

Urbanism as Counterinsurgency:
Subjugation Through Urban Destruction and Redevelopment
in Sur, Diyarbakir

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Abstract

Through the case of Sur, Diyarbakir, this thesis explores the relationship between ethnic conflict, counterinsurgency strategies, urban destruction, and urban redevelopment via their impacts on urban space. The main research question of the thesis is: *How is urbanism (urban destruction and redevelopment) used as a counterinsurgency strategy to subjugate Kurdish cities and people?* The case study material is based on (1) quantitative and qualitative data collected from different sources, (2) visualization of Sur through maps and satellite images designed by the author, and (3) two and a half months long fieldwork in Diyarbakir where two expert interviews, a total of nine interviews with the displaced people and the shopkeepers of Sur, and two field tours with informants and countless personal observation walks in Sur had been conducted by the author. During these field tours and walks, I took more than a thousand photos that reflect the abandoning, war, destruction, reconstruction, empties, and the ongoing everyday life in Sur. The case analysis of this thesis heavily depends on these pictures, which are narrated and analyzed.

The theoretical framework of the thesis lies at the intersection of urban destruction, urban redevelopment, and counterinsurgency. Rather than dividing urban destruction and urban redevelopment into two separated phenomena that chronologically follow each other, this thesis proposes to evaluate urban redevelopment as a part, a phase, of continuing urban destruction. Moreover, in this thesis, to understand the urban destruction and the redevelopment project in Sur, I suggest conceptualizing urbanism as a counterinsurgency mechanism. This conceptualization is followed by a comprehensive historical contextualization of Diyarbakir, where the recurrent oppression of the Kurdish people is exposed. Finally, the case analysis is structured through Sur's physical area, which is already fractured within. The threefold analysis exposes how urbanism is used as a counterinsurgency mechanism via (1) evaluating emptying space, emptiness, and depopulation as counterinsurgency strategies in *The Void*; (2) conceptualizing ambiguities, betweenness, and temporality facilitated by the urgent expropriation as other elements of counterinsurgency in *The Limbo*; and (3) unveiling the role of urban redevelopment and gentrification, that is securitization and depopulation, in counterinsurgency in *New Face*.

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List of Abbreviations

AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi / Justice and Development Party
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi / Republican People's Party
CUP	İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti / Committee of Union and Progress
DP	Demokrat Parti / Democrat Party
HDP	Halkların Demokratik Partisi / People's Democratic Party
HEP	Halkın Emek Partisi / People's Labor Party
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
KCK	Koma Civaken Kurdistan / Kurdistan Communities Union
PKK	Partiya Karkeren Kurdistan / Kurdish Workers' Party
TEM	Terörle Mücadele/Special Forces for Counterterrorism
TBMM	Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi / Grand National Assembly of Turkey
TMMOB	Türk Mühendisler ve Mimar Odaları Birliği / Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects
TOKİ	Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı / Housing Development Administration of the Republic of Turkey
TUIK	Türk İstatistik Kurumu / Turkish Statistical Institute
YPG	Yekineyen Parastina Gel / People Defense Units
YPJ	Yekineyen Parastina Jin / Women's Protection Units
ZPPP	The Zoning Plan for Protection Purposes

Chapter 1:

Introduction

Diyarbakır ortasında vurulmuş uzanırım

Ben bu kurşun sesini nerede olsa tanırım¹

-Ahmet Kaya, November 1995

Raised in a politically engaged Kurdish family, I grew up with the stories of oppression of my people and my family in 1990s Turkey. Stories that involved torture in prisons, stories that involved brutal deaths. I don't have any memory of the first time I heard, memorized, or sang the song "Diyarbakır Turkusu" by Ahmet Kaya. It feels like it has been with me since I was born². Kaya's song reflects the 1990s, a period marked by heated clashes between the PKK (Kurdish Workers' Party) and the Turkish military in the Eastern rural areas of Turkey. Although the fight was going on in the remote areas, the effects of this war also spread to the Kurdish cities in the form of police brutality towards Kurdish activists and civilians, and high pressure on civil societies, NGOs, and unions. Diyarbakır was *the* center of civil resistance and state oppression during this period. Yet, the intensity of clashes decreased in the early 2000s with the PKK's unilateral ceasefire, the Kurdish politicians' entrance into national politics, and the regime change in Turkey³. Hopes of peace grew bigger with the Peace Process⁴ starting in 2013.

¹"I lie in the middle of Diyarbakır, shot down / I recognize this bullet sound wherever it is" from "Diyarbakır Turkusu" (Kaya, 1995), translated by the author.

²Ironically enough, I was born in November 1995.

³In the 2002 general elections, the AKP (Justice and Development Party) came to power.

⁴Between the Turkish state, the Kurdish politicians and the PKK.

Although I had had my doubts about the possibility of peace in the future, I had never imagined that the lyrics of Kaya's song⁵ would come alive for Diyarbakir, for my hometown, once again in my lifetime. This time, even more brutally. In August 2015, following the collapse of the tentative Peace Process, armed conflicts erupted between the Turkish armed forces and the PKK in Diyarbakir⁶, among other Kurdish cities. The districts of Sur in Diyarbakir; Cizre, Idil, Silopi and Merkez in Sirnak; Nusaybin in Mardin; and Yuksekova in Hakkari turned into battle fields. The type of rural warfare -that the people were familiar with- transformed into urban warfare, each of the districts turning into urban fronts of the war. Between August 2015 and March 2016⁷, 1552 people (including soldiers, police, rangers, Kurdish militias, and civilians) died, while 1683 more got injured (IHD, 2016). During and after the clashes, the Turkish state forces bulldozed houses -even entire neighborhoods- and nearly half a million people were forcefully displaced. Unfortunately, analyzing the processes that each of the cities above have experienced in this war is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather, it focuses on Sur, Diyarbakir both because of the city's importance in the Kurdish struggle and its accessibility for me in terms of my already existing relationships with the city.

⁵See Appendix A. for the lyrics.

⁶Diyarbakir is located in Southeastern Turkey. Currently, covering an area of 15,355 km², with 17 districts and 1.8 million inhabitants.

⁷On 9 March 2016, the Turkish government announced that the operation to clean the terrorists from the Eastern cities ended.

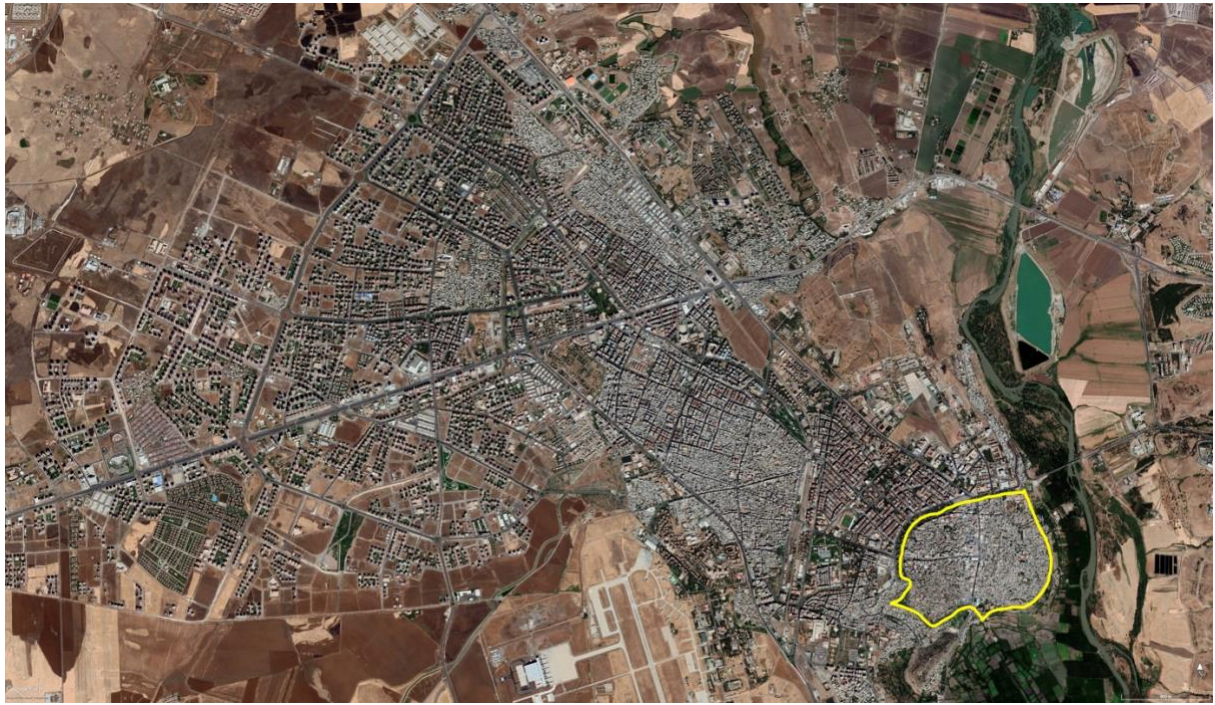


Image 1: *Central Diyarbakir, 2015.* Satellite image (Google Earth Pro).
Yellow line: borders of the old town, Sur.
Created by the author.



Image 2: *Sur before clashes.* Satellite image from 2015 (Google Earth Pro).

Surrounded by the thousands of years old city walls, with its labyrinthine narrow streets and dense urban fabric, the old town of Diyarbakir, Sur turned into an urban front of the insurgency and counterinsurgency in the war since August 2015. With its 15 neighborhoods,

Sur was officially accommodating over 50.000 people before the clashes started (TUIK, 2015). The average size of a household in Sur was 5,49 (TUIK, 2015), reflecting crowded households, i.e., big families⁸. The socio-economic conditions of the families were marked by being low-income Kurdish families who live off unrecorded, uninsured, mostly short-term, i.e., precarious jobs (HDP, 2016, p. 16). Most families lived in slum houses⁹ (either built in small empty lots or added new units to historic houses) as tenants or with unregistered ownership and with partially registered ownership with bills. Few had full rights to the historic houses but without official patents of historical heritage. One of the well-known characteristics of the old town was its cheap bazaars on which the low-income families of Sur heavily depended. In addition, the old town also had a promising potential for tourism, with the hundreds of years old historic sights, buildings, and houses located inside it. Nonetheless, the known touristic parts in Sur were mainly restricted to and around the main streets (Gazi and Melikahmet Avenues) because of the back streets' dense -and threatening- urban fabric.

In Diyarbakir and Sur, Kurds constitute the majority of the population, but the exact percentages are hard to come by. As a result of the government's refusal to differentiate minorities in the demographical statistics and the refusal by many Kurds to indicate their ethnic identity in surveys for fear of the state repression, there is, unfortunately, no reliable information on the distribution of the Kurdish population either in Diyarbakir or other cities of Turkey. Yet, if we consider the votes that the pro-Kurdish party has received throughout different elections since the beginning of the 2000s (between 55 to 77,7% in all Diyarbakir and between 54,5 to 81,5% in Sur), we can assume that the overwhelming majority is the Kurdish population in the city and the district.

⁸Same year, the average size of a household in Turkey was 3,52 (TUIK, 2015).

⁹The term "slum houses" is used in this thesis to refer to *gecekondu* buildings in Turkey. These buildings are informal housings that were built without official permissions. Yet, their informality had been overlooked by the state as they had solved the housing problems of the country without state's efforts. Although informally built, most of such houses have been acknowledged by the state over time and given usage rights. All of them are connected to utility infrastructures and being charged for the utilities.

The reasons behind the end of the Peace Process in Turkey and the eruption of urban warfare in 2015 have been controversial issues in the media and public discourse. The ongoing fight between the YPJ/YPG¹⁰ and ISIS (Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in Syria since 2013; and the bomb attacks in Diyarbakir¹¹ and Suruc¹² were feeding into the tension between the Kurds, the Kurdish militias, and the Turkish state for a while. The Kurdish politicians and the opposition media blamed the ruling party, AKP, for cooperating with ISIS. Using the PKK's (Kurdistan Workers' Party) alleged actions in the East -the killing of 2 police officers in Urfa, cutting roads, burning cars, etc.- the Turkish state officially declared war against the PKK in July 2015, consequently ending the Peace Process. The Turkish air forces were directed to Syria to attack the PKK and its sub-groups. At the same time, TEM (Special Forces for Counterterrorism) detained hundreds of Kurdish activists and politicians inside Turkey.

Under the gradually increasing state violence, on 12 August 2015, the KCK (Kurdistan Communities Union) stated that "For the people of Kurdistan, there has been no option left but self-governance." ("Oz yonetim", 2015) Followingly, the local municipalities of the Kurdish cities ruled by the HDP -including the Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality and the Sur Municipality- started to declare self-governance. Barricades -backed up by ditches to make the movement of vehicles harder- were built in dense neighborhoods of Sur by the insurgents. The Turkish state's reaction to the declaration of self-governance and building barricades and digging ditches was declaring these actions terrorist activities which threatened the unity of the nation. The operation to oppress the "terrorism" was named "Operation Ditch." The governor declared round-the-clock curfews in different parts of Sur. The Turkish military and special police forces blockaded the gates of the city walls while setting up checkpoints to cut the flow of people and communication with the rest of the city and the world. The intensity of the clashes

¹⁰The YPJ/YPG (Women's Protection Units/People Defense Units) are the Kurdish militia in Syria.

¹¹The Bomb attack on 5 June 2015 in Diyarbakir during an electoral rally of HDP (allegedly by ISIS).

¹²The Bomb attack on 20 July 2015 by ISIS in front of the Amara Cultural Centre in Suruc, Urfa, where leftist university students gathered to participate in rebuilding work in Kobani, Syria.

primarily increased after the murder of the Kurdish lawyer Tahir Elci¹³. Many of my interviewees, feeling deeply sentimental, described his murder as a turning point in the war, after which everything got worse and worse.



Map 1: *The old town, Sur, in 2015.*

Blue lines: the city walls / Blue circles: the main gates / Red lines: the neighborhood borders

Map created by the author, 2022.

The clashes concentrated on one half of Sur (right side on the map), covering the neighborhoods of Hasirli, Cevatpasa, Fatihpasa, Dabanoglu, Cemal Yilmaz, and Savas. Before the clashes, the total population of these neighborhoods was over 22.000 (TUIK, 2015). Diyarbakir TMMOB (the Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects) carried out a damage assessment in these neighborhoods right after the end of the second curfew (13

¹³Tahir Elci was a Kurdish lawyer and was the chairman of the Diyarbakir Bar Association when he was murdered. Elci was killed in Sur on 28 November 2015, shot dead by police while he was holding a press conference beside damaged Dort Ayakli Minare (Four-legged Minaret) for condemning guns, clashes and military operation in this historic and ancient region that have hosted several civilizations. Police was allegedly chasing two Kurdish militia in the streets. When the two past the scene of press conference police opened fire on that direction, shooting Elci on the back of his head with a single bullet.

October 2015). The TMMOB's *2015-2016 Destroyed Cities Report* (2019) notes that 706 workplaces and houses were determined as damaged in this assessment, 693 of which could be easily repaired but 13 required detailed evaluation. The report adds; at this stage, the clashes were not that intense, and heavy weapons were not used yet (p. 50). On 2 December, another curfew was declared in this area. A curfew that was not lifted even after the clashes officially ended. This curfew is recorded as the longest in the history of the world, lasting 2223 days from 2 December 2015 to 1 January 2022.

From this curfew to March 2016, nearly all the inhabitants of the area were forced to leave under heavy intervention by the state. In their operation to "clean" the area from the (not so heavily) armed militia, the Turkish state used all kinds of tools from artilleries, tanks, armored choppers, and other armored vehicles to construction vehicles such as bulldozers and diggers. The state's armed forces were repeatedly telling the inhabitants to leave Sur. F.¹⁴ tells me:

They were telling me to get out of Sur. I didn't have anywhere to go. The police were telling me that "Look, big sister, you are coming and going like this in the streets. We can't know if you are carrying a bomb or not or whatever. We would shoot you, you should know. Get out of here."

Although Sur was exposed to heavy destruction during the operation, at the end of the operation on 9 March, it was still in a condition that could be saved (TMMOB, 2019, p. 52). However, the AKP ruled Turkish state showed no intention of saving what was left. Already cleared from the inhabitants, the state took advantage and completely flattened the area. Not only did the governor keep the curfew to prevent the displaced people from returning, but also the ministerial cabinet declared urgent expropriation for all Sur on 21 March 2016 under the

¹⁴Names of all the interviewees are replaced with random initials in this thesis.

Law No. 6306, “Law on Restructuring Areas Under Risk of Natural Disaster” (“Sur’da acele”, 2016). Related to the government’s plans for Sur, Ahmet Davutoglu¹⁵ stated that “We will construct Sur in such a way that it will be just like Toledo (Spain) as with its architectural texture, it will become a place where everyone would want to see” (“Sur’u Toledo”, 2016).

In its early stages, the project was presented as an urban renewal project which would clean the city from unlicensed construction, make the old city walls visible and prosper economic development. The process of flattening all the blockaded areas in Sur started almost immediately. There were several objections to the project from the pro-Kurdish party mayors of the Metropolitan Municipality of Diyarbakir and the Municipality of Sur. Correspondingly, the state dismissed the elected mayors of Sur (in September 2016) and Metropolitan Municipality (in November 2016) with decree-laws and appointed trustees to their positions who approved every state decision for the area. In the 2019 local election, the pro-Kurdish party won back the municipalities of Sur and the metropolitan city. Yet, the state dismissed the mayors and appointed trustees again shortly after.

One can’t stop asking herself what economic development means in a space where houses were flattened with bodies still on the streets, where the smell of blood didn’t go away for months, where representatives who people rightfully elected are disregarded, and where prison-like structures or emptied lands replace gorgeous streets and buildings. All this brings us to face the truth that urban (re)development is much more than economic growth; it is a weapon in counterinsurgency.

Through the case of Sur, Diyarbakir, this thesis explores the relationship between ethnic conflict, counterinsurgency strategies, urban destruction, and urban redevelopment via their impacts on urban space. The main research question of the thesis is: *How is urbanism used as a counterinsurgency strategy to subjugate Kurdish cities and people?* With supporting

¹⁵Used to be a member of AKP, the prime minister of the time.

questions: What is the relationship between urban planning and securitization? What is the role of emptying, depopulating, and dehumanizing in urban development projects and counterinsurgency?

The structure of the thesis involves six chapters. Chapter 2 details the methodology used for the case study, the obstacles encountered in the field, and self-reflections. Chapter 3 introduces the necessary theoretical framework for the case study, introducing the concepts of counterinsurgency, urban destruction, land titles, emptying space, urban redevelopment, and gentrification and exposing their relationship. To understand the mechanisms that gave birth to the insurgency in Diyarbakir and the counter mechanisms developed on the urban scale against such insurgency, Chapter 4 provides a historical context, exploring the historical, architectural, demographical, and administrative context of the city and the Kurdish struggle. Chapter 5 involves a threefold analysis of the case study, each section focusing on different parts of Sur. (a.) *Void* takes emptying at its center through the (right) half of Sur, (b.) *Limbo* detangles not-yet-demolished but expropriated parts of Sur, and (c.) *New Face* focuses on newly built neighborhoods of Alipasa- Lalebey and new buildings in the emptied part of Sur. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusion and the case study findings and their implications.

Chapter 2:

Methodology

The case study material of this thesis is, firstly, constituted of quantitative and qualitative data from (1) statistical databases, (2) newspapers, (3) official state announcements, and (4) reports on the effects of war in Sur by political parties, international organizations, unions, and civil organizations¹⁶. Secondly, the quantitative data involves visualization of Sur through maps and satellite images designed by the author (via Google Earth Pro and QGIS software). Thirdly, and most importantly, the qualitative data is based on fieldwork done by the author, involving interviews, conversations, field tours (with and without subjects), and pictures. I carried out my fieldwork in Diyarbakir between January-March 2022 for two and a half months. During the fieldwork, I interviewed/had informed conversations with eleven people, face to face, in their houses, business places, or in a cafe, lasting between 15 minutes and 2 hours. Moreover, I had two field tours, one with a civil engineer and one with a displaced Sur resident (details below). I found my subjects through personal connections and the snowball method.

Two of the interviews -with the former head of Diyarbakir TMMOB and the former (dismissed) mayor of Sur- were conducted as expert interviews, each recorded and lasted around one and a half hours. The rest of the interviews/conversations were carried out with the displaced persons/families (5) and shopkeepers (5) of Sur¹⁷. In my first interview with one of the displaced families, I realized that having questions with me on a paper and asking formally formulated questions made my interviewee treat me like an expert. An expert who already has “correct” answers in mind and expects an interviewee to answer formally, precisely, and short. Thus, my interviewee’s responses lacked showing emotions, expressing feelings, and sharing

¹⁶See bibliography for details of databases and reports.

¹⁷See Appendix B. for the list of interviewed/conversed people.

comfortably. Besides, being from different classes hindered my interviewees and me, even though I was also from Diyarbakir. I was an insider, but not a complete one. After this experience, I memorized all my interview questions, just brought a piece of blank paper with me when I met with people and decided not to introduce myself to have an interview with formal questions in my hand. Instead, I asked my interviewees to have a “conversation” with me by informing them about my research and how I will use our “conversation.” All interviews/conversations were semi-structured. The questions were partially different depending on the type of interviewee (displaced family still living in Sur, displaced family moved out of Sur, displaced family living in TOKI apartments, old shopkeeper, new shopkeeper, etc.). All of the interviewees gave verbal consent for me to use their stories and answers in this thesis.

Nonetheless, none of my interviewees accepted voice recording no matter how I asked for it, which was something that I expected to happen. I heard many sentences like “You can ask me anything, I will answer all with no holding back, but no recording.” It is important to note that, for the last 20 years, nearly all court cases categorized as political offenses against the Turkish state (a.k.a. “terrorism”) involve audio surveillance, wiretapping, or voice records without exception. Thus, when I asked people to record our interviews, the answer “no” meant two things. Either they cannot be sure whether I am a police informant or are afraid that I might get arrested or detained someday, which would let the authorities find my recordings and retrospectively harm them. After all, I researched a “sensitive” topic in Turkey; any issue touching Kurds is “sensitive.” People have been detained for much less. Thus, I did not push any interviewees for voice recording; I let them know that I would take notes and carry out my fieldwork this way. After each interview or conversation in the field, I transcribed all my notes with extensive field notes and observations. After the fieldwork, I coded all the collected materials via the software Quirkos.

Another obstacle that I faced during my interviews and encounters with the people of Sur was due to being a woman. The middle-aged family men (including shopkeepers) talked very little with me, except one of them, who was a politically engaged person. None of them refused to speak with me. Yet, their answers were always short and simple without further explanations, avoiding eye contact with me and showing little interest in the conversation. I do not intend to speculate about the whys as it alone can be an object of whole research itself. Though, I have my guesses, one of them being the conservative family structures.

On the other hand, being a woman gave me the advantage of communicating with women and young girls very well, as their husbands and fathers did not see me as a “threat” to their families. I even had the great chance of having a field tour in the demolished neighborhoods of Sur with the young daughter (L.) of one of the displaced families. I am pretty confident that her family would not let her have such a tour with a man. Our tour with L. was more than seeing Sur’s demolished buildings and new face. Her narrative through our tour added new layers to the destruction and the building environment. As Anderson (2004) argues, “talking whilst walking can harness place as an active trigger to prompt knowledge recollection and production.” I walked the same places before I had our tour with L., yet having such a narration with me made me see these places very differently. Every 50 meters, L. remembered a new detail about their house, her friends and family’s life in Sur, and their neighborhood.

I had another field tour in the newly built neighborhoods of Alipasa-Lalebey and not-yet demolished parts of Sur with a civil engineer who has been working on different state and TOKI projects in Diyarbakir. It was also a similar experience in terms of walking with narration, but this time with more technical and architectural details. Besides my several walks in Sur, I had two more field tours in the abandoned, demolished, and newly built parts of Sur with some friends. The ghost town aura and the constant presence of the (heavily) armed police in such parts made me anxious to walk alone. During these field tours (and in my own time), I took

several pictures in Sur. Pictures that reflect the abandoning, war, destruction, reconstruction, and emptiness, and pictures of ongoing everyday life in Sur. The case study chapter of this thesis will narrate many of the materials I collected.

Chapter 3:

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this thesis lies at the intersection of urban destruction, urban redevelopment, and counterinsurgency. I use urbanism to refer to urban restructurings through urban destruction and redevelopment. In this chapter, these three research areas and their relationship will be explored in three subsections. The urban destruction section will introduce conceptualizations of place annihilation, ethnic cleansing, urbicide, spaces of confrontation and defeat, and emptying space. Later, the urban redevelopment section will explore concepts of dispossession, displacement, gentrification, and the role of land titles in urban redevelopment. Lastly, the counterinsurgency section will define counterinsurgency, then conceptualize counterinsurgency as a spatial strategy, and provide insights on how urban planning/urbanism has been used as a counterinsurgency strategy around the world.

3.1. Urban Destruction

Urban destruction is not a new phenomenon. There are different ways of conceptualizing and naming various forms of urban destruction. One of the first conceptualizations of mass urban destruction was by Kenneth Hewitt, describing the devastation/aerial bombing of many cities during WWII as “place annihilation and immolation” (1983). Place annihilation is primarily constituted by the destruction of inhabited settlements, significant fatalities among resident civilians, the destruction of homes of civilians, the devastation of civic life support and culture, and the practices that prevent or disrupt emergency measures for devastated areas (1983, p. 276). Further, the goals and justifications of area bombing include de-housing as a strategy of war, making civilian morale a target of war, advertising the raids as retribution

against the nation involved, justifying devastation and civilian casualties as leverage on the enemy, and treating place destruction as an inevitable outcome of total war (ibid.).

Hewitt's approach to urban destruction provides a general scheme for situating modern cities in total war settings where states declare war against each other. Yet, it remains incapable of analyzing the role of urban space in intrastate conflicts, such as in the case of Sur. During the intrastate war in Turkey, neither Diyarbakir nor other Kurdish cities were targeted as a whole. Instead, specific districts and neighborhoods were singled out. It is also crucial to acknowledge that the Turkish state avoided identifying the clashes as "war," emphasizing that the conflict is between the Turkish state and the PKK militias. Officially, the people of conflicted cities were never the "target." Besides, Hewitt's conceptualization of place annihilation focuses on interstate wars where the enemy is homogenized. Thus, it falls short when considering intrastate ethnic diversities and how a state deals with its minority accommodated spaces.

The urban destruction in Palestine in 1948 is, for example, identified as "ethnic cleansing" by Ilan Pappé (1994, 2006), arguing that ethnic cleansing was not a circumstance of the war but rather a purported goal of combat. In his analysis of the mass population displacement and the destruction of the built environment, Pappé (1994) demonstrates that the expulsions of thousands of Palestinians were executed by destroying the villages and populated centers that are difficult to control (Pappé, 1994, p. 92). Urban destruction can be normalized as an inevitable outcome of the "fight against terrorism" (as argued by Hewitt) in the case of Sur. However, Pappé's conceptualization shows that the displacement and impoverishment of the low-income Kurdish families also correspond to ethnic cleansing. Although Pappé's analysis considers physical destruction as a consequence of displacement, which is not my approach in the case of Sur, it still provides valuable insights by acknowledging ethnicized urban destruction.

Urban destruction has also been conceptualized in different contexts other than war, such as by Marshall Berman (1987, 1996). Berman coined the term “urbicide,” *the murder of a city*, to describe the urban restructuring in The South Bronx in the 1960s and 1970s (1987). Urbicide, for Berman, is about the destruction of the physically built environment but also the elimination of a particular form of social life (1996); non-white working-class social life was the target of elimination in the case of The South Bronx. Likewise, the specific form of social life, constituted by the low-income Kurdish families, has become the target of urban destruction in Sur. It should be clear that I do not prioritize the urban destruction or the elimination/displacement of the Kurdish families over the other in my analysis. Without reducing urban destruction to physical destruction, Berman’s urbicide exposes that urban destruction can be a long-term, targeting, and systematic mechanism that incorporates eliminating social life. This approach widens our understanding by interconnecting two different spheres of urban; physical and social.

The term urbicide was later popularized to describe the destruction of the cities in the Balkans (see Bogdanovic, 1993) and contemporarily in Palestine (Graham, 2004b and Abujidi, 2014). Nurhan Abujidi (2014) argues, “if the destruction of the urban environment is more widespread than the typical selected key buildings, and if the devastation covers a wide variety of buildings ... then the destruction cannot be justified as collateral damage or damage for security reasons. Such damage is then a deliberate destruction of the built environment that qualifies as urbicide” (p. 18). Incorporating both the deliberate destruction of the built environment and the targeting of a specific group, Martin Shaw (2004) proposes to understand urbicide as an element of a genocidal war that aims to dissolve clustered ethnic homogeneities from urban space to “destroy the power and ability to resist the enemy state and enemy population.” (p. 148). In Shaw’s conceptualization, urbicide is an attempt to cleanse a city perceived as morally polluted. In other words, urbicide can be seen as the destruction of

homogeneous centers that are deemed undesirable. I argue that Diyarbakir itself is perceived as a homogenous center of resistance by the Turkish state. Thus, urbicide in Sur, the core of such resistance, is marked by the motivations of punishment, dispersing resistance, and cleansing.

Besides urbicide, Pamela Colombo's (2014) conceptualization of spaces of confrontation and defeat also provides valuable insights into spatial destruction, although it does not necessarily focus on urban areas. In her analysis of the spatial dispossession of the revolution in Tucuman, Argentina, Colombo argues that "The fact that the subjects situate themselves and confront one another in a specific site modifies and alters this space." (2014, p. 50). Such space of confrontation refers to at least two dimensions: (1) it refers to a struggle within a space where oppositions confront each other, and (2) it refers to that whatever happens therein, the space is also a struggle for the control over the representations of this space, i.e., a struggle for symbolic domination (ibid.). Colombo exposes that attributing a fixed space to an "enemy" facilitates the destruction, breaking up, and annihilation of that space, ending with deterritorialization (p. 52).

The most critical contribution Colombo makes through her analysis is showing that defeat is also specialized via emptying the space of confrontation by the state. More specifically, she notes that "The presence of the state can operate and exist on the basis of this emptiness" (2014, p. 58). In other words, the state is also constructed in spaces that it leaves unoccupied on purpose (ibid.). I find Colombo's conceptualization of spaces of confrontation and defeat, and especially emptying space, very useful for the case of Sur as (1) reading Sur as a space of confrontation and defeat broadens our understanding of the symbolic value of the space for the conflicted parties, and (2) emptying space, keeping the space empty for years and further planning the space with extensive empty areas, constitutes the primary strategies of the Turkish state in Sur, which will be discussed in details in the case analysis under the subchapter *The Void*.

The discussion of leaving/keeping the space empty brings us closer to our subsequent research interest, which is what comes after the urban destruction. In the case of all urban

destruction/urbicide cases that have been discussed so far, the next step is marked by urban redevelopment. However, I do not find it convenient to divide urban destruction and urban redevelopment into two separate phenomena that chronologically follow each other. When the two are separated, it gives the illusion that urban destruction is over and urban redevelopment is a “natural” following process. The latter is purified from the harm given by urban destruction. Instead, what I propose in this thesis is to evaluate urban redevelopment as a part, a phase, of continuing urban destruction/urbicide. As it will be more detailed in the case analysis chapter, the urban destruction, and the urban redevelopment are critically intertwined processes in the case of Sur. The next section of the theoretical framework will introduce the literature on urban redevelopment in relation to dispossession, displacement, the role of land titles, and gentrification.

3.2. Urban redevelopment

In the case of Sur, I argue that the dispossession and displacement of the inhabitants by the urban destruction is further intensified in the urban redevelopment phase. However, before analyzing how such intensification takes place, it is necessary first to establish how urban redevelopment itself functions. The conceptualization of overaccumulation and accumulation by dispossession by David Harvey (2004) stands as a good entrance point into analyzing the relationship between urban redevelopment and dispossession. Marxist scholar Harvey criticizes the classical political economy assumptions for reducing (primitive) accumulation based on predation, fraud, and violence to an original stage considered no longer relevant in the capitalist system (p. 74). Whereas “a general re-evaluation of the continuous role and persistence of the predatory practices of ‘primitive’ or ‘original’ accumulation within the long historical geography of capital accumulation is (still) very much in order” (ibid.). As it seems odd to call

an ongoing process ‘primitive’ or ‘original,’ Harvey substitutes these terms with the concept of ‘accumulation by dispossession.’

Primitive accumulation, in Marx’s description (Harvey, 2004, p. 73), involves several processes such as privatization of land, forceful expulsion of peasant populations, conversion of different forms of property rights into exclusive private properties, suppression of rights to commons, etc. With its monopoly of violence and definitions of legality, a state takes an active and crucial role in backing and promoting such processes. Such accumulation, i.e., accumulation by dispossession, Harvey argues, occurs again and again in the capitalist system as overaccumulation is in constant seek for new fields of investment. In the contemporary urban context, accumulation by dispossession follows the logic of privatization through opening new spaces in an urban environment for private investments as well as the forceful expulsion of urban poor from urban centers through gentrification or, as in the case of Diyarbakir, through military intervention. Although helpful at providing a global capitalist scheme, the accumulation by dispossession theory has a tendency to reduce the military intervention and the urban redevelopment in Sur to pure efforts of creating space for the capitalist accumulation. This is one of the shortfalls that I fill with the conceptualization of counterinsurgency (in the following section) to understand the specificities of the urban redevelopment in Sur.

On the other hand, in the case of Sur, it was not solely the military intervention or stereotypical gentrification that expelled the Kurdish urban poor. In addition to the forceful displacement, the first crucial mechanism of dispossession was the legitimized -but not lawful- urgent land expropriation for all Sur. It is essential to comprehend the issue of territory and land tenure to understand such a mechanism. James C. Scott (1998) argues that in the formation of modern states, legibility has been a central problem in statecraft (p. 2). Making a society and a territory legible means knowing subjects, their wealth, landholdings, location, and most importantly, their identity. State authorities need to make society and territory legible. More

importantly, they need to arrange the population in ways that simplify the classic state functions of taxation, conscription, and *prevention of rebellion* (emphasis added) (1998). Accordingly, redeveloping Sur, whose “messiness” makes any observation from outside impossible, could be read as an attempt to create a legible territory and a society. However, I argue that when the Turkish authorities already know that the inhabitants of Sur are low-income Kurdish families supporting the pro-Kurdish party, then neither the complete flattening nor the redevelopment of Sur can simply be seen as an attempt to establish legibility. It becomes a *conquest*. As opposed to considering demolition as a “natural” phase of urban redevelopment, this thesis evaluates demolition as a purposeful mechanism in redevelopment, which should be seen as the continuation of urbicide and counterinsurgency. The total destruction and the following commercial (rather than residential) redevelopment in Sur intentionally dispossess the low-income Kurdish families.

The dispossessing or the expropriation of land is directly connected to the issue of land tenure, which also appears as an essential criterion in creating a legible territory (Scott, 1998). Although attaching every parcel of taxable property to an individual responsible for paying tax on it seems straightforward, it has been enormously difficult in the context of all modern states (p. 33), including Turkey. On the one hand, I argue that the various mixed and ambiguous tenure statuses combined with the messy district structures in Sur have given the insurgents the ability to stay invisible, resulting in frustration for the state authorities and armed forces. The diffused land tenure, in other words, operated as a form of resistance against the state’s efforts to create a controllable territory and society. On the other hand, and I argue more importantly, such ambiguous tenure statuses operate as a facilitator for the expropriation by creating fragile positions in the property rights for the people. The ambiguous tenure statuses grant minimal space for objecting to the expropriation and force people to accept any offer proposed by the

state. The case analysis subsection *The Limbo* will provide a detailed analysis of the urgent land expropriation and land tenures in Sur.

The second crucial mechanism of the dispossession in Sur has been the state-imposed commercial gentrification. It should be noted that when I use the term gentrification, it does not refer to the broader conceptualization of gentrification, which is the replacement of low-income families with middle or high-income families by the creation of a rent gap in a housing market. As D. Asher Ghertner (2015) states, the greatest flaw of gentrification theory is its “property-centrism,” its presumption that private property is already the exclusive or predominant form of tenure (p. 553). As highlighted before, Sur has not been such a place with an exclusive form of tenure, which creates an unfavorable environment for expecting rent gaps for gentrification. And above all, the inhabitants of Sur have not been replaced with middle or high-income families. Instead, the forceful expulsion has turned their neighborhoods into touristic commerce areas.

In their analysis of post-Dayton Sarajevo, Pobric&Robinson (2019) identify the renewal of the post-war city as tourism gentrification, i.e., “a process of socio-spatial change in which neighborhoods are transformed largely according to the needs of affluent consumers, residents and visitors alike” (p. 290). For example, in the attractive locations in Sarajevo, it has been common for private investors to invest in war/devastated properties to provide tourist accommodation and services. Commercial gentrification serving tourism was also taking place in Sur before the urban warfare, although on a very small scale. This period will later be covered in the analysis of the case. Yet, it is essential to note here that such touristic gentrification was not affecting the residential areas of Sur or threatening the existing shops in terms of rent prices.

The style of gentrification, I argue, changed in Sur with the urban redevelopment project after the clashes. It turned into state-imposed tourism gentrification as (1) the land was forcefully expropriated by the state, (2) the redevelopment project designed by the state

involves very few number of residential buildings, (3) the newly built shops, restaurants, hotels, and cafes under the project are not intended to be sold but rented by the state, and (4) the rents of such places, designated by the state, are incomprehensively high. The case analysis subsection *New Face* will involve an in-depth analysis of the state-imposed touristic gentrification with details of the old and new rents, as well as the new image that the Turkish state tries to attribute to Sur.

Related to urban redevelopment, the last conceptualization I utilize in my analysis is the temporality of displacement by Bahar Sakizlioglu (2013). Sakizlioglu argues that the literature on experiences of displacement has been separating the experience of displacement into two-phase as before and/or after displacement (p. 3). Such typology, she adds, does not consider how a neighborhood changes after authorities target it for renewal and how such changes affect the residents living under the threat of displacement, even before the displacement takes place (ibid.). Thus, Sakizlioglu proposes to study displacement as a process. I find her approach very helpful for the case of Sur because although all the land had been expropriated, many inhabitants have not been evicted yet. In the case analysis subsection, *The Limbo*, I will be using this approach to analyze life in not-yet-demolished parts of Sur.

I argue that the constant threat of displacement, combined with non-transparent information, creates an environment where the Turkish state establishes a threatening power over space and time, but most importantly, over people. The urban destruction and the urban redevelopment project in Sur, marked by ambiguities and uncertainties, can be best understood by conceptualizing urbanism as a counterinsurgency mechanism. I do not intend to overlook the capitalist economic relations and motivations involved in this mechanism. Yet, I insist that this mechanism is also fueled with the intentions of control, oppression, and subjugation. Thus, the next section will introduce the term counterinsurgency and then conceptualize its relation with urbanism, i.e., urban destruction and (re)development.

3.3. Counterinsurgency

Counterinsurgency was conceptualized as early as the 18th century by Santa Cruz de Marcenado to understand early signs of an insurgency and to develop strategies to prevent and counter such insurgencies (Heuser, 2010). Since then, several authors have further conceptualized and strategized it, especially military officers and strategists (e.g., B.H. Liddell Hart, David Galula, Robert Thompson, David Kilcullen, Martin van Creveld). Contemporarily, counterinsurgency is defined as “the blends of comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously contain insurgency and address its root causes,” whereas “unlike conventional warfare, non-military means are often the most effective elements, with military forces playing an enabling role” (U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide, 2009, p .2).

On the one hand, the Turkish army has already been reported to use the burning of forests, fields, and villages in Kurdish rural areas as counterinsurgency strategies against the PKK since the early 1990s. As Jongerden et al. (2007) emphasize, the immediate aim and strategy of the new ‘field domination doctrine’ adopted in 1991 by the Turkish state was the total destruction of the PKK environment (p. 4) which primarily focused on the rural mobilization. On the other hand, the territorial separation and isolation of the Kurdish region from the rest of the country through militarized spatial control techniques, Deniz Yonucu (2021) argues, has been another key strategy in the Turkish state’s counterinsurgency war against the Kurdish dissent. In her analysis of the counterinsurgency strategies in the Gazi neighborhood of Istanbul in 1995, Yonucu shows how the strategies to divide the Kurdish society from within in Northern Kurdistan during the 1990s were later adapted to divide the insurgents in the Gazi neighborhood. Such adaptation gives a clear image of how the counterinsurgency strategies traveled from one side of the country to another in different insurgencies. Likewise, I argue that what is experienced in Sur’s urban redevelopment projects is a reverse shift in this flow. The

urban renewal projects in Istanbul (see Bartu-Candan & Kolluoglu, 2008; Kuyucu & Unsal, 2010) to clear the slum neighborhoods and poor populations from the city center have provided practical examples for the counterinsurgency strategies in the dispossession of Sur.

In terms of the relationship between warfare and urban, Stephen Graham argues that in the post-Cold War and post-9/11 world, both insurgent and state violence are constituted by “*the systematic and planned targeting of cities and urban places*” (2004, p. 170, emphasis in original). Correspondingly, counterinsurgency tactics also need to be adapted to urban settings. However, the contemporary counterinsurgency strategies in urbanism date much earlier than 1991. The French invasion of Algiers in the 1840s holds a special place in the history of urbanism as counterinsurgency not only because it was one of the first cases where demolitions were used as military planning but also because it led to the first special manual on ‘urban warfare.’ This manual was developed by the French army and authored by Tomas Robert Bugeaud, the governor-general of Algeria himself, to show how troops could ruthlessly put down the insurrections in Algiers through urban destruction and replanning (Graham, 2004, p. 172).

More than resulting in the creation of a new manual on how to annihilate insurgencies in colonized cities, as Eyal Weizman argues, Algiers became a laboratory for another war inside of the French homeland (Misselwitz & Weizman, 2003). Bugeaud personified the anti-urban attitudes of the French restoration by advocating rural life to reverse the trend of migration to the cities and proposing a radical reorganization of Paris to open new routes for military maneuvers. Not surprisingly, Bugeaud’s doctrines later had a major influence on Baron Haussmann, the leading actor in the modernization project of Paris between 1853 and 1870 (ibid.). As Graham emphasizes, just like in the 19th century, the colonial techniques today still operate through what Michel Foucault termed as ‘boomerang effects,’ that is, as much as the European techniques, political and juridical weapons transported to the other continents, a

whole series of colonial models was brought back to the West. “The result was that West could practice something resembling colonization, or an internal colonialism, on itself” (Foucault, 1975-6 quoted in Graham, 2011). Such boomerang effect, I argue, is evident in the case of Turkey, previously highlighted through the case of Gazi neighborhood.

In contemporary urban warfare, the tactics of urbicide and counterinsurgency are specially developed by the U.S. and the Israeli military services, varying from the development of special techniques of one-to-one combat in urban settings to the usage of high-technology tools to visualize and control space (Graham, 2004). However, the flattening of urban areas for the sake of counterinsurgency also continues in the Middle East today. The old ways of using urban planning as counterinsurgency through camouflaging it by similar, as well as different, rhetoric of hygiene, order, or economic development by European colonialists, I argue, still exist in contemporary urban destruction and redevelopment in Sur. The reason why I conceptualize such urban restructuring as counterinsurgency strategies rather than economic redevelopment or direct warfare is that: just as in the case of the Haussmannization of Paris, their purpose is not solely the privatization of lands or place annihilation but also the prevention of any kind of possible future insurgencies that haven’t even taken place yet. Counterinsurgency, I persist, involves much more than active warfare.

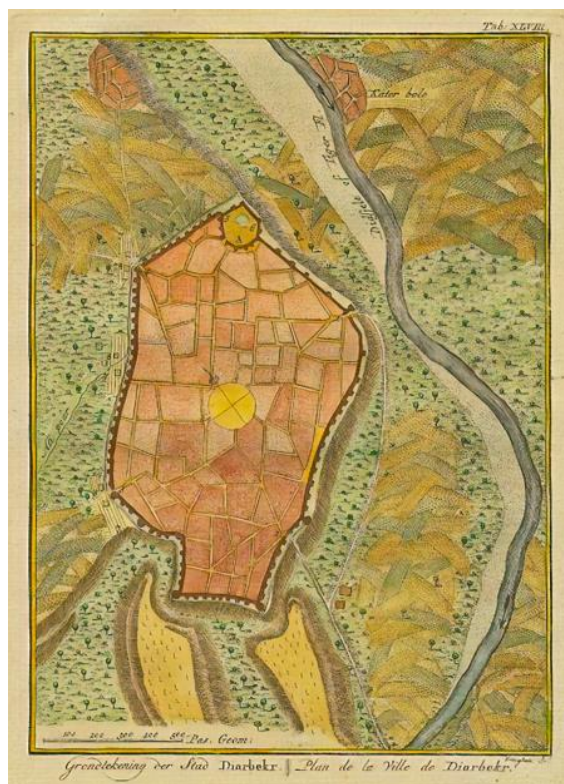
Chapter 4:

Historical Context of Diyarbakir: Recurrent Oppression

To understand the mechanisms that gave birth to the insurgency in Diyarbakir and the counter mechanisms developed on the urban scale against such insurgency, this chapter provides a chronological historical context; each of the three subsections explores the historical, architectural, demographical, and administrative context of the city and the Kurdish struggle.

4.1. Situating Diyarbakir and Kurds in History

Located in Northern Mesopotamia, the city of Diyarbakir hosted several civilizations such as Medes, Assyrians, Persians, and Romans over centuries. The inner castle of today's old town, Sur, is assumed to be built around 3000 B.C. by Hurries-Mittanis. It was later expanded with walls encircling the city by Romans in 297 A.D. using black volcanic basalt stones that are incredibly resilient. The old town, walls, four main gates, and 82 watchtowers have survived several conquering by different civilizations until today; each conqueror restored the damaged parts. Until the 1950s, Sur was *the* center of the Diyarbakir; the only settlement area was inside the city walls.



Map 2: Close-up map of Diyarbakir Province, 1766.
By Carsten Niebuhr.



Map 3: Map of Ottoman Empire, 1612.
By Jodocus Hondius. (Red star: Diyarbakir, added by the author).

It is important to highlight that the city played a significant geopolitical role as the region's administrative capital for the power holders. When the Ottomans took over the city by defeating the Safavids in the 16th century, Diyarbakir once again became the administrative center and headquarter of the broader region. The city was home to ethnically and religiously heterogeneous populations, each leaving remarks on the architecture of the old town. During the early Ottoman era, varied communities with different ethnical and religious backgrounds lived in the mixed neighborhoods of Sur.

However, the late Ottoman era was marked by the Young Turk regime¹⁸ (CUP), under which non-Muslim populations and ethnic minorities suffered immensely. With the deportation of non-Muslim populations in 1915, all Christian communities -Armenians' being particularly singled out for immediate annihilation- of Diyarbakir were forced to leave (Ungor, 2011, p. 99). Kurds were perceived as Ottoman Muslims, and the Ottoman army had always profited from the Kurdish manpower when needed in war. (p. 108-09). Nevertheless, the existence of Kurds who had resisted the regime and the fear of Kurdish nationalism had complicated the relations with Kurds. Correspondingly, in 1916, Talat Pasha issued the deportation of the Kurds -particularly influential personalities, families, and leaders- from Diyarbakir to central Anatolian cities Konya, Kastamonu, Nigde, and Kayseri (p. 110-11).

The ideology of the upcoming successor of the Ottoman Empire, the Turkish Republic, was not so different from the Young Turks in terms of Turkish nationalism. With the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in WWI, the allies created what we can call the modern Middle East. Although the Treaty of Sevres (1920) between the allies and the Ottoman Empire promised an independent Kurdistan, it was never ratified (Callimanopulos, 1982). At the end of the Turkish

¹⁸The Young Turks was a political reform movement in the early 20th century. The movement was favoring the replacement of the Ottoman Empire's absolute monarchy with a constitutional government. Although the movement emerged with the ideology of Ottomanism, it soon evolved into Turkish nationalism. Between 1913-1918, Three Pashas (Mehmed Talaat Pasha, Ismail Enver Pasha and Ahmed Cemal Pasha), also known as Young Turk triumvirate, effectively ruled the Ottoman empire under the CUP (Committee of Union and Progress).

War of Independence (1919-1923), led by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk,¹⁹ The Republic of Turkey was founded in 1923 in the Treaty of Lausanne, alongside Iraq and Syria. The Kurds were promised a Turkish-Kurdish federated state in return for their assistance in the independence war (ibid.). Yet, they were out of the picture in the treaty.

4.2. The History of Kurd(istan)s within Turkish Borders

The imagined borders of Kurdistan have been a controversial issue in terms of its extension. However, all claims intersect on the point that the borders of Kurdistan lay inside the borders of Turkey, Syria, Iran, and Iraq. The Turkish borders have been surrounding the majority of the divided Kurdish population since the foundation of Turkey. In this split homeland, Diyarbakir has been considered the unofficial capital of Kurdistan by Kurds.



Map 4: *Map of Kurdistan, 1945.*
Presented by the Kurdish League Khoybun to the San Francisco Conference.
(Red star: Diyarbakir, added by the author).

¹⁹Mustafa Kemal at the time. He took the surname “Ataturk” (meaning the “father of Turks”) with the Surname Act in 1934.

The fate of the Kurds in these four countries was left in the hands of each country. The Turkish state, ruled by the Republican People's Party (CHP)²⁰ under Atatürk's presidency, chose the physical and cultural elimination of all non-Turkish elements, primarily the Kurdish and Armenian (Callimanopulos, 1982). In the 1924 Constitution, it was made clear that; (1) the official language of the State of Turkey is Turkish, and (2) the State of Turkey is republican, nationalist, populist, statist, secular, and revolutionary²¹. The existence of the Kurds, Kurdish identity, language and culture were refused. From the beginning of the nation-building, the Kurdish language was banned; the language of education was declared Turkish; and the names of the Kurdish villages, cities, regions, even mountains and rivers were changed to Turkish.

The Kurds' reaction to all was nothing but starting rebellions. There had been several large and small-scale rebellions all around the Kurdish region in Southeastern Turkey, especially in the first 15 years of the foundation of Turkey. One of the most important and the first large-scale rebellions was the Sheikh Said Rebellion in 1925, still holding a prominent place in the collective memory of the Kurds and the Kurdish movement. Covering most Diyarbakir and Mardin provinces, the rebellion was motivated by liberating the Kurds from Turkish oppression. It was quickly and aggressively repressed; Sheikh Said and all other rebel leaders were hanged in Diyarbakir at the gates of Sur, in today's Dagkapi Square. Not much later, in the times of further Kurdish uprisings, a new resettlement law was issued by the Turkish state in 1934. The interior minister Sukru Kaya declared: "This law will create a country speaking with one language, thinking the same way and sharing the same sentiment" (TBMM, 1934, p. 71). More than half a million Kurds were deported and resettled internally during the execution of the law²². Diyarbakir was among the cities bitingly targeted by the law (see Ungor, 2011). It

²⁰The CHP was founded in 1919 by Mustafa Kemal, as a resistance organization at the beginning of the Turkish Independence War. With the foundation of the Republic of Turkey, it turned into a political party and functioned as the founding party of the Republic, Atatürk being the head of the party. The party's ideology has been Kemalism.

²¹The six founding principles of CHP, as well.

²²See Sagnic (2010) for detailed information and analysis of the effects of the law on the Kurdish population.

was not until 1950 that the law was revoked under the rule of the Democrat Party²³ (DP), and deported the Kurds could come back to their homelands.

However, the Turkish military was not satisfied with the conservative rule getting stronger and stronger. In 1960, to “put an end to the sibling²⁴ fight” and “restore secularism,” a group of 37 low-ranking military officers made a military coup against the democratically elected government. The military commission took control of the management of the state and jurisdiction. One of the accusations against the DP members was planning to establish a Kurdish state. A crucial mark of the 1960 coup was a change in the third article of the Constitution, by the military rule, from “Sovereignty belongs to the *nation* without any reservation or condition” to “Sovereignty belongs to the *Turkish nation* without any reservation or condition.”²⁵

The following years were marked by social unrest. The left-wing workers’ and students’ movements strengthened, countered by the right-wing Islamist and militant Turkish nationalist groups. The Kurdish activists and leftist intellectuals acted in unison with the Turkish left. In 1971, the military decided to end the “anarchy” leading the country. They forced the ruling party to resign and replace it with a more favorable ruling group whom the military could direct. Nearly all leftist groups and organizations were brutally oppressed. Soon, martial law was declared in the major urban areas and Kurdish regions, including Diyarbakir, the youth organizations were banned, union meetings were prohibited, and leftist publications were canceled. For the next two years, the martial law was renewed every two months.

²³The Democrat Party (DP) was a center-right party, formed in 1946 by opponents within the CHP. The party ideology was based on liberal conservatism, economic liberalism and right-wing populism. The one-party period of Turkey under the reign of the CHP officially ended in 1945. Yet, it was not until the 1950 general election that the CHP’s regime came to an actual end. The 1950 general election was a landslide victory for the opposition the DP. The DP’s general approach to the Kurdish population and cities were much more tolerating than the CHP regime.

²⁴Referring to the Turks and Kurds.

²⁵It was not until 1982 that the article was changed back to the original version.

4.3. Emergence of the Organized Kurdish Movement in Turkey

The 1971 military memorandum was a turning point in the emergence of the organized Kurdish movement in Turkey. Under such a restrictive and oppressive atmosphere, the leftist youth groups were organized and mobilized away from the public, in university dorms or shared apartments. A group of Kurdish students -known as the Kurdistan Revolutionaries- led by Abdullah Ocalan also mobilized in such a manner in Ankara, later forming the core ideological group of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). The movement mainly focused on the oppressed Kurdish people of Turkish Kurdistan and the colonialization of Kurdistan by espousing a Marxist-Leninist ideology. To mobilize the Kurdish masses, the group relocated to Kurdistan soon. Although the first steps toward establishing a party were taken in 1974, the PKK was officially launched on 27 November 1978 in the village of Fis, Diyarbakir, as a militant Kurdish political organization for independency. Until 1980, they mainly fought turf war against the Kurdish and Turkish radical Islamist organizations in the Kurdish region.

Followingly, the 1980 coup, headed by the Chief of the General Staff General Kenan Evren to invoke the Kemalist tradition of the state secularism and the unity of the nation, swept the country with a nationwide martial law, abolished the government, suspended the Constitution, and banned all political parties and unions. The Kurdish language was officially prohibited in public and private life, and the expression of Kurdish culture (from songs, dresses, to names) was banned. The disobeyers were arrested and imprisoned. The coup and the following oppression of Kurdish people in the region further radicalized the PKK, shifting its direction to an armed guerilla movement against the Turkish state. 1984 was marked as the first attack of the PKK on the Turkish military. Although the war between the PKK and the Turkish army stayed within the boundaries of the rural areas, the effects of clashes resulted in the polarization of the political actors in the Kurdish cities in the following years (Gambetti, 2005). The Kurdish

politicians, activists, and citizens were either with the Turkish state or against it in this war. There was hardly a middle ground.

The intensity of clashes alongside the oppression of Kurds intensified in the 1990s. The Kurdish civilians, activists, and politicians faced a brutal period of torture in prison cells, high pressure on the civil society, and constant fear in the street during the 1990s. The Kurdish population which migrated to cities during the village and forest burnings of the 1990s²⁶ were primarily families who provided for themselves via agricultural and farming activities. After their homes and sources of living were burned to the ground by the Turkish military, some of them migrated to the Western metropolitan cities like Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmir with the hope of finding jobs. In contrast, others insisted on staying in the Kurdish region and settled in the cities there. Those who moved to Diyarbakir mostly settled in Sur, where they survived by doing whatever jobs they could find and building slum houses wherever they could.

The 1990s also witnessed the beginning of a new phase in the Kurdish movement in Turkey, although this new strategy was also hit hard by the state. With the foundation of the HEP²⁷ (People's Labor Party) in 1990, the Kurdish politicians attempted to change the Turkish nationalistic implementations from within the national politics. The HEP was closed by the Constitutional Court of Turkey with the accusations of "aiming to divide the state; and the country and nation," leading to the beginning of an endless loop of the pro-Kurdish party being closed and succeeded by a new one with more or less the same Kurdish politicians²⁸.

²⁶ For the war against the PKK in the rural regions of Turkey's Kurdistan, the Turkish military burned down villages and forests to forcefully displace rural inhabitants, (1) dispersing the Kurdish population to prevent the further mobilization of the PKK, (2) making the rural areas inhabitable for the PKK to get help from, (3) destroying the environmental surroundings of the guerrillas to make the living conditions harder for them and to detect them easily.

²⁷ The HEP has been considered as the first representative of the Kurdish Movement in the national politics of Turkey. Although the Kurdish politicians had got involved in the national politics through other parties before, the HEP was marked as the first national political party which included the issues of non-acknowledgement of Kurdish identity, discrimination against the Kurds, the right to the education in mother tongue into its party agenda.

²⁸ All political parties, that are referred as "the pro-Kurdish Party" in the rest of this thesis are successors of the previously closed pro-Kurdish parties (the first being the HEP).

The struggles of the 1990s, the unemployment, and the neglect of the state in terms of infrastructure heightened the political consciousness among the residents of Diyarbakir, which partially explains the overwhelming support given to the pro-Kurdish party in the municipal election of 1999 (Gambetti, 2005, p. 54-55) and further elections²⁹. The existence of municipalities under the rule of the pro-Kurdish party gave legitimization to the Kurdish identity. Additionally, the unilateral ceasefire by PKK in 1998 and the December 1999 Helsinki Summit³⁰ further softened the conflict. Consequently, Diyarbakir began to transform into a fertile place for civil society activism in the following years. The end of the 1990s and the beginning of the 2000s was also a turning point for the conservative political parties to gain power in the national politics. The country entered a new ruling era with the self-proclaimed conservative democratic party, the AKP's (Justice and Development Party)³¹, sweeping victory in the 2002 general elections.

Briefly, the AKP's approach to the Kurdish issue and struggle was progressive and even promising during the early stages of its rule. In a speech that the prime minister Erdogan gave in Diyarbakir in 2005, he stated that the "Kurdish issue is not an issue for one part of this nation but the whole of it. It is my issue as well" (Goksedef, 2021). His statement was considered the first moment signaling that the government acknowledges the Kurdish issue and is open to solving it. The president and ministers made several affirmations to solve the Kurdish issue in the following years. There were meetings between the AKP and the pro-Kurdish party, promising an upcoming solution to the Kurdish issue. However, there were also contradictory moves by the Turkish authorities. There was constant arresting and detaining of the Kurdish

²⁹ Since the 1999 local election, the winners of the local elections have been the pro-Kurdish party (or the pro-Kurdish party politicians joining the elections from other parties) for the metropolitan municipality of Diyarbakir, as well as for the majority of the districts in the city including Sur.

³⁰ The Summit officially accepted Turkey as a candidate for full EU membership.

³¹ The AKP was founded in 2001 by Recep Tayyip Erdogan. The party was one of the successors of the Islamist political party FP (Virtue Party) that was closed by the Constitutional Court for "violating the secularist articles of the Constitution".

activists and politicians. Besides, the pro-Kurdish party was closed again in 2009 by the Turkish state.

At the end of 2012, the prime minister Erdogan finally announced that to find a solution to the Kurdish issue; the Turkish National Intelligence Service visited Abdullah Ocalan³² (“Baslangictan bugune”, 2014). The statement marked the beginning of the Peace Process. Shortly after, on 25 April 2013, the PKK officially announced that its armed forces were withdrawing from Turkey. On 11 July 2013, the president of Turkey approved the proposal of “The Law About Ending Terror and Empowering the Integration of Society,” followed by forming the “Committee of Wise Persons³³.” Unfortunately, the Peace Process was ephemeral. The atmosphere of the country, especially in the Kurdish region, radically changed with the eruption of the events in 2015.

³²Ocalan was captured in Nairobi, Kenya in 1999 by the Turkish Secret Service and brought to the prison facility on Imrali Island, Turkey. He has been there since.

³³The law indicated to carry out necessary political, constitutional, socioeconomic, cultural, and security procedures within the context of Peace Process. The Committee of Wise Persons was designated by the government, aiming to form a committee who can explain to and encourage the public about the Peace Process.

Chapter 5:

Case Study: Urbanism as Counterinsurgency

If it has to be summarized in one sentence the counteractions of the AKP ruled Turkish state against the declaration of self-governance and insurgency in the Kurdish cities were nothing but unproportionate use of forces on all levels. Since 2016, I have been regularly checking satellite images of Sur, observing the urban annihilation.



Images 3&4: *Urban annihilation.* Satellite images from 2015 and 2017 (Google Earth Pro)

Yet, none of those bird's eye views prepared me to encounter the real-life view of the completely emptied area. The eeriness of the emptied space got more intense when seeing the immediate backstreets of this area, the backstreets that remind what was once there in the emptied space.



Picture 1: *The Void.*

Taken by the author in emptied half of Sur, facing demolition zones and not yet demolished parts of Sur, February 2022.



Picture 2: *The backstreet.*

Taken by the author in immediate backstreets of emptied half of Sur, February 2022.

There were many ways to structure this chapter, dividing it into concepts, actors, or following a chronological order of the events. However, after my fieldwork, I decided to structure it through Sur's physical area, which is already fractured within. My observations in these different areas -emptied/in the process of demolition/partially reconstructed (marked red), not yet demolished (marked yellow), completely reconstructed (marked blue)- varied while shifting from one to another. Walking in each of these areas had awakened different senses. Each of these areas reflects a different aspect in untangling the mechanisms of counterinsurgency in Sur.

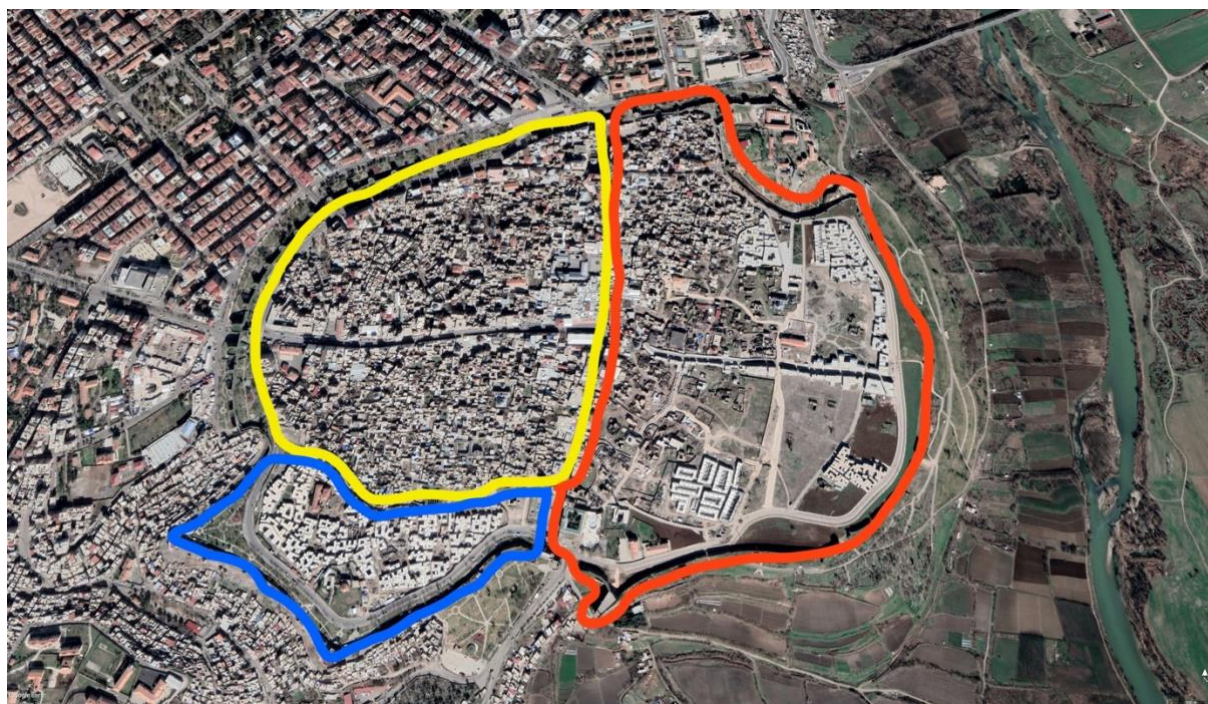


Image 5: *Fractured Sur*. Satellite image from 2021 (Google Earth).
Created by the author.

Consequently, the following analysis of my case study became threefold. The Void focuses on emptying space, the role of emptiness, and depopulation. The Limbo conceptualizes the state of ambiguities, betweenness, and temporality. New Face exhibits the role of urban redevelopment and gentrification.

5.1. The Void

Let's first introduce the void. In the most general sense, the void refers to the emptied half of Sur, the complete annihilation/flattening of urban space. However, what is being emptied is not only the physical built environment but also the social life by forcefully depopulating the area. The void also refers to the emptied lands that are kept empty in the restructuring of the area. The area of void in Sur was the area of intense clashes in 2015-16. It was a space of confrontation, and now it is a space of defeat. Through the void, this section of the case analysis will expose the role and mechanisms of emptying in the urban destruction; and the role of emptiness in the urban (re)planning and what it represents.



Images 6,7&8: Emptying. Satellite images from 2015, 2017, and 2021 (Google Earth Pro).

As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the last curfew in Sur was marked by the state forces' deliberate destruction of the built environment (TMMOB, 2019). This period of urbicide especially involved cleansing the physical environment by widening the narrow streets of Sur via bulldozing the houses to open ways for tanks and artilleries. Consequently, the intense

destruction, yet I argue purposefully, depopulated the area by forcefully displacing people. In his statement on 1 February 2016, the prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu stated that:

We are going through security planning. [...] The existing security structure cannot deal with these things (fighting against terrorism). There is a need for restructuring in securitization. [...] These cities (that turned into ruins in the current events) are cities that were developed without control in the 1990s. Even if these events did not happen, they needed urban transformation anyway. [...] Especially in Sur, I commanded them to let me know even if one stone is put on top of another.

(“Sur’u Toledo”, 2016)

Although untold, the new security structure of the Turkish state for Sur involved urbicide and complete cleansing of the built environment and the population. There were different opinions voiced by my interviewees (displaced during and after the clashes) in terms of what happened in Sur and why. One recurring argument was that the clashes were just an excuse by the Turkish state to disperse the people of Sur. Another was that the war took place just so that the state could demolish Sur. And the last one was that it all happened so that the state could steal the historical artifacts and the hidden golds³⁴ in Sur. No one imagines that emptying or rebuilding has intended to serve the people of Sur.

It is crucial to point out that neither such an urbicide nor emptying space could occur without the primary tool of the counterinsurgency in Sur, the round-the-clock curfews. The last curfew lasted for 2223 days until 1 January 2022³⁵. The rules of the curfews were simple; banning any movement in the streets. It was forbidden to leave the house under any condition

³⁴The hidden golds in the context of Turkey mostly refers to the treasures and valuables buried by non-Muslims when they were fleeing from the region in the 20th century. In the case of Diyarbakir, it refers to the deportation/genocide of Armenians.

³⁵See Appendix C. for the list of round-the-clock curfews declared in Sur.

unless the inhabitants let the authorities know that they wanted to flee from the area. The last curfew, I argue, created an area of *state of exception* where there are no rules, but the rules of the military forces and no observation from outside are available. Whatever happens within this space was legitimized from the state's perspective with the curfew. During our walk in the emptied part of Sur, L. showed me where their house used to be. Pointing to the Kursunlu Mosque, she added:

Our home was able to see the minaret of the Kursunlu Mosque, right there across us. We were not allowed to come near the windows. There were snipers on the minaret. There were only two very high buildings here. One of them was right next to the Nasim Pasa Mosque. They demolished it already. Apart from that, the minaret of the Kursunlu Mosque could see everything. It was one of the highest points. So the snipers were located there, shooting from the top.

L. was 12 years of at that time. Suddenly, during our conversation, F., mother of L., told me, "They lifted the curfew for a day. Believe me, the streets were filled with corpses. There were brains spread over the streets. All of my children saw those", including L.

The clashes officially ended in March 2016; no one was left in the area at the time. In less than two weeks, all of Sur was urgently expropriated. Yet, the curfews stayed in place for another six years for the already emptied space. It was made sure that no one could ever return to the emptied half of Sur. The area was entirely blockaded by concrete blocks put at every entrance point in the area. The governor stated that the concrete blocks were to protect the public from possible explosives in the area and that they will be lifted soon ("Valilik: Beton", 2016). The area, supposedly having explosives, was bulldozed without hesitation, and the concrete blocks were not lifted until recently. Ironically, the translation of "curfew" to Turkish

is “banning of going out to the street³⁶.” There was no one left in the area to go out to the street. Soon after, there were no streets left but a massive area of emptiness. Thus, I argue, it was not a curfew in practice. It was the prohibition of the entrance to the area. Right after the clashes, the curfew was partially lifted for a short time; the state officials were calling the displaced people and permitting them to come and take their belonging from their old houses. All of my displaced interviewees stated that there was nothing left to take. It was all ruins. E. tells that:

I haven't seen my house first. My neighbor went to see and told me that the house was there, but nothing was left inside; all house appliances were gone, and only two couches were left. They even ripped off the hooks of the air conditioner. Five days later, the state called us and told us that our house had been demolished. We went to see; I recognized my house from the furniture, from my couches in the middle of a ruin. They demolished my house within five days, five.

Concerning the long-lasting and paralyzing curfew, what was even more shocking for me was that no one knew the curfew was lifted on 1 January 2022. I also didn't know it until I interviewed A., an architect and former head of Diyarbakir TMMOB. There was neither national nor local news about the curfew being lifted. The decision was announced in the official gazette, which no one ever reads unless they are looking for a specific decision on that day. After learning this fact, I purposefully asked every person -the displaced people, people still living in other parts of Sur, shop owners in Sur, NGOs, unions representatives in Diyarbakir, my friends, family, etc.- whether the curfew was lifted or not. The answer was always no.

³⁶“Sokağa çıkma yasağı.”

On the other hand, what kept the area of the void as a state of exception was giving the full authority over the area to the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning and Iller Bankasi³⁷ in 2016. The dismissed mayor of Sur, M. stated that the municipality officially has no authority in the enclosed area except to collect trash and sustain water infrastructure. Yet, even these were not allowed by the state forces in practice. No one from the municipality, including M., was allowed to enter the area. The area was quickly flattened in this exceptional space created by the Turkish state. However, it was not quickly rebuilt. The redevelopment process has been slow; the area was kept empty for a long time. No detailed information about the area's future has been available to the public. Everything, including the media attention given to the area, hopes, and expectations, faded away into the void. One thing was sure for the void: the Turkish state *owns* it. It can do whatever it wants with it. It is a space of defeat in this sense. The void represented the victory of the Turkish state, the power of the state, and most importantly, the presence of the state in the heart of the unofficial capital of Kurdistan.

In this slow reconstruction process, lifting the curfew allowed people, including me, to observe the void. The void is a space where the Turkish state agonizingly imposes its existence on the people. The main entrance point to the area is laid out with posters of the president Erdogan. The road leads to the main gate of the inner castle on the left, in front of which there is a massive poster celebrating the “639 conquest of Diyarbakir” by the governor of Diyarbakir. This poster shocked me as I had no idea what this conquest refers to. I researched about the “conquest” later online. No document or archive referred to this “conquest”; only available information and news were issued since 2020 by the governor, the Municipality of Diyarbakir under the appointed mayor, and some local news channels. In his statement in 2021, the governor celebrated the conquest of Diyarbakir, which “was a critical point in the meeting of Anatolia and Islam, and the doors of Anatolia opening to Islam” (“Diyarbakir’in Fethi”, 2021).

³⁷Iller Bankasi is a state-owned development and investment bank based in Ankara, Turkey. It is subordinated to the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning.

We have a poster emphasizing a made-up “conquest” in a redeveloping area after the forceful displacement of thousands of people and deliberate destruction of the built environment. In this space of defeat, I argue, such representations aim nothing but to claim the space by the Turkish state.



Picture 3: *Erdogan posters at the entrance of New Sur.*
Taken by the author, February 2022.



Picture 4: 639 Conquest of Diyarbakir.
Taken by the author at the entrance of the inner castle, February 2022.

The poster of the “conquest” faces the void where the eye can see nothing but a road leading to the center of the void, an empty area of grass, supposedly being a green area with few trees, new two-store buildings, and the high minarets of the two mosques (Kursunlu and Nasim Pasa).



Picture 5: Entrance to the Void.
Taken by the author in front of the gate of the inner castle facing the Void, February 2022.

Following the road leading to the center, we found ourselves in the middle of a striking emptiness; an emptiness that the new Governor's Office guards, a building that used to be a school, and the Kursunlu Mosque next to it.



Pictures 6,7&8: *Striking emptiness.*

Taken by the author at the same point from left, center, and right angles in order, the Governor's Office and the Mosque standing on the right, February 2022.

The newly built two-store houses are located around the emptiness, the front ones facing the Governor's office and the Mosque. After my field tour in the area, I shared my thoughts about this area with my brother, a social scientist. He jokingly labeled these houses as "state-view houses." That label stuck with me for the rest of my fieldwork.



Picture 9: *State-view houses.*

Taken by the author, the Governor's Office behind me, February 2022.

The ruined historic house in front of the newly built houses, not yet demolished, conflicts with everything that the void establishes, reminding the observers of what was once here. Such conflictual views intensify when getting near the parts of the continuing demolition. The area behind the Kursunlu Mosque until the Four-legged Minaret is still an area of demolition and restoration. Right next to the Kursunlu Mosque, more posters by the state appear; the posters are put on the barriers to divide the void from the rest. The statements on them center around making Sur alive through restoration.



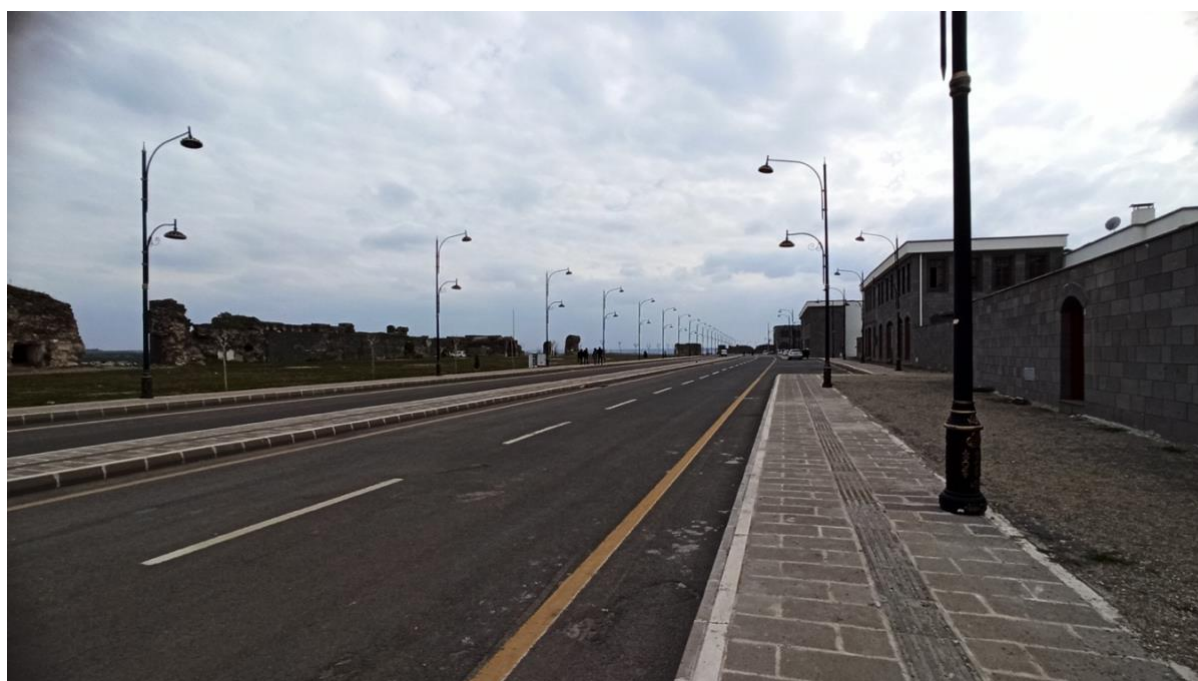
Picture 10: *Dividing posters.*

Taken by the author, in front of Kursunlu Mosque, February 2022.

On the other hand, it is not only the vast empty spaces that create the void. It is also the widened streets and the new urban layout of the area for the sake of security. The Zoning Plan for Protection Purposes³⁸ (ZPPP) for Sur was revised in 2016 by the Turkish state, adding six new police stations and widened roads to connect the police stations. A. emphasized that the urban replanning was centered around restructuring Sur from the point of securitization. The

³⁸Designed by experts and approved in 2012 by the Council of Metropolitan Municipality of Diyarbakir to renew Sur in accordance with heritage protection.

widened road surrounding the outer front of the emptied area tells us a lot on its own. This road does not necessarily serve the public; people barely use it, as it does not infrastructurally contribute to the rest of the city. It is a double highway road that encircles Sur. I argue that the plans to build six police centers and design a security ring in the area indicate that the Turkish state anticipates upcoming wars in the area, thus using urban redevelopment to control the space as a counterinsurgency tool.



Picture 11: *The highway of Sur.*
Taken by the author, February 2022.

The visibility range in the newly built area is also widened, in addition to the widened roads. The original ZPPP determined the number of floors to a maximum of two, yet it did not mean that all buildings should be two-store. However, all the new buildings in Sur are designed to be two-store buildings, which allows a long visibility range from the top of any building. The only high points in the area are the minarets of the mosques, which can see the whole area from a single point. Such widened roads and long-distance visibility range, I argue, also extend the scope of the void in Sur (both horizontally and vertically) by designing an urban space where

observation and intervention are possible from all angles. The possibility of such observation and intervention was not available at all in Sur, which was a cause of frustration with the area for the state forces. The creation of the void, I persist, serves as a counterinsurgency strategy. Creating an area marked by emptiness, extending the control over the area through securitization, and depopulating the area are restructuring Sur, where the state attempts to construct an incontestable domination over the space. In this space, I argue, the people of Sur are losing their sense of belonging to the space. More importantly, they are losing their sense of having the right to claim the space.

However, this void is yet to reach its boundaries, still swallowing the rest of Sur on its way. As mentioned before, the area of demolishment is very next to the void, continuing in speed. The barriers to demolishing areas inside the void are very ambiguous. There are metal barriers dividing the roads from the demolishment and restoration zones. However, these barriers are not completely blocking the observation firstly because they are not high enough and secondly because the doors of the barriers were most of the time open, as far as I observed. These not-so-sharp barriers allow any observer to see the bluntness of destruction, and the signs of war, like bullet holes, on what was once someone's home. Picture 14 shows where the old house of L. used to be, now a site of sorrow.

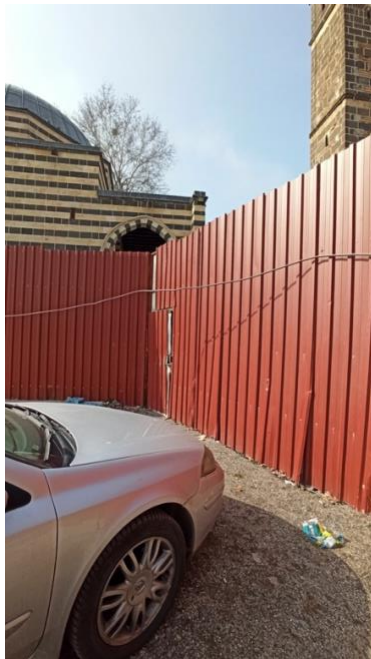


Pictures 12,13&14: *Barriers and behind the barriers of demolition.*
Taken by the author, March 2022.

The other half of Sur, where life still goes on, is also threatened by the destruction. The barriers between the emptied part of Sur from the rest are dividing the new from the old. The main barrier, sharply dividing the two areas, was located in the Four-legged Minaret. The red barrier had a small gate. I tried to pass it once. A construction worker around the gate told me, "You cannot pass from that door, sister; that is the door of the police. If you want to pass, I have the key for another door; I can let you pass." He let me through another door. In only one step, the whole atmosphere changed as I entered the other half of Sur, where the narrow street was packed with people.



Picture 15: *The barriers of Four-legged Minaret.*
Taken by the author from the emptied area, February 2022.



Picture 16: *The door of the police.*
Taken by the author, February 2022.



Picture 17: *One step.*
Taken by the author, February 2022

In the following section, the limbo will focus on these not-yet-demolished parts of Sur where everyday life still goes on. This area was not an area of intense clashes but urgently expropriated anyway. It has not gone under destruction and redevelopment yet.

5.2. *The Limbo*

The term limbo refers to the temporality of displacement in the sense of living under the threat of displacement and being displaced but unable to establish a stable life afterward. As the fundamental mechanism in the emergence of such limbo is the urgent expropriation of all Sur, this section will mainly focus on how land expropriation has been functioning and how it has affected Sur's displaced/current inhabitants. After providing details of the (urgent) expropriation in Sur, this section will first provide accounts of the displaced people and focus on the spatialized limbo, not-yet-demolished parts of Sur. The spatialized limbo is an area between two stages, the people still living in old Sur but knowing/seeing what awaits them in the future.



Picture 18: *Living in a half building.*

Taken by the author at one of the passage points from emptied Sur to old Sur, March 2022.

The first urban renewal project in Diyarbakir was declared in 2008 by TOKI³⁹ (Housing Development Administration of the Republic of Turkey) in cooperation with the local governorship, targeting three neighborhoods of Sur -Alipasa, Lalebey, and Cevatpasa- to clear the region from squatter houses and apply the ZPPP. The inhabitants were proposed to move to a settlement in Colguzeli, located on the city's periphery. The Metropolitan Municipality of Diyarbakir and the Municipality of Sur accepted to take part in the project in 2009. The municipalities would be responsible for the expropriation and demolishment in the neighborhoods, while TOKI would be responsible for constructing the new settlement in Colguzeli. The project was on hold until the ZPPP was completed in 2012. The demolishment process practically started in 2012. However, many residents refused to accept the deals by TOKI and resisted evacuation. The municipalities withdrew from the project, arguing that it does not take the interests of the inhabitants into account. Although the expropriation decision for these neighborhoods was made, the refusals of making deals with TOKI, resisting evacuations, and the municipalities' withdrawal from the project legally and practically stopped the urban renewal project in the area.

Shortly after, on 4 November 2012, the ministerial cabinet declared Sur a “risk area” based upon the Law No. 6306, “Law on Restructuring Areas Under Risk of Natural Disaster” (T. C. Official Gazette, 2012). The 2008 Metropolitan Municipality Law⁴⁰ was a powerful tool blocking the urban development project. Yet, the Law No. 6306 provided direct authority to the state administrative offices to execute transformation projects in any desired area. It is also important to note that Sur is not a first-degree area of any natural disaster. A. expresses that:

³⁹TOKI is a sub-department of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization.

⁴⁰The law was passed by the AKP government, giving autonomy to the metropolitan municipalities in planning and enforcing urban development, deciding zones for construction, opening municipality land for investment, and regulating the conditions of land plans.

Interestingly, no one objected to that decision (declaration of risk area). Neither the municipalities nor any NGO did anything about it. [...] No one expected that declaration of risk area would have serious consequences. Let it be declared a risk area; if the buildings are risky, then there are requirements such as strengthening the structures, etc. [...] Interestingly, the field operation for deciding whether it is a risk area or not was actually made in 2013⁴¹, way after the declaration was already made. So basically, they just made the declaration and made up the field operation report later.

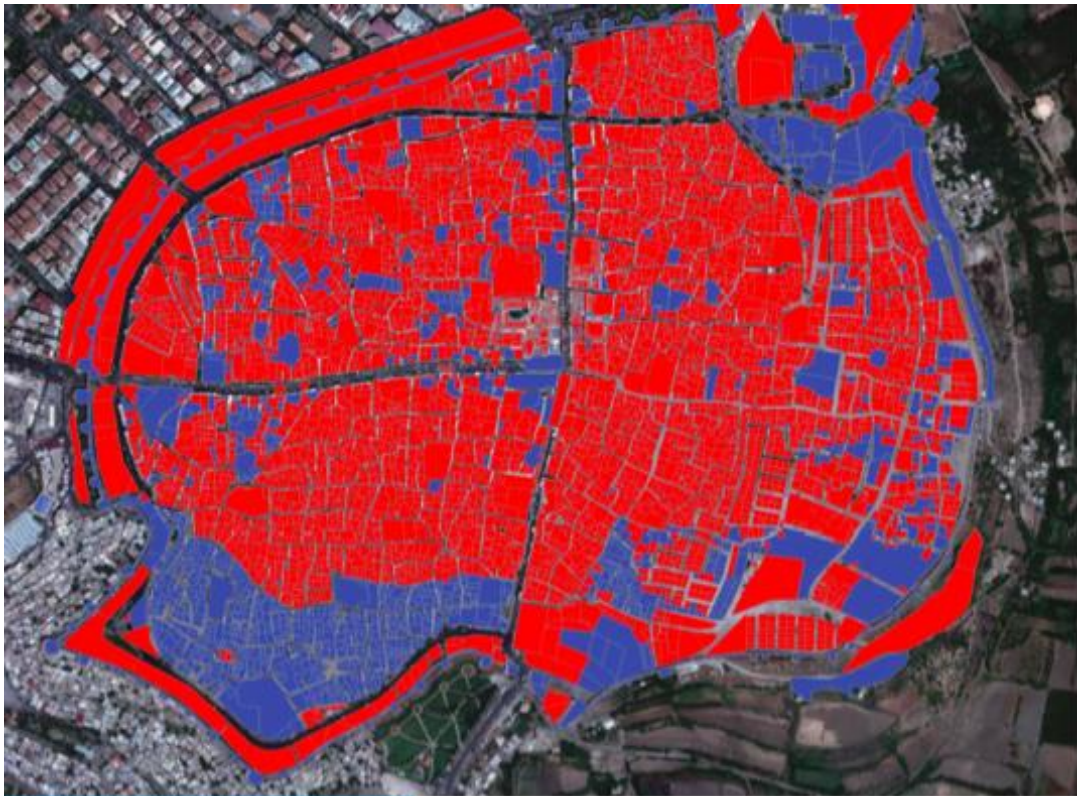
Until 2016, the Turkish state took no further actions to push the urban renewal project or the 2012 declarations of expropriation and risk area. On 21 March 2016, however, the urgent expropriation decision was declared directly based upon the 2012 declaration of the risk area. Thus, the state had full authority in terms of executing the expropriation. A. explains the process of the urgent expropriation in detail; I quote in extent:

Expropriation is a practice of hundreds of years old. It is not new. However, what is being done for the first time through urgent expropriation is that you have no right to object. In the history of Turkey, Sur was the first case where urgent expropriation was applied. You have no right to decide on staying, leaving, or questioning the decision. We saw that just to announce urgent expropriation on 21 March Newroz⁴²; the state prepared the decision in a hurry. Just to give Kurds and Kurdistan the message that “I can do this to you in your Newroz”[...] We checked later what this decision is about and realized that from the churches to mosques to public buildings to parks to public

⁴¹ In the field operation report by Ministry of Environment and Urbanization in 2013, only 6.04% of the buildings in Sur could be identified as risky (for earthquake) (SAMER, 2017).

⁴² 21 March is the day of Newroz in Kurdish communities. It is a celebration of spring and new year in Kurdish culture. The Newroz celebration in Turkey has always been a very political statement. Every year, the biggest and most crowded demonstration of Newroz is set in Diyarbakir, as the capital of Kurdistan, where millions of Kurds comes together.

spaces, everything was expropriated. [...] Why would a state expropriate its buildings? Its municipalities' lands? What kind of a decision is this? They later corrected the decision and undid the expropriation of public buildings. [...] Later, a platform was founded for solidarity with Sur by NGOs and the municipalities before the appointed mayors. We formed a law desk to help the displaced people of Sur. We objected to the urgent expropriation decision with 900 files, but all were rejected by the court, arguing there was a formal mistake in the objection process. Of course, this whole process tired people psychologically and economically. You know, the people of Sur were poor people affected by war, so very few came to the desk for the second objection. There was no positive result for those who came, apart from some historic public buildings that belonged to NGOs.



Map 5: Urgent Expropriation Decision No. 2016/8659 dated 21.03.2016.
By TMMOB (2019).

Red: parcels that are expropriated based on the decision
Blue: parcels that were expropriated before, in 2012

The urgent expropriation decision looked like a very sharp and direct decision, but it has not functioned that smoothly. As a result of the ambiguous and various land title statuses in Sur, it was chaos to figure out whose land or house was worth how much. In my interviews with the displaced families/persons, I came across four different positions that the inhabitants of Sur had been in. Overall, none of these positions were economically, ethically, or legally just.

The first position, and relatively the best one, was possessing the land title of a historic house -but without an official patent of historical heritage⁴³-. The historic Sur houses are 1-2 store houses, famous for their big sizes and airiness, basalt stone structures, and *avlu* ⁴⁴.



Pictures 19&20: *From avlu of a historic Sur house.*
Taken by the author, February 2022.

⁴³Patented houses are protected as heritage buildings by law and cannot be touched. The process of patenting a building requires several (economic and legal) procedures that the low-income inhabitants of Sur have had no means to reach. Only patented historic houses that I came across in Sur were owned by NGOs.

⁴⁴*Avlu* is an open-air inner yard in the middle of a house. Most of *avlu* in Sur has a big tree in the middle and a well.

The displaced families in the position of possessing a historic house were given three choices: option 1) getting a new house in the redeveloped Sur and being indebted to TOKI around 400.000-800.000 TL⁴⁵, option 2) getting a new apartment in the newly built TOKI in the periphery and being indebted to TOKI around 25.000-100.000 TL, option 3) getting monetary compensation around 100.000-170.000 TL.⁴⁶ The monetary compensation for the demolished historic houses sounds ridiculous, considering that the new houses in their place are being sold for around 1-5 million TL. There were also other variants in the offers. G.'s father owned a historic house in the emptied Sur. The state offered him two TOKI apartments in the periphery and being in debt, or 120.000 TL compensation. He refused to move outside the city and got the compensation but couldn't find a place to buy for that little money. So, he rented an old apartment in another low-income neighborhood in the city center. He is still going to Sur every day and sitting with his old friends in a tea house. G. narrated his father as "my dad has kept saying I cannot breathe outside of Sur, I just can't." Especially for the elderly, the displacement has been harsh. Every family I interviewed either lost their elderly shortly after the displacement, or their elderly are in constant sorrow.

The second position in the process of the urgent expropriation was possessing the land title of a plot and, in some cases, a (not historic) house. People who owned not historic houses were not proposed a new house in the redeveloped Sur. They were proposed with the options 2 and 3. The compensations were radically lower compared to owning a historic house. Consequently, the debts for getting a TOKI apartment were radically higher. For the people who only possessed the land title of the plot but not the house, option 3 was the only proposal. E. and her family lived in a two-store house with her husband's family in one of the two apartments. Her

⁴⁵As every expropriated land and house was valued differently, the amounts of compensations and debts change from one to another. The amount ranges that are given in this thesis are determined by the amounts that I encountered during my fieldwork.

⁴⁶The minimum wage in Turkey in 2016 was 1.647 TL. Most of inhabitants of Sur were earning under minimum wage.

father-in-law owned the land title of the plot but not the house. They were given 105.000 TL compensation for the whole house, 52.500 TL for each apartment. Even with the combined compensation, the big family could not buy a new house anywhere. They moved from rentals to rentals for a while. Her mother-in-law and father-in-law died shortly after. Now, the rest of the family (8 people) lives in a rental 4-room apartment in the periphery, paying 1800 TL rent.

However, possessing a land title is still more advantageous than a title deed. The third position was possessing a title deed. In the Turkish land registry cadaster system, a land title refers to officially registered property ownership granting full ownership rights. In comparison, a title deed refers to a written document declaring that ownership of a property is transferred from one person to another in exchange for a sum of money. A title deed also refers to ownership without official registration in the system. In the case of Sur, people holding title deeds of plots were also divided into two in terms of possessing the title of the house or not. Again, those who did not possess the house were only proposed to option 3 but with even lesser compensations. Family of F., for example, only possessing the title deed of the plot but not the house, were proposed 27.500 TL. The ones who did hold the title deed of the house were given the options 2 and 3. In these cases, the compensations were also low, and the debts for a TOKI apartment were high.

For his title deed-owned house, G. was given the options of a TOKI apartment or 17.000 TL compensation. He asks, “You tell me, which house can you buy for 17.000 TL!?”. He accepted the offer of a small TOKI apartment in the periphery, now being in debt to TOKI around 28.000 TL. G. also gave details about the TOKI apartments in the periphery. These high-rise apartments are isolated, housing thousands of people in small apartments with no open-air space apart from small balconies. The demography in these TOKI apartments is constituted by some families from Sur, police officers’ families, soldiers’ families, and civil

servants' families. It is an isolated heterogeneous area with no public space, utterly opposite of Sur. G. expressed that:

I come here (Sur) every day, my job is here, but my wife and kids cannot come to Sur. TOKI is too far away from here. Believe me; I do not like TOKI at all. I couldn't live if I were not coming to Sur every day. We were all together here on the streets; we sat together, eating sunflower seeds together. Women were on the one side, men on the other, we would spend time together. It was our life. We would never lock our door when we are not home, for example. Our neighbor's eyes would be on our door when we were not around. TOKI is not like that. I don't like it there, believe me.

All aside, the worst position (the fourth position) in the process of the urgent expropriation was of the tenants in Sur, living in rental houses/apartments. They were given almost nothing. They were also completely excluded from informing about the expropriation and the redevelopment project. After being displaced, the only help they could get from the state was temporary rent aid of 1000 TL a month. F. narrated the hardships of being a tenant:

They (state forces) constantly told us to leave during clashes, but we had nowhere to go. We had no money to move, nothing. At last, after 59 days of clashes, a teacher that we know told us that she has an apartment in Ofis (city center district) that will go under reconstruction, but we can stay there until it does. [...] We had nothing in the new house for days. Not even carpets to sleep on. With the help of neighbors there, with friends' help, we could gather some kitchen things and some carpet. The municipality gave us some furniture, but it all changed after the appointed mayor came. They gave us nothing. [...] Only thing the state gave us was rent aid. But no one told us they would

cut the aid when we changed our residence address from Sur to somewhere else. I didn't know that, and after two months, I changed our address to Ofis. They cut the aid immediately. If we knew, we wouldn't change it. They didn't give us any money for our lost furniture and stuff either.

In addition to being cut in the case of an address change, the rent aids were also only given to households where no one (legally) works. If someone starts working in a socially secured job, the aids are cut. What can be the logic of hardening conditions of receiving the rent aid for the forcefully displaced people by warfare? What can be the mentality of cutting the rent aids given to the displaced people once they change their residence addresses from Sur? No one I asked such questions could come up with reasoning besides arguing that the state just doesn't care about the Kurdish people. The whole atmosphere of the displacement and urgent expropriation has been formed so that, I argue, it signals the state forces and administrative offices' apathy towards its own citizens.

Sadly enough, the people have been so traumatized and paralyzed by such long-lasting oppression and apathy that no one even dares to claim that the Turkish state obliges them as its citizens. The people of Sur did not only lose their houses; they lost their loved ones; they lost everything from photos to furniture to even money or gold savings in their houses. When I asked about the compensations for their losses, the values were between 0 to 5000 TL. G. stated that the state administrative office just transferred the compensation of loss (1500 TL in his case) to his bank accounts without even giving him a chance of objection and told him that he could "either take it or leave it." Because of the extreme messiness of the land title statuses, insufficient public informing, and the explicit apathy of the state, there seems to be no fixed criteria in determining the value of the land or house or losses. The Turkish state has simply valued any land, house, or loss how much it wants. There was no reference point for anyone to

object to anyway. What is even more worrisome is that all of these criteria of urgent expropriation will also be applied the same way when the state decides to displace the rest of the Sur.

The displacement in the rest of Sur has already started in the Alipasa-Lalebey neighborhoods in 2017, the area where the urban renewal was paused in 2012. B. was a tenant in this area when the eviction hit his house in 2019:

My house was the first house that the bulldozer hit in there. They didn't pay me anything. Nothing. They told me a week before that I had to empty the apartment in a week. I packed everything in a hurry and brought my stuff to the NGO office (where he was working). It was the middle of the pandemic. I lived in the office for a year. They didn't give me any rent help or money to move. Nothing.

B. later moved to Iskenderpasa, another neighborhood in Sur, the only neighborhood where people still live densely. He added that the houses in this neighborhood are also getting emptier day by day as the people are leaving Sur. The population started dropping in the not-yet-demolished parts of Sur, places under the constant threat of displacement. D., who recently moved out of Sur, expressed the same:

We moved inside of Sur 2 times during the clashes. The clashes were not intense here, but our first apartment was on the last floor, and it was getting hit by bullets all the time. We moved to another house because of that. We didn't want to leave Sur. Neither me nor my family. But now, we left Sur with a heavy heart. [...] There are only some people densely living in Iskenderpasa, but apart from that, everyone is leaving Sur. People are not able to handle all this anymore.

I can only describe this area of limbo, *alive but not alive, not demolished but yet-to-be-demolished*, as heartbreaking. As an observer, it was painful to walk through streets that were once filled with children playing and women sitting and chatting in front of their doorsteps on the street. Now, those streets are surrounded by abandoned houses and small empty lots where houses used to be.



Pictures 21,22,23,24&25: *Abandoned buildings and empty lots.*
Taken by the author in not-yet-demolished neighborhoods of Sur, February 2022.

In this temporality, in this limbo, people have no sense of owning anything. They only have a temporary sense of ownership. During my conversation with a small neighborhood shop owner in this area, he shared his opinions about expropriation as follows:

If the state wants to expropriate, it expropriates. It is that simple. In exchange, it gives you money. You either accept that money or go to the court to say that this money is not enough. The court lasts three months, five months, five years. In the end, the court determines a value that you have to accept. One way or another, the state eventually expropriates whatever it wants.

I want to emphasize at this point that I do not intend to romanticize the old Sur or argue for keeping it however it was. Everyone, including me, is aware that besides its gorgeous historic houses, Sur was also filled with slum houses that have not provided safe and healthy living conditions. After the clashes, the conditions got worse as the bullets and cannons hit many buildings.



Pictures 26,27&28: *Unsafe urbanization and war damage.*
Taken by the author, March 2022.

No one I conversed with argued that they wanted to live under such circumstances. The former mayor M., the architect and former head of Diyarbakir TMMOB A., and the civil engineer C. all agreed that the buildings in Sur have needed rehabilitation through restoration and restrengthening, yet such rehabilitation did not necessitate displacement. Neither the experts nor the people were against urban renewal as a concept, but they were against displacement. They wanted to stay in Sur. In the rest of the Sur, everyone knows that if the urban redevelopment comes to their door, it will kick them out, leaving them with nothing but some money.

So far, the analysis of the case study exposed the mechanisms of emptying and the creation of limbo for the dispersion and subjugation of the people of Sur. Focusing on the newly redeveloped areas of Sur, the next chapter will depict what awaits the future of Sur. It will focus on what is forcefully replacing the old Sur.

5.3. New Face

Shortly after his statement about turning Sur into Toledo, in April 2016, the prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu gave another public speech in Sur about the Turkish state's plans for Sur. He stated that (1) there will be no step taken without the consent of the people of Sur, (2) the architectural fabric of Sur will be protected per UNESCO⁴⁷ standards and the 2012 ZPPP, (3) the urgent expropriation will not danger property rights, and (4) *none of the citizens* who left Sur will be homeless ("Basbakan Davutoglu", 2016). Without dancing around it, let me clarify that none of these promises came true. Apart from the second one, the so-far analysis exposed that. By focusing on Sur's new face, this subsection of the analysis will focus on how the second

⁴⁷ The process of including Sur City Walls and Hevsel Gardens in UNESCO World Heritage List was started in 2012, and finalized in 2015 in the 39th meeting of World Heritage Center.

promise has been inconceivably broken, mainly in terms of the 2012 ZPPP. The relationship between historic preservation and economic development is also a fruitful discussion. However, my case analysis does not cover these in detail due to limited space, although I collected comprehensive data about preservation standards and the position of UNESCO in the case of Sur. I can shortly state that UNESCO's heritage protection standards for Sur have not been taken seriously by the state offices, and UNESCO as an organization has not applied any sanctions or made any statement on the case of Sur.

The revisions in the ZPPP to securitize the area (adding six new police stations and widening the roads) were already discussed in *The Void*. These revisions were made very early in 2016, beginning the redevelopment process. More revisions were added later. However, the later revisions in the plan followed a different logic: first doing it, then reasoning the action through revising the plan. A. explains the process as follows:

First, they built the houses (in Alipasa-Lalebey). When we investigated them, we determined that the architecture does not align with the historic architecture of Sur at all. We prepared a report as the Union of Architects and objected to these buildings, saying they are against the ZPPP. What did they do? They revised the plan according to the already built houses. To prove that they are right about 44 houses, they changed the whole protection plan of Sur. The former plan specified that the side of the houses looking at the street had to be built out of basalt stone. They revised the plan saying that it may be basalt stone. You may not do it too. We objected to this revision too. By coincidence, the experts preparing the report were our acquaintances. We prepared the expert report together; we gave it to the court. The court declined the expert report. A new expert group was appointed; they prepared the report exactly how they wanted it and kept the revision at the end.



Picture 29: *New houses (front street) in Alipasa-Lalebey.*
Taken by the author, February 2022

A. also pointed out a current statement by the interior minister, Suleyman Soylu. For the demolition of derelict buildings in the cities of Turkey, Soylu stated that “They say there is a derelict building here and there, but we cannot demolish it because of court orders. My friend, go and demolish it at night; the court order should follow us” (“Soylu: Mahkeme”, 2021). I believe that this statement reflects the motto of any decision in urban planning in Turkey for a while now. First doing, then revising the existing orders. It also exposes the unbounded power of the state, standing above the law. Soylu’s statement makes it clear that the state is *the* law.

Apart from making up revisions in the ZPPP, another critical point in the redevelopment project of Sur has been that the project offices in Ankara prepared the redevelopment plans. Both A. and the civil engineer C. stated that the plans for the new Sur were drawn in Ankara

by people who had never even seen Sur before. The plans were later sent to Diyarbakir and given to the private construction contractors for execution by TOKI. A. also adds that nothing is carried out transparently in this process. All the information that he gave to me, for example, he got to know from his acquaintances in the state offices. None of this information has been public, not even shared with the Union of Architects as a professional association, a constitutional association. Soon, it became apparent that the redevelopment planning was oriented toward tourism and not accommodating people. A. emphasized in our interview that, in total, 3900 residential buildings had been demolished in Sur, displacing over 25.000 people. Yet, only 600 houses are built in their place.

During our tour in the newly built area of Alipasa-Lalebey⁴⁸ with the civil engineer and private construction contractor C., we had the chance to check out one of the new houses on sale (the house in the middle in Picture 30).



Picture 30: *New Alipasa-Lalebey houses.*
Taken by the author, February 2022.

⁴⁸ The area of Alipasa-Lalebey is mainly replanned as a residential area.

Although he did not work in the redevelopment of Sur, C. has several acquaintances of private contractors and engineers who worked in the area. Firstly, C. stated that these houses cannot even be considered second-degree quality villas because of the cheap materials used in their construction. More importantly, the inside of the houses are not even appropriately furnished (which is not usual in Turkey); kitchen furnishings are not complete, bathrooms are not equipped, and even the heating is not connected to the houses yet. Another failure in these new houses, C. stated, is that they did not use basalt stones in the buildings. The usage of basalt stone in Sur was not a coincidence or a choice of aesthetic. C. explains:

The characteristics of basalt stone are that it keeps the heat inside during winter and outside during summer. The material choice in the architecture of Sur was not a coincidence. As you know, Diyarbakir has a harsh climate. The basalt stones were chosen on purpose to adapt to this climate.

In addition, the new houses have radically smaller avlu and smaller windows compared to historic Sur houses. They also have asymmetrical rooms. When I asked about it, C. laughed and answered, "because they imagine that a historic-looking house would have asymmetrical architecture."



Pictures 31,32&33: *Inside of a new Sur house.* Taken by the author, February 2022.

In the restructuring of all Sur, we also observe that the redevelopment project is not based on the old parcel division of Sur. C. stated that in the new planning, they first built the houses and then divided the land into parcels accordingly. Unfortunately, the new parcel plan is not available in the online cadaster system of Turkey. Thus, I cannot provide a comparison. However, the close-up satellite images of the Alipasa-Lalebey provide valid proof for restructuring.



Images 9&10: Restructuring. Satellite images from 2009 and 2021 (Google Earth Pro).

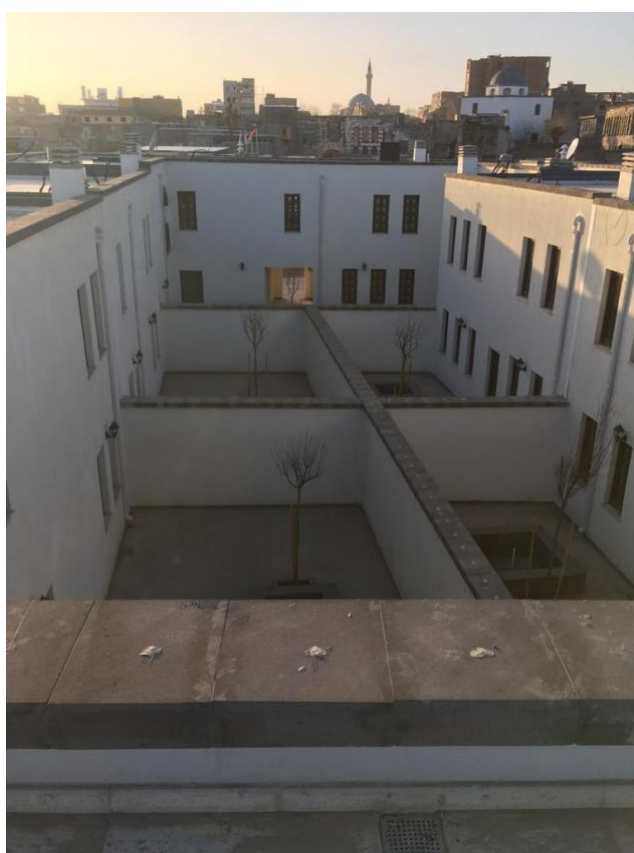
This restructuring of parcels, I argue, prevents claims by the old inhabitants of Sur in the long run. Because the new planning changes the parcel borders in all Sur, a right holder cannot retrospectively claim for their parcel as it is divided into pieces. In addition, nearly all of my interviewees mentioned that the new Sur houses look like a prison. Satellite image of the new houses and Picture 34, in comparison with a close-up satellite image from Diyarbakir T Type

Prison, also supports this opinion. In Turkish, “avlu” also refers to “prison yard.” Picture 34 from redeveloped houses in emptied Sur also vividly exposes the prison-like avlu in the restructuring of Sur; no interaction between housing units, and each avlu is divided by high walls.



Images 11&12: *Prison(s).*

Satellite images of Diyarbakir Prison and New houses in Sur, from 2021 (Google Earth Pro).



Picture 34: *Prison-like avlus of New Sur.*

Taken by Diren Tas (not published), February 2022.

On the other hand, the most significant change in the new face of Sur, I argue, is the restructuring/annihilation of public space. By public space, I refer to spaces where the residents of Sur interacted with each other. In Sur, the public space was/is *the street*. All of my displaced interviewees shared the same sentiments about their old street life, where they spent most of their time with their neighbors. Sur's narrow and labyrinth-style streets prevented any outsider from entering or observing the streets, providing a safe space for inhabitants to utilize. Whereas, in the new planning of Sur, all back streets are widened. It is even plausible to say that there is no back street left in the new face of Sur, only side streets. All streets are accessible to any observer (either by walking or driving) very easily.



Picture 35: Side streets of new Sur.
Taken by the author, February 2022.

Such accessibility, I argue, decreases the security feeling on a personal and small group level but increases the securitization on the state (forces) level. Thus, widening the streets and erasing the labyrinth-style street structure of Sur aims to control the public space, preventing the possibility of further insurgencies that could emerge in former public spaces.

Furthermore, the public space in old Sur also heavily depended on the small neighborhood shops (*bakkal*) in the back streets. These shops provided cheaper grocery options for the inhabitants of Sur and eliminated the need to go outside of their residential area for shopping. The replanning of the emptied Sur does not provide any space for such shops in the residential areas. What is built, on the contrary, are units for touristic shops, and big restaurants and cafés in a separate zone, in the replanned street of Yenikapi, which is turned into a boulevard now.



Pictures 36,37&38: *New units of touristic shops, cafes, and restaurants on Yenikapi Boulevard.*
Taken by the author, February 2022.

Walking among the demolition/reconstruction sites, I came across several information panels indicating the responsible private construction companies in the sites, the expected finishing dates of the reconstruction, and the bid cost.



Picture 39: Information panel in reconstruction site.
Taken by the author, February 2022.

TOKİ pays the private contractors to demolish and execute the new plans. As C. and A. both explain, the bids for choosing the contractors were invitee-only events. TOKİ has the exclusive rights over the buildings when the new buildings are ready, responsible for selling or

renting the units. The housing units in Alipasa-Lalebey were the first ones ready to sell. Nearly none of the old inhabitants could get a house here because of unaffordable debts. C. explained the process of selling these houses as follows:

The prices of the houses here are 3-5 million TL. TOKI organized an (invitee only) auction for these houses. No one bought them. Then they made another auction, where they invited AKP supporter business people and ordered them to buy a house here. Now, most of the houses in this area are private property, but the rest (in emptied Sur) are still under TOKI.

There is no way to prove whether AKP supporter business people own most of the houses in Alipasa-Lalebey (no data is available to confirm the owners of the houses) or whether they bought the houses by order. However, one thing is for sure: although most of the houses passed into private property, no one lives in Alipasa-Lalebey. I cannot describe this area other than calling it a ghost town with nothing but empty houses and real estate advertisements for renting or selling each house.



Pictures 40,41,42&43: A ghost town.
Taken by the author, February 2022.

A. argued that because they failed in Alipasa-Lalebey, TOKI is not planning to sell the houses or shops in the emptied Sur, “They turned Alipasa-Lalebey into an abandoned area, afraid to do the same for the other part of Sur.”

May or may not because of such fear, TOKI is not selling the new build units in the emptied Sur. It is instead renting the units. During my field tour in newly built areas of the emptied Sur, I came across posters on each commercial unit's display window (either for gastronomy or for

touristic shops). Picture 44 is just an example of such posters, stating that the unit will be rented via *-invitee only-* auction under Emlak Yonetim⁴⁹, giving information about the size of the unit, the deposit of the unit, the rent value of the unit, the commercial sector of the unit and the date of the auction.



Picture 44: *Information posters.*
Taken by the author, February 2022.

I visited the office of Emlak Yonetim in Sur, located in one of the new shop units in the emptied Sur. The office is advertising the new Sur, once home to thousands of Kurdish people, as “Yenikapi Open-air Life and Culture Center.” I asked whether I could learn the prices of new houses in the area, and the officer replied that this office is only responsible for renting the

⁴⁹ Emlak Yonetim is a sub-office of TOKI, responsible for selling and renting TOKI properties.

commercial units in the area and that nothing is on sale here. “If you are an old inhabitant with a property and looking for a new house, you can consult with TOKI,” she added. There is no office for a consultation, claiming your rightful land, but there is an office for opening up a new business in Sur. It should be noted here that none of the displaced shop owners in this area were given the option of opening a new shop; they were only given compensation for the land of their shop and their lost equipment.



Picture 45: *Emlak Yönetim office.*
Taken by the author, February 2022.

When the rents of these new commercial units are considered, it becomes more evident that Sur is forcefully (commercially) gentrified. Sur used to be -the old Sur still is- a place for low-income and middle-income families to shop for almost every need. During my fieldwork, I chat with many shopkeepers in old Sur. Most of these shops are located in the historic bazaars; a specific sector constitutes each bazaar. Through conversations with these shopkeepers, I learned that nearly all historical bazaars are owned by private or public foundations, including the General Directorate for Foundations of Turkey. The shopkeepers rent the places from the foundations. Depending on the bazaar, some have short-term contracts with extension

possibility. Others have long-term contracts, up to 50 years. The most important is that the rents of these shops are low, and most of the shopkeepers have been running the same shops for decades. For example, in the Carsiya Sewiti, a bazaar for small shoe, tobacco, and cloth shops, the rent is on average 500 TL. In the Goldsmiths Bazaar, which has the highest rent rate in old Sur, the rent is a maximum of 5000 TL.



Pictures 46,47&48: Old bazaars of Sur (Kuyumcular, Carsiya Sewiti, Asefciler).
Taken by the author, March 2022

On the contrary, the sectors of the new commercial units in the redeveloped Sur are restricted to gastronomy (big restaurants and cafés), goldsmith, coppersmith, spice seller, local café, and tasbih café. All of them are motivated to serve tourists. The rents for these shops are drastically higher. The lowest rent I observed was 4.500 TL for a tiny spice shop. The lowest rent for a goldsmith shop was 14.500 TL. The rents for cafes and restaurants are the highest, starting from 15.000 TL. In the most basic sense, what we observe in the new face of Sur is accumulation by dispossession. The state forcefully displaced thousands of families and turned the area into a commercial touristic center where the state offices (such as TOKI) and the private

businesses (such as construction companies and new shopkeepers) profit. However, this accumulation by dispossession, I argue, is also motivated by the current (yet not so current) state ideology, which is oppressive against the Kurds. Securitizing and depopulating the area is one of the main concerns of the state.

Nonetheless, what I refer to as the new face of Sur is not restricted to the newly redeveloped emptied half of Sur. The commercial gentrification is also spreading to the limbo. There are new touristic cafes, restaurants, and souvenir shops opening in the old Sur, some of them in restored historic houses, some of them even in historical heritage buildings. It should be noted here that although the urgent expropriation decision is officially declared for all Sur, a property owner can rent her property (but not sell) until she receives the official notification that her property is urgently expropriated. Thus, many rights holders, especially the historic house owners, started to rent their houses to cafes to make some money before the state confiscates their property. Yet, the rents that the new cafes and restaurants are paying are still low, a maximum of 1500 TL. I asked some Kurdish café owners whether the state offices gave them hard times in the opening processes or whether they were worried about the urgent expropriation in not-yet-demolished Sur. They all stated that they had no difficulty opening their businesses, and none of them believes that the state has any money left to carry out the rest of the redevelopment in Sur. Many speculations can be made at this point about why the state permits opening new cafes and restaurants in the area that itself urgently expropriated. But it can be argued that as long as it is for business purposes, specifically for turning Sur into a touristic area, the state offices do not prevent the Kurdish entrepreneurs from entering Sur. Sur's public space, the living space, is commercialized from all sides.

In addition to commercialization, Sur is also turned into a space for imposing state ideology through transforming the public institutions and civil society spaces. The scope of this thesis does not cover how the urban warfare and restructuring in Sur affected these spaces, but few

remarks can be mentioned. Sur was a hub for civil society and public institutions which had been explicitly focusing on empowering women and supporting children. Many civil society offices had also been urgently expropriated, displacing them from Sur. In addition, the former mayor of Sur M. also stated that the first appointed mayor of Sur, in 2016, transformed all public institutions of the municipality, such as women's centers, child centers, libraries, etc., into Qur'an courses. The newly opened civil society centers, especially for youth, on the other hand, are also well-known for their close relationships with the AKP, promoting conservative lifestyles.

The analysis of the new face of Sur exposes that the reconstruction and gentrification are the continuations of urbicide in Sur, eliminating and replacing a particular and homogenous form of social life that had been threatening the Turkish state. Overall, through the analysis of the void, the limbo, and the new face, the analysis of Sur in this thesis exhibits that emptying, ambiguating, and replanning Sur is heavily motivated by counterinsurgency; securitizing and depopulating the area.

Chapter 6:

Conclusion

Through the case of Sur, Diyarbakir, this thesis explored the question of how urbanism (urban destruction and redevelopment) is used as a counterinsurgency strategy to subjugate Kurdish cities and people. Theoretically, I proposed to evaluate urban redevelopment as a phase of continuing urban destruction/urbicide and consider these two phenomena as counterinsurgency mechanisms. After providing a comprehensive historical contextualization of Diyarbakir and the recurrent oppression of the Kurdish people, this thesis analyzed the urban destruction and redevelopment in Sur after the collapse of the Peace Process in Turkey and the eruption of urban warfare since 2015. The analysis of the case study mainly depended on my fieldwork in Diyarbakir. This chapter will first summarize the main arguments of the analysis, briefly mention the shortcomings of the thesis and finally indicate what this thesis contributed.

The physical area of Sur is fractured within; my analysis followed these fractions. Through the void, this research exposed some of the main strategies of urbanism as a counterinsurgency are the practices of emptying space and keeping the space empty. This emptiness, however, does not only refer to the emptying of the built environment but also of the social life by forcefully depopulating the area. The tools for emptying in Sur involved curfews, deliberate destruction of the built environment, purposeful depopulation of the area, urgent expropriation, and the extension of horizontal and vertical visibility. I argued that creating an area marked by emptiness, extended visibility, and depopulation can only be understood as the Turkish state's attempts to construct incontestable domination over space. This attempt is a counterinsurgency strategy as the people of Sur are losing their sense of belonging to the space. More importantly, they are losing their sense of having the right to claim the space, which can prevent further insurgencies in the space.

Nonetheless, Sur is not entirely emptied; there is an extensive area where all land and properties are urgently expropriated but not demolished yet. This area is the area of limbo, where displacement is a constant threat. Limbo also refers to the already displaced people who still couldn't establish a stable life. This thesis argues that urgent expropriation is a tool of counterinsurgency through which the inhabitants, who are deemed potential insurgents, are forcefully dispersed from the space. *The Limbo* provided an extensive analysis of how the urgent expropriation had mercilessly functioned in emptying the half of Sur, preventing any objections, and foreshadowing what awaits the rest of the people in Sur. In this temporality, in this limbo, I argued, people have no sense of owning anything. They only have a temporary sense of ownership and belonging to the space.

Furthermore, *New Face* exposed that the tools of counterinsurgency in the redevelopment process of Sur have been heavily dependent on the bounded power of the state over restructuring the area. The ZPPP has been revised several times to turn Sur into a touristic, commercial center and minimize residential areas. The old parcel plans have been restructured to prevent any future right claiming by the displaced inhabitants. The new houses are planned like prisons where interaction between units is blocked. The new street structures minimized the personal level of security while opening the public space to accessibility and intervention by the state. I argued that the new structure of the houses and the streets had annihilated the public space where insurgencies could have been formed before.

Last but not least, the forceful commercial gentrification by the state in Sur facilitates accumulation by dispossession, which is motivated by the current (yet not so current) state ideology that is oppressive against Kurds. Securitizing and depopulating the area is one of the main concerns of the state. What we observe in Sur is the elimination of a particular and homogenous form of social life that has been threatening the Turkish state and its replacement of it with commercial gentrification. I argue that the securitization of Sur could never be

accomplished by not depopulating the area. As detailed in extent, Diyarbakir is a Kurdish city. Replacing the low-income Kurdish families of Sur with another class in the city, who will also be inevitably Kurdish, would not prevent further insurgencies. Thus, in the eyes of the state, securitization of Sur inherently necessitated depopulation.

There have been two aspects that could not be covered in this thesis that are (1) the role of UNESCO and heritage protection in urbanism and (2) the annihilation of existing civil society and replacement of them with other organization which imposes state ideology. Both aspects are fruitful inquiries for future studies in developing a comprehensive understanding of the relationship between ethnic conflict and urbanism.

Through the case of Sur, this thesis contributes to the literature on urban and conflict studies by demonstrating how conflict and counterinsurgency get spatialized and how the socio-spatial environment is turned into a tool for counterinsurgency in the subjugation of people. Finally, with this research, I wish to contribute to the literature on Turkey, where all oppositionary voices, including the voice of academia, have been systematically silenced for the last seven years.

Appendices

Appendix A.: Lyrics of Diyarbakir Turkusu (Kaya, 1995)⁵⁰.

Diyarbakır ortasında vurulmuş uzanırım
Ben bu kurşun sesini nerede olsa tanırım
Bu dağlarda gençliğim cayır cayır yanarken
Ay vurur gözyaşıma, ben gecede kalırım,
Ben gecede kalırım

I lie in the middle of Diyarbakir, shot down
I recognize this bullet sound wherever it is
While my youth is burning fiercely in these mountains
The moon hits my tears, I stay in the night
I stay in the night

Bu dağlarda gençliğim cayır cayır yanarken
Ay vurur gözyaşıma, ben gecede kalırım

While my youth is burning fiercely in these mountains
The moon hits my tears, I stay in the night

Üzülme sen üzülme, başını öne eğme
Gün olur kavuşuruz, dert etme Diyarbakır
Ağlama sen ağlama, kanlı bezler bağlama
Bu yangın söner bir gün, ağlama Diyarbakır

Don't be sad, don't be sad, don't bow your head
We will meet one day, don't worry Diyarbakir
Don't cry, don't cry, don't tie bloody cloths
This fire will go out one day, don't cry Diyarbakir

Diyarbakır yolunda toz olmuş dağılım
Bu hırçın depremlerle sarsılırim kanarım
Arkadaşların yüzü ağır ağır solarken
Gün doğar yaylalara, kahrımdan utanırım,
Kahrımdan utanırım

On the way to Diyarbakir, I scatter, turned into dust
I'm shaken by these violent earthquakes, bleeding
While the friends' faces are fading slowly
The sun comes up in the highlands, I'm ashamed of my sorrow
I'm ashamed of my sorrow

Arkadaşların yüzü ağır ağır solarken
Gün doğar yaylalara, kahrımdan utanırım

While the friends' faces are fading slowly
The sun comes up in the highlands, I'm ashamed of my sorrow

Ey fırtınalı bayır, ey mazlum Diyarbakır
Dağlarında kızıl ateş, alnında kızıl bakır
Çiğdemler solar gibi, anneler yanar gibi
Dizlerine döküldüm, ağlama Diyarbakır

Oh stormy hill, oh oppressed Diyarbakir
Red fire in its mountains, red copper on its forehead
Like crocuses fade, like mothers burn
I fell on your knees, don't cry Diyarbakir

Ey fırtınalı bayır, ey mazlum Diyarbakır
Dağlarında kızıl ateş, alnında kızıl bakır
Çiğdemler solar gibi, anneler yanar gibi
Dizlerine döküldüm ağlama Diyarbakır

Oh stormy hill, oh oppressed Diyarbakir
Red fire in its mountains, red copper on its forehead
Like crocuses fade, like mothers burn
I fell on your knees, don't cry Diyarbakir

⁵⁰ Translation by the author.

Appendix B.: Complete List Of Interviewed/Conversed People

Figure	Type	Place	Duration	Referred
Architect, former head of TMMOB Diyarbakir Architects Branch	Expert Interview	Office	90m	A.
Former (dismissed) mayor of Sur	Expert Interview	House	75m	M.
Displaced Sur resident	Semi-structured interview	Cafe	60m	B.
Displaced Sur resident/workshop owner	Semi-structured interview	Workshop	60m	D.
Displaced Sur resident	Semi-structured interview	House	45m	E.
Displaced Sur resident	Semi-structured interview	House	120m	F.
Displaced Sur resident	Semi-structured interview	Cafe	70m	G.
Old shop owner (small neighborhood market)	Semi-structured interview	Shop	90m	H.
Old shop owner (tobacco shop)	Semi-structured interview	Shop	15m	I.
Old shop owner (gold jewelry shop)	Semi-structured interview	Shop	30m	J.
Café owner in Sur	Semi-structured interview	Cafe	30m	K.
Displaced Sur resident	Field Tour	Emptied Sur	80m	L.
Civil Engineer	Field Tour	Alipasa-Lalebey	240m	C.

Appendix C.: List of round-the-clock- curfews declared in Sur since 2015⁵¹

Neighborhood	1 st Curfew (1 day)	2 nd Curfew (1 day)	3 rd Curfew (1-7 days)	4 th Curfew (2 days)	5 th Curfew (8 days)	6 th Curfew (93-2223 days)
Abdaldede	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	27/01-03/02 2016 (7 days)			
Alipasa	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	27/01-03/02 2016 (7 days)			
Lalebey	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	27/01-03/02 2016 (7 days)			
Suleyman Nazif	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	27/01-03/02 2016 (7 days)			
Ziya Gokalp	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	27/01-03/02 2016 (7 days)			
Cami Kebir	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	02/02-03/02 2016 (1 day)			
Cami Nebi	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	02/02-03/02 2016 (1 day)			
Iskenderpasa	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	02/02-03/02 2016 (1 day)			
Melikahmet	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	02/02-03/02 2016 (1 day)			
Cevatpasa	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	10/10-13/10 2015 (3 days)	28/11-30/11 2015	02/12-10/12 2015	11/12/2015-13/03/2016 (93 days)
Cemal Yilmaz	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	10/10-13/10 2015 (3 days)	28/11-30/11 2015	02/12-10/12 2015	11/12/2015-01/01/2022 (2223 days)
Hasirli	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	10/10-13/10 2015 (3 days)	28/11-30/11 2015	02/12-10/12 2015	11/12/2015-01/01/2022 (2223 days)
Fatihpasa	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	10/10-13/10 2015 (3 days)	28/11-30/11 2015	02/12-10/12 2015	11/12/2015-01/01/2022 (2223 days)
Savas	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	10/10-13/10 2015 (3 days)	28/11-30/11 2015	02/12-10/12 2015	11/12/2015-01/01/2022 (2223 days)
Dabanoglu	06/09-07/09 2015	13/09-14/09 2015	10/10-13/10 2015 (3 days)	28/11-30/11 2015	02/12-10/12 2015	11/12/2015-01/01/2022 (2223 days)

⁵¹ Original table is taken from HDP's report on Sur (2016), updated by the author.

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