

CONTENTIOUS POLITICS AND URBAN DESIGN: TOWARD A NEW ARCHITECTURAL THEORY

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Abstract

Between the 1950's and early part of this century *gecekkondular* grew around every large city in Turkey. Despite lacking formal political opportunities, and being marginalized as "rural others," the *gecekkondulu* were able to mobilize within close social networks to claim their "right to the city." Architects in Turkey remained mostly silent during this period or echoed the rhetoric of the elites who saw them as a threat to Turkey's modernity. The *gecekkondu* phenomenon was an example of a social nonmovement. Social nonmovements, as defined by Asef Bayat, are everyday acts of widespread, mundane disobedience that lead to incremental, tangible benefits. As architectural theorists and practitioners become more involved in social engagement, more scholarship is needed to recognize the role of architects in social movements. To this end, I reviewed literature on *gecekkondu* and the surrounding discourse on politics of space. It is apparent through this literature that social movements have an urban ecology, but how are they helped or hindered by urban form? How should architects approach social engagement in light of the role architecture plays in contentious politics? The literature on politics of space in Turkey deals primarily with two themes: 1) the conflict and negotiation of binary paradigms within Turkish society, and 2) the use of clientelism and co-optation within the built environment to maintain power. Both phenomena are within the purview of the discipline of architecture because they deal with public space and housing. They offer a theoretical point of departure for understanding architects' role in contentious politics. With this knowledge, design professionals can become a force for democratizing the built environment through social engagement. However, we must first engage in critical scholarship about our role in the politics of space to develop new theories that will help shape architectural education and practice.

Introduction: A Critique of Modernism

Urban spaces are venues for limitless activities. People from every class, race, ideology, and disposition participate in the complex daily "street ballet" that composes city life. It is possible to argue that cities are the material for human experience, and architects share some responsibility for shaping that experience. It is important, then, to study how elements within our purview work and do not work. This understanding should extend beyond the usual theorizing about aesthetics and the functioning of everyday life. We should seek out new, less researched phenomenon that are affected by our decisions. In many cases, architects are the technical experts who implement the visions of much more powerful interests; however, in many other cases architects develop theoretical impetus for broad plans that shape urban life. There many cases where our broad plans affected urban activities, and we, for better or worse, took no responsibility for them. One such case is the urban phenomenon of contentious politics.

To appreciate the urban dimension of contentious politics, we must begin with Jane Jacobs' (1961) famous critique of modernism in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. At the time she was writing the ideas of utopian city planning theories had taken root throughout the Western world. Ebenezer Howard's "Garden City" was a way to escape the social ills of the post-industrialized city (p.18) and permanently fix social classes (p.289). Daniel Burnham's "City Beautiful" scheme would tell a predetermined story of the city through monuments (p.24). Le Corbusier's "Radiant City" would bring about equality through high grass to pavement ratios (p.22) and micro-manage a successful economy (p.287). The architectural profession uncritically hailed these iterations for their simplicity, legibility, and aesthetic harmony (p.23). It did not seem to matter to architects that at the same time, these very schemes were used explicitly for social control in other parts of the world. Mitchell (1988) describes the British colonization of Egypt as a program of "discipline" that would make control "acceptable, unnoticed, and affective" by partitioning urban activity into neat, legible models that maximized surveillance (p.44). Edward Lutyens' plan for New Delhi, India was meant "to captivate the imagination of the Indian with the glories of architectural display" (Abercrombie, 1913, p.185); thus contrasting the diffused, fine-grained morphology of the old Mughal Delhi with the ordered, disciplined formality of British Delhi (Morenas, 2010, p.155). In Johannesburg, South Africa, the ethnically European government used the

modernist doctrine of spatial separation to marginalize the African majority (Haarhoff, 2011). Jacobs stops short of claiming that planners and governments in the West had programs of explicit social control; however, she was disturbed by 20th century planners' paternalistic program.

The example of Johannesburg, especially, provides evidence that modernist planning was specifically designed to inhibit political mobilization. This begs the question, why were architects, who boast of their ethics and social sensitivity (Spector, 2001, p.11), engaging in this form of social control? In "Space is the Machine" Bill Hillier (1996) provides a partial answer. Architects, he writes, believe that architecture is more than adding art or aesthetics to a building, but a way to engage every aspect of a building or urban area, including the cultural milieu (p.10), but architectural theory and discourse deal mostly with the material dimension of architecture (p.111). To the extent that culture is dealt with, it is toward reshaping culture for theory du jour such as modernism or new urbanism (Bozdoğan, 1997, p.152). In essence, the disciplines that shape cities have "compartmentalized" their roles between those who deal with urban policy/behavior and those concerned with urban form (Hillier, 1996, p.111). Therefore, architects do not have a normative theory that synthesizes behavior, spatial configuration, and social mobilization/control (Hillier, 1996, p.142). Without such a theory, architects will continue to be subject to intentions beyond their control (Bozdoğan, 1997, p.153). To develop a critical theory of social engagement for the architectural profession, we should look at Social Movement Theory (SMT).

Contentious Politics

Contentious politics is defined as "public, collective" action on behalf of one group in order to gain some benefit from another powerful group (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2009). The claimants may be labor unions, social movements, and/or the urban poor, and the powerful group could be a government, corporation, school, or any powerful institution. Contentious politics are what groups use to assert claims when conventional politics are unavailable (Mitchell, 2003, p.54). This is what many call "taking it the streets" where the public space most readably available to everyone becomes the stage where contentious performances, slogans, demonstrations, and claim making create an atmosphere in which aggrieved parties can be heard and potentially bring others to their cause (Mitchell, 2003; Gregory, 2013). The major risk of open contention against the power is their repressive apparatus (Bellin, 2012). However, when claims are situated in mundane, everyday life, repression becomes more difficult (Bayat, 2013).

To see how contentious politics affect the architecture profession, we first need to look at contentious politics' relationship to the city.

Mobilization Structure

According to McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald (1996) social movements take place in mobilization structures, or *those collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action* (p.5). Their analysis; however, is constrained to "groups, organizations, and informal networks" and does not include *actual* structures. Asef Bayat (2013), on the other hand, acknowledges the spatial dimensions and moves from the questions of why and who of contentious politics to the question of where (p.180). He describes five characteristics of "streets of discontent": 1) Spaces where rapid assembly can take place located near mobilizing groups, 2) Space with strong symbolism, 3) Nodes of mass transit, 4) Spatial flexibility with escape routes, and 5) Places that are visible to potential allies (p.184-186). However, his analysis focuses on the symbolism of space, leaving the spatial dimensions barely covered. His analysis is limited for two reasons: 1) There is no architectural language from existing literature to draw from, and 2) he is not an architect so is hindered by disciplinary partitioning. However, when looked at in light of theories of good urban form, Bayat's observations become interdisciplinary.

Urban design theorist John Montgomery (1998) conveniently provides us with a list of characteristics of good urban form, which we can use to support Bayat's observations. Before that is undertaken, one more theory is needed to tie these together. According to McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2009) social movements have five mechanisms: 1) brokerage, 2) identity shift, 3) co-optation, 4) diffusion, and 5) repression. When it comes to social movements, urban characteristics play a role in all five mechanisms.

Activities: Brokerage and Diffusion

Montgomery's first characteristics of good urban form fall under the category of activity. This deals with the number of people who are on a street during certain hours of the day (Montgomery, p.98). Unlike cities planned according to modernist principles, vibrant urban spaces have a mixture of uses and 24 hours of activity. Good urban spaces will have a diversity of *activities* with storefronts and housing that faces the street and squares that are connected to other uses (Montgomery, p.98). This can generate chance encounters that

allow for **brokerage** and **diffusion**. Brokerage is where social movements make connections to other movements in order to strengthen their power to make claims, and diffusion is when performances move from one site to another (McAdam, Sidney, & Tarrow, 2009, p.274). This is how Bayat's first characteristic, rapid assembly near mobilizing groups, actually works. The paths to Cairo's Tahrir Square move along popular intellectual hubs, universities, and mosques where people can rapidly gather and meet with other potential revolutionaries on the way to the large, open space (Bayat, 2013, p.180).

Social movement theorists often speak of the need for co-presence (Gregory, 2013). Don Mitchell (2003) writes that public life requires public space and co-presence. According to the short film, *Taksim Commune: Gezi Park and the uprising In Turkey* by Brandon Joudan (2013), people from different political ideologies, meeting face to face in Taksim Square learned that their differences were a case of manipulation by the mainstream media. The spatial dimensions of Taksim Square allowed for co-presence that formed into a community, which is a common result of well-designed public space (Hillier, 1996, p.141; Jacobs, 1960, p.72). Therefore, active spaces that are accessible to mobilizing groups are indispensable machines for brokerage in contentious politics.

"The Square," a documentary about Egypt's revolution directed by Jahane Noujaim (2013) hints at how integrated urbanism allowed Bayat's fifth characteristic, visibility, to create diffusion. In one poignant scene social activist Khalid Abdalla rose from his computer where he was producing videos of the protests to share on social media, walked to his balcony, and started filming the square again. With Tahrir Square's mixture of uses and close integration with the urban fabric, many eyes could monitor the protests and broadcast the state's repression to the world inspiring protests in other areas Egypt and around the world.

Also important to diffusion is the availability of mass transit to or near the site of contentious politics (Bayat, 2013, p.185). A multimodal society has the flexibility to go places quickly and conveniently, thus spreading contentious performances to other parts of the city and spreading the message when communication services are shut down. Modernist planning schemes rely on automobile travel, which makes gathering in city squares impractical.

Images: Identity Shift

According to Montgomery (1998) good urban spaces have **images** that compose mental maps and create shared identities (p.101). Symbolic spaces; however, are not made symbolic through the mere act of designing the object. They become symbols through interaction with public memories, customs, and traditions (Montgomery, 1998 p.100). This is important because modernist planners believed identity could be imposed from the top-down (Meeker, 1997, p.168). The "shared identities" of cities are part of a powerful cognitive processes made famous by urban theorist Kevin Lynch (1960). Through research with residents of various American cities he discovered a city's **imageability** consisted of paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks (Lynch, 1960), which are part of a public cognitive reality (p.47). When a social movement is able to appropriate one of these "images of the city" and make it symbolic of their claims, residents of the city, regardless of ideology, have a cognitive pull to identify with the movement. Through the power of this public cognition **identity shift** allows social groups who were previously unrelated or even contradictory to unify in order to form an "us-them" dichotomy against the regime (McAdam, Sidney, & Tarrow, 2009, p.274).

Bayat's (2013) second characteristic of "streets of discontent" is historic and symbolic significance of the space in terms of "inscribed memories of insurrection and triumph,.. or symbols of state power" (p.185). Istanbul's Taksim square is a powerful symbol of the conflict between Kemalists; with the Ataturk Memorial and Ataturk Cultural Center, and AKP hegemony (Çinar, 2005, p.111). The protests over Gezi Park's demolition went far beyond the desire to save green space. It was a struggle for democracy, plurality, and the "right to the city" (Joudan, 2013). Ataturk's central square of Istanbul brought together "inscribed memories" and "shared identities" that suspended particularized ideologies.

Form: Repression and Cooptation

Form is the final aspect of good urban spaces, which is configured to allow residents to access spaces, and modify space to meet their needs (Lefebvre, 1991; Montgomery, 1998, p.102). The modernist planning principles of zoning, green space, separation of activity, and efficiency led to monotonous closed systems where access to public space is limited, and local adaptation is either impossible or strictly forbidden (Jacobs, 1960, p.195; Southworth & Ben-Joseph, 1993; Mitchell, 2003). Instead of truly public spaces, cities became points of "pseudopublic spaces such as malls, corporate plazas, and redeveloped parks" connected by either dead green spaces or large autoways (Mitchell, 2003, p.139). Hillier (1996) argues that spatial configuration will affect human configuration (p.21). We can see by the simple diagram in (Figure 1), known as a *justified graph*, that spatial configuration allows the designer to control the use of space by layering of access. In a spatial configuration; all of the architectural feature may be the same between two structures, but only the control of

how space is entered makes all the difference (p.22). Limited access districts, large blocks, and separating uses have served repressive regimes through disconnecting, isolating, and disorienting people (Southworth and Ben-Joseph, 1993, p.276, p.279). By contrast, cities that were built over time, in incremental patterns, where public space is integrated with the urban fabric (Southworth and Ben-Joseph, 1993, p.284) provide the stage for Bayat’s (2013) fourth characteristic of “streets of contention:” Maneuverability.

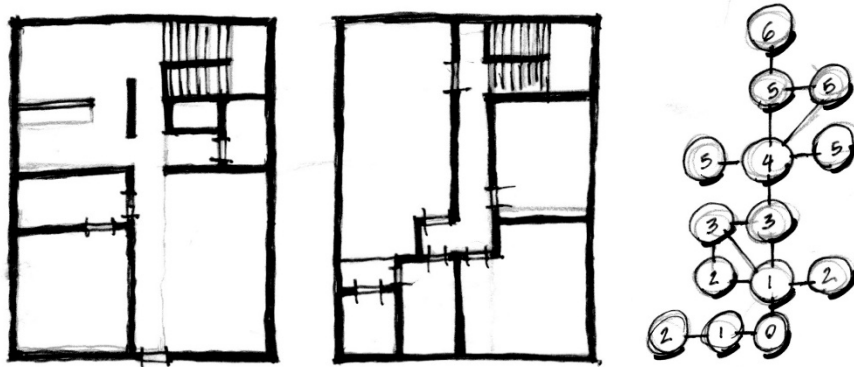


Figure 1. Floor plan of author’s house with its justified graph. Source: Author

Maneuverability allows for brokerage and diffusion because people are more connected to one another and contentious politics’ performances can find multiple routes to other parts of the city. However, brokerage and diffusion are subject to the regime’s repressive efforts. According to McAdam, Sidney, & Tarrow (2009) **repression** is actions that attempt to make contentious politics too costly to continue (p.275). Repression at Gezi Park pushed protestors to continue their performances to other local parks throughout central Istanbul (Joudan, 2013). How were they able to do this? Contentious politics are difficult to suppress when staged in spaces that are “surrounded by narrow alleyways, shops, or homes that can offer respite or sanctuary to” protestors (Bayat, 2013, p.185). For example, Tahrir Square (Figure 2), Avenue Habib Bourguiba (Figure 3), Taksim Square (Figure 4), and Euromaidan (Figure 5) all have multiple routes and inlets where people live, work, recreate, and interact. Egypt’s urban fabric allowed protestors plot fake routs through the city to put the police out of position (Gregory, 2013, p.238). The 2013 Gezi Park protests in Istanbul saw residents coming out of their homes to support protestors who were driven out of Gezi Park (Joudan, 2013). All along the routs leading to Gezi Park and Taksim Square are streets filled with 24-hour activity.

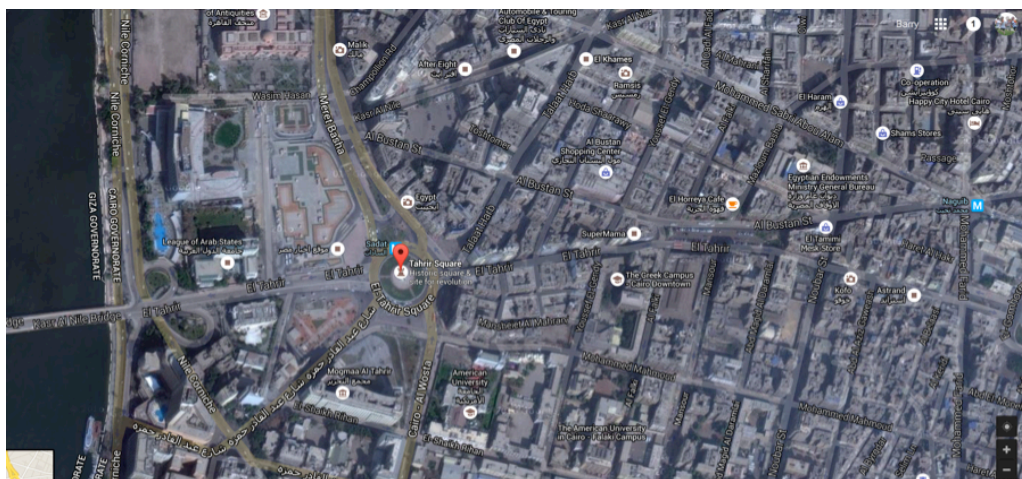


Figure 2. Tahrir Square, Cairo (Google Maps)

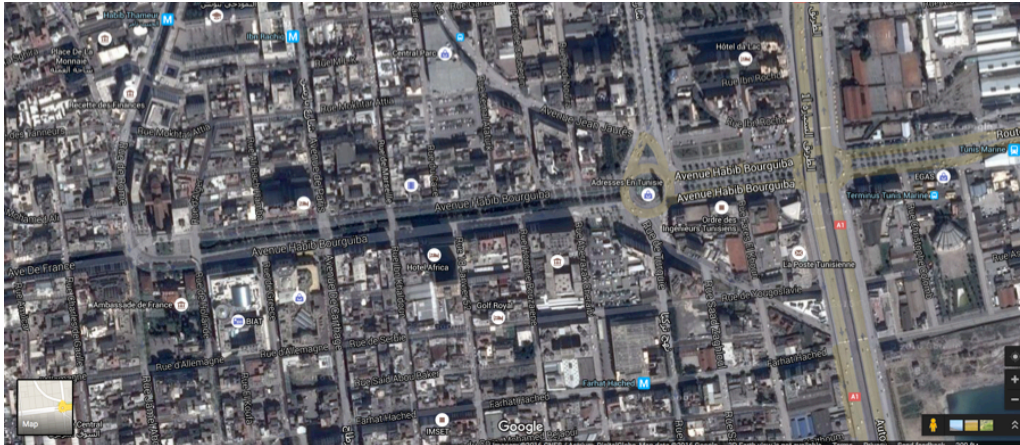


Figure 3. Ave Habib Bourguiba, Tunis (Google Maps)

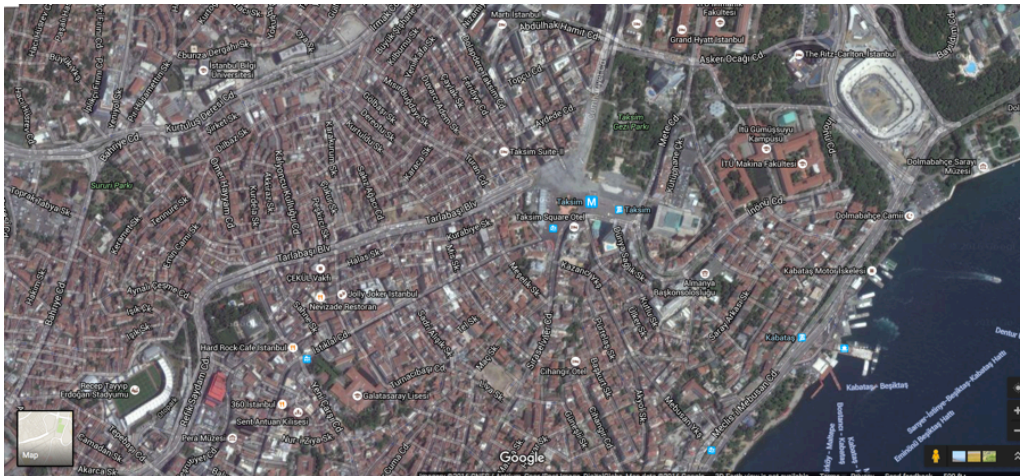


Figure 4. Explanation

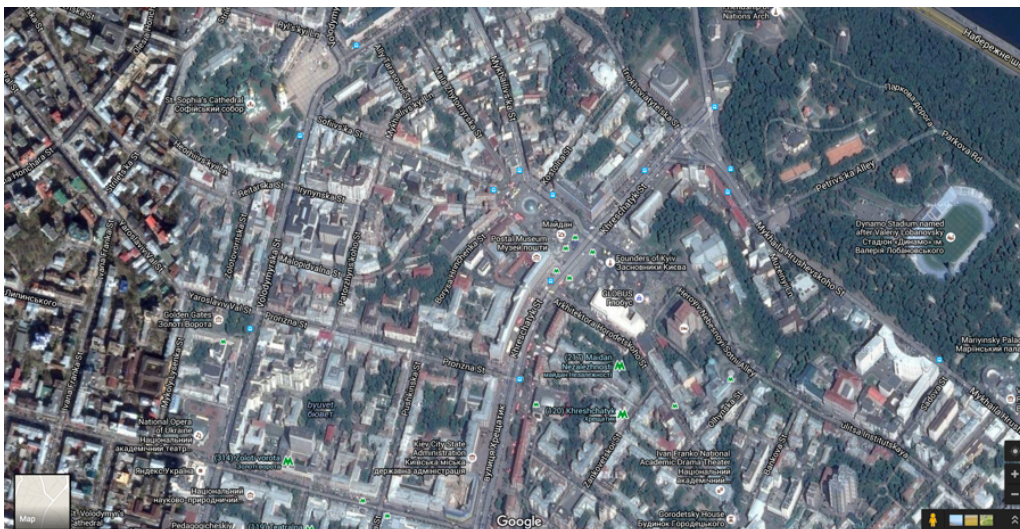


Figure 5. Explanation

Bahrain’s unsuccessful attempt at street politics focused on a symbolic space, but the urban environment has none of the characteristics of good urban form (Figure 6). It is separated from mixed use areas, it does not have 24-hour activity, there was no source of visibility, it is not a locus of mass-transit, its symbolic location, the Pearl Roundabout, could not be framed for an “us-them” dichotomy, and it has no fine-grained urban fabric.

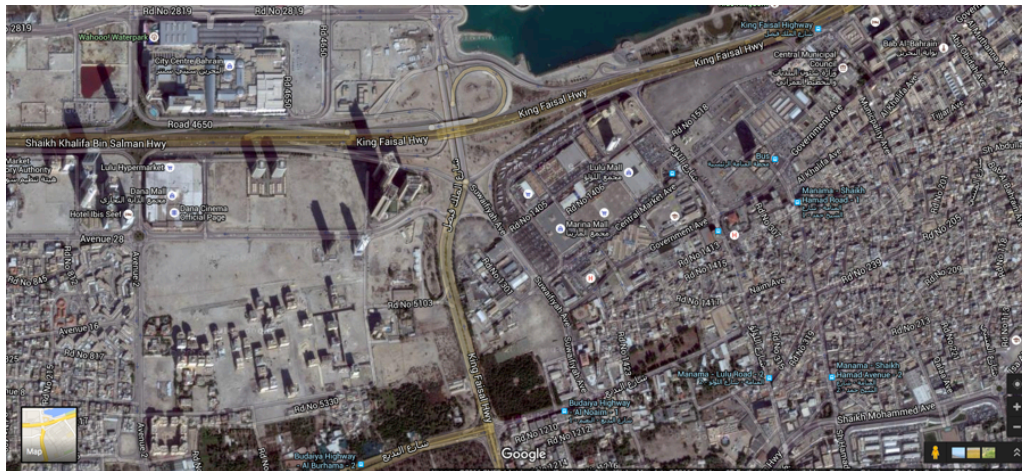


Figure 6. Pearl Roundabout (demolished), Manama (Google Maps)

The next formal characteristic relevant to the mechanism of contentious politics is adaptability. By adaptability I mean the freedom to build one’s own dwelling or make small adaptations to the built environment (Montgomery, 1998, p.106). When the regime has complete control of the built environment, they can practice co-optation through limiting adaptability (del Rio, 2008 p.42). Co-optation is using the resources of the state to decouple a portion a social movement from the rest of the movement thereby weakening it (McAdam, Sidney, & Tarrow, 2009, 274). Bayat does not cover spatial co-optation in his “streets of contention” analysis; however, Jane Jacobs (1960) gives clues how this works in chapter 10 “The Need for Aged Buildings” and chapter 15 “Slumming and Unslumming” of *Death and Life*. Here are passages of those chapters that relate to co-optation:

- High price of new construction gives power to the wealthy politically connected (p.188)
- When everything is torn down, prices are forced up so tenants must be wealthy or subsidized (p.191).
- People are forced out of the market by large swaths of new construction (p.191)
- Zoning is monopoly (p.192)
- Only noncontroversial groups will be subsidized (p.193).
- The modernist initiative to raze slums and old quarters preclude the ingenious adaptations that shape vibrant cities (p.194).
- The urban poor, who make up a large body for political mobilization, separated from social networks (p.279), are made perpetually dependent on the regime (p.278).
- Goods and services are located outside the district, but the urban poor need concentrated densities to produce working economies (p.286).
- Modernist planners wanted to stop unslumming (p.287).

Spatial repression and co-optation has a theoretical ecosystem in political theory, but not architectural theory. Below is a tabulation of a synthesis showing how social movement theory might relate to architectural theory.

Montgomery	McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly	Bayat	Modernist Planning
Activities	Brokerage	Close to Intellectual centers, visibility	Segregated districts allow the state to control who goes where
Activities, Form	Diffusion	Transit, visibility	Limited access
Images	Identity Shift	Symbols, visibility	Symbols are imposed from the top-down
Form	Co-optation and Repression	Flexibility	Monotony and closed system where adaptation is impossible

Table 1. Mechanism of contentious politics and characteristics of good urban form

So far we have briefly critiqued modernism and contrasted it with urban forms that allow political mobilization. This is all directed at giving architects a critical approach to designing urban space because the issue is not just

a lack of knowledge but also a professional reliance on normative theory. To see how normative theories affects politics we will look at a case study of Turkey.

Modernism in Turkey: Competing Paradigms

The notion that positivist, rational, and functional approaches to urbanism could usher in a utopian, modern society (Spector, 2001, p.VIII) made its way around the world to the budding Turkish Republic in the late 1920's (Bozdoğan, 1997, p.140). According to Sibel Bozdoğan (1997) modernism in Turkey was the "literal and the metaphorical" emancipation from the outdated Ottoman Empire to the new, Western focused Turkish state (p.138). The critique of modernism, that it was void of culturally meaningful symbols, served the Turkish secularists' purpose well because the progressive agenda of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk was specifically designed to undermine a critical aspect of Turkish culture; Islam as a cultural force (Çinar, 2005, p.104). According to Mardin (1991) this progressive realignment extended to intolerance to traditional knowledge and practice (p.126). However, Turkey's Islamism and its connection to Ottoman heritage never went away (p.127). While Ankara was developed almost from the ground up as a symbol of positivism and secularism, Istanbul remained the defacto capital of Islamic Turkey (Çinar, 2005; Mardin, 1991). Ankara became the seat of central, artificial power of the state, Istanbul remained the cultural capital and became a spatial battleground between Kemalism and Islamism where modernist symbols of the Republic are imposed on Islamist districts and Islamic symbols invade modernist enclaves (Çinar, 2005, p.100). The affect of the early Republican period is that modernism became associated with the elite, secular, and urbane while traditionalism became associated with folk, Islamism, and rural life. The modernist program of the Republican government ushered in binary paradigms that are so clearly delineated, their affects can be viewed in the built environment to this day.

In the early Republican period, Istanbul as the cultural center of Turkey was an ideal to be attained in the minds of many Turks (Karpas, 1976, p.162). While Ankara offered very little cultural congruity with the folk culture of rural Turkey, the Ottoman arts, music, and folklore that were still alive in historic Istanbul "belonged to the lower classes" (ibid). Ownership of Istanbul and who could rightfully be called *İstanbullu* became a contested subject (Öncü, 1999). The Kemalist *İstanbullu* saw the urban poor as Islamists, authoritarian, fanatic, and collectivist (White, 2002, p.31). The Islamists saw the Kemalists as detaching Turkey "from its own cultural roots through imitative and alienating Westernizing policies" (Çinar, 2005, p.103). This dichotomy played out spatially with the "museumification" of Sultanahmet Square, the historic Ottoman center of Istanbul and with the shifting the center of city life to Taksim Square; which had more churches and synagogues than mosques (Çinar, 2005, p.111). With this spatial victory, Istanbul was on the path of being conquered for Kemalism. That all changed in 1994 when the Islamist party won victories for "the other Turkey" in Istanbul elections (Çinar, 2005, p.114). This foothold in Istanbul led to victories across the nation. How did Islamist parties gain power in Turkey? To answer that question we must look at the death of the modernist program.

The Gecekondu: End of the Modernist Program

Modernism in Turkey was "compromised from the beginning because it was introduced to the country from above" as an explicit program for uncoupling Turks from their culture (Bozdoğan, 1997, p.135). The modern Republican vision balanced on the precarious narrative that Turkey was now a modern state. That narrative was challenged when the folk culture of the villages "invaded" the cities (Karpas, 1976, p.37). When the neo-liberalism of the 1950's that gave birth to informal settlements across the world became policy in Turkey, the Republicans came face-to-face with a part of its identity they wished to eradicate (Erman, 2001, p.985). Gecekondu means "built in one night" because legal loopholes allowed people to build on unused land as long as all construction could be completed in one night (Karpas, 1976). Gecekondu (gecekondu dwellers) were usually men from rural villages in the Black Sea region who built makeshift homes on state or undeveloped private land mostly in Ankara and Istanbul, began working in the formal or informal sector, brought their families from the villages, and began improving their homes incrementally (Karpas, 1976; White, 2002, p.38). In the late 1960's Turkish historian Kemal Karpas (1976) did extensive ethnographic research in Istanbul's gecekondu. At a time when Turkish elites, academics, and architects were distraught over this rural invasion (Erman, 2001), Karpas was acquiring knowledge that showed the political and physical complexity of the gecekondu settlements (White, 2002, p.105). The politics of gecekondu could be observed in the strong social ties and opportunistic construction methods (Karpas, 1976; Nalbantoğlu, 1997).

In fact, the gecekondu were a force for social change. Bayat (2013) refers to the rural migrations around the world as a social nonmovement; which seeks out their place in the city and its amenities by establishing their presence in physical space (p.16). The gecekondu established their space and defended it through architectural tactics (Nalbantoğlu, 1997, p.204). The modernist program of rationalizing and controlling the city

through “panoptical transparency” of grand boulevards could not extend into the winding fabric of Ankara’s gecekondulu, and residents could use that fabric for resistance against demolition (Nalbantoğlu, 1997, p.204). According to Karpat (1976), what gecekondulu were seeking was an urban lifestyle, upward mobility, and wished to be associated with urbanity (p.123). However, the established urbanites, including architects did not recognize gecekondulu as a legitimate social movement but a problem to be dealt with (Nalbantoğlu, 1997, p.205). No manner of unslumming seemed to satisfy the urbanites. Even when increased property values allowed gecekondulu to rise into the middle class, the established urbanites referred to them as “haciğa:” a caricature of false piety and wealth without taste (Öncü, 1999).

This contentious “othering” by Kemalist elites gave Islamists a political opportunity (White, 2002). The urbane/secular identity of Republican Turkey was nationalistic and relied on top-down/paternalistic symbolism to control public life while the rural/Islamic identity had horizontal/communal relationships (Meeker, 1997, p.168, p.184). The urban/rural dichotomy changed Turkish politics because horizontal/communal political mobilization networks brought power to the politicians who knew how to use it and had a religious/cultural bond with the people (White, 2002, p.37). The Kemalists with their ideologically driven mobilization efforts wanted to liberate the people from tradition and individuals from communal bonds (White, 2002). The Islamists, instead, opted to work within the close networks. By framing the Kemalist program as anti-culture, and the willingness to fit that frame at every step by consistently “othering” the rural migrants, the secularist parties have floundered in the past decade (Meeker, 1997; White, 2002). The rise of the rural other, coupled with the perceived elitism of Kemalists, gave the Islamists their avenue to power.

Justification for looking at modernism in Turkey

What does all this have to do with the spatial dimension of contentious politics? Jacobs’ critique of modernism is a disorienting rebuke of architects’ moral certainty of the early half of the 20th century (Spector, 2001, p.VIII). Now, as architects are moving from focusing on form making into social engagement, the physical dimensions of contentious politics become more relevant.

Platitudes that architects have leaned on to justify our status as a distinct profession such as “health, safety, and welfare” (Spector, 2001) are diminished when we uncritically give our services to clientelism, paternalism, and identity politics as was the case with modernism, and we ignore social nonmovements as was the case in Turkey (Nalbantoğlu, 1997). Gecekondulu provide a way to study architecture of resistance, architecture as a social nonmovement, and the intermediate zones between contemporary cities and emergent cities (Nalbantoğlu, p.208). The binary contention in Turkey is probably playing out in every neo-liberal context around the globe, and has global implications for contemporary architectural practice. It is a slow motion referendum on the efficacy of the central state, a reorientation on what it means to be a citizen in free society, and a tacit critique on the necessity of designers’ input on the built environment. In essence, not engaging these issues within the built environment will make architects increasingly irrelevant. By engaging these issues on theoretical and practical levels, architects are positioned to truly improve life for citizens in the cities of the future.

In order to build this theoretical basis for understanding social engagement as it pertains to the spatial dimension of contentious politics, we will look at an example of architecture for social control in Turkey. First, to summarize what I have covered so far. I introduced the critique modernism and suggest it was used for social control. I synthesized observations of the built environment in the context of contentious politics to show how architects’ decisions affect society in ways that are rarely studied. I discussed how modernism was used in Turkey to realign the national identity. I introduce the gecekondulu as a force for confronting the modernist paradigm. I show how urban elites, including architects ignored or framed the rural migration as an invasion by “others.” Finally, I suggest that the architectural profession missed an opportunity to bolster its professional mission through analysis of what the gecekondulu meant for Turkey. In these next sections, I will show how urbanism for social control has been reborn in contemporary Turkey.

TOKI: The Return of Modernism In Turkey

According to anthropologist Jenny White (2002) vernacular politics “is a value-centered political process rooted in local culture, interpersonal relations, and community networks, yet connected through civic organizations to national party politics” (p.27). Local culture, as it pertains to vernacular politics in Turkey, is usually situated in urban working class neighborhoods that are either gecekondulu, or were gecekondulu but are now integrated into the city. These areas are well equipped for mobilizing through interpersonal relationships and community networks because exigent reality creates need for reciprocity (p.138). Civic organizations are the only formal mechanism connecting these networks to party politics. The Islamists understood how these networks worked and established associations that were not overtly political or ideological but focused on relationships (p.6).

They understood there were cultural needs and physical needs that were not being met by the Kemalist/secularist government. As mayor of Istanbul Erdoğan lived in a rental apartment to maintain close ties to the urban working class (p.11). This was characteristic of Islamist politicians and their close ties to the people helped them be more responsive. They won the trust of the urban poor and eventually won the trust of enough Turks that they became they majority party in parliament. As their power has grown, they have abandoned vernacular politics and have chosen clientelism (Marschall, Aydoğan, & Bulut, 2015).

The medium of their clientelism is Turkey’s mass housing administration, TOKI. According to Marschall, Aydoğan, and Bulut (2015) the ruling party maintains power through “construction jobs, contracts, and subsidized housing” through TOKI’s massive contraction program (p.4). According to TOKI’s website its mission is to alleviate the strain on public infrastructure and provide suitable housing for the rural migrates in accordance with the Turkish constitution, a public housing law, and a 2002 “emergency action plan,” and as of January 2015 TOKI accounts for nearly 650,000 units throughout Turkey (TOKI). To make room for all of this construction, the AKP government is razing thousands of homes. In many cases the homes are replaced by commercial and entertainment buildings while new homes are constructed far outside the city center. The physical form and arrangement of these large housing complexes are a mixture of Howard’s “Garden Cities” and Le Corbusier’s “Radiant Cities,” and it is possible they have the same affect on co-optation and repression discussed previously.

Structures of Repression

If there is an urban form that provides a mobilizing structure for contentious politics, there is also an urban form that supports repression. TOKI are disconnected from the greater urban spaces, are composed of large green spaces with tall towers in the middle, and has panoptic legibility. It offers none of the urban forms discussed earlier to facilitate contentious politics. There is no chance for brokerage because spatial segregation leads to “social cleavages” (Bayat, 2013, p.183). These social cleavages further the binary paradigms in Turkey (Azem, 2012) because there is no spatial co-presence between the classes; preventing the possibility of community building (Hillier, 1996, p.141).

Structures of Co-optation

We have seen earlier through Jane Jacob’s arguments that fixing the city in place while making adaptability impossible empowers the wealthy and powerful. During the proliferation of gecekondu, rural migrants were becoming a sought after voter block, thus giving them power to negotiate with municipalities for services. The mobilizing structure of close-nit communities driven by negotiation of time and space is being replaced by complete dependency on government. Before, the urban poor had access to city amenities, more choice in jobs, and opportunity for upward mobility. Now, the lack of adaptability could have the affect of freezing them in place.

Below is the same table above with TOKI Housing substituting for “Modernist Planning.”

Montgomery	McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly	Bayat	TOKI Housing
Activities	Brokerage	Close to Intellectual centers, visibility	Segregated districts allow the state to control who goes where
Activities, Form	Diffusion	Transit, visibility	Limited access
Images	Identity Shift	Symbols, visibility	Symbols are imposed from the top-down
Form	Co-optation and Repression	Flexibility	Monotony and closed system where adaptation is impossible

Table 2. Mechanism of contentious politics and TOKI housing.

Conclusion: Social Movements, Nonmovements, and the Architecture Profession

Since Whitney M. Young’s critique of the architecture profession at the AIA convention in 1968, the architecture community has responded by giving the Whitney M. Young award to architects who show “responsibility toward current social issues” (AIA). However, there has not been a major push among architects

to get beyond our “thunderous silence and complete irrelevance” (Young, 1968) when it comes to social engagement. Young (1968) specifically criticized architects who maintain their ethical posturing while designing “vertical slums.” Now architects are participating in the same planned destruction of cities with very little outcry from the architectural community. On the contrary, the profession is bestowing them with honors for their humanitarianism. Social engagement has been a prize in some circles. However, this engagement has focused on the praxis of architecture and not on theories of the built form. It is important for architects and designers to think beyond the immediate impact of their design. It is not necessary for architects to design for contentious politics, nor would that endeavor ensure the success of social movements nor is a given that architects should design for success of social movements. However, it is important for architects to wrestle with the ethical implications of their work (Spector, 2001). Design decisions support or inhibit behavior (Rapoport, 1988, p.58). Unlike modernist planning “based on governmental control, and in planners paternalistically deciding what is good for the community, overseeing and directing the behavior of the private sector” (del Rio, p.42), architects will need to work toward theories of democratizing cities.

Social nonmovements are a kind of contentious politics that focuses on everyday subversion. The gecekondu phenomenon in Turkey was a social nonmovement that gave rural migrants their “right to the city.” While progressive regimes opted for utopian urban schemes, authoritarian regimes were using the same schemes for social control. Architects had ready normative theories based on prevailing narratives to justify these schemes. The postmodern paradigm shift did two things, deconstructed narratives and left a cynical nihilism that turned architecture into expensive form making, but also opened up the profession to needful criticism from without. Architects have the options of, remaining socially agnostic, complying with the agenda of social control, becoming a social movement, or becoming a social nonmovement.

Future Research

This is a preliminary synthesis for movement toward architectural theory that recognizes city form’s role in contentious politics. Further research would tighten up these ideas through more rigorous literature review. Furthermore, research could do a thorough analysis of the areas including axial maps, density, and quantitative mixed-use analysis, walking interviews with participants. Also, Rapoport (1998) discusses environmental behavior studies as a way of understanding how space affects people’s behavior. This could be extended to contentious politics (p.2). Architects have knowledge of spatial theory to add to the knowledge of contentious politics. With proliferation of slums throughout the developing world surveys could be conducted to gauge architects’ perception of informal settlements.

Research in Turkey could begin with a comparative study of the spatial geography of Turkish cities compared to TOKI housing developments. The 2013 protests in Taksim square over the demolition of Gezi Park were partially over the massive construction programs throughout Turkey. The Taksim Platform is a collective of Istanbul residents and architects with the slogan “Taksim belongs to us all.” According to another group of architectural activists, *Herkes İçin Mimarlık* (Architecture for Everyone), the lead up to the Gezi Park protests saw architects mobilize to not participate in the redesign of Taksim. Study of these movements should be included in theories of spatial dimensions of contentious politics.

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