STRUGGLE FOR URBAN PLANNING IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF ISTANBUL GEZI PARK PROTESTS

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Turkey has realized important reforms since 2000s. The government has enacted a series of regulations serving the transition of power from central administrative offices to the local governments, motivating the development of civil society and developing principles of transparency and accountability in ruling in the local level. Despite such reforms, the Istanbul Municipality decided to design the Gezi Park, near to the Taksim Square, including a shopping mall and a military barrack despite the reactions coming from environmentalist groups and other civil society organizations. The oppression of the environmentalist groups by the police in the end of May 2013 gave way to massive reactions which remained about one month along the country and resulted with the death of seven people (including a policeman) and left thousands injuries and hundreds of public cars fired. This paper will shed light on political change in Turkey in the level of grass roots and civil society organizations presented through Gezi Park protests. My paper will firstly emphasize the characteristics of civil society developed in the post-1980 period and the values civil society organizations have defended. It will secondly, analyze the Gezi protests in reference to its participants and their demands. The participants' profiles, their demands and motivations, the way they did politics and the results of these protests will be analyzed from the vintage point of demands on urbanization and local democracy in Turkey.

Biography

ÇAHA Ömer (Professor of Political Science) is actually teaching at Yildiz Technical University, Department of Political Science and International Relations, Istanbul, Turkey.
He is the author of a number of books and articles on such issues as democratization, local governments, political behaviors, Islam and politics, civil society, ethnicity, women movement, Turkish politics etc. both in English and in Turkish: