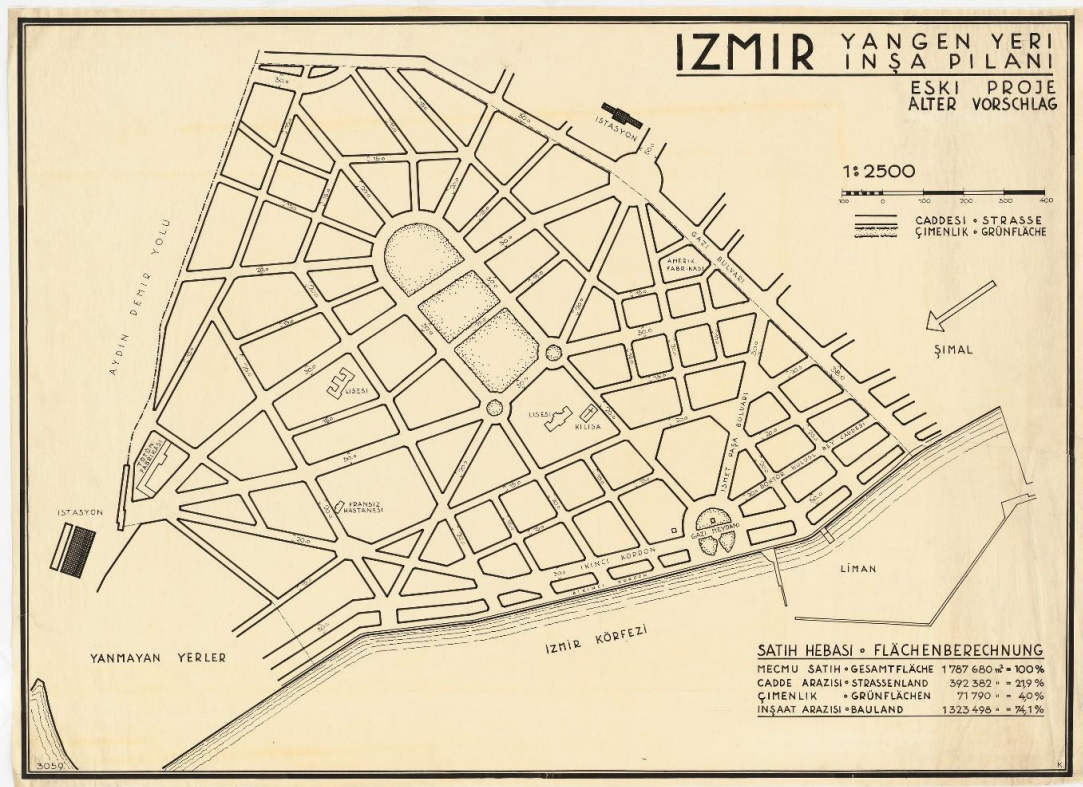
**Figure 1.** İzmir Central Symrna neighborhoods pre-1922 and the fire zone (Source: İzmir Municipality History Project Center Archive)

### 1930’s

During 1930’s in Turkey, architecture and planning discipline for the modernization of urban space, incarnations of the formal representation and purify of urban space from the Ottoman / Islamic past, stressed the necessity of large urban transformation. This requirement is formalized by the applications of 1580 and 1593 laws, to make a formal plan for big cities of Turkey between 1930 and 1935 years [3].

In this regard, the formal plans of cities are given to foreign architects to make modern cities of new Turkey. So, during the mayor of Behçet Uz in 1931, a new period starts in İzmir. In addition to foreign architects mentioned for the planning of city, one of the most prominent of planners of Germany were also invited to study in İzmir, Hermann Hansen. Behçet Uz got opinions from Jansen about the city planning of İzmir. As the plan of the “fire zone” was the emergency activities of the city, he has designed a plan for “fire zone” of İzmir in 1932.

In the old plan, there are radial boulevards intersect to form triangular or star-shaped squares (in front of station and Gazi meydanı) and a big green area in the middle of the settlement. The city's symbolic gate from the sea, Gazi Meydanı with its scale, constitutes one of the focal point of the composition and the form of semicircle. The plan reflects the formalist composition approach of the teachings of the French Beaux-Arts School. (fig 2).



**Figure 2.** Development plan of urban expansion in İzmir, northern urban expansion. An older proposal, Herman Jansen and Kotzer (Source: TU Berlin Architecturemuseum Inv. No. 23433)

However the project of Jansen were totally different both for roads and green areas. The most prominent feature of his project is a dense green belt from Gazi Meydanı to Station. The roads, green areas and construction areas are all parallel to each other.

### Squares in İzmir

City Squares, like all urban spaces, are representations that make social, cultural and ideological attitudes of the government in the framework of urban spatial. In fact urban spaces have some theories beyond its visual and geometric views. Rob Krier's (1979) definition of urban space as an organization of socio-political and cultural attitudes, shows the comprehensive approach to this context. [4]. The origins of this comprehensive discourse on space can be traced back to early urban planners and architects of space which emerged during the beginning of twentieth century in Turkey.

İzmir city has some prominent urban spaces or squares which belong to early republican period of Turkey. Most writings about the transformation of the urban space in İzmir focus on the second half of the nineteenth century, on Konak meydanı or Gündoğdu Meydanı, when the urban administration system was established and its outputs began to shape the city. Undoubtedly, Konak meydanı represented a radical transformation on describing the history of modernization of İzmir [5]. However Cumhuriyet meydanı is also an important square for the society of İzmir.

We can say that, the formation process of squares had been started after French style and Rene Danger with Henri Prost city plans in the post-world war-I in İzmir. Beaux-Arts-style radial roads in a sense of composition, boulevards and squares, has been accepted as the prime urban elements in the formation of the modern city of İzmir. Bilsel (2001) states that many new challenges such as Cumhuriyet meydanı, was constructed according to this ideology with Konak meydanı [6].

Actually, squares were powerful expressions of the republican vision of thoroughly modernized, meeting place for mixed-gender public, listening/communicating their leader. As Bozdoğan states, these spaces which still in bear their original aesthetic and environmental qualities, had important democratic implications. [7]. Architecture by its very nature constituted a central element of visual of modernity, in the spirit of spaces. So, it is not surprising that the categories "ideology" and "power" have been at the center of modern architecture.

### **Cumhuriyet Meydanı**

The official discourse of the republic in 1930's, was based on enlighten idea that was relevant to modern architecture. The squares, a number of parks, public recreation places of the republic were proudly featured in big cities of Turkey. As Bozdoğan (2001) states, they become urban and architectural icons of republican modernity [8]. One of this icon space is Cumhuriyet Meydanı in İzmir.

The establishment of the Cumhuriyet Meydanı exemplified the spaces designed to gather people for the meetings and practices of contemporary republican state that distinguished themselves from the practices of the Ottoman Empire. Its function emphasized the Republican ideas of a contemporary state. Because the ideas of State were to be told to the society in some places such as squares.

There is an Atatürk monument as "Gazi Heykeli" at the center of the square which was designed by Italian sculptor Pietro Canonica while the base is designed by architect Asım Kömürcüoğlu. This monument symbolizes the "Armies, your first goal is the Mediterranean. Forward!" command of Atatürk. It was opened by mayor Behçet Uz in 1932 [9].

Jansen designed one of the most important (remarkable) squares of İzmir, through which modernity project was introduced to society as "Gazi Meydanı". What is important to note is that Jansen was the one among many German architects, engineers and contractors working on the designs of urban spaces in Turkey.

After the construction of Gazi Heykeli, Gazi Meydanı has been designed. Because we can see the monument in the plans of Gazi Meydanı. There are two plans for Gazi meydanı designed on 8<sup>th</sup> of June in 1932. One project is probably for the old plan of fire zone (of Rene Danger), (fig 3) the other one is for the project of Jansen, designed for fire zone (fig 4).

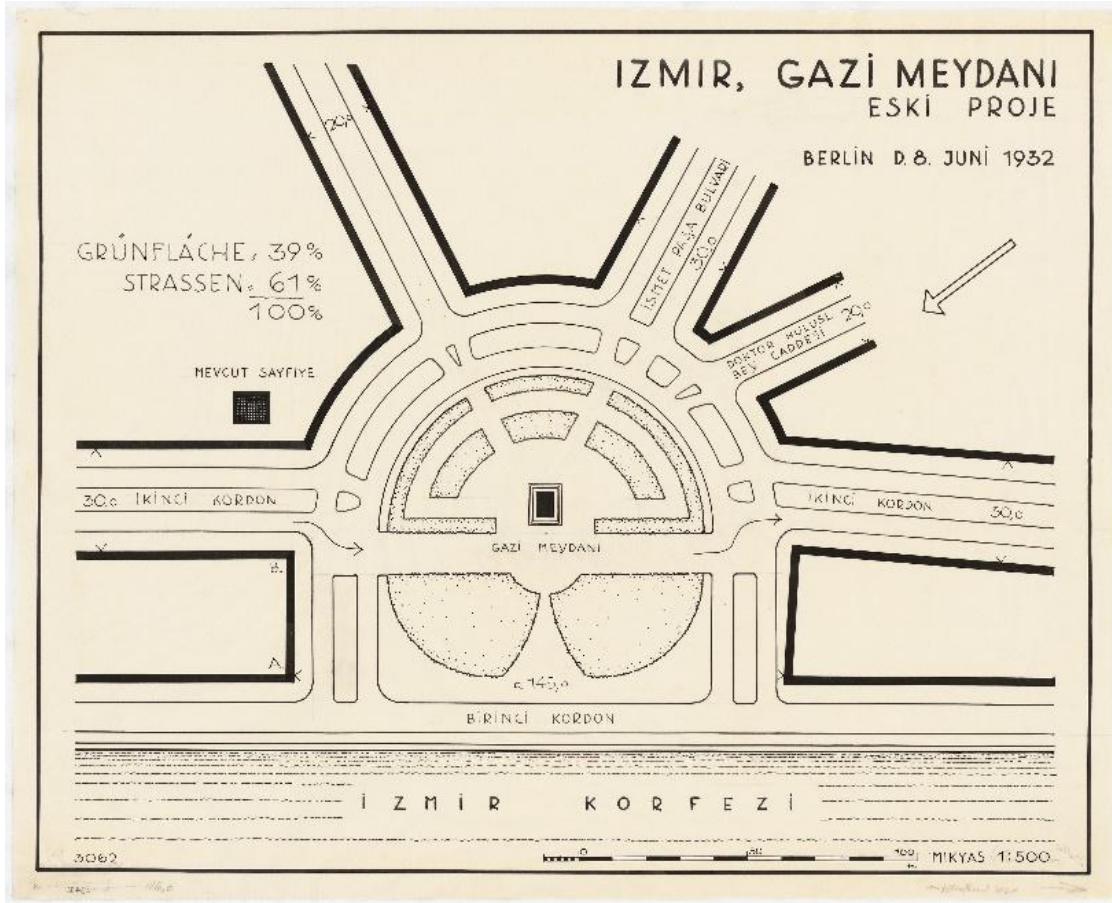
The design criteria for the old plans shows a segregation of more place for roads and streets. There is a separation of % 39 for lawn areas and %61 for roads/streets while the other has %81 lawn and %19 roads. This shows that Jansen wants the Gazi meydanı as a green area. According to his new plan he has designed a "forum" area as a meeting place both two sides having coffee and rose gardens. Also gardens with green areas is the main planning principle of Jansen. Hence he separated streets from the square not involved in the forum. In the old plan there is second parallel road to kordon as a "İkinci Kordon". Jansen has not put the Atatürk monument at the center while it was at the center in the old plan.

Also Jansen told his ideas to the mayor about the plans of the square. He has found the plans of Danger-Prost as being non- economic. He summarizes his decision with these words:

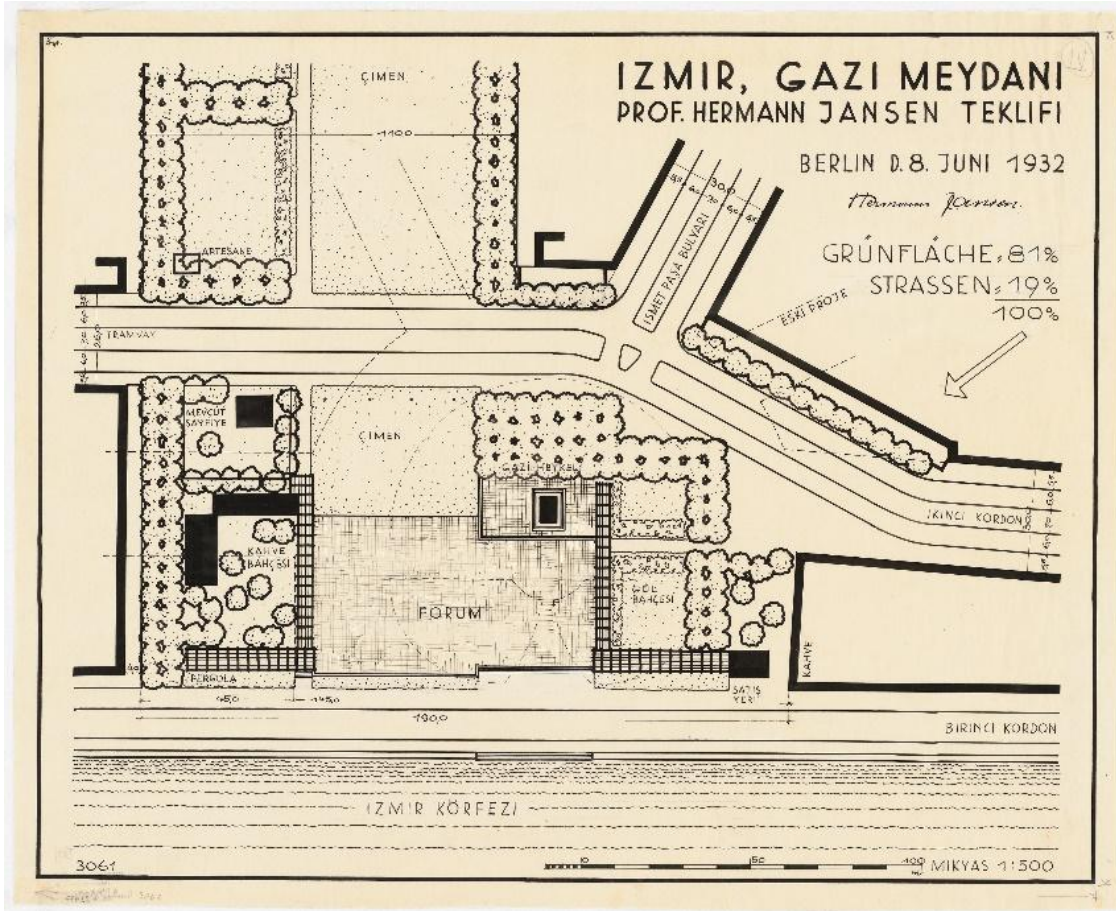
*"I would like to mention that, Gazi Meydanı would cost cheaper and gain more value as a part of city plan. Approximately 80 thousand Turkish liras for the regulation of modern construction plan is sufficient for the future needs of the city. The municipality wastes 78 thousand Turkish liras both for the circulation and bad designing of Gazi Meydanı."* [10].

Jansen has designed many urban design projects for the new republic. However most of designs like Gazi Meydanı has not been realized. Probably, lack of financial resources, technical information and legacy for the implementation of most important plans are the reasons why his plans were not realized.

According to Aşkan (2011), Gazi Meydanı is considered as a symbolic gate to the city from the sea. Because the location of the horseshoe-shaped sea access to the inner part of the road system in the detached completely from the old tissue is located in front of the municipal building. Thus, it proposed to be built in a monumental symmetry axis of the town hall square so it is considered as a symbolic gate [11] (Figure5a, 5b).



**Figure 3:** Zoning of urban expansion İzmir. Gazi meydanı Age suggestion. Hermann Jansen and Walther Bangert (Source: TU Berlin Architecturemuseum Inv. No. 23436)



**Figure 4:** Zoning of urban expansion İzmir. Gazi meydanı. Hermann Jansen and Walther Bangert (Source: TU Berlin Architecturemuseum Inv. No. 23437)



**Figure 5a, 5b:** Gazi monument on Cumhuriyet meydanı and the paradigmatic national space for public meetings in İzmir 1950’s (Source: İzmir Municipality History Project Center Archive)

The square makes references to the “*Place de la bastille*” “square aesthetics” especially with its radial shaped roads, July column at the center and in Paris (fig. 6)



**Figure 6.** Place de la bastille ,source: <http://www.arkitera.com/haber/26846/pariste-kavsaklarin-yayalar-icin-donusumu> (Accessed May 20, 2016).

### III. CONCLUSION

Cumhuriyet meydanı (Gazi meydanı) located between Alsancak and Çankaya and was conceived as a large open space with a monument in the middle in İzmir. The enthusiasm for this visionary space and its conception as a modern public space for popular recreation were described in 1932.

During the modernization period of İzmir, this square has played a significant role. It still in existence stands out as a prevalent meeting culture that mediated the transformation of the society. It also remains to today, one of the most popular legacies of republican spatial practices. From an architectural point of view, the purpose of the square is not primarily to preserve open spaces but to maintain and structure new urban systems. In the modernization period of İzmir, Cumhuriyet Meydanı had played a significant role. It also still in existence stands out as a prevalent meeting culture that mediated the transformation of the society.

Today the square contains details that display a different condition in its own microcosm by the buildings around it. However regarding the zeitgeist of changing urban policies and condition in republic period, Cumhuriyet meydanı could be conducted at a different level with policies.

### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank TU Berlin Architecturemuseum for providing scetches of Gazi Meydanı. Also thanks to Ayşegül Güngören for the old photos of İzmir Municipality History Project Center Archive.

### REFERENCES

- [1] <http://www.apikam.org.tr/Bagimsiz/izmirin-tarihi> (accessed 20.04.2016)
- [2] C. Bilsel, “Planning of Republic Period in İzmir (1923-1965): 20. Th center urban Heritage” *Agean Architecture Journal*, October 2009 s.12-17
- [3] B. Yıldırım,, A.,Erdem , (2015) “The rebuilding of Taksim Square as an Urban Space of Republic” *Tasarım+Kuram Journal*,
- [4] B. Krier. *Urban Space*, Foreword by Colin Rowe, Academy Editions, London, 1979, p.

- [5] R. Zengel, “Transformation of a Square: An analytical Approach to İzmir Konak Square” *Mimarlık Journal*, number. 334, Ankara, 2007.
- [6] C. Bilsel, C., “Master Plan Proposal of Danger-Prost Plan and of Le Corbusier: Urban Experience of the Transition to the modern city in İzmir and Urban Experience and Model Transfer Problem” *Domus* , Feb-March 2001, Number: 9, ss.42-46.
- [7] S. Bozdoğan,, “Modernism and Nation Building” University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 2001, p.75
- [8] S. Bozdoğan,, “Modernism and Nation Building” University of Washington Press, Seattle and London, 2001, p.78
- [9] <http://www.izmir.com.tr/Pages/TourismDetails.aspx?id=13&mid=82> (accessed 20.05.2016)  
Note that the title of the book is in lower case letters and italicized. There is no comma following the title. Place of publication and publisher are given.
- [10] T.A. Baran, “The rebuilding of a City, İzmir (1923-1938)” Arma Editions, 2003, İstanbul.
- [11] A. Aşkan, “Architecture and Urban Planning with Rıza Aşkan Between the 1922-1960 Years.”, İTÜ Science Knowledge Institute Master Thesis, 2011, İstanbul
-