

# The Production of Space in Dersim in the 2000s

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## Abstract

“The Production of Space in Dersim in the 2000s”

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This dissertation scrutinizes space production processes in Dersim – a city culturally and politically very different from other cities in Turkey – by focusing on the actors of the city and their strategies. It claims that the natural and urban space of Dersim have visibly transformed since the rescission of the state of emergency (OHAL) and that this can be read both as a kind of “demilitarization” and as part of the capital’s geographical expansion towards “untouched” places. Until the 2000s, as a result of security measures, the natural space of the city was able to develop relatively undisturbed while the city center suffered from dense housing due to migration from the surrounding countryside. The process of the rescission of the OHAL, which coincided with the coming to power of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP), brought with it a series of spatial and economic strategies.

In the face of the spatial transformation that the state has attempted to realize through several institutions, non-state actors have invented manners to the extent of their powers to leave their own traces on space. Although the scope and sphere of influence of these interventions are mostly symbolic, they can be seen as re-appropriation of space. These interventions, examined in a wide framework, are related to identity patterns reconstructed by the non-state actors. Hence, space is examined as a thing that both reproduces identities and is reproduced by representatives of certain identities.

145,000 words

## Özet

“2000’lerde Dersim’de Mekan Üretimi”

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Bu tez, Türkiye’nin diğer kentlerine kıyasla hayli farklı kültürel ve politik özellikler gösteren Dersim’deki mekân üretim süreçlerini, kent aktörlerine ve bu aktörlerin stratejilerine odaklanarak incelemektedir. Kent mekânının ve doğal mekânların OHAL’in kalkmasından bu yana hızla değişip dönüştüğünü, bunun hem bir tür “sivilleşme” hem de sermayenin “dokunulmamış” yerlere doğru coğrafi hareketinin bir parçası olarak okunabileceğini savunmaktadır. 2000’lere kadar, güvenlik önlemlerinin bir sonucu olarak kentin doğal mekânları görece bozulmadan kalabilmiş, kent merkezi ise kırdan kente göçün belirlediği yoğun bir yapılaşmayla karşılaşmıştır. Ancak Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi’nin iktidar olmasıyla aynı döneme denk düşen OHAL’in kalkması süreci, Dersim’in bir dizi mekânsal ve ekonomik stratejiyle tanışmasını beraberinde getirmiştir.

Devletin büyük oranda kurumlar aracılığıyla soyunduğu bu mekânsal dönüşüm karşısında devlet dışı aktörler de güçleriyle orantılı olarak mekânda iz bırakacak yöntemler icat etmiştir. Bunlar, kapsam ve etki açısından daha çok sembolik müdahaleler olsa da mekânın yeniden temellük edilmesi olarak düşünülebilir. Geniş bir çerçeveden ele alınan bu girişimler, devlet-dışı aktörler tarafından yeniden üretilen kimlik kurulumlarıyla yakından ilişkilidir. Dolayısıyla, mekân hem kimlikleri yeniden üreten hem de belli kimliklerin temsilcisi görünümündeki aktörlerin ürettiği şeyler olarak incelenmiştir.

145.000 kelime

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*To my father*

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## List of Abbreviations

ADEM	Aile Destek Merkezi (Family Support Center)
AKP	Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (Justice and Development Party)
ANAP	Anavatan Partisi (Motherland Party)
AP	Adalet Partisi (Justice Party)
BDP	Bariş ve Demokrasi Partisi (Peace and Democracy Party)
CHP	Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi (Republican People's Party)
DDHD	Dersim Demokratik Halk Dayanışması (Dersim Democratic People Solidarity)
DDKO	Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları (Revolutionary Cultural Hearths of the East)
DEDEF	Dersim Dernekleri Federasyonu (Federation of Dersim Associations)
DHF	Demokratik Haklar Federasyonu (Democratic Rights Federation)
DİE	Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü (State Institute of Statistics)

DİĞİAD	Diyarbakır Girişimci ve İşadamları Derneği (Diyarbakır Entrepreneurial Businessmen's Association)
DİSİAD	Diyarbakır Sanayici ve İş İnsanları Derneği (Diyarbakır Industrialists and Businesspeople Foundation)
DOGÜNSİFED	Doğu ve Güneydoğu Sanayici ve İş İnsanları Dernekleri Federasyonu (Federation of Eastern and Southeastern Industrialist's and Businesspeople's Association)
DP	Demokrat Parti (Democratic Party)
DPT	Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı (State Planning Organization)
DSİ	Devlet Su İşleri (State Hydraulic Works)
DTP	Demokratik Toplum Partisi (Democratic Society Party)
EMEP	Emeğin Partisi (Labor Party)
FEDAŞ	Fırat Elektrik Dağıtım AŞ (Fırat Electricity Distribution Inc.)
FKA	Fırat Kalkınma Ajansı (Fırat Development Agency)
GAP	Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi (Southeastern Anatolia Project)
GÜNSİAD	Güneydoğu Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği (Southeastern Industrialist and Businessmen Foundation)
HPPs	Hydroelectric Power Plants
KESK	Kamu Emekçileri Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (Branch of the Confederation of Public Workers' Unions)
KÖYDES	Köy Altyapısını Destekleme Projesi (Village Infrastructure Support Project)
KPSS	Kamu Personeli Seçme Sınavı (Public Personnel Selection Exam)
MKP	Maoist Komünist Parti (Maoist Communist Party)
MÜSİAD	Müstakil Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği (Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association)
OHAL	Olağanüstü Hal (The State of Emergency)
PKK	Kürdistan İşçi Partisi (Kurdistan Workers' Party)
TBMM	Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi (Grand National Assembly of Turkey)

TEPAV	Türkiye Ekonomi Politikaları Araştırma Vakfı (Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey)
TGTV	Türkiye Gönüllü Teşekküller Vakfı (Association of Turkish Voluntary Enterprises)
THKO	Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Ordusu (People's Liberation Army of Turkey)
THKP-C	Türkiye Halk Kurtuluş Partisi-Cephesi (People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey)
TİKKO	Türkiye İşçi Köylü Kurtuluş Ordusu (Workers and Peasants Liberation Army in Turkey)
TİP	Türkiye İşçi Partisi (Workers Party of Turkey)
TKP	Türkiye Komünist Partisi (Communist Party of Turkey)
TKP-ML	Türkiye Komünist Partisi-Marksist Leninist (Communist Party of Turkey-Marxist Leninist)
TMŞ	Terörle Mücadele Şubesi (Anti-Terror Branch)
TOKİ	Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı (Housing Development Administration of Turkey)
TOSB	Tunceli Organize Sanayi Bölgesi (Tunceli Organized Industrial Zone)
TRT	Türkiye Radyo Televizyon Kurumu (Turkish Radio and Television Corporation)
TUDEF	Tunceli Dernekleri Federasyonu (Federation of Tunceli Associations)
TÜMSİAD	Tüm Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği (All Industrialist and Businessmen Foundation)
TÜRKONFED	Türk Girişim ve İş Dünyası Federasyonu (Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation)
TUSGİD	Tunceli Sanayici ve Girişimcileri Derneği
TUSKON	Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayicileri Konfederasyonu (Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey)
YÖK	Yüksek Öğretim Kurumu (Council of Higher Education)
YURTKUR	Yüksek Öğretim Kredi ve Yurtlar Kurumu (General Directorate of Higher Education Credit and Hostels Institution)

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*In the dark times  
Will there also be singing?  
Yes, there will also be singing  
About the dark times*

– B. Brecht

## Introduction

This dissertation reveals the history of urban development of Dersim (administratively defined as Tunceli) and focuses especially on the period after the end of the emergency era in 2002 (the post-OHAL period) until the end of the peace process (2015) when the security concerns of the state once again gain strength to understand the interrelationships among various dimensions such as identity politics, demography, and capital flows on the regional and national scales. Dersim is special as far as ethnic and religious patterns and the political tendencies of its inhabitants are concerned. It is the only province in Turkey the population of which is predominantly Alevi Kurd. Moreover, it has symbolic meaning for both socialists and the Kurdish movement. It has always been seen as a “starting point” by dissident groups due to its insurgent character in the Ottoman era. On the other hand, it has always been regarded uncanny and mysterious by the state. While the state has attempted to reconfigure the city to control and generally assimilate its people, others have sought to appropriate it as a “rebel zone.”

Dersim is the first province in the republican period whose borders were redefined by the state for spatial control. A law unique to the city, the Tunceli Law, was even enacted in the republican era to ensure the sustainability of these borders. When a considerable part of the province was annexed to neighboring cities, Dersim – notable for its geographic conditions that prevent the state from monopolizing authority – became vulnerable to external attack

and intervention by the state. While the territory of the province was downsized, the city center was moved to a more accessible location. It is clear that the Dersim policy of the 1930s was not only intended for deporting or intimidating the population but also for the reorganization of urban space to prevent potential insurgencies from blossoming.

In the 2000s, the legal arrangements of single-party rule and the coercive measures of the state of emergency were replaced by new spatial strategies of the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, AKP) government that pretended to break from the old. The first AKP government (March 2003) coincided with the rescission of the state of emergency (OHAL) (July 2002) in Dersim, which had been in force since 1987.<sup>1</sup> Nevertheless, the province continues to be perceived as disobedient, in spite of the fact that the new hegemony appears to be taking a conciliatory approach towards its inhabitants. This is first because the majority of inhabitants openly defines themselves by religious and ethnocultural values different from those supported and frequently articulated by the government. Second, the regional and local political rivals of the AKP in Dersim are powerful. The 2000s witnessed democratic and legal forms of political engagement by Kurds in Turkey. Moreover, socialists and the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi, CHP) have always been supported by those Dersimlis who identify themselves principally with reference to Alevism instead of Kurdishness. In order to rule over the province, the AKP has to know and then reshape the desires, demands, and values of the inhabitants by producing consent.

With the rescission of the OHAL, the relative presence of the army in the city has diminished while more civil-society-based governance practices have become prominent. It is possible to observe this transformation in everyday life and space. This dissertation reveals how different national, regional, and local actors permeate everyday life and space in Dersim and uncovers reconfigured neoliberal tendencies; concerns about control, surveillance, and security; ideological motivations; and forms of resistance through which several actors intervene in the spatial order. The point of departure of this dissertation consists of these basic questions: How does space embody social relations in

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1 The state declared a state of siege in Tunceli in April 1979. It lasted eight years.

Dersim? How do the social relations underpin space? How is a particular place constructed physically and mentally according to the differing perspectives of actors who act according to their own motives, interests, and capabilities? How is the society-space interaction reproduced?

This dissertation answers the aforementioned questions by looking at Dersim's spaces: the most revealing strategy to comprehend the present of a city (and the past in its present) is to investigate its spatial composition. Lefebvre argues that the space is not only a means of production but also a means of control, domination, and power.<sup>2</sup> Because social and political forces seek to subjugate it to the full extent of their powers, space can be seen as an embodiment of social relations: urban space not only reflects the social atmosphere of the city but also constitutes it. Our theoretical approach should comprehend the contents of space in terms of its interrelationships within space. These relationships –which include numerous conflicts, ruptures, interconnections, and mutual interactions through which different political agendas, belongings, and identities are produced, reproduced, and struggled over – and their links with the spatial practice of the particular society or mode of production should be studied to examine the production of space.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the attempts to change the natural and social spaces of the province are not merely “urban policy;” they are a crucial part of the art of management and the art of resistance of competing actors in the city.

On one hand, this study demonstrates how spatial interventions and urban development projects function as modern forms of power and contribute to governmentality. The administrative changes and legislative processes of the 1930s are examined as part of the creation of a new city, called Tunceli, which would be free of insurgent influence. However, territory-, place-, and scale-specific interventions are not peculiar to the republican era. By scrutinizing the explicit and implicit designs and projects invented in the post-2002 Justice and Development Party era, this study claims that the functional utility of planning tools, regional space policies, and the transformation of public spaces in conformity with the requirements of the current government are not

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2 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford; Cambridge: Blackwell, 1991), 26.

3 Ibid., 42.

bound to a specific period and not only inherent to despotic regimes. Taking this into consideration, the question of by which mechanisms the state realizes state projects in Dersim locality constitutes the main question. The territorial character of political power and the changing spatialities of the state are discussed through the case of Dersim.

Changing geographies and frameworks of state intervention are directly related to socioeconomic and sociopolitical processes and struggles. This entails a reconsideration of multiple dynamics: power relations between the central and local governments, political struggles among local groups, contingent and provisional outcomes of the processes of globalization, the increasing prominence of localities in capital accumulation processes, and the domestic policy of the last decades. This study approaches spatial policies in Dersim from 2002 to 2015 – the period involving initially the lifting of the emergency rule and later the peace process as well – by taking into account both the global tendency of the rescaling of the capitalist state and the state’s will to control and assimilate cities where non-Turkish populations live. In other words, identities and dynamics embodying the community’s values are not the only motivations that determine spatial projects. The socio-spatial and economic transformation of Dersim is neither exceptional nor unrelated to global and national developmentalist trends of recent decades although the city is small and insignificant in terms of economic activities. The neoliberal restructuring processes based on the movement of capital to new regions that become dynamic spaces of capital accumulation and the reorganization of the division of labor according to new opportunities are conducive to geographic expansions. The eastern cities of Turkey, which have remained relatively untouched until recently due to the war between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish government, have become new horizons for investment meeting the needs of capital accumulation, especially during the peace process.

While examining the spatial strategies of the AKP government, one observes the role of institutions founded or restructured to transform the physical landscape and social space of the province. These institutions such as the university, *cemevi* and the regional development agency are state agencies that control and regulate socio-spatial and economic transformations and produce

the logic, forms of knowledge, symbols, and codes that enforce cultural homogenization and the commodification of space. They are particular projects –endowed with an ideology and knowledge– that intervene in spatial forms and seek to modify them. On the other hand, they are dominant spatial or economic units that are in themselves conceptualized by the prominent ideology. This study scrutinizes them both as part of the spatial reorganization and as agents of the government who cannot directly reach the people of Dersim. They pretend to render services to the local people through official regulations that refer to the local. Taking into account that their individual functions differ they all serve the purpose of integrating Dersim into the hegemonic value system of the country and global capitalism. The questions of how these institutions functioning as administrative and political apparatuses of the state intervene in space and to what extent they contribute to shaping the political and economic life of the city are one of the principal focuses of this dissertation.

Apart from these institutions, the projects in Dersim designed by governmental agencies are examined as another aspect of the spatial strategies of the state. One of the most remarkable spatial strategies of authoritarian powers to reconfigure the society and the economy is large-scale social engineering. Large-scale development projects such as HPPs (hydroelectric power plants) and dams have been established along Dersim's rivers since the 1990s. Different from others located in the western provinces of Turkey, these dams and HPPs seem to function as a counterinsurgency strategy because they lead to the depopulation of spaces. In addition to enabling the state to control the space more easily, they contribute to the processes of the commodification and privatization of natural resources. As the political and economic interests of the state and private sector overlap and a clear public-private partnership has emerged, winning the consent of the locals (or at least avoiding their negative reaction) has always been considered important because of the fragile political atmosphere of the region. Hence, to examine the spatial policies of the government also helps to understand the state-local relationship of Dersim.

This dissertation claims that both recently established and restructured institutions as well as high-modernist projects in Dersim constitute the discursive regime of rationality and strengthen the ideological hegemony. However, apart from the state, there are many actors in the city with projects their own.

In this context, I examine the transformation of urban space as the reified sedimentation of social relations including not only opposition and ambiguity, but also the embedded potentialities of social change.

All social forces seek to shape or [re]appropriate space in accordance with their political, economic, and ideological positions, cultural values, and historical references. Even under the repressive measures of the OHAL regime that prohibited the expression and representation of any counterhegemonic values, forms, and symbols, the people of Dersim and selected municipalities produced spaces against all odds through local forms of knowledge. They attempted to design public spaces in such a manner that existing understandings of the relations between space, politics, and ideology are interrupted. I use the term “counter-spaces” to describe attempts to change or challenge the extension of dominated spaces. How did Dersim communities create counter-space –spatial expressions of counterhegemony – and how have they resisted the bureaucratic management of space? How have counterhegemonic urban designs and strategies changed as the power balance between the central state and local actors as well as among non-state actors changed? These questions are raised to understand the capacities of non-state actors in Dersim and their access to space.

Several actors’ strategies examined in this study appear to be unlike each other in terms of their institutional, economic, or symbolic categories; however, it is more convenient to examine them together. This is first because every aforementioned strategy, from the simplest to the most sophisticated, embodies the general principles that constitute the overall coherence of the social representations of the actors; therefore, each one deserves consideration. Second, this research emphasizes the asymmetry between the spatial strategies of the state and those of the others, which derives from a power asymmetry, and underlines the spatial-temporalities of counter-spaces. The spatial strategies of the state are structured by strong institutional arrangements and fit into a politico-economic rationality, while counterhegemonic spatial strategies are generally symbolic and produced by acts of [re]appropriation that are usually provisional, fragile, and instable. This dissertation attaches equal importance to both because in spite of the dominance of the former, counter-spaces exist everywhere.

The present study assesses the significance of placing a non-Turkish city in a broader context. Dersim is always examined as a special city as I will discuss in detail under the title of Methodology and Sources but it is not exempt from the processes every city faces or follows. My suggestion is that an approach that considers the regional, national, and global trends of space policies provides a foundation for a comprehensive analysis of the similarities and differences of urban processes. In other words, the work centers on the urban development of this non-Turkish city without decontextualizing it from overall capital accumulation processes; economic, domestic, and regional policies; the ideological position of the government; and the power struggle among local, regional, and governmental actors.

This dissertation examines the strategies through which the state and the non-state actors shape space. However, it is clear that one must not analyze these actors as if they were fully rational and capable to always pursue their own interests, calculate costs and benefits of all alternative policies, and choose the optimal instrument. Hence, the institutions, projects, and practices that this dissertation discusses are not parts of a complete plan of an actor; these are rather – consistent or inconsistent – attempts which are not fully elaborated. This study examines these strategies as forms of competing agendas of the state and non-state actors and demonstrates that they are reconfigured in the course of time with the participation of new actors.

## § 1.1 Plan of the Study

This study introduces a city in flux. It focuses on the socioeconomic, demographic, and political changes that promote the transformation of Dersim's urban space without neglecting the role of historical events in the construction of identities supported by different social or political groups. To do so, chapter 2 states a historical outlook on Dersim. First, its geographic features are described to highlight the relationship between the physical space and sociopolitical characteristics of the province. The questions of how the state reads nature for a better mapping and how it reads people *geographically* for a better management are discussed in this part. Second, the transformation of

the administrative structure of Dersim is presented. The transition from Dersim to Tunceli is scrutinized as a change in the representation relation between the central government and the local. The chapter reveals that the territorial transformation of the city coincides with the clarification of the lines between state and local power. It then gives information on the population characteristics of Dersim. The deportation and relocation policies of the 1930s redesigned not only the inhabitants but the space, as well. Similarly, the forced migration and forced village evacuation policies of the 1990s created forbidden zones and reshaped the residential areas of Dersim. Because migration and spatial transformation are two interrelated processes in the case of Dersim, the chapter includes a section on this topic. Lastly, the chapter summarizes the social life of Dersim in order to uncover sociocultural dissimilarity of Dersim from neighboring conservative cities.

Before proceeding to examine the actors influencing the sociospatial development of Dersim, it is necessary to ascertain the values, meanings, and norms through which these actors express different belongings. Chapter 3 focuses on identities attributed to and adopted by the people of Dersim. Considering that there are no clear boundaries among ethnic groups living in the city and that religious and linguistic identities intermingle, this chapter firstly describes how ethnic categorizations can be manipulated and reshaped by the state in tandem with real politics. In the republican era, for example, Alevism was an acceptable identity for Dersimlis in the view of the state to the extent that it was in accord with Turkish identity.

On the other hand, the chapter highlights the importance of the identities adopted by the Dersim people. I claim that the identities that the Dersim people adopted are directly associated with power relations between the central government and local powers; they have been reframed and redefined according to national policies and according to reactions to these policies. Leftism, Kurdish identity, Zaza identity, and Alevism are presented in this context. The purpose of this chapter is to illustrate the role of geography and space in the reconstruction of these identities. By raising the question of how geographic and spatial codes, symbols, and legends influence the establishment or resurgence of belonging, it enables us to understand the references behind the socio-spatial perspectives of Dersim's actors.

In chapter 4, the creation of the city at the end of the 1930s according to sovereignty norms of the modern state system, its reorganization in the OHAL period with the population increase of the city center and the growing security concerns of the state, and the expansion of the city and its spatial segregation in the 2000s are examined in detail with the help of the plans for and maps of the city. To pursue the question of by which social processes space is constructed in Dersim, this chapter demonstrates the development of Dersim's urban space in parallel with population dynamics. The cancellation of the OHAL and the appearance of new institutions in the 2000s clearly enabled a relatively favorable atmosphere for economic development; however, the same events also accelerated the commodification of urban space and spatial segregation.

As the city geographically expands, both state and non-state actors struggle with each other to produce, shape, and [re]appropriate urban spaces in tandem with their sociopolitical, economic, and ideological stances and identity values. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 scrutinize the city as a sphere of conflict where the projects of the central state and those of local powers compete with each other. In these chapters, I scrutinize multiple figurations of interventions in public spaces.

Chapter 5 begins by presenting the actors. The power of the state and of non-state actors (the CHP, socialists, and the Kurdish movement) is presented by analyzing the constitutional referendum of 2010 as well as the general and local elections in which the pro-Kurdish party participated.<sup>4</sup> Then the mecha-

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4 Because of the electoral threshold (10 percent) that keeps the Kurdish movement out of parliament, the pro-Kurdish parties have been represented only by fielding independent candidates. In the 2000s, the movement was able to win the majority in local elections. The CHP is another influential and well-established actor in the city. In spite of the 1937-38 events that occurred during the single-party period – and the fact that some regard Mustafa Kemal and İsmet İnönü responsible for the massacre – the party has strong relations with Dersimlis. Third, one can highlight the presence of a socialist-Maoist flow which has a considerable influence over the province. Although its popularity decreased during the peace/solution process, many Dersimlis are kin of guerrillas or activists in the movements. Lastly, the government seeks to conquer Dersim, which is the only city that did not vote for the AKP. It

nisms through which the government intervened in Dersim's natural and urban spaces<sup>5</sup> are explained. Chapter 5 examines the Tunceli Cemevi and the policy of establishing large-scale development projects as part of the spatial strategy of the government. Chapter 6, on the other hand, focuses on two institutions established in tandem with the government's developmentalist approach: Tunceli (Munzur) University and the Fırat Development Agency (Fırat Kalkınma Ajansı-FKA). They are introduced as government institutions that contribute to the radical redesign of the city.

The Tunceli Cemevi and Tunceli University are not only identified as institutions that act in the name of the government in Dersim, they are also public spaces open and accessible to the people of Dersim. Both have been regarded as dominant spaces through which the government imposes its symbolic authority on its subjects. Chapters 5 and 6 focus on how they were established, how they have been used, and to what extent they have contributed to the transformation of the city.

The Tunceli Cemevi was built in the second half of the 1990s. With the increase of the urban population due to migration from the countryside to town, Dersimlis required public spaces to gather, especially for funeral services. In this section, the foundation of the *cemevi* –house of worship of the Alevi –in tandem with urbanization and the submersion of the natural places of worship (*ziyarets*) of the Alevi are discussed together to highlight how Dersim Alevism has been reconstructed spatially serving the purpose of defining a single, overarching Alevism while at the same time depoliticizing it. It also illustrates the parallel between the institutionalization of Alevism in Dersim and the commodification of natural spaces. Since the *cemevi* is presented as the essential place of worship, the government, which tends to act to maximize the benefits of capital flow and to prioritize economic growth and privatization, disregards the destructive impact of the dams and HPPs for *ziyarets*.

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represents values and norms that starkly contrast those of Dersimlis; however, redistributive, clientelist networks and business connections push them toward the government.

5 Lefebvre argues that in cities, natural space is being annihilated by the abstract space of capital. He contrasts natural and man-made spaces as well as countrysides and cities; therefore, I use natural and urban spaces as distinct concepts.

The legislative regulations enabling the establishment of dams and HPPs on the rivers of Dersim obliged many inhabitants to migrate again from their villages changing residential areas. The government's interest in promoting dams and HPPs is another remarkable spatial strategy cited in chapter 5, not only because it contributed to the transformation of places of worship but also because it was used as a counterinsurgency strategy. This section reveals how the economic and political priorities of the state coincide with its concerns about safety. Finally, anti-dam protests, which were an unintended consequence of the spatial strategy of the state, are discussed.

The Fırat Development Agency, founded to reorganize the economic life of the city with its neighbors, is examined within the context of the shift of institutional and regulatory arrangements from the national scale to local configurations. The agency, which was founded by the "Law on the Establishment, Coordination, and Duties of Development Agencies," has mediated between the central government and the local actors since the end of the 2000s. How a specific spatial horizon (local, regional, or national scale etc.) becomes important in parallel with the requirements of capital and in accordance with the government's goal of spatial reorganization in Eastern Anatolia is the main question of this part of the chapter. It is argued that the FKA became involved in the spatial (and therefore the political, economic, and social) transformation of the city through economic activities that enhanced relationships between local actors and the state.

The state seeks to attract capital investment in new localities and offers capitalists the advantage of territorial competitiveness—resources and capacities of cities, regions, and other territories that provide competitive advantages. The government's guidance with respect to the economic potential of Dersim contributes to investment in specific sectors. One may observe that the economic activities of the FKA incorporate the local to some extent; therefore, it is seen as legitimate by the inhabitants. However, as far as its role in rescaling the territorialities of governance and its role in the investment system are concerned, it clearly allows the state to control and reconfigure the local economy, politics, and space. The agency is scrutinized taking into account the new regional investment incentives system, the spatial movements of capital, and the role of local and regional business world.

The following part in chapter 6 moves on to describe Tunceli University in greater detail. It questions its ideological function (school as agency of socialisation that transmits the ideology of the ruling class or party), its impact on economic and demographic transformation, its contribution to urban development, and its symbolic meanings. By defining it not only as the representative but also as the representation of the central government, this section also investigates the campus as a public space shaped in accordance with the power relations between students and the university administration. I claim that the new demographic composition that emerged after the establishment of the university has considerably changed the balance of power in Dersim.

Chapter 7 is concerned with the spatial strategies of non-state actors. First, the Munzur Culture and Nature Festival is introduced as part of a “return campaign” organized to convince Dersimlis who had been forcibly removed or who had migrated from their home to return. As the event is an initiative to reclaim the local and stakes a claim in the production of locality, it strengthens the sense of community and sense of place. It is considered as one of the strategies of non-state actors because it is an obvious challenge that calls for the suspension of the temporal and spatial order of the dominant culture.

Second, the chapter focuses on the spatial arrangements of the city’s municipalities which reflect the cultural, historical, and social patterns of the users of the city. The municipal efforts of the social democrat parties in the 1990s are introduced and the urban designs created by pro-Kurdish municipalities are then described. When the Kurdish movement started to win local elections in Dersim, the physical and cultural landscapes were reconfigured in tandem with the discourse of the Kurdish movement about space, things, and people in space. In this context, this chapter demonstrates how and to what extent urban space has been [re]produced according to non-state actors’ historiographies, identity politics, and the cultural codes embedded in their languages.

## § 1.2 A Theoretical Framework: State, Local and Space

In the last forty years, there has been a growing interest in space and the spatiality of social relations. The critical theorization of social production revealed by Henri Lefebvre has influenced not only urban theorists but also Marxist intellectuals. His major philosophical work *The Production of Space* (1974) demystifies the inner dynamics of social space and provides a detailed analysis of the “neocapitalist order.”<sup>6</sup> According to Andy Merrifield, this is an epistemological shift from considering “things in space” to apprehending the “production of space.”<sup>7</sup> Space is no more the passive surface on which actions occur – it is produced during and as a result of struggles among many different groups with competing interests.

How political powers intervene in spaces to promote a certain identity or ideology and through which spatial mechanisms they exercise power over the users of spaces comprise the main questions of this dissertation. The attempts of various social forces to shape spaces have both economic and political dimensions. Bob Jessop points out that

there is ample scope for competition among social forces over accumulation strategies, state projects and hegemonic visions, as well as for potential disjunctions between the strategies that emerge from such competition to dominate their respective imagined spheres. In this context a key role is played by the rivalries and struggles of intellectual forces, individually and collectively, in a free-floating or an organized manner, to articulate strategies, projects and visions that seek to reconcile contradictions and conflicts and to resolve dilemmas for various sites and scales of action.<sup>8</sup>

Starting from this point, one may first elaborate the state’s role in the production, regulation, transformation, and reproduction of spaces. In this context,

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6 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*.

7 Andy Merrifield, *Henri Lefebvre: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 106.

8 Bob Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State* (Cambridge: Polity; Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 50.

the state theories of Lefebvre, Jessop, and Brenner provide a theoretical foundation for analyzing state spatiality. Second, the state is not the sole agent that engages in the interventions that occur within a space. This dissertation also focuses on certain local and regional actors – notably the local government – that seek to reconfigure spaces.

Regional feeling may create or strengthen a sense of identity that challenges hegemonic, national identity narratives.<sup>9</sup> How are the senses of identity formulated by counterhegemonic powers manifested on space? The production of counter-spaces and the process of cultural decolonization can be considered parts of the reinvention of regional and local identities. On the other hand, although the regional and local scales may appear to be the constitutive elements of resistance, they are also crucial state tools for the reterritorialization of political, social, and institutional spaces. In this regard, rescaled patterns of state territorial organization need to be examined considering the different aspects of the process. The literature on scale gives some clues about the construction of social relations – including the state and the economy – at different spatial scales, and it reveals how the spatial policies of different actors accord or conflict.

### 1.2.1 *Space and the Modern State*

The state can regulate spaces for the sake of capital accumulation. It creates physical spaces within the national territory such as factories, industrial zones, and commercial centers; makes public investments in roads, canals, docks, harbors, and airports for the circulation and transportation of commodities; establishes technological infrastructure, networks, and financial systems; and develops urbanization and housing policies in tandem with production, reproduction, and consumption processes. In spite of a rapid, extensive tendency toward privatization, only the state is capable of making huge investments.<sup>10</sup> Lefebvre reveals the rationality of the state in *De l'Etat*:

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9 Sarah Radcliffe and Sallie Westwood, *Remaking the Nation: Place, Identity and Politics in Latin America* (Taylor & Francis, 2005), e-Library edition, 114.

10 David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 378.

Only the state can control the flows and harmonize them with the fixed elements of the economy (stocks) because the state integrates them into the dominant space it produces. The huge investments that accompany the disintegration of the spontaneous growth poles and the many resultant displacements (of equipment, of energy, of the labor force, and of raw materials) can only be properly accomplished with the agreement and support of political power.<sup>11</sup>

The state needs to arrange space for many reasons: it physically separates groups of people to prevent potential conflicts among them (segregation) and reorders places according to power relations and the relations of production and of property. Finally, it seeks to control every place, from the “centers” to the “peripheries.” On one hand, a clear hierarchy among spaces appears in terms of the class and socioeconomic status of the users; on the other, the concepts of “center” and “periphery” disappear as far as the all-encompassing character of the surveillance system is concerned.

First of all, the neoliberal state aims to form a “good business or investment climate for capitalistic endeavours;” guarantees individual private property rights, the free market, and free trade rules; and takes the side of the integrity of protecting the financial system over that of the well-being of the population or environment.<sup>12</sup> Creating a good business environment includes not only controlling and repressing labor movements<sup>13</sup> but also establishing security requirements for the development of capitalism. Bob Jessop indicates that the role of the state is “to secure the social conditions in which market forces can operate to maximize capital accumulation in the long-term.”<sup>14</sup> In

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11 *De l'Etat* has not been translated into English. The fifth chapter was translated for an edited book, *State/Space*. Henri Lefebvre, “Space and the State,” in *State/Space: A Reader*, ed. Neil Brenner, et al. (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 91.

12 David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 70-71.

13 David Harvey, “Reinventing Geography,” *New Left Review* 4 (Jul-Aug 2000): 87.

14 Jessop, *State Theory: Putting the Capitalist State in its Place* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 185.

other words, the state should favor the free mobility of capital among cities, regions, and countries to resolve crises of overaccumulation.

One may suppose that interlocal competition as a state project strengthens inherited hierarchies among cities and regions. This includes both an inter-metropolitan polarization with new zones of marginalization and exclusion as well as new patterns of uneven geographical development that appear in accord with the differing potentials of cities and regions.<sup>15</sup> The state contributes to the reconfiguration of these hierarchies by attributing a specific function to every city or region. Locational policies based on territorial competition and the principle of “enhancing the share of existing local businesses in the markets they serve and generating new businesses and markets” have been mobilized by state institutions.<sup>16</sup>

On the other hand, the state creates, modifies, and transforms spaces as a part of its political domination. It engenders not only the social relations embedded in capitalist production but also the relations of domination appearing among different groups and the state.<sup>17</sup> Space is an ideology and the instrument of political power. Through many organizations and institutions, the state ceaselessly manages the process of the production of spaces. In this way, the most isolated corners of its territory become controllable and accessible.<sup>18</sup> One of the most effective ways of managing everyday life is managing of space.

Lefebvre’s theorization of “state space” (*l’espace étatique*) contributes to a better understanding of the dominant space. The concept means not only state strategies to reconfigure and control capitalist development and the means of its communication and transportation within and beyond its territory, but also

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15 Neil Brenner, *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (Oxford New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 172-192.

16 Paul C. Cheshire and Ian R. Gordon, “Territorial Competition and the Predictability of Collective (In)Action,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 20:3 (1996): 385.

17 Lefebvre, “Space and the State,” 85.

18 *Ibid.*, 86.

the symbolic representations of state power with politically significant architectural forms.<sup>19</sup> Lefebvre claims that state space can be examined in three dimensions.

- ◆ the ideological – the technocratic representation of the social;
- ◆ the practical – instrumental, a means of action;
- ◆ the tactical-strategic – consisting principally in the subordination of a territory’s resources to political ends.<sup>20</sup>

One may argue that these dimensions are intermingled and involve one another. For example, vast engineering projects such as dams, irrigation works, and large factories are crucial for the development of capitalism; in other respects, they are also essential as far as the principal goal of the modern, developmentalist nation-state to transform peripheral, non-state spaces into state spaces is concerned. Apart from the state’s practical approach to space (as a commodity broken into fragments that are freely exchanged or as a factor of production), there is an implicit logic behind most state projects: consolidating the power of central institutions and diminishing the autonomy of local people.<sup>21</sup> Thus, state institutions or agents create “dominant spaces ruling over dominated spaces.”<sup>22</sup> By producing new spaces or changing existing spaces, the state both imposes its symbolic authority on its subjects and uses spatial elements as a part of its strategy against the tactics of rival political powers.

The AKP government’s spatial policy with respect to Dersim, on which this dissertation focuses, reflects all of these dimensions. It first aims to provide investors a safe, secure environment in parallel with its neoliberal, developmentalist perspective. As I scrutinize in following section, it supports local development through new institutions and reconfigures relations at the local, regional, and national scales. This neoliberal restructuring process goes hand

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19 Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, “Introduction: State, Space, World: Lefebvre and the Survival of Capitalism,” in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays / Henri Lefebvre*, (eds.) Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 21.

20 Lefebvre, “Space and the State,” 95.

21 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998), 286.

22 Lefebvre, “Space and the State,” 96.

in hand with the post-OHAL policy of the state with respect to Kurds. The government has sought to reorganize Dersim's urban space while establishing modern, reconciliatory institutions representing the ideology of the new hegemony and employing active surveillance techniques different from those of the OHAL period. The government's spatial strategies toward eastern cities where non-Turkish populations live can be seen as an expression of multifaceted temporality and spatiality of the 2000s.

### 1.2.2 *The State and the Local: Rescaled Geographies*

The state's increasing interest in space is also directly related to the changing nature of the temporal and spatial horizons of capitalism. The trend conceptualized as "glocalisation" by Erik Swyngedouw indicates the continuous reorganization of geographical scales in the age of globalization. The processes shaped by social conflict and politico-economic struggle bring certain scales to the fore while pushing others into the background. In this context, the rise of the local is a part and a product of the capitalist state's rescaling process that both enables and expresses –on its own– hegemonic transformations.<sup>23</sup>

This dissertation considers the rise of the local as a capitalist state policy rather than as the victory of civil society over the nation-state.<sup>24</sup> The scalar transformation of the networks of economic organization cannot operate independently from political and institutional organizations. Via territorially organized political and institutional arrangements, the state regulates economic

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23 Mustafa Kemal Bayırbağ, "Ölçek Yaklaşımının Kent ve Bölgelerin Yükselişinin Açıklanmasındaki Katkıları Üzerine," *Praksis* 15 (2006), 49.

24 Some argue that self-governing associations like local networks and relations position between competitive market society and centralized state power. Both provide these groups an enhanced role in social governance within their own sphere and protect their legitimate autonomy; therefore, they are able to break hierarchies and strengthen civil actors. See, for example, Paul Hirst, "Associational Democracy," in *Prospects for Democracy*, (ed.) David Held (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1993), 119.

order while providing security at every scale.<sup>25</sup> Jessop highlights that establishing a formally rational legal order is one of the most crucial functions of the capitalist type of state.<sup>26</sup> In other words, the national state as both a scale and an actor has been and is still dominant as far as its role in reterritorialization, deterritorialization and space regulation processes is concerned.<sup>27</sup>

[The] changes do not exclude a continuing and central political role for the national state. But it is a role which is redefined as a result of the more general rearticulation of the local, regional, national and supranational levels of economic and political organization.<sup>28</sup>

Moreover, as Harvey points out “the practices of the neoliberal and developmental state broadly converge” in the transition from government to governance.<sup>29</sup> The rise of the neoliberal state coincides with that of the concept of civil society; however, neoliberalism does not oppose state power, it only transforms state institutions and practices. It reconstructs the balance among various political powers – between coercion and consent and between capital and local inhabitants.<sup>30</sup> That is to say, although the relative succession of global, national, regional, and local relations is reframed through capital accumulation processes and although state policies shift the relative importance of a certain scale and increase the significance of specific actors, one must focus on mutually- constitutive and relationally-intertwined dimensions of socio-spatial relations<sup>31</sup> and pay sufficient attention to statehood and state regulation.

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- 25 Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State*; Erik Swyngedouw, “Globalisation or ‘Glocalisation’? Networks, Territories and Rescaling,” *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17:1 (2004), 32.
- 26 Jessop, *The Future of the Capitalist State*, 45.
- 27 Erik Swyngedouw, “Globalisation or ‘Glocalisation’? Networks, Territories and Rescaling,” 32.
- 28 Bob Jessop, “Capitalism and its Future: Remarks on Regulation, Government and Governance,” *Review of International Political Economy* 4:3 (Autumn 1997), 576.
- 29 Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 77.
- 30 *Ibid.*, 78.
- 31 Bob Jessop, Neil Brenner and Martin Jones, “Theorizing Sociospatial Relations,” *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 26 (2008), 389.

Regarding the national state as a key political actor and the principal scale, the passage from government to governance means reorganizing the boundaries between the state and civil society.<sup>32</sup> As Jessop points out, “just as there is a denationalization of statehood, civil society is being ‘denationalized.’”<sup>33</sup> In other words, the rise of new public-private governance arrangements and the rise of certain scales are directly related to local politicization processes and local political potentials. Both the success of local development<sup>34</sup> and the societal acceptance – which is to say, the legitimacy – of political projects of the governance regime depend on the mobilization of local actors. The consensus can work only if civil society mobilization has itself rescaled the exercise of power and reterritorialized its social claims.<sup>35</sup>

In this sense, the rise of localities can be understood not only as part of the spatial strategies of the state but also as a result of changing power balances. The political impact, policy-making capacities, interests, and bargaining abilities of local actors make them significant agents for reconfiguring contemporary urban spaces. As local actors gain power, they reverse the hierarchical ordering of space and dare to [re]appropriate urban space. Space is reconstructed by them in pursuit of different political goals, and it is often reframed according to local cultural patterns to mobilize the masses around a counter-hegemonic project. These actors generally promote a certain identity, often at the expense of other potential identities.

Because people increasingly want to be included in micro identities in the face of globalization, regional identity and regionalism are important categories. Anssi Paasi highlights that regional identity has two intertwined contexts: “‘from above’ in the form of territorial control/governance, and ‘from below’

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32 Mustafa Kemal Bayırbağ, *Local Entrepreneurialism, State Re-Scaling and Scalar Strategies of Representation: The Case of the City of Gaziantep*, Turkey, PhD Dissertation, Carleton University, 2007, 22.

33 Jessop, “Capitalism and its Future: Remarks on Regulation, Government and Governance,” 576.

34 See Bernadette Mérenne-Schoumaker, “Lé Développement Local: Introduction,” *Geographies, Bulletin de L’Association de Geographes Français* 73 :5 (1996), 464-467.

35 Julie-Anne Boudreau, Pierre Hamel, Bernard Jouve and Roger Keil, “Comparing Metropolitan Governance: The Cases of Montreal and Toronto,” *Progress in Planning* 66 (2006), 48.

in the form of territorial identification and resistance.”<sup>36</sup> These two contexts need to be examined together to get a complete picture of the process. The space is not only designed by the state, which seeks to mold it in line with its own interests, but also by its inhabitants who experience the space and other actors who aim to reframe it with several projects. In other words, the space becomes a production process “from below” and “from above” at the same time. The effectiveness of perceived, conceived, and lived spaces is directly related to power relations among local groups and the state in a given space.

Ideological, practical, and strategic approaches to space are formulated by the state through the system of spatial planning. As Michael Gunder points out, planning disciplines everyday life in accordance with the dominant market logic and dominant ideology of the time.<sup>37</sup> In this regard, it can be defined between the articulated and the visible, the discourse and the material, and the said (plans) and the unsaid (strategies).<sup>38</sup> Urban and regional planning practices reflect the dilemmas that arise in the course of the construction of the values and goals of the state on space.

On the other hand, space includes struggle: counter-plans and counter-projects challenge the state’s rational and organizational capacity. Both regional identity and local identity are rediscovered from below in everyday life by producing and defending counter-projects and counter-spaces. The production of counter-spaces is both the consequence of the rise of non-state actors and the initiator of counterhegemonic movements.

...revolt can and must start from the presentation of counter-projects, of counter-spaces, leading to sometimes violent protests, and culmi-

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36 Anssi Paasi, “Region and Place: Regional Identity in Question,” *Progress in Human Geography* 27:4 (2003), 467.

37 Michael Gunder, “Planning as the Ideology of (Neoliberal) Space,” *Planning Theory* 9:4 (November 2010), 308.

38 John Ploger, “Foucault’s Dispositif and the City,” *Planning Theory* 7:1 (March 2008), 52.

nating in a radical revolt that calls into question the entirety of interchangeable, spectacular space, with its implication of everydayness, centrality, and spatial hierarchization.<sup>39</sup>

Edward Soja also highlights this interrelation: “As a social product, spatiality is simultaneously the medium and outcome, presupposition and embodiment, of social action and relationship.”<sup>40</sup> According to him, the spatiotemporal dynamics of social life determine social action and social relations including power relations. The process materially constituting these relations and conflicts involves discrepancy and struggle that derive from the duality of produced space as both outcome and medium of social activity. In other words, space is a “competitive arena for struggles over social production and reproduction, for social practices aimed either at the maintenance and reinforcement of existing spatiality or at significant restructuring and/or radical transformation.”<sup>41</sup> Instead of the ties between objects in space and time, these ties themselves produce, characterize, and transform space and time.<sup>42</sup> The relationships themselves – reconciliations or conflicts – between competing actors create and define space and time through hegemonic or counterhegemonic projects.

The crucial question is how political projects, passions, and ideals are spatialized. As the state creates or restructures several institutions in a locality in tandem with its hegemonic projects, the space also host counter-projects of regional and local actors or of its inhabitants. The attempts “to turn different sites of oppression and discrimination into spaces of resistance”<sup>43</sup> or geographical expressions of acts of resistance function as considerable political strategies that upset the balance of power in a given locality. At the same time, the [re]appropriation of space by non-state actors demonstrates new power

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39 Lefebvre, “Space and the State,” 88.

40 Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Theory* (New York: Verso, 1989), 129.

41 *Ibid.*, 130.

42 Doreen Massey, “Politics and Space/Time,” *New Left Review* 196 (1992), 79.

43 Michael Keith and Steve Pile “Communities of Resistance: Geography and a New Politics of Identity,” *Area* 24:2 (June 1992), 234.

relations: conflict or complicity, opposition or coalition between the state and other social organizations. The form of domination (integrated or dispersed) determines the shape of countrywide social and political changes.<sup>44</sup> The space is produced and reproduced around these multifaceted strategies of the actors.

The process of interaction between the local and the state can be better formulated with the conception of “territory” as an element of the image of the state. Apart from territorial boundaries, there are social boundaries – having realms of meaning – separating the state from those subject to its rule (non-state actors and forces). However, alliances, coalitions, and other agreements with diverse non-state groups soften and blur these rigid boundaries.<sup>45</sup> These social groups seek to challenge boundaries and to change territorial and social borders as well as their meanings even if the formal lines on the map remain unchanged.<sup>46</sup> Competing powers in a space attempt to change and blur limits among social groups. In fact, the conflict is over who is able to make rules and penetrate a locality.

In a locality where the state is powerless to effect social changes or in a society with fragmented social control, the state may concede to or coopt local strongmen. Societies in which social control is shared with social organizations at the local level influence the character of the state. On one hand, state leaders try to win people over to the state’s rules; therefore, they establish institutions in order to implement their own policies. On the other hand, they compete against local strongmen who have their own rules and systems of justice via different strategies.<sup>47</sup>

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44 Joel S. Migdal, “The State in Society: An Approach to Struggles for Domination,” in *State Power and Social Forces: Domination and Transformation in the Third World*, (eds.) Joel S. Migdal, Atul Kohli, Vivienne Shue (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 23.

45 Joel S. Migdal, *State- in-Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute Each Other* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 17-20.

46 *Ibid.*, 26.

47 These policies can be limited by the frequent change of bureaucrats in localities that prevent loyalties to potentially strong agencies (“big shuffle”); however, precautions may exceed formal methods. Dirty tricks such as imprisonment, deportation, strange disappearances, and the use of death squads directed at rival leaders within the state or in non-state organizations are often used. Joel S. Migdal, “Strong States, Weak States: Power and Accomodation,” in *State*

As far as non-state powers are concerned, the main aim of each regional or local actor is to deny the homogenizing strategies of the dominant actor. For this reason, the space not only “reflects” the identity and belonging that an actor wishes to construct or reconstruct but also plays a crucial role in generating specific social or political patterns of identity or belonging. Steve Pile argues that resistance has visible expressions on space. It has its own distinct spatialities and it always takes place even under authority’s tight control; therefore, resistance may involve the foundation on which alternative places flourish.<sup>48</sup> Counterhegemonic values, ideas, projects, and demands are formulated in these places created as a consequence of power struggles.

“How do structurally defined actors produce and reproduce cities through their conflicts, domination, alliances and compromises? How do spatial forms, economic functions, political institutions, and cultural meaning combine themselves in a process of urbanization that we view as the outcome of social struggles and social bargaining?”<sup>49</sup> These crucial questions were asked by Castells to understand urban design and urban movements. In addition to demand for the services of the state and local government in a locality, inhabitants want their cultural identities to be defended and expressed in urban space. These territorial claims on city space or resistance do not necessarily emerge as an echo of domination.

There are other possibilities for resistance in the dislocations through, for example, frictions of distance, the blurring of boundaries, and hiding and coming out. It can be argued that different power relations may produce different specialisations and, further, that resistance may well operate between the spaces authorized by authority, rather than simply

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*in Society. Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute Each Other*, Cambridge University Press, 2001 [1987], 72-81.

48 Steve Pile, “Introduction: Opposition, Political Identities and Spaces of Resistance,” in *Geographies of Resistance*, (eds.) Steve Pile and Michael Keith (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 2-4.

49 Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), xvii.

scratching itself into the deadly spaces of oppression and exploitation.<sup>50</sup>

From this perspective, there is an interaction between spaces of resistance and spaces of domination that parallel a shifting power balance. This is a “dis-located interaction” according to Steve Pile: resistance not only acts on spaces abandoned by the powerful, it seeks to break imposed spatial frontiers, appropriate spaces, and produce new spaces.<sup>51</sup> The meanings and functions of a particular place may change through power struggles; however, they can only be considered legitimate to the extent that people accept the new meanings and functions in everyday life.

This dissertation focuses on the aforementioned questions. Government institutions and the hegemonic projects supported by them and counter-projects invented by non-state actors are scrutinized in the light of state/space theories. In this context, the dissolution of old relations and the generation of new ones are the elements of an interaction. The urban space is not introduced as a “scene” where the struggle takes place; it is considered as a production process that is shaped, destroyed, transformed, or resurrected by different actors.

### § 1.3 Literature Review

On 10 November 2009, the seventy-first anniversary of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’s death, Onur Öymen, a deputy and the vice chairman of the CHP, delivered a speech in parliament criticizing the government’s Kurdish initiative to extend the rights of Kurds in Turkey and stop the armed conflict between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state. Öymen argued that Atatürk’s method of combating terrorism was completely dissimilar to the AKP’s current approach and cited the case of Dersim: “Did not mothers cry in the Dersim uprising? Did Atatürk negotiate with the actors of the Dersim Rebellion?”

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50 Pile, 13.

51 Ibid., 16.

For the first time, the Dersim massacre, an “open secret known by everyone,”<sup>52</sup> was revealed to public and discussed openly.

In discussions that emerged after the unfortunate statement of Onur Öymen, the Dersim question not only became a means through which the government caught the main opposition party, the CHP, “in the act,” but also a subject of research on which many have been able to focus critically due to the new political atmosphere. Did military operations occur at the end of a rebellion or not? Did the Dersimlis resist the modern state? Did the state approach the rebels with extreme prejudice? What was the role and impact of aşirets – most prominent social formations in the province– in the events? Was Mustafa Kemal Atatürk aware of the massacre? In the political conditions of the 2000s, where the AKP regime gathered Islamists, conservatives, and liberals and established its superiority over the Kemalist block, these questions started to be answered independent of the official historiography of the pre-AKP era.

When the Dersim question stopped being an official problem for the state, the collective memory of Dersim began to attract the attention of the public. Social scientists eager to explore the aspects of this lesser-known case also devoted close attention to the province. It would not be wrong to argue that both politicians and social scientists are mostly interested in the 1930s. The massacre is the key concern for the majority. The formation of the identities, political stances, and ideological approaches of the Dersim people have been investigated by considering the intergenerational transmission of the trauma. The last surviving witnesses of the massacre were about to die. Their invaluable narratives have been recorded in the scope of oral history projects supported by the European Union and by independent NGOs.

From the end of the 1990s, strong interest in the city has increased its cultural productions, too. Dersim’s ethnic music based on lamenting the victims

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52 Herkesin Bildiği Sır is the name of Şükrü Aslan’s book on Dersim.

has been reinvented,<sup>53</sup> many documentaries have been made,<sup>54</sup> and not only academic studies but also literary works by famous novelists<sup>55</sup> have been published. Symposiums and panels about the Dersim events have been organized by both government institutions and local groups.<sup>56</sup>

The intellectual and cultural turn in Dersim is part of a multidimensional awakening of the 2000s. The democratic opening created by the AKP government, the rescinding of the OHAL regime in the east of Turkey, the rise of a legal Kurdish movement, and the increasing importance of local governments coincide with Dersim's reinvention. Because Dersimlis are considered the most conspicuous sufferers of the policies of the early republican regime, old rivals of the CHP (the Islamist-conservative-liberal alliance and the Kurdish movement) have encouraged this intellectual and cultural turn. In such a political atmosphere, the history of Dersim is rewritten by exceeding the limits of Kemalist historiography.

In this part of the dissertation, I briefly review the literature on Dersim. First, there is a considerable number of primary sources about the province

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- 53 The most famous musicians who unearth and perform Dersim songs are Metin-Kemal Kahraman (see especially his 1997 album *Yaşlılar Dersim Türküleri Söylüyor* consisting of a collection of poetry and songs from Dersim), Mikail Aslan, and Ahmet Aslan.
- 54 See, for example, *Dersim '38* (Dersim 38, Çayan Demirel, 2006), *Two Locks of Hair: The Missing Girls of Dersim (İki Tutam Saç: Dersim'in Kayıp Kızları)*, Nezahat Gündoğan, 2010), *Black Carriage (Kara Vagon)*, Özgür Fındık, 2011), etc.
- 55 Popular examples are: Muzaffer Oruçoğlu, *Dersim* (Istanbul: Babek, 1997); Celal Yıldız, *Dersim Dile Geldi: 1938'in Çocukları Konuştu* (Istanbul: Su Yayınları, 2008); Sema Kaygusuz, *Yüzünde Bir Yer* (Istanbul: Doğan, 2009); Haydar Karataş, *Gece Kelebeği /Perperik-a Söe* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010); Hasan Fırat, *Tunceli Otuzsekiz ve Mirze: Konuşma Destanı* (Istanbul: Cinius Yayınları, 2010); Haydar Karataş, *On İki Dağın Sırrı, Bir Göz Ağlarken* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2012); *Bir Dersim Hikâyesi*, (ed.) Murathan Mungan (Istanbul: Metis, 2012); and Haydar Işık, *Arevik: Dersim Terteleğinde Bir Ermeni Kızı* (Ankara: Satırarası Yayınları, 2013).
- 56 The first international symposium on Dersim was organized by Tunceli University in 2010. After three years, the university hosted another in which the peace/solution process was the most discussed issue. In 2013 and 2016, symposium series on healing traditions of Dersim were held. These events, supported by Dersim's many NGOs, focused on the relation between Dersim's nature and its belief systems. In 2014, "Economy Conference in Tunceli (Dersim)" was organized by the chamber of commerce and industry of Tunceli. Moreover, the Dersim Municipality held many conferences during the Munzur Culture and Nature Festivals.

written in both the Ottoman and the republican eras, and most of the following studies refer to them. In general, the disobedience and “backwardness” of the inhabitants constitute the main topic of these documents. A report prepared in the first half of the 1930s by the Gendarmerie General Command allied to the Ministry of the Interior is the most frequently used by researchers. It informs the state about rebellions that took place in Dersim from the time of the Ottoman era, describes military operations and other precautions against them, gives detailed data on the aşirets and their members, and encourages military solution.<sup>57</sup> There are other important reports collected by researchers such as Cemal Şener, Faik Bulut, Serap Yeşiltuna, Cemil Koçak, and Hüseyin Aygün.<sup>58</sup> These reports reveal that both the Ottoman state and the single-party regime seeking to know this self-enclosed country attempted to govern it as an internal colony.

The most detailed archival documents about Dersim are published by the History Foundation of Turkey (Tarih Vakfı). It consists of reports presented to the Republican People’s Party between 1939 and 1950 and to the Democrat Party between 1952 and 1953 by Necmeddin Sahir Silan, the deputy of Bingöl (1939) and Tunceli (1943 and 1946). Moreover, five books labeled “secret” and distributed only to certain state officials (*gizli ve hizmete mahsus*) – prepared by the Turkish General Staff, the Gendarmerie General Command, and the Ministry of the Interior in the 1930s and 1940s – are published as the second volume of Silan’s archive. Zafer Toprak emphasizes the importance of Silan’s

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57 *Dersim Raporu*, (ed.) İzzeddin Çalışlar (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010).

58 Burhan Özkök, *Osmanlılar Devrinde Dersim İsyanları* (Istanbul: Askeri Matbaa, 1937); *Osmanlı Belgeleri’nde Dersim Tarihi: Osmanlıca-Türkçe 50 Orijinal Belge*, (ed.) Cemal Şener (Istanbul: Etik, 2003); Faik Bulut, *Dersim Raporları* (Istanbul: Evrensel Basım Yayın, 2009); Hüseyin Aygün, *Dersim 1938 ve Zorunlu İskan: Telgraflar, Dilekçeler, Mektuplar, Fotoğraflar* (Ankara: Dipnot, 2010); *Devletin Dersim Arşivi*, (ed.) Serap Yeşiltuna (Istanbul: İleri Yayınları, 2012); Cemil Koçak, *Tek-Parti Döneminde Muhalif Sesler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2011); Hüseyin Aygün, *o.o.1938: Resmîyet ve Hakikat* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları: 2011) and Hüseyin Aygün, *Dersim 1938 ve Hacı Hıdır Ataç’ın Defteri: İlk Kez Yayımlanan Belgeler, Raporlar, Haritalar* (Ankara: Dipnot, 2012).

archive because it demonstrates the modern state's anthropological and geographical approach to Dersim and other eastern cities.<sup>59</sup> The sixth of the archival documents reveals how Dersimlis interacted with the state. Through Silan's archival documents, it is possible to observe the political and social climate of the city both before and after the 1937-38 events.<sup>60</sup>

A Turkish nationalist current dominated the research until the aforementioned reinvention of Dersim. This dominant pitcher is comprised of narratives, observations, and reports that gave the government information about the city and sought to prove the Turkishness of the population or to make an official explanation of the 1937-38 events. For example, the books and articles of Naşit Hakkı (Uluğ), Ömer Kemal Açar, and Besim Darkot written at the end of the 1930s and in the 1940s introduce the inhabitants and geography of Dersim and justify the project of modernism there.<sup>61</sup> Studies investigating state intervention as a legitimate and necessary defense against insurgency are still being conducted today. They generally claim that aşiret leaders oppressed the Dersim people and the military operations were carried out to put an end to this tyranny. Their main argument is that the aşirets mounted insurgency movements, which can be considered among the Kurdish rebellions, and that these were supported by foreign countries such as England, Russia, France,

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59 Zafer Toprak, *Darwin'den Dersim'e Cumhuriyet ve Antropoloji* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2012).

60 See "Doğu Sorunu" Necmeddin Sahir Silan Raporları (1939-1953), (eds.) Tuba Akekmekçi and Muazzez Pervan (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2010); *Doğu Anadolu'da Toplumsal Mühendislik: Dersim-Sason (1934-1946)* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2010); *Kürt Sorunu ve Devlet: Tedip ve Tenkil Politikaları (1925-1947)*, (ed.) Tuğba Yıldırım (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011); *Dersim Harekâtı ve Cumhuriyet Bürokrasisi (1936-1950)*, (eds.) Tuba Akekmekçi and Muazzez Pervan (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011); *Doğu Anadolu ve Cumhuriyet Bürokrasisi (1939-1951)*, (eds.) Tuba Akekmekçi and Muazzez Pervan (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2011); and *Dersimlilerden Mektuplar (1941-1953)*, (eds.) Tuba Akekmekçi and Muazzez Pervan (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2012).

61 Naşit Hakkı (Uluğ), *Derebeyi ve Dersim* (Ankara, 1931); Naşit Uluğ, *Tunceli Medeniyete Açılıyor* (Istanbul: Cumhuriyet Matbaası, 1939); Ömer Kemal Açar, *Tunceli-Dersim Coğrafyası* (Istanbul: Türkiye Basımevi, 1940); and Besim Darkot, "Tunceli Üzerine Coğrafi Görüşler," in *Üçüncü Üniversite Haftası* (Istanbul: İÜ Yayınları, 1943).

and the United States as well as the Armenian community, the “historical enemy” of the Republic.<sup>62</sup>

The famous book of Nuri Dersimi first published in Syria in 1952, *Dersim in the History of Kurdistan (Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim)*, led the drive for an alternative historiography that considered the province as a part of Kurdistan.<sup>63</sup> This approach highlights the similarities between Dersim and [other] Kurdish cities and includes it in Kurdish geography and history. It usually refers to Nuri Dersimi, who positions the province at the heart of the Kurdish nationalist movement, emphasizes the role of Seyid Rıza in the construction of the Kurdish nationalism, and defines a “Kurdish Alevism” different from that of the Turks. Moreover, it considers Zazaca (variously called Zaza, Kirmanjki, Kirmancki, Kirmancca, and Dimli) as a dialect instead of a language. İsmail Beşikçi’s significant book *The Tunceli Law [1935] and the Dersim Genocide (Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi)*, written in 1977 and published in 1990, constructs the main historical arguments of this pro-Kurdish literature and is the first work clearly criticizing Turkey’s official ideology.<sup>64</sup> Beşikçi evaluates the Dersim operations as the continuation of state interventions in Kurdistan and openly uses the term “genocide” for the killing. This narrative introduces the Dersim people as powerful actors who resisted instead of passive victims of state violence.

Martin van Bruinessen, who conducted many years of field research in Kurdish cities and published a number of publications on Kurds,<sup>65</sup> is another

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62 See, for example, Hıdır Öztürk, *Tarihimizde Tunceli ve Ermeni Mezalimi* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1984); Suat Akgül, *Yakın Tarihimizde Dersim İsyancıları ve Gerçekler* (İstanbul: Boğaziçi Yayınları, 1992); Baki Öz, *Dersim Olayı* (İstanbul: Can Yayınları, 2004); Rıza Zelyut, *Dersim İsyancıları ve Seyit Rıza Gerçeği* (Ankara: Kripto, 2010); Necmi Günel, *Dersim İsyanı* (İstanbul: Paraf, 2010); and Ramazan Demir, *Feodalizmin Devlete İsyanı ve Dersim Olayları* (Ankara: Palme Yayınları, 2011).

63 M. Nuri Dersimi, *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim* (İstanbul: Zel Yay, 1994).

64 İsmail Beşikçi, *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi* (İstanbul: Belge Yayınları, 1990).

65 Martin van Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh, and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan* (London; Atlantic Highlands, N.J.: Zed Books, 1992); and Martin van Bruinessen, *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism Versus Nation-Building States: Collected Articles* (İstanbul: Isis Press, 2000).

author who scrutinizes Dersim as part of the historical process of modern Kurdish awareness while emphasizing ethnocultural diversity among the inhabitants of the Kurdish geography. He examines not only the 1930s – the decade when the pacification program of the government in the province was applied to assimilate the non-Turkish population – but also the 1980s and 90s when both leftist and pro-Kurdish movements bloomed in the city.<sup>66</sup>

The pro-Kurdish Dersim literature developed in the 1990s in parallel with the rise of the Kurdish movement. The province is described into Kurdistan whose national identity is reconstructed primarily through a single language with different dialects and a collective memory shaped by the Dersim massacre. The Vate Working Group (Vate Çalışma Grubu) first gathered in 1996 in Stockholm and is the crucial initiative that best represented this current in the 1990s. It sought to standardize the Zaza language and demonstrate the similarities between Zazaca and Kurmanci, the most widely spoken Kurdish dialect in Turkey. Since 1997, the group has published a periodical named *Vate*. The Vate Publishing House was founded in 2003 and has released many studies supporting the Kurdishness of Dersim. A member of the group, Munzur

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66 Martin van Bruinessen, “Kurdish Society, Nationalism and Ethnicity, Refugee Problems,” in *The Kurds: a Contemporary Overview*, (eds.) Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl (London: Routledge, 1992); Martin van Bruinessen, “Nationalisme Kurde et Ethnicités Intra-Kurdes,” *Peuples Méditerranéens* 68-69 (1994); Martin van Bruinessen, “‘Aslımı İnkâr Eden Haramzadedir!': The Debate on the Ethnic Identity of the Kurdish Alevis,” in *Syncretistic Religious Communities in the Near East*, (eds.) Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, Barbara Kellner-Heinkele and Anke Otter-Beaujean (Leiden: Brill, 1997); Martin van Bruinessen, “Constructions of Ethnic Identity in the Late Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey: the Kurds and their Others,” paper presented at the workshop Social Identities in the Late Ottoman Empire, New York, Middle Eastern Studies, 08.03.1997; Martin van Bruinessen, “Race, Culture, Nation and Identity Politics in Turkey: Some Comments,” paper presented at the Mica Erteğün Annual Turkish Studies Workshop on Continuity and Change: Shifting State Ideologies from Late Ottoman to Early Republican Turkey, 1890-1930, Department of Near Eastern Studies, Princeton University, 24-26.04.1997; and Martin van Bruinessen, “Kurds, States and Tribes,” in *Tribes and Power: Nationalism and Ethnicity in the Middle East*, (eds.) Faleh A. Jabar and Hosham Dawod (London: Saqi, 2002).

Çem, has conducted important research on Dersim Alevism and its language.<sup>67</sup>

On the other hand, Dersim-born intellectuals who migrated to Europe after the coup d'état of 1980 started to give thought to Dersim's language, religion, and traditions. They framed a perspective based on the assumption that Dersim is neither Turkish nor Kurdish. One may express that the emergence of Zazaist literature on Dersim is directly correlated to the rise of the studies regarding the province as part of the Kurdish region. In other words, it stems from a dialectical relation with the development of Kurdish nationalism. The Zazaists focused on the Dersim language as a characteristic cultural norm. They have published many periodicals such as *Ayre*, *Piya*, *Raştıye*, *Desmala Sure*, *Ware*, *Tija Sodiri*, *Pir*, and *Kormuşkan* and sought to prove that Zazaca is a distinct language. Books written in the 1990s by Ebubekir Pamukçu, Sait Çiya, Seyfi Cengiz, and Mustafa Düzgün represent this Zazaist tendency.<sup>68</sup> With the extension of internet usage, the intellectuals in the diaspora have tended towards writing on web sites.

From the 1990s, the 1937-38 events started to be investigated critically.<sup>69</sup> On one hand, some historical documents exhibiting the severity of the massacre were discovered and published; on the other, new research relying on

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- 67 Munzur Çem, *Dersim'de Alevilik* (Istanbul: Peri Yayınları, 1995); Munzur Çem, *Türkçe Açıklamalı Kırmancca (Zazaca) Gramer* (Diyarbakır: Deng Yayınları, 2003); and Munzur Çem, *Dêrsim Merkezli Kürt Aleviliği: Etnisite, Dini İnanç, Kültür ve Direniş* (Istanbul: Vate Yayınları, 2011).
- 68 Ebubekir Pamukçu, *Dersim Zaza Ayaklanmasının Tarihsel Kökenleri* (Istanbul: Yön Yayıncılık, 1992); Mustafa Düzgün, *Tayê lawikê Dêrsimi: Şiwari: Agitlar / Dersim Türküleri* (Kista, Sweden: Berhem, 1992); Mustafa Düzgün, Munzir Comerd and Hawar Tornecengi, *Dersim De Diwayi, Qese Pi-Kalikan, Erf u Mecazi, Çibenoki, Xeletnayeni / Dersim'de Dualar, Atasözleri, Mecazlar, Bilmeceler, Şaşırtmacalar* (Stockholm: Berhem, 1992); Seyfi Cengiz, *Dersim ve Dersimli* (Marne, Germany: Desmala Sure, 1995); and Sait Çiya, *Dersim Yazıları* (Istanbul: Tija Yayınları, 1998).
- 69 Vecihi Timuroğlu, *Dersim Tarihi* (Ankara: Yurt Kitap-Yayın, 1991); Ali Kaya, *Başlangıcından Günümüze Dersim Tarihi* (Istanbul: Can, 1999); Hüseyin Yıldırım, *Emalenge: Une Femme Témoigne sur les Massacres au Kurdistan-Dersim, 1937-1938* (Paris: Harmattan, 2001); Mehmet Bayrak, *Dersim-Koçgiri: Te'dib, Tenkil, Taqtil, Tehcir, Temsil, Temdin, Tasfiye* (Ankara: Öz-Ge, 2010); Cafer Solgun, *Dersim... Dersim... Yüzleşmezsek Hiçbir Şey Geçmiş Olmuyor* (Istanbul:

oral histories interwoven with archival and photographic surveys and biographical memoirs were released. In this way, the events were re-inscribed from the standpoint of witnesses and radically rethought.<sup>70</sup>

As trends in the social sciences shifted from social analysis to cultural studies and identity politics, Dersim became the subject for anthropological and ethnographic research. Studies on Dersim in terms of the resiliency of its linguistic and religious differences among the population as well as its ethno-political construction have appeared in the last decade. The dynamics of ethnic identification and the boundaries [re]produced through social interaction have been scrutinized in these sources.<sup>71</sup> The especially valuable works of Erdal Gezik and Gürdal Aksoy inspire one to think about the ways in which

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Timaş, 2010); Nurer Uğurlu, *Kürt Milliyetçiliği: Dersim 1937 Seyit Rıza İsyanı* (Istanbul: Örgün Yayınevi, 2011); and Mahmut Akyürekli, *Dersim Kürt Tedibi 1937-1938* (Istanbul: Kitap Yayınevi, 2011).

- 70 Cemal Taş, *Dağların Kayıp Anahtarı: Dersim 1938 Anlatıları* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010); Munzur Çem, *Tanıkların Diliyle Dersim '38* (Istanbul: Peri Yayınları, 2010); İlhami Algör, *Ma Sekerdo Kardaş? N'etmişiz Kardaş?: "Dersim38" Tanıklıkları* (Istanbul: Doğan Kitap, 2010); Hasan Demir, *Dersim'den Tunceli'ye: 38 Katliamı Tanıklıkları* (Istanbul: Belge, 2011); Bülent Bilmez, Gülay Kayacan and Şükrü Aslan, *Toplumsal Bellek, Kuşaklararası Aktarım ve Algı: Dersim '38'i Hatırlamak* (Istanbul, Tarih Vakfı Yayınları, 2011); Yusuf Baran Beyi, *Süngü ve Yara: Dersim '38 Katliam ve Sürgün Tanıklıkları* (Ankara: Dipnot, 2012); Mithat Özcan, *Tanıkların Dilinden Pêri Vadisi* (Istanbul: Pêri Yayınları, 2012); Yalçın Doğan, *Savrulanlar: Dersim 1937-1938 Hatta 1939* (Istanbul: Kırmızı Kedi, 2012); Emirali Yağan, *Dersim Defterleri: Beyaz Dağ'da Bir Gün* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2013); Munzur Çem, *Qurzeli Usiv'in 70 Yılı* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2014); Mehmet Yıldız, *Dersim'in Etno-Kültürel Kimliği ve 1937-1938 Tertelesi* (Istanbul: Chiviyazıları Yayınevi, 2014); and Betül Fatime Günday, "Adın Perihan Olsun": *Diyap Ağa'nın Torunu Ane Hatun'un Hikayesi* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2016).
- 71 Erdal Gezik, *Dinsel, Etnik ve Politik Sorunlar Bağlamında Alevi Kürtler* (Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, 2004); Doğan Munzuroğlu, *Toplumsal Yapı ve İnanç Bağlamında Dersim Aleviliği* (Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, 2004); Ahmet Kerim Gültekin, *Tunceli'de Kutsal Mekân Kültü* (Ankara: Kalan Yayınları, 2004); Gürdal Aksoy, *Dersim Alevi Kürt Mitolojisi: Raa Hag'da Dinsel Figürler* (Istanbul: Komal, 2006); Gürdal Aksoy, 'Anadolu Aleviliği'nden Dersim'e: *Alevi Tarihine Coğrafi Bir Giriş* (Ankara: Dipnot, 2009); Ahmet Kerim Gültekin, *Tunceli'de Sünni Olmak: Ulusal ve Yerel Kimlik Öğelerinin Tunceli-Pertek'te Etnolojik Tetkiki* (Istanbul: Berfin Yayınları, 2010); Gürdal Aksoy, *Dersim: Alevilik, Ermenilik, Kürtlük* (Ankara: Dipnot, 2012); and Dilşa Deniz, *Yol/Rê: Dersim İnanç Sembolizmi: Antropolojik Bir Yaklaşım* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2012).

the ethnic identities of the Dersim people are defined and negotiated. Moreover, two crucial books edited by Şükrü Aslan fostered an interdisciplinary approach to the field.<sup>72</sup> These studies gathered the articles of both Dersim-born intellectuals and other academics and have therefore encouraged new outside researchers. On the other hand, there are a limited number of studies about Dersim in the 1990s under the OHAL regime and the severe restrictions imposed on everyday life.<sup>73</sup>

Although the unprecedented flourishing of historical studies and artistic production concerning Dersim has contributed to the development of the collective memory of the city, the great interest in the past and in a culture characterized by elegiac values, themes, and expressions seems to overshadow the present of the city.<sup>74</sup> Dersim is generally described as trapped in the past, frozen, permanent, and monolithic. However, the present of the city framed by the new hegemony also deserves serious consideration. Starting from an interpretation of the physical and sociopolitical development of the city in accordance with national, regional, and global dynamics in addition to historical ruptures, this dissertation scrutinizes Dersim with the help of the literature of critical urban studies.

This dissertation differs from other academic studies on Dersim. First, it focuses on Dersim as a *space* that both the state and other actors seek to produce, transform, and re-appropriate. It deals with the formation of different

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72 *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, (ed.) Şükrü Aslan (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010); and *Dersim'i Parantezden Çıkarmak: Dersim Sempozyumu'nun Ardından*, (eds.) Zeliha Hepkon, Songül Aydın and Şükrü Aslan (Istanbul: İletişim, 2013). See also *Pülümür*, (ed.) Şükrü Aslan (Ankara: Ütopya Yayınevi, 2016).

73 See, for example, Celal Başlangıç, *Korku Tapmağı: Güçlükönak-Silopi-Lice-Tunceli* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2001); and Joost Jongerden, *The Settlement Issue in Turkey and the Kurds: An Analysis of Spatial Policies, Modernity and War* (Leiden, The Netherlands; Boston: Brill, 2007).

74 Some interesting articles on the socioeconomic dynamics of the city include: Ali Ekber Doğan and Ş. Gürçağ Tuna, "Tunceli/Dersim'de Tembelligin Kültürelleştirilmesi: Emek Süreçlerinin Özgünlükleri Çerçevesinde Bir Bakış," *İktisat Dergisi* 515-516 (2011): 81-93; and Ş. Gürçağ Tuna and Bayram Güneş, "Munzur'dan Şirket Yaratmak: Munzur A.Ş. Üzerinden Dersim'de Sermaye Birikiminin Dinamikleri," *Praksis* 28 (2012): 99-119. See also *Dört Dağa Sığmayan Kent: Dersim Üzerine Ekonomi-Politik Yazılar*, (eds.) Ş. Gürçağ Tuna and Gözde Orhan (Istanbul: Patika Kitap, 2013).

identities adopted by national, regional, and local actors and the historical events that influence or determine the urban policies of these actors to the extent that they relate to the reconfiguration of Dersim's spatial patterns. For example, instead of revealing what happened in the 1930s in Dersim, it clarifies the geographic reorganization of the province and spatial designs that appeared after the 1937-38 events. Instead of attempting to uncover the origins of the ethnic identities of the Dersim people – maybe the most frequently studied and discussed topic in the Dersim literature – the main axis of the study concerns the ways in which ethnicity is transformed into a strategic political force. In other words, unlike the rest of the literature, this study examines the urban development and spatial transformation of the province and refers to historical and cultural dynamics only to comprehend the struggle over space.

Most urban studies concentrate on large cities and metropolitan districts. Istanbul, for instance, can be cited as the first city in Turkey contextualized in terms of the politics of identity and culture, contested positions, and negotiated spaces.<sup>75</sup> Since the 2000s, a considerable number of studies on this world city have been published. The dynamics of commodification, urban transformation, practices of displacement, suburbanization, residential segregation, gentrification, housing problems, social exclusion, everyday life, the spatialization of class relations, urban ecology, local government, and many other urban phenomena have been addressed by several disciplines from several perspectives.<sup>76</sup>

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75 *İstanbul: Between the Global and the Local*, (ed.) Çağlar Keyder (Lanham, Md.: Rowman&Littlefield, 1999).

76 Some examples are as follows: Sema Erder, *İstanbul'a Bir Kent Kondu: Ümraniye* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1996); Şükrü Aslan, *1 Mayıs Mahallesi: 1980 Öncesi Toplumsal Mücadeleler ve Kent* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2004); Çağlar Keyder, "Globalization and Social Exclusion in İstanbul," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29:1 (2005), 124-34; Ebru Firidin Özgür, "Sosyal ve Mekânsal Ayrışma Çerçevesinde Yeni Konutlaşma Eğilimleri: Kapalı Siteler, İstanbul, Çekmeköy Örneği," *Planlama* 4 (2006): 79-95; *İstanbul'da "Soylulaştırma"* (eds.) David Behar and Tolga İslam (Istanbul: Bilgi Üniversitesi Yayınları, 2006); Ayfer Bartu Candan and Biray Kolluoğlu, "Emerging Spaces of Neoliberalism: a Gated Town and a Public Housing Project in İstanbul," *New Perspectives on Turkey* 39 (2008): 5-46; *Public Istanbul: Spaces and*

Apart from Istanbul, a number of studies of Anatolian cities have been conducted since the beginning of the 2000s.<sup>77</sup> Some of these works – those

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*Spheres of the Urban*, (eds.) Frank Eckardt and Kathrin Wildner (Bielefeld: Piscataway, 2008); Tuna Kuyucu, *Poverty, Property and Power: Making Markets in İstanbul's Informal Low-Income Settlements*, PhD Dissertation, University of Washington, 2009; Tuna Kuyucu and Özlem Ünsal “Urban Transformation’ as State-led Property Transfer: An Analysis of Two Cases of Urban Renewal in İstanbul,” *Urban Studies* 47:7 (2010): 1479-99; Besime Şen, “Kentsel Dönüşüm ve ‘Kaybetmeden Mücadele Etme Arayışı’ Gülsuyu-Gülensu ve Başibüyük Deneyimleri” in *Tarih, Sınıflar ve Kent*, (eds.) Besime Şen and Ali Ekber Doğan (Ankara: Dipnot, 2010), 309-354; Jean-François Pérouse, *İstanbul’la Yüzleşme Denemeleri: Çeperler, Hareketlilik ve Kentsel Bellek* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2011); Şükrü Aslan and Besime Şen, “Politik Kimliğin Temsil Edici Mekanları: Çayan Mahallesi,” *Toplum ve Bilim* 120 (2011): 109-132; *İstanbul: Müstesna Şehrin İstisna Hali*, (eds.) Ayşe Çavdar and Pelin Tan (İstanbul: Sel Yayınları, 2013); and *Yeni İstanbul Çalışmaları*, (eds.) Ayfer Bartu Candan and Cenk Özbay (İstanbul: Metis, 2014).

- 77 See, for example, Zeki Coşkun, *Aleviler, Sünniler ve... Öteki Sivas* (İstanbul: İletişim, 1995); *Başkent Üzerine Mekan-Politik Tezler: Ankara’nın Kamusal Yüzleri*, (ed.) Güven Arif Sargın (İstanbul: İletişim, 2002); Funda Şenol Cantek, “Yaban”lar ve Yerliler: Başkent Olma Sürecinde Ankara (İstanbul: İletişim, 2003); Adana’ya Kar Yağmış: Adana Üzerine Yazılar, (ed.) Behçet Çelik (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006); *Sanki Viran Ankara*, (ed.) Funda Şenol Cantek (İstanbul: İletişim, 2006); Ali Ekber Doğan, *Eğreti Kamusalılık: Kayseri Örneğinde İslamcı Belediyecilik* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007); *Trabzon’u Anlamak*, (eds.) Güven Bakırcı and Yücel Demirer (İstanbul: İletişim, 2009); Mehmet Penbecioğlu, “Yeni Bölgeselcilik ve Denizli: Yerel Endüstriyel Gelişimi ve Dönüşümü Yeniden Düşünmek,” *Praksis* 21 (2009): 135-154; Engin Sarı, *Kültür, Kimlik, Politika: Mardin’de Kültürlerarasılık* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2010); Yasin Durak, *Emeğin Tevekkülü: Konya’da İşçi-İşveren İlişkileri ve Dindarlık* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2011); Ali Ekber Doğan and Bediz Yılmaz, “Ethnicity, Social Tensions and Production of Space in Forced Migration Neighbourhoods of Mersin: Comparing the Case of the Demirtaş Neighbourhood with Newly Established Ones,” *Journal of Balkan and Near East Studies* 13:4 (2011): 475-494; “Ta Ezelden Taşkındır...” *Antep*, (ed.) Mehmet Nuri Gültekin (İstanbul: İletişim, 2011); “Karardı Karadeniz” (ed.) Uğur Biryol (İstanbul: İletişim, 2012); Kurtuluş Cengiz, “Yav İşte Fabrikalaşak” *Anadolu Sermayesinin Oluşumu: Kayseri-Hacılar Örneği* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2013); Mehmet Penbecioğlu, “Urban Development Projects and the Construction of Neo-Liberal Urban Hegemony: The Case of İzmir,” *METU JFA* 30:1 (2013): 165-189; Nuray Ertürk Keskin and Melda Yaman, *Türkiye’de Tütün: Reji’den Tekel’e Tekel’den Bugüne* (Ankara: Notabene, 2013); Mehmet Atlı, *Herkesin Bildiği Kimsenin Bilmediği: Hepsi Diyarbakır* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2014); *Kenarın Kitabı: “Ara”da Kalmak, Çeperde Yaşamak*, (ed.) Funda Şenol Cantek

written on commercial or industrial cities or districts – concentrate on the relationships between central and local governments, capital accumulation processes, the spatial organization of production and trade, the dynamics of industrialization, and patterns of production relations or modes of social relations of production. On the other hand, studies examining the cities whose economic performance is unimportant with respect to its effect on the potential performance of the national economy are usually structured on the basis of cultural forms and social relations. As stated at the beginning of this introduction, this dissertation contributes to this literature of “city studies” by scrutinizing the spatial transformation of Dersim, an underdeveloped and ethnically extraordinary city. In this regard, it suggests a new perspective from which to analyze the attempts of several actors in a city to produce space by simultaneously looking at economic strategies, ideological intentions, and embedded symbolic forms.

Local scale increasingly gains importance in terms of free geographical mobility of surpluses towards new areas; however, the Kurdish question and the atmosphere of conflict block the geographic expansion towards “untouched” places and reduce the intensification of capital accumulation in there. Dersim is one of those cities whose economic potential is limited; however, dialectical processes of the production of space involve economic functions as well as ideological concerns. In the city, the spatial strategies of the actors (especially of the state) reflect the intermingled nature of the economic and ideological purposes of these actors. In other words, this study emphasizes that the ideological, economic, and cultural characteristics of the spatial strategies of a national, regional, and local actors are multilayered, multifaceted, and interwoven, and it attempts to uncover the motivations determining the [re]configuration of the city.

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(Istanbul: İletişim, 2014); Fırat Genç, *Politics in Concrete: Social Production of Space in Diyarbakır 1999-2014*, PhD Dissertation, Boğaziçi University, 2014; Tuna Kuyucu and Didem Danış, “Similar Processes, Divergent Outcomes: A Comparative Analysis of Urban Redevelopment Projects in Three Turkish Cities,” *Urban Affairs Review* 51:3 (2015): 381-413; and *İzmir Kültürpark’ın Anımsa(ma)dıkları: Temsiller, Mekanlar ve Aktörler*, (eds.) Burkay Pasin, Kıvanç Kılınç and Ahenk Yılmaz (Istanbul: İletişim, 2015).

This dissertation focuses on Dersim for certain reasons. First, Dersim is a city where both national and regional as well as local actors play significant roles in political and everyday life. Unlike many Anatolian cities where only the AKP and CHP compete with each other – and unlike (other) Kurdish cities where the Kurdish movement has a commanding lead over other actors – Dersim hosts a wide spectrum of parties and organizations with considerable political influence. It is the only city in Turkey where the AKP was unable to succeed in either the general or local elections. As far as the Kurdish movement is concerned, the entrance of pro-Kurdish organizations in the city was not easy. Many leftist factions demonstrated strong continuity and comprise grassroots organizations in the city. In other words, because the political climate of the city bears no resemblance to the rest of the country, Dersim is a rich case for observing how several actors reinvent, distort, and convert local characteristics into spatial strategies.

Second, Dersim is the first city whose center was relocated by the republican regime.<sup>78</sup> The aim was to concentrate the population in a more controllable area and prevent new threats against the modern state. In this regard, the making of a new city center can be considered the most clear and early attempt at state intervention in Dersim's urban space. Most of the issues of territorial [re]organization were studied in relation to the requirements of accumulating capital and worldwide capitalist restructuring. In the case of Dersim, on the other hand, one can observe the role of space in ideological struggles for hegemonic control over the inhabitants and the role of ideology in spatial struggles for hegemonic control over social and political space. Because the city witnessed attempts at spatial control very early, the case of Dersim may help to rethink space policies from a historical and multidimensional perspective.

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78 One must note that there are examples of such relocation before the republican era. For example, the center of the eastern city of Harput became Mezre in the nineteenth century. In his PhD dissertation, Ali Sipahi describes how Harput and Mezre co-existed until they were replaced by a fortress of nationalism, unified city of Elazığ. Extending into the republican era, such replacement constituted a rupture in the story of the city, particularly during the 1930s. In these years, Harput and Mezre were disappearing while Elazığ was developing as the center. See, Ali Sipahi, *At Arm's Length: Historical Ethnography of Proximity in Harput*, PhD Dissertation, the University of Michigan, 2015.

Last, this dissertation contributes to Dersim literature by looking at the present of the city unlike historical or cultural research. It shows that the city is not defined by the mournful memories of the 1937-38 events; the city also consists of expectations, hopes, rational decisions, plans, projects, investments, resistance, conflicts, and negotiations, like all other cities.

To sum up, this dissertation describes Dersim considering its distinctiveness from surrounding area and the rest of the country in terms of ethnocultural and historical features as well as political choices; therefore, it argues that some strategies of competing actors are peculiar to Dersim. However, because the city is considered as part of (the broader) Kurdistan, some strategies investigated in this study are directly associated with the Kurdish policies of the government and the non-state actors. On the other hand, discussing overall economic development strategies of the AKP and questioning to what extent they are implemented in Dersim offer an opportunity to scrutinize Dersim as a locality similar to other non-industrial, underdeveloped Anatolian cities. It is clear that neither the government institutions and projects nor counter-spaces created by non-state actors are unique to Dersim. What I wish to emphasize is that the institutions, projects, and spatial interventions which serve to produce or [re]appropriate Dersim's spaces have been restructured according to the power of each actor relatively to the others.

## § 1.4 Methodology and Sources

This dissertation is based on archival research conducted in Ankara in the archive of the Provincial Bank (İller Bankası) established under the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. According to archival reports, there were four plans for the central district of Dersim (Tunceli Merkez), dated 1951, 1966, 1984, and 2000. The first plan is signed "EMANET" (which means that the Provincial Bank prepared the plan itself); the others are signed by İlhan Artuner, Vedat Yalçınkaya, and Özhan Elgin, respectively. Because the archival materials were stored in poor conditions, the 1951-dated plan has been lost. I also found other plans of the city dated May 1999, October 1999 and 2001; however, these plans are not indicated in the registry. I scanned the plates I found in the archive, spliced them together, and digitalized them.

The first master plan of the city was prepared by the Provincial Bank in 1951. Later, in 1979, a plan study was undertaken. It was renewed in 1983 and approved in 1984. A revision was made in 1995. In 1997, the Provincial Bank conducted a tender for a contract to make a new plan.

In addition to these plans, I found research reports about the city. The Tunceli Central District Construction Plan Research (Tunceli Merkez İmar Planı Araştırması), prepared by master architect Özhan Elgin, was among them. It gives information about the city's position within the region and country, its population, its physical features and natural resources, the space formation of the city, its economic structure, its social fabric, the use of urban spaces, its social, transportation, and technical infrastructure, property patterns, urban land values, previous planning decisions, high level plans, and development trends. Finally, plan decisions are presented. In this way, it is possible to observe to what extent the previous master plans were realized.

Another archival document is a 1999 explanatory report of the Tunceli Merkez master plan. It reveals the socioeconomic infrastructure, spatial features, and certain projections (with regard to population, economy, employment, housing, and working areas). The 1997 maps prepared by Özhan Elgin within the scope of research for the master plan were also found in the archive.

Second, I conducted many in-depth interviews with prominent figures of the city: the governor, the rector of Tunceli University, the deputy mayor, unit supervisors within the municipality, the provincial chairmen of political parties and organizations (the AKP, CHP, the Democratic Rights Federation, the Labor Party, and the Communist Party of Turkey), the *dedes* –religious, political, and juridical leaders in Alevi communities– of the Tunceli Cemevi, representatives of NGOs, former mayors, academics and students at Tunceli University, the chairman of the Tunceli Industrialists and Entrepreneurs Foundation (Tunceli Sanayici ve Girişimcileri Derneği, TUSGİD), the chief of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tunceli (Tunceli Ticaret ve Sanayi Odası), the owner of Radio Munzur, the representative of the Firat Development Agency in Dersim, the representative of the Federation of Dersim Associations (Dersim Dernekleri Federasyonu, DEDEF), and the director of the Munzur Schools.

The field research was conducted between 2010 and 2015. In the meantime, I made several visits to Dersim that lasted from one to five weeks. Actual data about the social and economic life of the city that I had demanded – on the basis of the right to information act – from the Tunceli governorship and other governmental agencies was not shared for security purposes. This study thus repeats quantitative data presented by the Fırat Development Agency and TÜİK. However, almost all written requests for interviews were accepted by the government agencies.

Lastly, the identity of researchers and their networks play an important role when coming into contact with the Dersim people. “Are you from Dersim?” and “to which aşiret do you belong” are the principal questions asked by almost all interviewees. Being Dersim-born or at least being Alevi enables a trust relationship to be established. The political opinions of researchers also play a crucial role in the willingness of the Dersim people to accept an interview request.

The field research provided a wide range of materials, richer than I had expected. Because the field research was conducted in the peace process, almost everyone asked for an interview accepted my offer. The public officials were eager to explain democratic openings and the practices of the AKP government. Dersimlis who had been suppressed by the prior hegemony, on the other hand, were in need of narrating their own history. I think that this situation is directly related to the democratic atmosphere that emerged with the peace process. What was difficult was to analyse the narratives extracting from them the information about space – not history or culture.

## A Historical Outlook on Dersim

This chapter introduces Dersim in terms of its geographic features, administrative structure, population characteristics, and social life. First, geographic features of the province are presented as a common point of departure to demonstrate the relationship between natural space and sociopolitical life. Both society and the environment have been reframed by modern statecraft in accordance with the control and fiscal and commercial logic of the state. I claim that the state tends to associate the Dersim people to Dersim's physical landscape.

Second, the administrative structure of Dersim is described from a historical perspective. This includes the formation process of the province as an administrative unit from the Ottoman era to the republican period. On one hand, the change in Dersim's geographic frontiers and the transition from Dersim to Tunceli are demonstrated; on the other, the change of the representation relation between the representative and the represented is discussed. This section is continuously guided by the question of how the city has been physically and administratively remapped.

The remapping of the city cannot be considered independently of population movements. The most crucial demographic transformation occurred after the 1937-38 events. This not only meant a dramatic decline in the population of the province, but also the erasing of some villages from the map. Moreover, forced migration and forced evacuations of villages in the 1990s

created new “forbidden zones” and reshaped the residential areas of Dersim. Because the latter are examined in detail in the following chapters, this chapter focuses on the population composition of Dersim from the nineteenth century to 1950s.

The chapter includes a part about the social life of the city. It discusses the conditions under which subordinated social groups participate in social, political, and economic life relatively more than in other cities. The purpose of this part is to display the sociocultural dissimilarity of Dersim from neighboring conservative cities. Dersim’s social life, especially women’s participation in everyday life, can be interpreted both as a consequence of cultural codes and political struggles and as the cause of the development of diverse political tendencies –including most radical ones. Therefore, this part is included in the historical outlook.

## § 2.1 Geographic Features

James C. Scott opens the introductory chapter of *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, titled “Hills, Valleys and States,” by quoting Mark Elvin: “Making maps is hard, but mapping Guizhou province especially so...”<sup>1</sup> This sentence is also valid for Dersim which has no similarity with the Chinese province other than its mountains.

As Lefebvre argues, natural or physical space is the perception of “nature.”<sup>2</sup> It refers to the physical world and cosmos. Nature is still the “background of the picture”<sup>3</sup> even though there is not much pristine wilderness left in the world. However, natural space is more than a scene or “raw material”<sup>4</sup>: even a minor detail relating to nature can affect humans to a large extent because it acts “as source and as resource.”<sup>5</sup> Nature as source implies its originality; it is

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1 James C. Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 1.

2 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 27.

3 Ibid.

4 Ibid., 84.

5 Ibid., 30.

the primary version of the social process – the beginning of space’s history. Other forms of space consist of the abstraction of natural space. Nature as resource, on the other hand, represents a space that humans consume to perform a function. Capitalism is a regime in which exchange-value takes precedence over use-value – a quality that emerges from the use or consumption of object to satisfy human needs.<sup>6</sup> However, nature supplies only use value. Lefebvre emphasizes that a natural element is not a product because it is outside of social practice. “It provides resources for a creative and productive activity on the part of social humanity.”<sup>7</sup> In brief, to scrutinize different forms of space, one must start from natural space – “the common point of departure” as Lefebvre says.

Human geographers seek to show the role of geography in cultural and social processes by taking the social and the spatial as imbued in each other.<sup>8</sup> Although the relation of nature and culture has been recently termed a binary opposition, there is vital information traffic between them.<sup>9</sup> Geographic features affect economics, social life, cultural relations, and the everyday life of habitants while land and settlement issues, locational patterns, and landscapes are influenced by cultural attitudes and practices to a large extent.<sup>10</sup> This interaction is striking in Eastern Anatolia and Dersim, the case study of this dissertation.

In his study questioning why high-modernist projects intended to improve the human condition have failed, Scott argues that the first element of state-initiated social engineering is the administrative ordering of nature and

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- 6 Joel Kovel, *The Enemy of Nature: The End of Capitalism or The End of The World* (New York: Zed Books, 2002), 195-196.
- 7 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 70.
- 8 Tim Cresswell, *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology, and Transgression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 11.
- 9 *Spaces of Geographical Thought: Deconstructing Human Geography’s Binaries*, (eds.) Paul Cloke and Ron Johnston (London; Thousand Oaks, Calif.: SAGE Publications, 2005), 143.
- 10 Erin Hogan Fouberg, Alexander B. Murphy and H.J. de Blij, *Human Geography: People, Place, and Culture* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley&Sons, 2009), 29.

society.<sup>11</sup> Both society and the environment have been reshaped by modern statecraft. In this way, not only is a high degree of schematic knowledge and control possible, but the fiscal and commercial logics of the state overlap.<sup>12</sup> High-modernist projects consist of the calculation and standardization of natural elements, the invention of new techniques of controlling, and even a “reading” of nature for better management and extraction. In this part of the dissertation, I demonstrate the state’s attempt to “read” both Dersim’s territory and Dersim’s people geographically.

Dersim is surrounded by mountains on all sides; therefore it is still isolated to a large extent. Although these geographic conditions affect everyday life negatively, its isolated position protected the province from state operations, at least until 1937, as well as from the environmental effects of capitalism until the 1990s. In this section, general information about the physical conditions of the city is given to present the “natural space.” The mountains, rivers (which are the subject of current debates concerning hydroelectric power plants), tablelands, and valleys of Dersim are indicated and the plan of province before the 1937-1938 massacre, which reflected its natural frontiers, is introduced.

Mountains constitute the typical landforms of the region occupying 69.9 percent of the land mass.<sup>13</sup> Dersim’s mountains are the prolongation of the Eastern Taurus Mountains and extend along an east-west axis in accordance with the general character of mountains in Eastern Anatolia. These mountains are known as *Munzurs*. Although they do not afford easy passage, they can be traversed. The province cannot reach the fertile catchment basin between Erzincan and Iğdır due to the steep slopes. The Munzur mountain range runs from the south of hollow shapes formed by Erzincan-Tercan and Pasinler plains to the west of Pülümür. It has a length of 130 kilometers and its highest point is more than 3000 meters.<sup>14</sup> The highest point of the Munzurs, Akbaba

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11 James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, 4.

12 *Ibid.*, 11-15.

13 “Tunceli,” *Yurt Ansiklopedisi* (Istanbul: Anadolu Yayıncılık, 1981-1984).

14 *Ibid.*

Mountain (3462 m), is within the provincial borders of Erzincan. Considerable peaks within the provincial borders of Tunceli are Yılan Mountain (2950 m), Ziyaret Hill (3071 m), Karasakal Mountain (3123 m), Kırklar Mountain (2033 m), Topatan Hill (2234 m), Karaoğlan Mountain (2422 m), and Bağırpaşa Mountain (3292 m), which attaches the Munzurs to the Karasu-Aras Mountains.<sup>15</sup> In the southeast, there is the sheer slope connecting the mountains with the Ovacık lowland. Important passages through the range are the Munzur and Kemah Passes. In the 1959 research of Karl Nebert, the Munzur Mountains are categorized morphologically. The first group is characterized by limestone and looks like the Alps, and the second group consists of serpentine material and loose Neogene sediments, enabling agriculture.<sup>16</sup>

There are also deep rivers and brooks that have both physical and symbolic meanings for the inhabitants of the province. They are mostly in the north of the mountainous zone. Snow and rain waters feed the streams regularly; thus the flows of rivers are regular.<sup>17</sup> Munzur River, Peri River, Mercan River, Pülümür Brook, Hozat (Singeç) Brook, Avuşkert Brook, and Ormanyolu (Tahar, Toğar) Brook are significant watercourses flowing into the reservoir created by the Keban hydroelectric dam built on the Euphrates. With the construction of new hydroelectric power plants, new reservoirs will appear.

Peri River is one of the large branches of the Murat River. It arises from Şeytan Mountains of Bingöl, forms the frontier of Bingöl-Elazığ and then

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15 Ibid. In a 1959 issue of the journal published by the General Directorate for Mineral Research and Exploration (MTA), Karl Nebert cites other names for the highest points: Köşek Mountain, Kara Mountain, Bayram Mountain, Çatal Mountain. Karl Nebert, "Munzur Dağı Bölgesinin Jeolojisi Hakkında," *Maden Tetkik ve Arama Dergisi* 52 (1959), 35. Necmeddin Sahir Silan's more detailed list is as follows: Katırtepe (2300 m), Koçgölbaşı (3250 m), Eğripınar and Finik mountains (3150 m), Büyük Gölbaşı (3000 m), Akbaba (3449 m), Karacakale (3160 m), Bağırbaşa (3287 m), Bobyezbaba (3205 m), Fahribaba (2530 m), Şambudağı (2405 m), Acıelma-Süaydela (2450 m), Küçük Göladağı, Temas (2750 m), Hamıkbaba (2057 m), Hipitutu (2600 m), Düzgünbaba (2083 m), Kırklar, Sinevar (2050 m), Ziyaret (3188 m), Bayram, Yılan (3000 m), Zel (2200 m), Sarısaltık (2276 m), Kızıldağı (2200 m), and Beyazdağ (2150 m). Many others are less than 2000 meters "Doğu Sorunu" *Necmeddin Sahir Silan Raporları* (1939-1953), 188-189.

16 Nebert, 35-36.

17 The flows of the rivers destabilized after the construction of dams.

downriver the frontier of Elazığ-Tunceli. Teke, Yuvanık, Kalman, Kıl, Sekban, and Muhindi Brooks join it within the borders of Tunceli. Because it is snow-fed, it has significant water even in summer.<sup>18</sup> Hozat Brook is a small river originating from west of Hozat. Ulukale and Hadişar Brooks join Avuşkert Brook; and Emirgan, Ağveran, Ekrek, and Oskih Brooks join Ormanyolu Brook.<sup>19</sup> An important brook, Mercan River, arises from the west side of the Avcı Mountains. Until recently, Mercan River joined the Munzur after traversing Mercan Valley and later joined with the Pülümür and Peri rivers to flow into Fırat River.<sup>20</sup>

Munzur River, which has a legendary and vital role for the Dersim people, arises from the foothills of Ziyaret Mountain situated in Ovacık and arrives in the city center after covering a distance of sixty-three kilometers. Along this course, several rivulets such as Sarıtaş, Laç, Kalan, and İksor join it. In the current city center, the Munzur joins Pülümür Brook at a place known as *Gole Çetu* (*Gole Çhetu*) which is enshrined by inhabitants. Apart from spiritual connotations which are scrutinized in the following parts of this study, the river has a life-sustaining function in the daily life of both the people and other creatures. The area surrounding the river was to be a national park and it was granted statutory legal protection in 1971. 1518 plant species have been recorded in the Munzur Valley; forty-three of these endemic plants are unique to the Munzur Mountains while 227 are unique to Turkey.<sup>21</sup> In addition, the valley hosts rare animals such as the mountain goat, the curved horned goat, and the gray bear.

The severe geographic features mentioned above have determined urban life to a large extent. Sharp mountains, deep valleys, and vigorous rivers have obstructed modern interventions and human interference. For example, because mountains did not provide ready passage; until recently, the valleys have been the natural roads. The first roads were constructed by the state in the 1930s and were used for military purposes. A Dersim report written in 1933 or

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18 “Tunceli,” *Yurt Ansiklopedisi*.

19 Ibid.

20 Beyza Üstün and Fuat Ercan, “Munzur’a Vurulacak Altın Kelepçe Can Suyu Olacak mı?,” in *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, (ed.) Şükrü Aslan (İstanbul: İletişim, 2010), 535.

21 <http://www.tuncelikulturturizm.gov.tr/TR,57342/munzur-vadisi-milli-parki.html>.

1934 by the Gendarmerie General Command under the Ministry of the Interior gives detailed information about the ancient roads of Dersim. This report reveals that all roads attaching central Dersim to neighboring cities were undeveloped in the 1930s. It includes a list of these rough roads. Almost each is described by expressions that highlight natural difficulties: “passage is possible only by foot in winter,” “it is very hard to pass by *mekkari*,”<sup>22</sup> “it is possible to pass by *kelek* (raft) in *Türüşmek*,” “...there are other ways; however, they consist of paths... one may go and return only by a sled named *evik* in winter,” and “all roads are on hilly ground and their widths are generally convenient for the passage of only one person.”<sup>23</sup> The analysis of these roads in the aforementioned state report, prepared before the 1937-1938 Dersim operations, should be discussed from various perspectives. It was certainly an attempt to collect and map information that could be exploited by the modernist state for its military projects. Nevertheless, this picture presents determinative character of the physical space as well. Without pretending that a purely natural or original state of affairs can be found anywhere, the human capacity to transform nature (and the desire to transform it) was limited in Dersim as far as other provinces of the country are concerned. This is because the history of the space –from nature to abstraction– runs differently in Dersim for several reasons. The political power has claimed that the dominance of nature is a reflection of human nature and that the latter reflects the severity of nature.

One may observe the analogy of the physical space and the inhabitants by examining documents on Dersim. This analogy goes back to the pre-republican period. For example, Kazım Karabekir’s 1918-19 report, written in response to an unnumbered message (15 Kânunuevvel 1335), includes the comment:

Dersim is so rocky, wild, impassable, and steep sloped that arable land is very limited. Affecting their characters, the wildness of the land has made the Dersim people wild and bloodthirsty, deprived of humanity

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22 Tradesman arranging the transportation of goods and passengers.

23 *Dersim Raporu*, (ed.) İzzeddin Çalışlar, 27-31.

and virtue. Because of the inadequacy of tilled land, people compensate for this deficiency of nature with robbery and brigandage.<sup>24</sup>

Books published in the 1930s and 40s keep this discourse going. It can be said that racist policies influencing the entire world provided a fertile environment for the reproduction of this analogy. In his book published in 1931, Naşit (Hakkı) Uluğ, the journalist and editor of *Hakimiyet-i Milliye* journal, depicts Dersim's geography: “[its] nature is disobedient. In this huge homeland of 5800 square kilometers lying 2000 meters above sea level – surrounded by the overweening Munzur in the north, Peri Brook in the east, Murat and Fırat in the south and west – nature rules over humans, animals, and plants with its harsh conditions.”<sup>25</sup> Another Naşit (Hakkı) Uluğ source, dated 1939, identifies environmental features with the inhabitants of Dersim. In the first chapter, entitled “With Its Rebellious and Rugged Nature Dersim Has Harbored Brigandage for Centuries,” he asks “why is there still a ‘Dersim’ in the midst of our homeland that continues to annoy us?”<sup>26</sup> He adds:

We seek an answer within the insurgent nature. With its abrupt mountains, its brooks embedded in the middle of escarpments, with its caves and lairs that are hundreds of meters in length and width, [and] with oak forests covering sheer slopes, Dersim harbored brigandage for centuries. Aliboğazı, Kutuderesi, Kalanderesi, Dojıkbaba, Bobyazbaba, [and] Zelbaba remain as if they were impenetrable. Dersim brigandage had taken refuge in these places.<sup>27</sup>

In his book published in 1940 Ömer Kemal Ađar mentions Munzur as a “bare and awesome” mountain snowcapped for eight months of the year.<sup>28</sup> He expresses his opinion about the mountain with these phrases: “Munzur is pretty in summer, poisonous in winter. It is a significant mountain. In winter, the

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24 Bulut, *Dersim Raporları*, 223.

25 Uluğ, *Derebeyi ve Dersim*, 22.

26 Uluğ, *Tunceli Medeniyete Açılıyor*, 7.

27 Ibid.

28 Ađar, *Tunceli-Dersim Coğrafyası*, 8.

high, steep passages of Munzur are closed. Its awfulness increases much.”<sup>29</sup> This discourse continues in the following years. An article of Besim Darkot, a geography professor, on Dersim’s geography is one example. He considers the hard geographic conditions as the reason for both the inhabitants’ brutishness and their political activities against state authority. “Mountain character seems to rule over all, even in life on the plane. Water floods from the mountains. Sometimes raiding crowd of people is more destructive than this water...”<sup>30</sup> The author cites geographic elements of the province to support state policies of the single party period:

People wishing to enter in this hilly terrain first encounter hardly passable rivers easily guarded by castles positioned in hills next to passageways, and then mountains rising step by step. Canyons which divide these mountains and resist armies with little effort... Plains that people use as fields and winter quarters among mountains, summer pastures in higher zones... In brief, it is the kind of country that gives refugees the opportunity to survive and doesn’t easily give way to foreigners.<sup>31</sup>

He continues describing natural elements while recalling the ancient Dersim image deprived of civilization:

Cotton in small quantities has been cultivated since of old. Mulberry tree are grown in many places... There is no doubt that fruit growing is open to improvement. In a geography book it is written that the fruit types decrease in this part of the Eastern Anatolia. Must we unthinkingly attribute that to climate? May fruit trees, like civilization, be late to enter these places?<sup>32</sup>

Reports of Necmeddin Sahir Silan, the Tunceli deputy in 1943 and 1946, give information about the geography of the province. Although he highlights its unspoiled beauty, he describes geographic features in a similar way: “Tunceli

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29 Ibid.

30 Darkot, “Tunceli Üzerine Coğrafi Görüşler,” 116.

31 Ibid., 117.

32 Ibid., 122.

seems a small place at first sight; is a big environment embracing the most difficult assets of nature including abrupt and precipitous mountains whose peaks reach to clouds, narrow and sheer mountain passes that terrify people, wide and deep cliffs.”<sup>33</sup>

All in all, geographic assessments of Dersim usually reflect a pejorative approach –characterized by connotations of nature– to its people. Living in the mountains under the laws of nature is seen as subhuman because this practice involves indifference to the human ability to transform natural space. On the other hand, the inherent state of the space has been used to explain the social, political, and economic behavior of people living in this space. It is perceived by the governing elites as the main reason for the “ungovernable” character of its inhabitants; therefore, natural space has been interpreted as the first thing in need of transformation.

## § 2.2 Administrative Structure

The famous book of M. Nuri Dersimi, who became a Kurdish nationalist in response to the Turkist policies of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) after the Balkan Wars<sup>34</sup> and became the general secretary of the Kurdish students’ association Kürdistan Muhibban Cemiyeti in 1912, expands on the province’s history and socio-spatial features. The book, first published in Syria in 1952, argues that Dersim is a geographic domain the frontiers of which border Erzurum, Muş, and Çapakçur (Bingöl) *vilayets* –provinces, the largest administrative divisions of the empire headed by a governor or beylerbeyi– in the east; the Fırat River in the north; Malatya in the west; and the Murat River in the south.<sup>35</sup> Dersimi divides the area into two parts: East and West Dersim.<sup>36</sup> According to this classification, West Dersim consists of Hozat, Çemişgezek, Pertek, Ovacık, and Kemah; East Dersim consists of Mazgirt, Kiğı, Çarsancak (Peri), Nazımiye, and Pülümür.

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33 “Doğu Sorunu” *Necmeddin Sahir Silan Raporları* (1939-1953), 188.

34 Hakan Özoğlu, *Osmanlı Devleti ve Kürt Milliyetçiliği* (İstanbul: Kitap Yayınları, 2005), 105.

35 Dersimi, *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim*, 9.

36 *Ibid.*, 35.

Dersim's official borders were modified several times in the Ottoman Era. Administrative reforms of the Tanzimat gave way to the extensive transformation of the province with the reorganization of the Diyarbekir *eyalet* – administrative division before 1864. (A part of Dersim –Çemişgezek, Pertek and Mazgirt– had been registered previously in Diyarbekir.) Hereby, Mamuret-ül Aziz (Harput) was excluded from the eyalet of Diyarbekir and it was made an individual eyalet in 1846.<sup>37</sup> Dersim (the center of which was Hozat) became a *sanjak* – one of the administrative districts into which a vilayet is divided– of Harput in 1848, while Gürcanis, Kuruçay, Ovacık, Mazgird, Kuzican, Koçgiri, and Kemah became its *kazas* – a subdivision of sanjak.<sup>38</sup> Kemah and Ovacık were declared as the center in 1851 and 1859, respectively.

After the promulgation of the Vilayet Law (1864), Dersim was organized as vilayet in 1880<sup>39</sup> under the governorship of Fikri Pasha, and Hozat was re-defined as the center. Because Hozat was proclaimed as the vilayet center, a new arrangement was made in compliance with its new status: a government office, military installations, hospital, telegraph office, prison, city hall, mosque, and an Ottoman junior high school (*rüşdiye*) were built there.<sup>40</sup> The research of Vital Cuinet, a French geographer who had been charged with surveying the areas and counting their population in order to establish the ability of the Ottoman Empire to pay its debts, suggests that Dersim had lost its status in 1888 by an imperial order and was transformed into a sanjak of the vilayet of Harput.<sup>41</sup> According to Cuinet this sanjak was divided into nine administrative kazas consisting of 533 villages.<sup>42</sup>

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37 İbrahim Yılmazçelik, *XIX. Yüzyılın İkinci Yarısında Dersim Sancağı* (Elazığ: Çağ Ofset Matbaacılık, 1999), 34.

38 Ibid., 34-37.

39 *Dersim Raporu*, 75.

40 "Tunceli," *Yurt Ansiklopedisi*.

41 Vital Cuinet, *La Turquie D'Asie: Géographie Administrative Statistique Descriptive et Raisonnée de Chaque Province de L'Asie-Mineure vol 6* (Paris, 1891; Istanbul: Isis, 2001), 260.

42 Ibid., 261.

Table 2.1 Kazas and Villages of Dersim at the End of the Nineteenth Century

Kazas	Villages
Khozat (Hozat), kaza center	100
Tchimitch-Kézek (Çemişgezek)	98
Tcharsandjak (Çarsancak, Akpazar)	90
Mazagherd (Mazgirt)	80
Pertek	
Kouzitcham (Kuzican, Pülümür)	80
Ovadjik (Ovacık)	40
Pah	30
Kizil-Kilissé (Kızılkilise, Nazımiye)	15

The event Mamuret-ül Aziz Vilayet Annual Yearbook of 1892 asserts that Hozat was recognized as the center of the Dersim sanjak.<sup>43</sup> With the amendment, Kuzican kaza was registered to the Erzincan sanjak of Erzurum, and the Ovacık and Pah kazas were rescinded.<sup>44</sup> The Annual Yearbook of 1908 presents Dersim as a sanjak consisting of five kazas, sixteen *nahiyes* – administrative units smaller than kazas – and 628 villages.<sup>45</sup> An administrative record dated 1907-1908 that includes nahiye settlements may be schematized as follows<sup>46</sup>:

43 “Tunceli,” *Yurt Ansiklopedisi*.

44 Yılmazçelik, 42.

45 Tuncer Baykara, *Anadolu'nun Tarihi Coğrafyasına Giriş: Anadolu'nun İdari Taksimatı* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü Yayınları, 1988), 138.

46 Yılmazçelik, 44.

Table 2.2 Administrative Structure of Dersim in 1907-1908

Dersim sanjak (Hozat kaza)
Çemişgezek kaza
1 Paşoazlık nahiye
2 Germili nahiye
Mazgird kaza
1 Pah nahiye
2 Türüşmek nahiye
Çarsancak kaza
1 Pertek nahiye
Kızılkilise (Nazımiye) kaza
Ovacık kaza

From 1888 through the decline of the Ottoman Empire, Dersim kept its sanjak status. As far as the republican era is concerned, Dersim was transformed into a district of Elazığ in 1926 and then became a city with the name Tunceli via the 1935 Tunceli Law.

The administrative structure of Dersim in the republican era is directly related to the aforementioned law. İsmail Beşikçi's book on the Tunceli Law, written in 1977 but not published for another thirteen years, presents parliamentary discussions about the law. Beşikçi emphasizes that the legislative proposal was unique because it passed through parliament quickly and without challenge. Beşikçi quotes parliamentary speeches and examines the justification for the legislative proposal and the implementation of the law.

The parliamentary speech of Şükrü Kaya, the Minister of Internal Affairs, aims to support the Turkishness of Dersim with arguments related to the Çaldıran War. He argues that "in certain places, if the people are ignorant and poor because of the barrenness of the land and if they are armed, troubles never end, [but] almost all modern countries have such underdeveloped

places.”<sup>47</sup> Kaya highlights the “normality” of the case of Dersim thusly: “There is no abnormality there. I would like to state that there is no abnormal situation in our country.”<sup>48</sup> Although Kaya insists on the normality and ordinari-ness of the disorder the state was confronted with, the solution offered was unprecedented, exceptional, and arguably abnormal. For the first time, a law was enacted to reorganize and reshape a city administratively and spatially in accordance with the concerns of the political power for its own safety.

Dersim’s administrative boundaries continued to change even after the law because the law’s second article allowed the *korkomutan*<sup>49</sup> to change the borders and statuses of kazas and nahiyes.<sup>50</sup> The administrative model, which was called the Fourth General Inspectorate and was under the leadership of the *korkomutan* who possessed the authority of a minister, lasted until 1 January 1947<sup>51</sup> as a consequence of several extensions to the period of the code’s validity.<sup>52</sup> During this period, Pülümür, which was previously a district of Erzincan, and Nazımiye, which was previously a district of Elazığ, were included into Tunceli.<sup>53</sup> However, the city was still governed by the provisional center, Elazığ, in accordance with articles of Tunceli Law, which intended “long-awaited peace and serenity, safety and public order.”<sup>54</sup>

As administrative frontiers changed over the decades, local administration and power relations also transformed. Until the construction of the new nation state, Dersim had been under the direct control of tribal chiefs. It can be

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47 Beşikçi, *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi*, 10.

48 Ibid.

49 Korkomutan means the person appointed as both governor and commander. He was selected from among the highest ranking officers for the surveillance of Tunceli, Bingöl, Elazığ, and Erzincan.

50 Beşikçi, *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi*, 11.

51 Documents archived by the Petition Commission of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) reveal that implementation of the Tunceli Law continued even after 1947. A petition sent by a citizen named Hıdır Danik pressing charges against Safi Çelik, the governor of a sub-district of Tunceli, reveals that local administrators maintained the restrictive policies defined by the law. *Radikal*, 12.04.2012.

52 Beşikçi, *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi*, 38.

53 <http://www.tunceli.gov.tr/page.asp?id=49>.

54 Beşikçi, *Tunceli Kanunu (1935) ve Dersim Jenosidi*, 38.

said that the unstable administrative status of the province in the Ottoman era reinforced tribal structures. On the other hand, there was continuity in the relationship between the central power and the local tribes: administrative structures took shape in parallel with the power struggle between central and local powers. Janet Klein also takes the power struggle among different local powers into account. In her study, which scrutinizes Kurdish society with its own historical process via the case of the Hamidiye Light Cavalry Regiments, Klein questions how states empower insurgent groups for the sake of order and how transform such communities from a threat into part of the state's authority.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, Kurdistan –which was a frontier region difficult for the central power to control and accordingly under the governance of notables such as tribal chiefs and sheikhs– was always a geography in need of civilization in the eyes of the Ottoman government. According to Klein, “local power relations and identities were significantly transformed through the state-sponsored empowerment of certain groups.”<sup>56</sup> The Light Cavalry Regiments are argued to be the consequence of the empowerment of Kurdish tribes against Armenian groups with the aim of exerting authority in tribal zones. Klein implies that Kurds and Armenians were perceived by the central power as local groups instead of ethnic identities, and the power struggle between these two local groups was manipulated in accordance with geographic and demographic envisagements of the center for regions where the central authorities have difficulty penetrating.

From this standpoint, the collaboration between the central government and the Kurds can be discussed in many different ways. First of all, Klein recalls that the state, at first glance, appears to be behaving inconsistently with “the idea of the state” when it empowers local enemy groups. However, when compared to modernist practices of other states in the nineteenth century, one may observe that the Hamidiye project was intended to settle and control the tribes, to force them to submit to the central authority, to centralize and protect Ottoman lands, and to incorporate “non-state spaces” or “stateless zones”

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55 Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 1-9.

56 *Ibid.*, 9.

into state spaces. In other words, it is possible to read this coalition as an attempt to tame Kurdish tribes while also suppressing Armenians.

On one hand, this coalition was the result of the legitimacy of the agency of local Kurdish chiefs. Although intended to keep Kurds in line by making some concessions, local powers were not contained completely. Klein emphasizes that the empire was not a monolithic actor: local Kurdish chiefs had significant influence on the local; therefore, the central power was obliged to act by paying attention to tribal powers. On the other hand, the coalitions formed between the central power and local powers created local representatives of the empire. In other words, as Klein points out, “lines between state and local power (and hence, state and local identities) became more blurred.”<sup>57</sup> It must be emphasized that tribes are not unchanging groups. Their compositions, functions, and organizations adapt in parallel with the relations among tribes and the relations between any one tribe and the state.<sup>58</sup> Thus, local figures that the central power was compelled to respect because of their political clout could turn into part of the state in the course of time. As Martin van Bruinessen argues, “the tribes may even be seen as creations of the state.”<sup>59</sup> While the incorporated in the state, they became “the state” in the local. Such coalitions continued in the republican era. Although local tribes were seen as a source of trouble by the new regime, the government cooperated with established local figures in order to be legitimate in the eyes of the local people.

Maladministration by *mutasarrıfs* –the administrative chiefs of sanjaks– after 1876 is a principal reason for the rise of tribes.<sup>60</sup> However, the Dersim Report asserts that local figures had always taken part in the administration of Dersim whether the state recognized them or not.

We notice that chiefs such as Shah Hüseyin Bey, Gülâbi Bey, Mansur Aga, and Sheikh Süleyman ruled Dersim in the 1860s. Hüseyin Bey

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57 Ibid., 12.

58 Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State: The Social and Political Structures of Kurdistan*, 134.

59 Ibid.

60 Akyürekli, 23.

became the kaymakam of Pülümür and Gülâbi Bey became the kaymakam of Mazgirt in 1875. In other words, in the administrative organization of Dersim after the *Tanzimat*, kaymakams and government officers consisted wholly of local chiefs and their children.<sup>61</sup>

During the national struggle and at the beginning of the republican era, relations between local powers and the central government continued. The first Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) in 1920 reflected the collaboration between local powers and the pro-Western Kemalist state elite. Dersim deputies in the first parliament were Ahmet Ramiz Tan, Diyar Aga (Diyar Yıldırım), Hasan Hayri Kanko, Mustafa Öztürk Aga, Mustafa Zeki Saltık, and Abdülhak Tevfik Gençtürk.

Ahmet Ramiz Bey, the son of the chief of the Karahallı tribe, had graduated from Harbiye Imperial School for Tribes and had joined the army. He had taken part in the national struggle. After the formation of the Second Group against the Group for Defense of the National Rights of Anatolia and Rumelia gathered under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, he joined in the Second Group.<sup>62</sup> Diyar Aga, the son of the chief of the Ferhat Uşağı tribe and one of most known figures of Dersim, was a landowner. He had supported the national struggle. After being selected as deputy, he always took sides with Mustafa Kemal.<sup>63</sup> Although his term in parliament ended in 1923, he endeavored to block the spread of the Sheikh Said rebellion and compelled Dersim's tribes to declare their loyalty to the government.<sup>64</sup> Hasan Hayri Bey, the son of the chief of the Sheikh Hasanlı tribe, had graduated from Harbiye Imperial School for Tribes like his colleague, Ahmet Ramiz. He had been promoted to squadron leader in 1916 by virtue of his pro-government stance during rebellions

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61 *Dersim Raporu*, 74.

62 Fahri Çoker-Türk Parlamento Tarihi Araştırma Grubu, *Türk Parlamento Tarihi: Milli Mücadele ve TBMM I. Dönemi 1919-1923*, vol. 3 (Ankara: Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Vakfı Yayınları, 1994-1995), 283.

63 *Ibid.*, 285.

64 Kağan Gökalp and Suat Bulut, *Dersim'in Gizlenmeye Çalışılan Gerçek İfadesi: Dersimli Diyar Ağa* (Ankara: Kripto Kitaplar, 2011), 137.

that had occurred in Dersim. On the other hand, he also took part in the Second Group.<sup>65</sup> When his term expired at the end of the first session in 1923, he returned to Dersim. He was tried by the Eastern Independence Tribunal on the grounds that he supported Sheikh Said rebellion (1925) and was sentenced to death in 1925.<sup>66</sup> In his book, M. Nuri Dersimi states that in the Lozan Conference, Hasan Hayri had enunciated that the Kurds would not separate from the Turks and that he disagreed with separatist approaches.<sup>67</sup>

Mustafa Öztürk Aga (known as Miço Aga), the unschooled son of the chief of the Abbasoğlu tribe, was busy with his tribe's affairs. Dersimi makes mention of him as "Gazi's man" while describing a ball organized in Elazığ.<sup>68</sup> He was killed in the 1938 events. On the other hand, the Elazığ-born Mustafa Zeki Saltık had also graduated from Harbiye Imperial School for Tribes, like many others. He took part in the Sivas Independence Tribunal in 1920. After his term as deputy, he continued to work as high-ranking soldier.<sup>69</sup> Lastly, Abdülhak Tevfik Gençtürk, the son of gendarmerie sergeant Veli Ağa, was an investigating judge in Dersim. At the end of his term in 1923, he demanded to be reinstated to his previous job. He was appointed to the Mazgirt office of the attorney general; however, he was arrested in 1925 on the grounds that he collaborated with Seyid Rıza, and he was put in prison.

It is crucial that the deputies in the first term of the TBMM (1920-1923) represented Dersim's locality to a great extent in comparison to other cities. All Dersim's deputies in this period were Dersim-born.<sup>70</sup> Moreover, almost all had close tribal relations, showing that the collaboration between the founding elites and Dersim's local powers, which had begun during the national

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65 Çoker, 286-287.

66 Mehmet Bayrak, "Osmanlı Saltanatından Cumhuriyet Rejimine Bir Siyaset Tarzı Olarak Alevi Katliamları," *Dersim: 1936-1938* organized by Kurdish Institute of Paris, 27.11.2009, [http://www.institutkurde.org/conferences/dersim-1936-1938/gizli\\_belgeler.html](http://www.institutkurde.org/conferences/dersim-1936-1938/gizli_belgeler.html).

67 Dersimi, 127.

68 Ibid., 130.

69 Çoker, 290-291.

70 Ahmet Ramiz Tan (Hozat), Diyar Aga (Diyar Yıldırım) (Hozat), Hasan Hayri Kanko (Hozat), Mustafa Öztürk Aga (Hozat), Mustafa Zeki Saltık (Elazığ-Harput), and Abdülhak Tevfik Gençtürk (Hozat).

struggle, continued during the first parliamentary period. However, in the second period of parliament (1923-1927), one of the two deputies was Istanbul-born.<sup>71</sup> One may claim that the Sheikh Said rebellion shook government's trust in tribes; therefore, it was inclined to nominate candidates not having tribal relations in order to restore state order. As is well known, repressive measures were taken in eastern cities starting in 1925 in line with security concerns. Consequently, until the first multiparty general election in 1946, local candidates were not preferred or were less preferred.<sup>72</sup> The foundation of the Democratic Party (DP) had posed a threat to the CHP and the maintenance of order and safety after 1938 via forced migration had obliged CHP to soften authoritarian policies in the province. Because important tribal leaders had been killed or eliminated, most inhabitants had been displaced by the end of the 1930s, and there was no longer a need to refrain from nominating local figures. In addition, on the eve of the multiparty system, the CHP had to appear more democratic and more respectful of popular sovereignty in order to compete with the DP, which had emerged with claims to the contrary. In the

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- 71 Dersim deputies between 1923 and 1927 were Ahmet Şükrü Bey (Ahmet Beğ Kulualp), a farmer from Pertek, and Feridun Fikri Bey (Düşünsel), a doctor of law from Istanbul. See *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, vol 1, (eds.) Feridun Keşir, Fatih Ören, and Necati Sungur (Ankara: TBMM Basın ve Halkla İlişkiler Müdürlüğü Yayınları, 2010), 90. [http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/TBMM\\_Album/Cilt1/index.html](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/TBMM_Album/Cilt1/index.html) [20 May 2012].
- 72 Ibid. In the period 1927-1931, in which Tunceli was attached to Elazığ: Ahmet Saffet (Okay) (Istanbul, military officer), Fazıl Ahmet (Aykaç) (Istanbul, educator and journalist), Hasan Tahsin (Berk) (Selanik, public officer), Hüseyin Bey (Gökçelik) (Elazığ, police chief), Muhittin Bey (Çöteli) (Elazığ, agriculturalist), Mustafa Bey (Solmaz) (Harpur, teacher), and Nakyettin Bey (Mehmet Naki Yücekök) (Macedonia, teacher and public officer). In the period 1931-1935, during which Tunceli was still attached to Elazığ: Ahmet Saffet Okay, Fazıl Ahmet Aykaç, Hasan Tahsin Berk, Hüseyin Gökçelik, Fuat Bey (Ali Fuat Ağralı) (Molova, doctor of law and public officer), Fuat Ziya Bey (Mehmet Fuat Çiyiltepe) (Istanbul, military officer), and Memduh Şevket Bey (Mustafa Memduh Esendal) (Istanbul, ambassador and novelist). In the period 1935-1939, due to the 1935 Tunceli law, the province was administrated by the *korkomutan*. In the period 1939-1943: Sami Erkman (Aptürrahman Sami Erkman) (Yanya, military officer), Haydar Rüştü Öktem (Ali Haydar Öktem) (Gümüşhane, newspaperman and public officer), and Mitat Yenel (Ahmet Mithat Yenel) (İzmir, public officer). In the period 1943-1946: Necmeddin Sahir Sılan (Edirne, public officer and journalist) and Hasan Üçöz (Boğazlıyan, teacher).

1946-1950 term, Tunceli was represented by Edirne-born Necmeddin Sahir Silan, who had also been one of deputies during the previous term, and Palu-born Mahmut Tan, who had been a councilman in the Kalan Municipality and the chairman of the Kalan People's Room.

As mentioned, one may ascertain much about the social and political atmosphere of Dersim in the 1940s due to documents archived by Necmeddin Sahir Silan. These documents show that Dersim deputies had a crucial role in mediating between the state and inhabitants. They commonly visited their home districts, spoke with their constituency, and reported back to the central government.<sup>73</sup> Silan's reports show that people perceived or pretended to perceive the deputy as a "father" as far as the form of address used in petitions sent is concerned. Because there are only almost all the reports he gathered were about himself, it is not possible to understand people's real considerations; however, his approach parallels the normalization of relations between the center and local. His good relations with inhabitants may be the reason for his renomination. On the other hand, the nomination of Mahmut Tan was both the result of a political atmosphere purified of tribal threats and an electoral strategy of being seen close to the local.

The DP's rise affected Dersim's dynamics as well as the dynamics of the country as a whole. The election of 1950 resulted in the DP gaining two chairs in Tunceli. Both of these deputies, Hızır Aydın (Hızır Aydın) and Hasan Remzi Kulu, were born in Dersim and were engaged in agriculture and trade.<sup>74</sup> Silan had resigned from parliament on election day and switched to the DP; however, he would not be a deputy again. In the ensuing years, the CHP would regain its chairs in Tunceli with candidates having local links.<sup>75</sup>

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73 Zafer Toprak, "Toplumsal Mühendislik ve Necmeddin Sahir Silan," in *"Doğu Sorunu" Necmeddin Sahir Silan Raporları (1939-1953)*, (eds.) Tuba Akekmekçi and Muazzez Pervan (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2010), xv.

74 *TBMM Albümü 1920-2010*, vol 2, 599.

75 In the period 1954-1957: Arslan Bora (Mazgirt, military officer, CHP), Bahri Turgut Okaygün (Kalan, public officer, DP), and Mehmet Fethi Ülkü (Elazığ, teacher and writer, CHP). In the period 1957-1960: Hızır Aydın (Nazımiye, merchant and deputy, switched to the CHP), Arslan Bora, and Fethi Ülkü. In the period 1961-1965: Vahap Kışoğlu (Harput, teacher, New Turkey Party) and Fethi Ülkü. In the period 1965-1969: Kenan Aral (Pülümür, advocate, Justice Party)

Consequently, the diffusion and the impact of tribes on the central government weakened from 1938 onward; however, all political parties and deputies sought the acceptance of leading tribes in order to win the vote of the Dersim people.

Although administrative frontiers and the profile of representatives changed over the decades, the government's endeavor to know inhabitants remained unchanged. Reports written by Silan after 1943 prove that the principal intention of the central government was to get information about the Dersim people.<sup>76</sup> This intention is intermingled with spatial policies. While the pre-1938 administration, which had not yet overcome tribal influence, was identified with a primitive, dispersed urban organization, the new city, Tunceli, represented both the definitive rule of the Turkish state and a new spatial order planned in line with modernist objectives. It is possible to ascertain this relation between the new spatial reorganization and the post-1938 administration in Silan's reports: "Thus, the attempts to know and read the soul of Dersimlis

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and Hasan Ünlü (Mazgirt, advocate, CHP). In the period 1969-1973: Kenan Aral and Hüseyin Yenipınar (Nazımiye, teacher, CHP). In the period 1973-1977: Nihat Saltık (Karaca, banker, CHP) and Süleyman Yıldırım (Tunceli, advocate, CHP). In the period 1977-1980: Hüseyin Erkanlı (Nazımiye, advocate, CHP) and Ali Haydar Veziroğlu (Ovacık, merchant, CHP/independant/Unity Party of Turkey). In the period 1983-1987: Musa Ateş (Pülümür, merchant and public officer, People's Party (HP) /Social Democratic People's Party(SHP)) and Ali Rıdvan Yıldırım (Kabun, public officer, HP/SHP/Democratic Left Party (DSP)). In the period 1987-1991: Kamer Genç (Nazımiye, public officer, SHP) and Orhan Veli Yıldırım (Tunceli, advocate, SHP). In the period 1991-1995: Kamer Genç and Vahdet Sinan Yerlikaya (Ovacık, advocate, SHP/CHP). In the period 1995-1999: Kamer Genç (Right Path Party(DYP)) and Orhan Veli Yıldırım (CHP). In the period 1999-2002: Kamer Genç and Bekir Gündoğan (Tunceli, pharmacist, independant/DSP/independant/New Turkey Party (YTP)). In the period 2002-2007: Hasan Güyüldar (Tunceli, civil engineer, CHP) and Vahdet Sinan Yerlikaya (CHP). In the period 2007-2011: Kamer Genç (independant/CHP) and Şerafettin Halis (Hozat, teacher, independant/Democratic Society Party(DTP) /independant/ Peace and Democracy Part (BDP)). In 2011: Kamer Genç (CHP) and Hüseyin Aygün (Tunceli, advocate, CHP).

76 Gözde Orhan, "Necmeddin Sahir Silan Arşivi'nin Sundukları: 1930'lardan 1950'lere İktidarın Doğuş ve Dersim Algısı," *Toplumsal Tarih* 210 (June 2011), 77.

as well as Dersim went hand in hand with an organized plan for the construction of roads and bridges, government buildings and schools, barracks and police stations, [and] lodgings for public servants and military officers in the Dersim region.”<sup>77</sup>

Reading the soul of Dersim and the Dersim people necessitated different techniques peculiar to modern states such as a population census, conscription, and the registration of land. The reports on Dersim show that the state adopted these methods in the city and considered spaces in relation to their users.

### § 2.3 Population Movements

One of the most important indicators of the dialectical connection between space and social relations is population movement. It is important to examine population movements of Dersim to make sense of the spatial transformation of the city in accordance with the security requirements of the state. The demographic characteristics of the city, which were mostly determined by deportation policies and state violence of the 1930s, as well as the increasing interest in the registration of the population according to racial and ethnic categories are discussed in this section.

Even before the establishment of the Turkish state, a population census was conducted in the eastern provinces of the Ottoman Empire. While researching Ottoman state’s ability to pay its debt to Düyün-u Umumiye, Vital Cuinet carried out an evaluation of Dersim’s population as a sanjak of Mamuret-ül Aziz. According to him, the total population of Dersim was 63,430 at the end of the 1800s.<sup>78</sup>

Cuinet argues that the population of the kaza center, Hozat, was 5,600, comprised of 1,000 Muslims, 2,100 Kurds, 1,820 Qizilbashes, 506 Gregorian Armenians, and 174 Protestant Armenians.<sup>79</sup> When the populations of the 100 villages in the jurisdiction of Hozat are included, its total population rises to

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77 “Doğu Sorunu” *Necmeddin Sahir Silan Raporları (1939-1953)*, 186.

78 Cuinet, 261.

79 *Ibid.*, 264.

12,500 (3,734 Muslims, 2,356 Kurds, 5,086 Qizilbashs, 1,150 Gregorian Armenians, and 174 Protestant Armenians).<sup>80</sup>

Table 2.3 Population of Dersim's Communities at the End of the Nineteenth Century

Communities	Male	Female	Total
Muslims	7,460	8,000	15,460
Kurds	6,000	6,000	12,000
Qizilbashs	13,700	14,100	27,800
Gregorian Armenians	3,560	4,000	7,560
Protestant Armenians	300	310	610
Total	31,020	32,410	63,430

According to the Ottoman census of 1914, 14,099 Christians were living on the frontiers of present-day Dersim (including Çarsancak). Table 2.4 enumerates the numbers of Muslims and non-Muslims living in Dersim in 1914.<sup>81</sup>

The data of Cuinet and Kemal Karpat show that a significant non-Muslim population lived in Dersim. The Armenian names of the villages of Pertek, Çarsancak, Mazgirt, and Peri where these populations lived are: Basu, Urts, Kodariç, Tsorak, Ğayaçin, Hayvatlı, Masdan, Bağın, Karıntsor, Canik, Xozınkeğ, Dilanoğlu, Lamk, Küreken, Şordan, Danaburan, Tarmutağ, Lazvan, Göktepe, Kızılıcık, Gorcan, İsmayilli, Zeri, Urek, Til-Pertağı, Vahna, Sağman, Havşakar, Mercimek, Vasgerd, Paşağak, Gadosan, Xırnek, Xaresığ, Şamtsığ, Sımax, Karapınar, Norkeğ, Havsek, Sıvcoğ, Xacar, Lusadariç, Balışer, Sorpiyan, Tants, Tirişmek, and Merxo. Although these populations were deported, certain cultural constructions and some place names are still in use today. After the 1960s, when the Armenian population largely left the province, their churches and schools became dilapidated, were transformed into mosques,<sup>82</sup>

80 Ibid.

81 Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 182. The population of Pertek is not indicated by Karpat.

82 *Evrensel*, 28.09.2011.

or were depredated in the hope of finding buried treasure. Gölbağı Armenian Church of Mazgirt is the most famous of these historical ruins.

Table 2.4 Muslim and Non-Muslim Population of Dersim in 1914

Districts	Muslims	Greeks	Armenians	Protestants	Total
Dersim (center)	11,874	-	1,151	-	13,025
Çemişgezek (Çamiçi)	16,181	267	3,772	215	20,435
Çarsancak (Peri-Akpazar)	12,157	-	6,862	243	19,262
Ovacık (Pulur)	4,165	-	10	-	4,175
Nazimiye (Kızılkilise)	7,276	7	89	-	7,372
Mazgirt	14,323	-	1,483	-	15,806
Pülümür, an administrative district of Erzincan at the time	11,755		511		12,266
Total	77,731	274	13,878	458	92,341

SOURCE: Kemal H. Karpat, *Ottoman Population 1830-1914: Demographic and Social Characteristics* (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985), 182. The population of Pertek is not indicated by Karpat.

Dersim's population movements in the republican era can be observed in the population censuses of 1927, 1935, and 1940. These numbers also foretell, if only slightly, the consequences of the 1937-1938 events. According to the 1927 census, which demonstrates nomadic populations according to the estimations of the governor or kaymakam of relevant places, Tunceli's population was 76,290.<sup>83</sup> However, given the precautions taken in the census of 1935, it is clear that the 1927 census insufficiently reflected the real population.<sup>84</sup> Registrations

83 In this year, Tunceli was included within the administrative borders of Elazığ, except for the district of Pülümür, which was registered to Erzincan. The total population of Dersim including Çemişgezek (13,680), Hozat (10,387), Mazgirt (15,837), Ovacık (5,327), Pertek (13,992), Nazimiye (6,394), and Pülümür (10,573) was 76,290. Şükrü Aslan, "Genel Nüfus Sayımı Verilerine Göre Dersim'de 'Kayıp Nüfus': 1927-1955," in *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, (ed.) Şükrü Aslan (İstanbul: İletişim, 2010), 403.

84 Başvekalet İstatistik Genel Direktörlüğü, *1935 20 İlkteşrin Genel Nüfus Sayımı Türkiye Nüfusu: Vilayet, Kaza, Şehir ve Köyler İtibarile Muvakkat Rakkamlar* (Ankara: Ulus Basımevi, 1935), 3.

in ensuing general censuses were better kept on account of new implementations such as curfews and the numbering of settlements and houses. Dersim's districts were still under the jurisdiction of Elazığ (except for Pülümür) in 1935, and the population numbered 107,723.<sup>85</sup>

Tunceli's population was 94,639 in the general census of 1940.<sup>86</sup> The sharp fall is the consequence of the 1937-1938 events. In a report written to the general secretary of the CHP by N. Sahir Silan on 11 December 1943, the population of 1935 is compared with that of 1940. The numbers given differ from the data of the State Institute of Statistics (DİE) because of the inclusion of Kalan, which had not been handled as a separate unit before becoming the city center. Nonetheless, Silan does not refrain from explaining the reason for the decrease of the population.

It is supposed that the reason for the significant difference between the population in 1935 and that in 1940 is the disappearance and transportation of some people, and the hiding of others in caves and other places after military operations performed and precautions taken by our government for the sake of the surplus profit of the country to break resistance against the governmental reform program prepared for Tunceli.<sup>87</sup>

According to Silan's report, the population of 1935 and 1940 was as follows<sup>88</sup>:

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85 Aslan, 411.

86 Ibid., 406.

87 "Doğu Sorunu" *Necmeddin Sahir Silan Raporları (1939-1953)*, 220.

88 Aslan, 219.

Table 2.5 Population of Tunceli Before and After the 1937-1938 Events

Kazas	1935	1940
Çemişgezek	15,452	15,513
Hozat	16,225	9,925
Kalan	4,396	6,435
Mazgirt	24,703	20,867
Nazımiye	6,299	7,705
Ovacık	13,421	8,353
Pertek	11,998	13,745
Pülümür	14,606	12,096
Total	107,100	94,639

Şükrü Aslan considers the general censuses and reports of the State Institute of Statistics and schematizes as follows:

Table 2.6 Tunceli's Population between 1927 and 1955 According to Official Figures<sup>89</sup>

Districts	1927	1935	1940	1945	1950	1955
Çemişgezek	13,680	15,452	15,513	13,172	13,371	14,319
Hozat	10,487	20,028	9,925	8,402	10,000	13,053
Mazgirt	15,837	23,999	20,867	18,845	20,666	22,552
Ovacık	5,327	9,618	8,353	7,159	9,749	12,332
Pertek	13,992	16,522	13,745	14,556	16,310	18,187
Pülümür	10,573	14,606	12,096	12,429	16,298	18,168
Nazımiye	6,394	7,498	7,705	7,315	8,626	10,177
Center	-	-	6,435	8,568	10,739	12,955
Total	76,290	107,723	94,639	90,446	105,759	121,743

Aslan argues that not only had the population decreased but also some villages had disappeared in the census of 1940.<sup>90</sup> These places were wiped off the map in the 1940 census report. While there were 525 villages in 1935, there were only

89 Ibid., 411.

90 Ibid., 406.

391 in 1940.<sup>91</sup> In other words, 134 villages “disappeared” after 1937-1938 events. It is clear that an administrative and spatial transformation accompanied the events. Some residential areas were vacated and became forbidden zones. Although people deported during the events returned to their homelands after the law of 1947,<sup>92</sup> which was enacted upon a joint decision of the CHP and DP, some could not manage to return to their own lands until the mid-1950s because of the continuation of restrictions. This process, which lasted almost two decades, requires research in terms of the changing statuses and meanings of places.

This short summary demonstrates that Dersim was heterogeneous in the Ottoman era in terms of ethnic communities. Second, it clearly reveals the dramatic decline of the population at the end of the 1930s due to the 1937-38 events. However, the most remarkable change for the purposes of this study is the spatial consequences of demographic changes. Based on the general censuses, the crowded districts of the 1930s were depopulated after the events of 1937-38, and the population of the new city center started to rise. This suggests a spatial reconfiguration based on the concentration of the Dersim population in more accessible areas.

In the 1990s, forced migrations as a consequence of the evacuation and destruction of villages created another spatial arrangement. A considerable number of villages inhabited by Dersimlis were abandoned because of severe restrictions imposed by the state. During this decade, the rural population declined sharply. The prohibition of a large number of rural residential areas and migration from the countryside to town created new social relations and spaces. In the following chapters, we examine in detail the spatial transformation of Dersim in the 1990s.

## § 2.4 Social Life

Dersim differs from other cities of Turkey in terms of its liberal atmosphere. There is a public sphere where individuals exist with their own identities and

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91 Ibid., 409.

92 Akyürekli, 160.

can influence political action at the local scale. It also means that there is a social milieu in which subordinate social groups participate in social, political, and economic life relatively more so than in other cities.

The most concrete aspect of this is the situation of women. A report prepared by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA) states that “one measure of the conservatism of a city is the degree to which women are present in its various public spaces.”<sup>93</sup> From this point forth, this section examines the social life of the city.

Dersim is the “best city of Turkey to live in for women” as far as their education level, their age of marriage, and the participation in municipal councils by the female population is concerned.<sup>94</sup> From 2004 to 2014, it was the only city in Turkey governed by female mayors. Its women take part in trade unions, political parties, and NGOs. Women are more active in decision-making processes in comparison to the rest of the country. Another report, prepared by the Economic Policy Research Foundation of Turkey (TEPAV), paints a similar picture. An index of eighty-one cities was established from various data points. According to the wide range of indicators on which this

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93 The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, *Urbanization and the Changing Character of the Arab City* (New York: unspecified, 2005), 3.

94 Besim Can Zırh, “Tunceli ‘Türkiye’de Kadın Olmak İçin En İyi Kent’ Yarışını Nasıl Kaybetti?” *Birikim*, 05.04.2013. <http://www.birikimdergisi.com>. Zırh’s article is a response to an article by Şehriban Oğhan published in *Hürriyet Pazar* on 10 March 2013 titled “Kadın Olmak İçin En İyi 10 Şehir.” Oğhan makes a list of the cities on the basis of data from TÜİK. She uses four criteria: education level, marriage age, participation in municipal councils, and suicide rates among females. According to her list, Dersim is in thirteenth place. Zırh points out that when the suicide rate is not included in the analysis, Dersim is at the top. The reasons for the suicides experienced in the city need to be explained, and he emphasizes that the high rate indicated by the data needs to be scrutinized itself. Dersim’s demographic structure is already anomalous due to the deportation policy of 1938 and the forced migration of the 1990s. One must conduct a detailed demographic analysis to arrive at the real suicide rate of the city.

report was based, Dersim is second in terms of gender equity.<sup>95</sup> In some categories the city is the best. The teen pregnancy rate, for example, is lowest in Dersim.<sup>96</sup>

Several factors render the city more liberal than others. Alevism can be cited as the principal factor. Catharina Raudvere argues that Islam attaches significant importance to spatiality and it tends to produce separate places. Although gendered space is not peculiar to Islam, “religion has been an effective way of giving legitimacy to spatial separation.”<sup>97</sup> However, Alevi tradition treats women as more or less equals of men in public space.

The Alevi hereditary holy men are empowered to solve disputes but, according to the dominant religious philosophy, women are equal to men. In the Sunni communities, however, no man is regarded by birth as being superior to any other (nor are there men empowered by birth to judge in disputes) and women are explicitly regarded as inferior to men within their religious cosmology.<sup>98</sup>

Taking into account the fact that Alevi women are not immune from patriarchy, they nonetheless distinguish themselves from Sunni sisters, highlighting that they are more free and untroubled in comparison to Sunnis.<sup>99</sup> The principles and values of this belief system have the potential to break male dominance. But more importantly, because religion is an excellent source of legitimacy, Alevi culture helps women to be self-confident.

There are other, informal mechanisms and values regulating social life in Dersim. These are directly related to leftism, the “dominant” ideology of the city. Leftism – which promotes a non-hierarchical, egalitarian society– is the

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95 Hülya Demirdirek and Ülker Şener, *81 İl İçin Toplumsal Cinsiyet Eşitliği Karnesi* (Ankara: TEPAV, 2014).

96 Ibid., 40.

97 Catharina Raudvere, “Urban Visions and Religious Communities: Access and Visibility,” *Alevi Identity*, (eds.) Tord Olsson, Elisabeth Özdalga and Catharina Raudvere (Istanbul: Swedish Research Institute, 2003), 192.

98 Shankland, 10.

99 Fazilet Ahu Özmen, “Alevi Women and Patriarchy,” in *Gendered Identities: Criticizing Patriarchy in Turkey*, (eds.) Rasim Özgür Dönmez and Fazilet Ahu Özmen (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013), 157.

historically prevailing worldview in Dersim and enables women to move beyond their traditional roles. Because the vast majority of the population have internalized liberal values, community awareness of crimes against women – such as domestic violence, sexual harassment, and rape – is remarkable. Women frequently organize protests and meetings against abuses of rights. Although patriarchy is manifest in a variety of specific forms, the struggle for the equality and emancipation of women has a considerable legitimacy among the inhabitants.

In Alevism, a person who damages or commits an offense against another is declared *düşkün* (fallen) and is excluded from the society. Leftist ideology contains ethical values similar to those of Alevism, and these values are still more effective than the rule of law in Dersim. The liberal atmosphere is a result of the social organization shaped by these values, which conflict with patriarchal ones based on the supreme authority of men. The Kurdish movement, which has paid special attention to the emancipation of women, has also had a significant impact on Dersim's women as it has in the entire region. However, other eastern cities are highly conservative even though the Kurdish movement is more powerful there.

The conditions and factors enabling the equal participation of women and men in the public spheres of Dersim, which are not independent of the struggles of women, need to be examined in detail. What I wish to emphasize is that Dersim is a city where women feel relatively free, and the common sense about gender equality begets a desirable environment for young people who also suffer under patriarchy. For example, a LGBTI organization, Dersim Roştıya Asme (Dersim Moonlight), was founded at the beginning of 2014.<sup>100</sup> The organization conducts activities and meetings without a problem, unlike in the rest of the country where LGBTI individuals are under constant threat of violence. The city is not conservative in the general sense, though certain implicit rules of revolutionary ethics limit individual freedoms.

On the other hand, certain customs and tacit principles formed around revolutionary values have deeply influenced Dersim's social life. For example, the debate over beer houses where waitresses serve beer is remarkable. Beer

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100 *Milliyet*, 09.02.2014.

houses with barmaids are one of the most crucial social problems of the city. These pubs are houses of prostitution. The women who work there are not from Dersim; they generally come from Elazığ or other neighboring cities. The majority of inhabitants do not want women to work at beer houses, and both socialist organizations and the municipality struggle against these beer houses. Socialist organizations and the PKK often attack these establishments with Molotov cocktails and break their windows.<sup>101</sup> The inhabitants generally agree that beer houses with barmaids should be closed down and believe that these places are consciously supported by the state. The protests are presented as a critique against the commodification of the female body.

In the eyes of the inhabitants of other cities in the Kurdish geography, Dersim is the “city of freedom.” In neighboring cities, Islamic moral values and rules are prevalent in everyday life, social behavior, and interaction at both the individual and collective levels. In Elazığ, for instance, the inhabitants of which mostly vote for right wing parties (greater than 86%), there are no pubs or other places where women can drink with men, even though the city hosts a university. During the month of Ramadan, almost all restaurants are closed. As far as other eastern cities are concerned – even those under the influence of the Kurdish movement, which is the most prominent proponent of women’s rights and has claimed that Kurdistan’s liberation depends on women’s liberation – it is clear that the values and practices of Sunni Islam still determine everyday life. The most developed among these cities, Diyarbakır, differs from others due to its multicultural character, the effect of intellectual milieus, and the presence of a tourism sector that moderate the influence of religion on daily life. However, in the last analysis, Sunni Islamic moral principles and values impose themselves upon the people in these cities just as throughout the entire country.

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101 “Tunceli Birahanelerinde Örgüt Provası,” *Aksiyon*, 03.01.2011; “Tunceli’de Birahane Protestosu,” *Posta*, 19.09.2013; “Kadın Garsonlar Kenti Terk Etti,” *Milliyet*, 24.09.2013; “Tunceli’de ‘Birahane’ Gerginliği,” *Zaman*, 24.09.2013; “Birahane Meydan Savaşı,” *Milliyet*, 25.09.2013; “Tunceli’de Birahaneyeye Molotoflu Saldırı,” *Hürriyet*, 05.10.2013; “Tunceli’de Birahane Saldırıları Durmuyor,” *Milliyet*, 06.10.2013; “2 Birahaneyeye Taşlı Saldırı,” *Milliyet*, 27.01.2014; and “Tunceli’de Birahanelere Molotoflarla Saldırdılar: 2 İşyeri Yandı,” *Milliyet*, 17.04.2014.

Dersim is an exception to generally accepted social norms. For instance, the calendar prepared according to the holy days of Sunni Islam is not taken into account by Dersimlis. The dates of the Munzur Culture and Nature Festival – during which alcohol consumption increases significantly – are determined without respect to Ramadan or other holy days. By 2010, there were twenty-five public houses and eleven beerhouses in the city.<sup>102</sup> They are open during Ramadan. The Dersim distributor of Tuborg, Devrim Konak, says that beer consumption in the city is far above the average consumption in Turkey.<sup>103</sup>

Except for the sounds of the *ezan*, there is no sign of religion in everyday life. Moreover, Dersim has long been the summer resort of the east. Beaches similar to those of the Mediterranean or Aegean are found along the banks of Munzur. In summer, the city is frequently pictured in newspapers with photos of beach chairs and women wearing swimsuits. For example, in summer of 2013, when the peace process had just begun, hundreds of young people from several Kurdish cities came to Dersim for vacation and set up tents on the riverside, which was transformed into beach. Many bays of the Munzur River became camp sites. As a part of my research, I stayed in one of these camping areas for a week. The young holidaymakers who have come met in Dersim, went on bike tours, and made music through the night. The picture of the city was no different than western cities in terms of male-female relationships and alcohol consumption. Although Dersim was the one zone from which guerillas refused to retreat, the impact of the peace process was felt nowhere more than in the city.

Dersim's social life, and especially women's participation in the political, economic, and social life, makes the city different from other eastern cities. The social atmosphere is the fruit of both religious (Alevism, in addition to local and regional traditions) and ideological perspectives (leftism, socialism, Kurdish and Alevi-Zaza nationalism). It has enabled the development of diverse political tendencies including radical ones.

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102 Muzaffer Akın, "Kentin Bugünü: Ekonomik, Siyasal ve Demografik Görünüm," in *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, (ed.) Şükrü Aslan (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010), 50-51.

103 Devrim Konak, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 04.07.2012.

In following chapter, I scrutinize the identities adopted by Dersimlis that reinforce the liberal atmosphere of the city or appear or develop due to this atmosphere. However, the state also tends to attribute certain identities to the people of Dersim or to manipulate identities adopted by them as a part of its assimilation policies. These identities are examined in detail before discussing how they produce urban space and are reproduced in urban space.

## Identity and Space

This chapter demonstrates how state and non-state (local and regional) actors define Dersimlis. First, the identities attributed to Dersimlis by the state are introduced and then the identities adopted by Dersimlis themselves are presented. Geography, space, and spatial forms play an important role in the [re]construction of these identities. Scrutinizing these identities is necessary to show that each actor attempts to produce or design the urban space of Dersim according to images, codes, and symbols that belong to and are embraced by one or several sociocultural systems of belonging.

Ethnicity is a crucial concept both in politics and in academic research. Cultures, traditions, language, religion, repertoires, histories, physical traits, and other constitutive features are the elements that hold groups together. While some theorists emphasize the primordality of these ties and argue that ethnic bonds have an overpowering, non-rational quality, others highlight the changing character of group membership criteria and the impact of state policies on the formation of group consciousness. There are many approaches within these camps as well as new ones seeking to unify them.<sup>1</sup> In this study,

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1 Generally, ethnicity is handled in two categories: primordial and constructivist. The primordial approach attributes importance to ethnic bonds which are archaic, enduring, given, natural, and immutable. For examples that one may categorize as primordialist to some degree,

ethnicity is handled as a construct: a flexible social identity that transforms in accordance with modernization and other interventions of actors. In other words, its relational and processual character as well as its varying cultural significance are highlighted.<sup>2</sup> This offers an opportunity to scrutinize ethnic configurations in the context of interaction.

Moreover, people have multiple identities, and they take on or activate many identities at any point in time.<sup>3</sup> In their book *Multitude*, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri argue that people synthesize or reduce social differences into one identity; however, the multitude – the concept the authors define as “an open and expansive network in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally, a network that provides the means of encounter so that we can work and live in common” – is a multiplicity of all singular differences (cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, sexual orientations, forms of labor, and ways of living).<sup>4</sup> This concept maintains the characteristics of social difference

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see Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Walker Connor, “Beyond Reason: The Nature of the Ethnonational Bond,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 16:3 (1993), 373-389; Edward Shils, “Primordial, Personal, Sacred, and Civil Ties,” *The British Journal of Sociology* 8:2 (June, 1957), 130-145. The constructivist approach, on the other hand, argues that ethnicity is socially and politically constructed. See, for example, Donald L. Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London; New York: Verso, 1991); Frederik Barth, ed., *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1969); Anya Peterson Royce, *Ethnic Identity: Strategies of Diversity* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982). For an ethno-symbolist analysis of ethnicity, see Anthony D. Smith, *The Nation in History: Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000). For a synthesis of all these approaches, see James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity,” *International Organization* 54:4 (October 2000), 845-877.

- 2 Thomas Hylland Eriksen, “The Cultural Contexts of Ethnic Differences,” *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 26:1 (March 1991), 127.
- 3 Peter J. Burke and Jan E. Stets, *Identity Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 131.
- 4 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin Press, 2004), xi-xviii; 99-100.

in populations composed of different individuals and classes. However, singularities can communicate and act together while internal differences of the multitude remain unique.<sup>5</sup>

Emphasizing the effect of state policies on the construction of several identities; highlighting the dynamic, situational, and everchanging features of identities and taking the population – composed of a set of singularities – as plural and multiple provide a useful approach for analyzing Dersim's ethnic identity. In this part of the study, different identities in Dersim are examined relationally and historically. Identities that the Dersim people have adopted, while malleable and constructed like all identities, are directly associated with power relations between the central government and local powers. They have changed and transformed over the decades depending on national policies and reactions to these policies. Thus, this part shows how ethnic categorizations can be manipulated and reshaped according to real politics and asserts that there are no clear-cut, enduring boundaries among ethnic groups.

Inhabitants of Dersim define themselves variously as Kurds, Alevis, Kurdish Alevis, Qizilbashes, Zazas, Turks, and Dersimlis.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the tribes to which they belong are also crucial identities for these people. Some of these terms refer to language; some to religious or other values. These different identities may coincide, and the prominence of any one is possible according to the political context. Because religious and linguistic identities intermingle to a large extent in Dersim, this study scrutinizes these identities in relation with each other. For example, the rise of the Alevi identity in the city contributed to the development of a group consciousness among Zaza-speaking people, and the spread of the Kurdish movement and the rise of Kurdish national identity triggered the group identification of Alevis in reaction. This chapter of the dissertation examines these complex belongings taking historical and current power relations of Dersim into account.

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5 Ibid.

6 Although the term “Dersimli” also has a political meaning, I use the term as shorthand for all people living in Dersim.

## § 3.1 Identities Attributed by the State

### 3.1.1 “*Dersimlis are ‘Essentially’ Turkish*”

Dersimlis speak Turkish, Kurmanci, and Zaza. Bruinessen states that tribes of western Dersim (Ovacık and Hozat with parts of Çemişgezek and Pertek) mostly speak Zaza, while those of eastern Dersim (Pülümür, Nazımiye, and Mazgirt) speak both Zaza and Kurmanci, the latter of which is the most commonly spoken dialect of the Kurdish language.<sup>7</sup> Although Dersim is unique in terms of the usage of the Zaza language,<sup>8</sup> Turkish is widely used in the daily life of Dersim, unlike in other eastern cities. This is directly related to the republican national education campaign, which began before the 1937-38 events and intensified afterward in the scope of the regime’s Turkification policy.

Dersim was defined by the Republic of Turkey as a Turkish province, and in accordance with the official ideology, all non-Turkish identities were ignored until recently. Public records on Dersim, especially ones written before the 1937-38 events, include detailed information about the ethnic identity of inhabitants. These records construct a discourse intended to prove the Turkish origin of the Dersim people and to reduce diversities down to a single identity.

A 28 October 1903 report prepared by Mardini Arif Bey, the mutasarrıf of Dersim in this date, demonstrates historical roots of this official discourse. In this report, it is argued that the Dersim people – who had been assumed to be essentially Turks – were losing their essence and becoming Kurdish:

Contrary to popular belief, Dersim is not completely Kurdish from of old. The people of the Çemişgezek and Çarsancak kazas are entirely

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7 Bruinessen, “‘Aslını İnkâr Eden Haramzadedir!’: The Debate on the Ethnic Identity of the Kurdish Alevi,” 2.

8 Dersim hosts the most dense Zaza-speaking population of the country. Zaza-speaking enclaves also live in the villages of Bingöl, Elazığ, Diyarbakır, Urfa, Muş, Sivas (especially Zaza), Adıyaman, Erzincan, Batman, Bitlis, Malatya, Ardahan, Aksaray, and Erzurum. The total population of those who speak the language is approximately 3-4 million. These neighboring tribes generally claim to originate from Dersim.

Turks. The people of the town of Hozat's İnceağa village and Torot aşiret are Turks, but they are becoming Kurdish. Moreover, the people of the Mazgirt kaza and one of its villages, [as well as] villages on the plains of Ovacık kaza are also Turks in terms of their origins and still speak Turkish. However, unfortunately, Ovacık Turks are both becoming Kurdish and Shia. Kızılkilise has become completely Shia and Kurdish. Dersim sanjak is an ancient refuge of Turks. Apart from Turks, no artifact or memory of other descendants is to be found.<sup>9</sup>

Similar comments about the origin of the inhabitants are in the report of Celal Bey, the mutasarrıf of Dersim from 1903 to 1906.

The periphery of Dersim, Çemişkezek, and Çarsacak kazas consist of Turks who are obedient, civilized, and engaged in agriculture. Kuzuçan (Pülümür) belongs to Dersim Kurds. Dersimlis have no relation in the sense of geography or religion with Shafii Kurds living in the Bitlis [and] Van vilayets.<sup>10</sup>

Another official document (in response to an unnumbered message dated 15 Kânunuevvel 1335) dated 1918-19 was written by Kazım Karabekir to acquaint his superiors with the disappearing Turkish identity of the Dersim people. He states that

the language of Dersim Kurds is generally “Zaza” and it's close to Kurdish... The ancestry of Dersimlis is Mâverâyı Türkistan. Influenced by Şeyh Hasan and his brother Seydanlı who had emigrated from there, they formed two big tribes under these names. The present aşirets belong to these two tribes. In the course of time, Dersimlis who were originally Turk abandoned their traditions and nationality; they lost their language. Even the aşirets of Ovacık have maintained until recently the Turkish language, which is their mother tongue, and few people exist even today who speak Turkish eloquently. The fact that aşirets have Turkish names such as Bal Uşağı, Koç Uşağı, Maksud

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9 Bulut, *Dersim Raporları*, 213.

10 Ibid., 214.

Uşığı, Ferhad Uşığı, and Karaballı in accordance with their essence also definitively demonstrates their Turkish origin.<sup>11</sup>

Bruinessen argues that before the foundation of the republic, the speakers of the Zaza language were never considered a distinct group but always regarded as Kurds, even by Ziya Gökalp. Hasan Reşit Tankut, one of founders of the Turkish Language Association and a theorist of the Sun Language Theory which proposes that all human languages are descended from one primal, proto-Turkic language, sought to categorize these two languages separately, emphasizing linguistic and cultural differences in order to more efficiently Turkify these groups.<sup>12</sup> Hasan Reşit's suggestion was based on the assimilation of Alevis because they were using the Turkish language in their rituals. To convince them to live with a Turkish identity would be easier on account of their familiarity with the national language.<sup>13</sup> In other words, the linguistic categorization in the official discourse approached the Zaza and Kurmanci languages as if they are unrelated, both interrupting the construction of a Kurdish identity that could be constructed on a common language and accelerating the Turkification of the Zaza-speaking population.

The republican period witnessed a significant rise in Kurdish rebellions starting in 1925 when Sheikh Said revolted against the secularization and discrimination policies of the state. In these years, many small rebellions occurred in Kurdistan; however, the new regime – in the process of nation-building – suppressed these immediately with much bloodshed. The detribalization of the country was a principal target of the modernizing and centralizing regime.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, a wave of racism influencing the entire world not only legitimated the assimilation of non-Turkish identities but also reinforced the historiography based on the single identity. In this period, emphasis on a unique Turkish identity became more frequent in official reports.

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11 Ibid., 222.

12 Bruinessen, "Constructions of Ethnic Identity in the Late Ottoman Empire and Republican Turkey: the Kurds and their Others," 3.

13 Bruinessen, "Race, Culture, Nation and Identity Politics in Turkey: Some Comments," 5.

14 Bruinessen, "Kurds, States and Tribes," 19.

In Dersim reports written in the republican period, the danger of Kurdification is highlighted. Kurdification was defined as an exogenous fact that corrupted local people. For example, a 1926 report prepared by an administrative auditor, Hamdi Bey, focuses on the danger of Kurdification in Dersim and offers solutions such as the resettlement of Turks to the province.<sup>15</sup> In the 1926 report of Cemal Bey, the governor of Diyarbakır at the time,<sup>16</sup> which was addressed to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the source of the discourse of corruption is the encounter of Alevi Turks with Kurds.

There is no similarity between the Kurdish and Arabic aşirets and the Turkmen aşirets. The organization of Turkmen aşirets has been corrupted since the time of Suleiman the Magnificent. The reasons and motives of the insurgencies occasionally occurring in Dersim and some other places where Turkmen aşirets live are not the same. The insurgencies of Dersim stem from the behavior of ignorant Sunni people provoked and encouraged by bigoted hodjas. This improper behavior engenders social solidarity among Alevi Turkmens. In assuming that this situation is the same as that of Kurdish aşirets, many officers made wrong decisions and undertook unnecessary precautions. If the oppression ends and matters are handled in a conscious manner, then Dersimlis could be very loyal and self-sacrificing servants of the republic. I have not met anyone who resembles the Kurds, nor have I seen anyone who cannot speak Turkish during my Dersim travels. Sunnis define Alevis as Kurds; Alevis define Sunnis as Turks. As the Dersim Alevis, who are the neighbors of Kurds, consider themselves a separate nation, public officers have also been mistaken... Among Alevi Turks belonging to the Ja'fari sect, many superstitious beliefs have taken root because of the presence of several religions and sects. However, such beliefs have already lost their influence in the face of the ideas of the twentieth century... With your honorable support and the

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15 Bulut, *Dersim Raporları*, 242.

16 Cemal Bey (Bardakçı) would be appointed as the governor of Elaziz in 1926 due to his experience in the province. He held the office until 5 November 1929.

work of the Inspector of the Third Army, which will last a maximum of five months, a regiment of soldiers and 5000 lire for expenses if required are sufficient to make Dersimlis a sharp and loyal dagger of the republic against the Kurdish movement, which stems from the east.<sup>17</sup>

Another narrative from Inspector General İbrahim Tali, who would serve as the deputy of Elazığ from 1946 to 1950, sought to prove that not only the state but also the local people defined themselves as Turks. According to this narrative, İbrahim Tali Bey encountered people connected to several aşirets while travelling to Ovacık in 1928. The people he met exclaimed to him that they were Turks.<sup>18</sup>

In the reports of the First Inspectorate General in the 1930s the discourse changes: the presence of Turkish villages is indicated. In other words, it was recognized that the entirety of Dersim was not Turkish. Moreover, the inspectorates founded in 1927 to replace the martial law administration in the eastern provinces clearly claimed that “most of people leaving in the First, Third, and Fourth Inspectorates General are historically Turks although they have lost their language or changed their dialects” while presenting population information from the provinces.<sup>19</sup> According to meeting minutes from 1936, the population of the Fourth Inspectorate General, which included Dersim and its neighborhoods, was 350,826. Of those, 198,508 were recorded as Kurds, 107,965 as Turks.<sup>20</sup> This statement implies that the presence of a population “who defines itself as Kurd but [is] racially and genealogically Turk” was accepted. This explicit resolution about the population composition carried more strict precautions with it against non-Turkish people.

In reports, the inhabitants of Turkish villages were envisaged as village guards.<sup>21</sup> The reason for the precautions proposed by the inspectorate – such as the resettlement of the Dersim people in the west and the application of

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17 Ibid., 242-245.

18 Ibid., 245.

19 M. Bülent Varlık, ed., *Umumi Müfettişlikler Toplantı Tutanaqları-1936* (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2010), 15.

20 Ibid.

21 Bulut, *Dersim Raporları*, 252.

national education in the province – “was to integrate Dersim into the Turkish world.”<sup>22</sup> The chief of general staff further suggested that the state consider Dersim a colony and assimilate Kurdishness into Turkishness. To this end, it was necessary to enhance propaganda and teaching the Turkish language.<sup>23</sup> Faik Bulut suggests that the education of girls was especially emphasized in this process.<sup>24</sup>

Another report written by Ömer Halis Paşa, the commander of the Third Army who directed the second stage of the Pülümür operation (1930), demonstrates that the names of aşirets and villages were taken as proof of the Turkishness of Dersim. According to Ömer Halis, the Dersim people themselves were aware of their Turkish origins going back to Khorasan as well as their kinship with Celalettin Harzem Shah who had taken refuge in Anatolia.<sup>25</sup> This report implies that the republic did not perceive Alevism as a menace even as it considered Kurdishness a crucial problem. Ömer Halis Paşa emphasizes that the disciplinary interventions of the state should make people obedient instead of making them Turk-Sunni or Alevi: “Because one cannot interfere in the primitive rituals of the Alevis; to establish the loyalty of people will be easier.”<sup>26</sup> All these strategies were intended to call Turkish origins to mind and familiarize the people with their essential nationality.

In 1931, Şükrü Kaya prepared a report based on his own investigation in the province under the authority of the First Inspectorate General and presented it to the prime ministry. This report mentions two groups of people: the first one is “people” defined as “Turks,” and the second is Dersimlis. The first group is exposed to the brigandage and attacks of the Dersimlis according to Kaya.

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22 Ibid., 253.

23 Ibid., 257.

24 Ibid.

25 Cafer Demir, *Osmanlı ve Cumhuriyet Döneminde Dersim* (Istanbul: Umut Yayıncılık, 2009), 117.

26 Ibid., 118.

In Dersim, Çemişkezek, Pertek, Mazgirt, and Hozat, Turks in general and peasants who left their aşirets and whose guns were seized are under the threat and influence of Dersimlis. People who pay tax to the state and join the army of the state are also compelled to pay tax to western and northern aşirets for the security of their life and property while under the threat of being robbed or killed.<sup>27</sup>

Şükrü Kaya gives information about the aşirets in order to illustrate the political atmosphere of the province. He emphasizes that he had talked with *seyids* and *aghas*, and these notables were all obedient to the central authority. Kaya defines these notables as “Turks”: “They are Turks and republicans. It is not just to put the robberies of some Kurds on these people’s shoulders.”<sup>28</sup> Starting in the report of Şükrü Kaya, Dersimlis opposed to the central authority were labeled Kurds even as Kurdishness was described recoverable with the help of formal education. In other words, the official discourse referred to the Turkish origin of the Dersim people and interpreted Kurdishness as a deviance from which it is possible to be rehabilitated. This discourse is reproduced in the report of the Minister of Internal Affairs.

Reporting on his eastern tour, İsmet İnönü, the prime minister at the time, gave detailed information about the ethnic patterns of eastern provinces such as Elaziz, Diyarbakir, Mardin, Siirt, Bitlis, Van, Muş, and Erzincan. This report is the starting point of the administrative and demographic transformation of Dersim into Tunceli. In this confidential 1935 document, which was not made public until 2007, İnönü presented for the first time a rehabilitation program for Dersim including a preparation phase, a disarmament phase, and – if necessary – a resettlement phase. Throughout the report, the terms “Dersimlis” and “Dersim Kurds” are used to characterize the inhabitants.

The report demonstrates that the central government considered Dersimlis to be an “exploitative and imperious” community. Although there is a special section of the report examining the Dersim question thoroughly, İnönü often touches on “invader” Dersim people even in other sections scrutinizing

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27 Ibid., 124.

28 Ibid., 125.

other eastern cities. Dersim is the source of vandalism and, according to him, threatened neighboring cities.

Because Turkish villages lost their influence and Armenian villages disappeared completely, which had previously been barriers against Dersim Kurds, the atmosphere became perfectly suitable for the invasion (*istila*) of Dersimlis. Abandoned villages around Erzincan are filled with the well-fed, high-handed people of Dersim. Notables of Erzincan use Dersimlis as sharecroppers in the cultivation of their lands. This is a kind of entering under the protection of Dersimlis. These villages and sharecroppers enable Dersim's marauding groups to infiltrate. The fact that Erzincan has been the Kurdish center and, more importantly, [the fact of] the formation of Kurdistan are worrisome.<sup>29</sup>

On one hand, the Dersim people were perceived by the central government as part of the Kurdish community. The report focuses on Kurdification as the principal threat for the entire region and handles Dersim in this context. Because the population is considered "essentially" Turkish, all other non-Turkish communities are generally assumed to be in need of correction. The official discourse in the report homogenizes the region in terms of ethnicity. On the other hand, unlike the inhabitants of other eastern cities, Dersimlis are also described in another framework. Dersim was seen as the origin of disobedience; apart from the Kurdishness of its inhabitants, being an "invader" became one of identities attributed to the Dersim people. According to İnönü's report, Dersimlis differ from the people of other eastern cities in the eyes of the central government with regard to their subversive character that exceeds their Kurdishness. This character was interpreted as a communicable disease; therefore, the rehabilitation of Dersim was deemed necessary not only for Dersim itself but also for nearby cities. In many records the Dersim people are called looters (*çapulcu*), bandits (*haydut*), gangsters (*sergerde*), and marauders (*şaki*).<sup>30</sup>

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29 Ibid., 165.

30 Ibid., 186.

To conclude: as far as ethnicity is concerned, official reports on Dersim written in the republican period assume that the province is “essentially” Turkish and that it has been dramatically Kurdicized in the course of time. Ideological apparatuses of the regime also contributed to this claim. In journals of the 1930s, the Kurdish language was often defined as “degenerate Turkish under the influence of the Persian language.”<sup>31</sup> What is interesting is the fact that the regime, which had derecognized other ethnic identities within its national boundaries, based its national identity in Dersim on Alevism – a religious identity. This Alevism was “reinvented” against the threat of Kurdification.

### 3.1.2 *The Reinvention of Alevism: Alevism as Proof of Turkish Origins*

From the second constitutional period, the Alevi identity of the province was often presented as evidence of its Turkishness. This is not only the discourse of power but also a bid for legitimacy by Alevis. For example, Cemaleddin Çelebi,<sup>32</sup> the head of the Bektashi order between 1915 and 1918, sought to demonstrate that Dersimlis had not been Kurdish once upon a time: “Many years ago, my ancestor Hacı Bektaş Veli sent missionaries to Dersim Province to incorporate the Dersim tribes into Bektashism. After the death of these missionaries, our sons forgot our forefathers in the course of time and became completely Kurdish.”<sup>33</sup> With respect to the close relationship between the Alevi community and the founding elite – who put an end to the Ottoman-era discrimination against Alevis – the Alevism of Dersim was not regarded as a threat; on the contrary, Alevism was included in Turkish historiography in order to reinforce the primordality of the national ethnicity.

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31 See, for example, Kurun, 20.06.1937.

32 Cemaleddin Çelebi was appointed by the Union and Progress as commander of the militia of the Alevi-Bektashi population. He visited Anatolian provinces where Alevis lived and recruited soldiers. For detailed information, see Rıza Yıldırım, “Kışım Marı: Dersim Yöresi Kızılbaş Ocaklarını Hacı Bektaş Evlâdına Bağlama Girişimi ve Sonuçları,” *Tunceli Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 1:1 (Fall 2012).

33 Cemal Şener, *Aleviler’in Etnik Kimliği: Aleviler Kürt mü? Türk mü?* (Istanbul: Etik Yayınları, 2002), 73.

The attempt to involve Alevis in Turkish historiography goes back to the government of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) (1909-1918). The committee charged Baha Sait Bey to conduct research on Alevism-Bektashism in Anatolia in 1914-1915. The research would be published in the journal *Türk Yurdu* in 1926-1927. Baha Sait Bey's research report argues that Alevis are wholly Turks and that they speak Turkish. According to him, instead of Ali and imams, Shamanism and Oghuz rituals better explain and capture Anatolian Alevis: "A shaman temple and a Bektashi monastery are the same thing."<sup>34</sup>

Baha Sait Bey emphasizes that what is responsible for the Alevi massacres and for the lack of discipline among the Janissary corps who mostly belonged to the Bektashi monastery was the dynasty – in other words, the absence of the nation.<sup>35</sup> The CUP blamed the disasters that the Alevi people had met with on the old regime and invited the Alevi community to cooperate in the construction of the new nation state.<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the social and cultural forms the Alevis had adopted were not inharmonious with the ideal social order the CUP designed. For example, Baha Sait Bey draws an analogy between the monogamous family structure of the Qizilbash-Bektashi people and the modern Turkish family structure in his report.<sup>37</sup> The Alevi community's social and cultural practices (and especially the relatively equal gender relations)<sup>38</sup> coincide with ideals of the founding elites. In this respect, one may claim that the founding elites were inclined to prefer a more secular form of Islam – the form originating in Khorasan and inspired by Persian culture – rather than Arabic Islam.

The discourse emphasizing Khorasan as the origin of both Turkishness and Alevism continued with the claims of Fuad Köprülü. He wrote an article

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34 Baha Sait Bey, *İttihat-Terakki'nin Alevilik Bektaşılık Araştırması*, ed. Nejat Birdoğan (Istanbul: Berfin, 1995), 22-24.

35 Ibid., 25.

36 Dersim Alevism and Kurdish Alevism are not handled separately in the report of Baha Sait Bey (although it is indicated that the Dersim sect is also attached to "Yezidi") because all Alevis are considered Turks.

37 Ibid., 60.

38 Rıza Zelyut, *Aleviler Ne Yapmalı? (Şehirlerdeki Alevilerin Sorunları-Çözümleri)* (Istanbul: Yön Yayıncılık, 1993), 209.

in response to Franz Babinger's 1921 article "Der Islam in Kleinasien." In this text, Köprülü argues that although Oghuz had been influenced by several religions and belief systems such as Christianity, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, and Manichaeism, each had incomprehensive and complex characteristics for Turkmen; therefore, Turkmen kept their ancient beliefs. According to Köprülü, heterodox groups known as Qizilbashs, Alevis, and Hurufis which still exist in contemporary Anatolia and Iran are the descendants of these people.<sup>39</sup> In ensuing books and articles, Köprülü continues to seek the cultural and religious roots of the Turks. The discourse of Köprülü and other intellectuals of the early nationalist movement was not independent of the project to establish a national subject. Markus Dressler points out that Bektashis and Alevis were "Shamanist remnants" – carriers of pre-Islamic Turkish culture – in the eyes of the founding elites and intellectuals.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand, the emphasis on heterodoxy – a Western concept attributed to Turkish and Anatolian Islam by Köprülü – secularized Alevism-Bektashism and rendered it heretical. According to Dressler "...their 'heterodoxy' / 'syncretism' integrated them into the Turkish nation, while it at the same time othered them from the perspective of an Islamic mainstream influenced by modernist and revivalist notions of purity and essence."<sup>41</sup>

The inclusion of the Alevis, who almost exclusively use Turkish as their ritual language, was not only consistent with Turkish nationalism of the period, which was based on a common language, but was also rational in a context where a monarchy was the common enemy.<sup>42</sup> However, within a fifteen-year period, the young republic became a Sunni-Turkish based state.<sup>43</sup> In other

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39 Franz Babinger and Fuad Köprülü, *Anadolu'da İslamiyet* (Istanbul: İnsan Yayınları, 2003), 44-45.

40 Markus Dressler, "How to Conceptualize Inner-Islamic Plurality/Difference: 'Heterodoxy' and 'Syncretism' in the Writings of Mehmet F. Köprülü (1890-1966)," *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies* 37:3 (December 2010), 251.

41 Ibid.

42 Cemal Şener, *Atatürk ve Aleviler* (Istanbul: Ant Yayınları, 1991), 15.

43 Hans-Lukas Kieser, "Alevis, Armenians and Kurds in Unionist-Kemalist Turkey (1908-1938)," in *Turkey's Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview*, eds. Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 177.

words, the sympathy the founding elites expressed for the Alevi community was neither an attempt to recognize Alevism as a status nor an assurance of equal citizenship.

The Alevis expected a great deal from republican rule. But these expectations were not fulfilled. During the period of single party rule, the jandarmas' rifle butts were pointed mostly towards the villagers. The Alevis were, in essence, villagers. The Alevi-Kurd population in the east rose up against this cruelty. The Dersim Rebellion was the greatest and bloodiest of these uprisings.<sup>44</sup>

The Dersim operation was a crucial rupture for Alevis, although events were presented as an intervention vis-à-vis local powers that had resisted tax collection and recruitment of soldiers by the central government. The ties before 1938 were so strong that some Dersim people, especially the elderly, are still convinced that Mustafa Kemal did not give permission for the massacre.<sup>45</sup>

In brief, during the single-party period Dersim was accepted as a Turkish city like all other eastern cities populated by non-Turkish populations. The Alevism of the city was pushed into the background by comparison with its Kurdishness.<sup>46</sup> While there are many resources about the discourse of the regime, there are limited resources addressing the question of how Dersimlis define themselves. Although official reports were written under the influence of the regime to a large extent, “the voice of the subaltern” can be heard by reading between the lines. For example, in a 1945 report by Necmeddin Sahir Silan one observes that people were confused about their ethnicity. Silan recounts his memory of a dialog that occurred between him and the women of Dersim.

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44 David Shankland, *The Alevis in Turkey: The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition* (London and New York: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 24.

45 Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi, “Atatürk and the Alevis: A Holy Alliance?,” in *Turkey’s Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview*, (eds.) Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 66.

46 See, for example, the reports of Necmeddin Sahir Silan. He frequently used the term “Alevi Turks” for Dersimlis.

— Sir, they say us that we are Kurds. We do not understand which nationality we are. Would we be able to talk with you in Turkish if we were Kurds? They oppress us for being Kurdish.

— Madames, those who oppress you for being Kurdish are themselves Kurdish. Don't worry, when a person is angry with someone, he talks without thinking. You are noble and pure Turks.<sup>47</sup>

As noted previously, among Alevi communities even Kurdish- and Zaza-speaking tribes use generally Turkish as their ritual language.<sup>48</sup> This practice was generally held up by Turkish nationalists as proof of the Turkish origins of these groups. On the other hand, Kurdish nationalists also sought to re-frame Alevism according to their own nationalist perspective. Martin van Bruinessen summarizes the different arguments about the origins of Dersimlis supported by Turkish and Kurdish nationalists, in parallel with Turkish and Kurdish historiographies.

The existence of Kurdish- and Zaza-speaking Alevi tribes, who almost exclusively use Turkish as their ritual language, and many of which even have Turkish tribal names, is a fact that has exercised the explanatory imagination of many authors. Both Turkish and Kurdish nationalists have had some difficulty in coming to terms with the ambiguous identity of these groups, and have attempted to explain embarrassing details away. Naive attempts to prove that Kurdish and Zaza are essentially Turkish languages have not been given up, and have after 1980 even received a new impetus. Kurds, on the other hand, have emphasized the Iranian element in the religion of the Alevis and suggested that even the Turkish Alevis must originally have received their religion from the Kurds. Several articulate members of the tribes concerned, appealing to alleged old oral traditions in their support, have

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47 “Doğu Sorunu” *Necmeddin Sahir Silan Raporları (1939-1953)*, 349.

48 Some researchers reject this idea. For example, Munzur Çem claims that the ritual language of Alevi Kurds is Kurdish and many of the names of aşirets are also Kurdish. See Munzur Çem, *Dersim Merkezli Kürt Aleviliği: Etnisite, Dini İnanç, Kültür ve Direniş*, 279-286.

added their own interpretations, often all too clearly inspired by political expediency. The tribes have never had a single, unambiguous position vis-à-vis the Kurdish nationalist movement and the Turkish Republic. The conflicting appeals of these two national entities (and of such lesser would-be nations as the Zaza or the Alevi nation) to the loyalties of the Kurdish Alevi have torn these communities apart.<sup>49</sup>

Given the political atmosphere after the rise of the Kurdish movement scrutinizing the identity of the Dersim people nowadays has become even more difficult. This difficulty mostly arises from nationalist manipulations made by several groups. It is not the intent of this study to determine an identity for the Dersim people. On one hand, this is difficult because of the lack of reliable data; on the other hand, as mentioned previously, this dissertation is not concerned with the origins of the Dersim people or what their real, essential identity is. Following an approach that perceives ethnicity as a fluid phenomenon shaped by external factors, this section focuses on the different identities adopted by the Dersim people according to the power relations of the province and the country.

## § 3.2 Identities Adopted by the Dersim People

### 3.2.1 *Leftism as an Identity Characterized by Dersim: The City as the Center of the Armed Maoist Movement*

After the 1937-1938 events, Dersim lost a crucial part of its population not only because of the massacre<sup>50</sup> but also because of the regime's banishment campaign (*tenkil*). According to Hüseyin Aygün, with just the decree of the council of ministers dated 6 August 1938, five thousand people were sent to Elazığ's train station and resettled in 922 different villages in fifteen cities.<sup>51</sup> Only four

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49 Bruinessen, "‘Aslını İnkâr Eden Haramzadedir!': The Debate on the Ethnic Identity of the Kurdish Alevi," 1.

50 40-70 thousand people were slaughtered in 1937 and 1938.

51 Hüseyin Aygün, *Dersim 1938 ve Zorunlu İskân: Telgraflar, Dilekçeler, Mektuplar, Fotoğraflar* (Ankara, Dipnot: 2010), 137.

members of a family could live in the same village, so even nuclear families were distributed. Aygün claims that 7-12 thousand people were subjected to forced migration in 1938.<sup>52</sup> This political atmosphere intimidated the Dersim people trying to stay alive and inhibited the rise of opposing identities until the 1960s.

On the other hand, public services contributed to the assimilation of Dersimlis who continued to live in the city. These people interacted with modernizers via the education, health, and security services offered by the state and via compulsory military service. Public education was the principal strategy for the Turkification policy. For example, the Girl Institutes project was configured and meticulously applied in Dersim under the leadership of Sıdıka Avar who had been charged to “undertake missionary activities.”<sup>53</sup> Until the 1960s when fascism was defeated and democratic-leftist movements began to become popular throughout the world, the Dersim people suffered under the authoritarian policies of governments. Reports of the 1940s and 1950s demonstrate the success of the education campaign. In one of these reports, Silan emphasizes the transformation of the city in terms of language: “Two years ago I could not speak Turkish with even a child and I became sad. Fortunately, today, children know the Turkish names of everything; soldier, hazelnut, water jug, pencil, mouse, etc. and speak Turkish.”<sup>54</sup>

However, non-Turkish mother tongues persisted to a large extent and survive even today. Especially women still spoke their own language in spite of intense Turkification policies.<sup>55</sup> In the following dialog between N. S. Silan and schoolchildren of Nazımiye, Silan asks:

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52 Ibid., 138.

53 For a detailed assessment, see Elif Ekin Akşit, *Kızların Sessizliği: Kız Enstitülerinin Uzun Tarihi* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2005) and Sıdıka Avar, *Dağ Çiçeklerim: Anılar* (Ankara: Öğretmen Dünyası Yayınları, 2004).

54 “Doğu Sorunu” *Necmeddin Sahir Silan Raporları (1939-1953)*, 345.

55 Needless to say, conservation in the mother tongue for all communities concerns the private sphere, which is a “protected area” for women. The male-dominated public sphere necessitates the use of the official language; therefore, in non-Turkish provinces men first encountered the Turkish language. Compulsory military service was a significant factor differentiating the Turkification processes of men and women. For analyses emphasizing the role of women in

- Do your fathers and mothers speak Turkish like you?  
 —Our fathers speak it, our mothers do not.  
 —Why?  
 —Because they are women.  
 —Is it a sin for women to speak Turkish?  
 —No, sir, they do not speak Turkish because they are women. We are Turks, sir, but they are Kurds, so they do not speak Turkish.<sup>56</sup>

This dialog demonstrates that the forced transformations led by the regime resulted in significant confusion. The period from 1938 until the rise of the left in the region can be described as a state of quiet. The people were assimilated or at least pretended to adopt the identity attributed to them by the regime. On one hand, Turkish identity penetrated the city via official education; on the other, ancient cultural values were transmitted to new generations despite the restrictions and depression. The people were torn between two conflicting identities.

The confusion of the people about their identities deepened with the emergence of the left in the province. Dersim was an important place where almost all fractions of the left blossomed. In this period, leftism rose as a new identity in the city and took precedence over others.

The Eastern Meetings were held in seven eastern cities in 1967 under the leadership of members of the Workers Party of Turkey (TİP) from the east. Their intention was to protest “the backwardness of Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia,”<sup>57</sup> breaking the silence in Dersim that had lasted since 1938. On 15 October 1967, Dersimlis ventured out to voice their demands – although these demands were restricted to economic problems. With the help of the memoirs of Kemal Burkay, a crucial local political leader of TİP and lawyer who came into prominence during this period, Azat Zana Gündoğan details the Tunceli

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the production of culture see Nira Yuval-Davis, *Gender and Nation* (Thousands Oaks, New Delhi: Sage, 1997); Nira Yuval-Davis and Floya Anthias, eds., *Woman-Nation-State* (London: Macmillan, 1989); Deniz Kandiyoti, “Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation,” *Millennium Journal of International Studies* 20 (3) (1991): 429-443.

56 Ibid., 348.

57 Tarık Ziya Ekinci, *Sol Siyaset Sorunları: Türkiye İşçi Partisi ve Kürt Aydınlanması* (Istanbul: Cem Yayınları, 2004), 306.

meeting which took place as a part of the Eastern Meetings. Burkay emphasizes that they encountered several problems during the organizing of the meeting. (For example, print houses in Tunceli and Elazığ would not print the flyers because of their political content and frightening rumors about harsh police intervention that were going around the city). Moreover, the state sought to suppress the meeting, but the struggle between the organizers and local bureaucrats went in favor of the former.

Five to six thousand people participated in the meeting. When the fact that the population of Tunceli was thirteen thousand in 1965 is considered, such participation is impressive. It seems that enthusiasm replaced the discontent and timidity of the people. On the other hand, local supporters of the Justice Party (AP) organized a counter-protest in response to the meeting of the Easterners. Burkay and his followers sabotaged this movement: an agha who made a speech at this counter-protest argued that the people who had organized the Eastern Meeting were “*kızıl* (red) communists.”<sup>58</sup> Thereupon, Burkay yelled at the agha, accusing him of being communist himself. In this period in particular, communism was a prevalent accusation among people and it seems that Berkay used the same rhetoric. After a squabble, the crowd became disinterested and dispersed.<sup>59</sup>

Social opposition arose during the 1960s and 70s throughout the country. The 1960s were significant given the new constitution of 1961. Society saw the emergence of socialist approaches both in the political sphere and in the street. However, the liberal atmosphere changed drastically in the beginning of the 1970s when a military coup on March 12, 1971, which was intended to eliminate the opposition within the army, led to martial law. The March 12 regime removed opposition groups in short time, so part of the socialist struggle took the shape of guerrilla activities. Although many activists were imprisoned in

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58 “Kızıl” means “red” in Turkish. The conservative right generally uses this term as pejorative to define communists.

59 Azat Zana Gündoğan, “1960’larda Tunceli/Dersim Kent Mekânında Siyasal Eylemlilik: Doğu Mitingleri,” in *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, ed. Şükrü Aslan (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010), 501.

those days, a recovery of the leftist movement via legal methods followed the amnesty of 1974. Many leftist parties were established in this period.<sup>60</sup> However, the pedagogical and political functions of the theoretical studies of the left after 1974 differed from those of the 1960s. The theoretical accumulations of the 1960s contributed to the political improvement and ideological evolution of the left as a whole, but the atmosphere after 1974 presented only an identity to leftist groups.<sup>61</sup>

What makes 1970 and 1971 years different in the political history of Turkey is the tendency to proceed armed struggle as a requirement in the process of social revolution.<sup>62</sup> The People's Liberation Army of Turkey (THKO), whose activities started in January 1971, the People's Liberation Party-Front of Turkey (THKP-C), which was established in the beginning of 1970, and the Communist Party of Turkey-Marxist/Leninist (TKP-ML) and its armed wing, the Workers' and Peasants' Liberation Army in Turkey (TİKKO), founded in 1972 under the leadership of İbrahim Kaypakkaya, emerged as alternative organizations whose methods and principles were based on guerrilla war. They attracted the attention of the youth. Dersim is one of three crucial places where the TKP-ML, the third of these movements, was organized.<sup>63</sup>

The emergence of the left altered the social atmosphere of the city to a large extent. Dersim became the principal place where the Maoist movement, inspired by the Chinese Revolution and the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, became influential in Turkey. The movement – based on a political theory that considered the agrarian peasantry rather than the proletariat to be the

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60 For example, the Socialist Labor Party of Turkey (Türkiye Sosyalist İşçi Partisi, TSİP) in 1974, the Workers Party of Turkey (Türkiye İşçi Partisi, TİP) in 1975, the Laborer Party of Turkey (Türkiye Emekçi Partisi, TEP) in 1975, the Socialist Revolution Party (Sosyalist Devrim Partisi, SDP) in 1975, and the Homeland Party (Vatan Partisi, VP) in 1975. See "12 Mart," *Sosyalizm ve Toplumsal Mücadeleler Ansiklopedisi*, vol 7 (Istanbul: İletişim, 1988).

61 Ergun Aydınöglü, *Türkiye Solu (1960-1980): Bir Amneziğin Anıları* (Istanbul: Versus, 2007), 342.

62 Ertuğrul Kürkçü, "Türkiye Sosyalist Hareketine Silahlı Mücadelenin Girişi," *Modern Türkiye'de Siyasi Düşünce: Sol* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2008), 494.

63 Ali Taşyapan, *Anılarla Geçmişe Yolculuk: Kaypakkaya ile Birlikte* (Istanbul: Belge, 1997), 590. Apart from Dersim, the TKP-ML also had supporters in Istanbul and Kürecik-Elbistan.

essential revolutionary class and calls rural populations to guerrilla warfare – was welcomed and supported by Dersimlis who had long suffered from discrimination. However, Ali Taşyapan, a prominent member of the TKP-ML, argues in his memoirs that despite all its efforts, the movement was not as successful in the countryside as in Istanbul. He describes that militants were transferred from Istanbul to Dersim because the movement could not mobilize enough locals in spite of a massive grassroots support.<sup>64</sup> Instead of the peasantry on which the movement had pinned its hope, the youth of Dersim (like students of Tunceli High School) became the staff and sympathizers of the party.

The question of why leaders of the TKP-ML selected Dersim as the center of the Maoist guerrilla war can be answered in a historical and geographic perspective. The 1937-1938 massacres had discredited the government. Although the new city of Tunceli was calm after the operations, this did not last. Marcus L. Hansen pointed out in his 1938 speech that “what the son wishes to forget the grandson wishes to remember.”<sup>65</sup> The first generation, which had witnessed the massacre, been banished to western cities, and been exposed to trauma sought to erase those painful memories. It kept silent during exile even after return became possible in 1947. In spite of the silence of the first generation, the Dersim youth of the 1970s had the impression that the state was an untrustworthy entity. The Republican People’s Party had been the governing party during the 1937-1938 events; therefore, the Kemalist regime was perceived by Dersimlis as an alien oppressor (even though, interestingly, Mustafa Kemal was and is held in high esteem).<sup>66</sup> Thus, the anti-statist tendency of the people overlapped with the approach of the armed Maoist movement, and its

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64 Ibid., 593.

65 Eugene I. Bender and George Kagiwada, “Hansen’s Law of ‘Third-Generation Return’ and the Study of American Religio-Ethnic Groups,” *Phylon* 29:4 (1968): 360.

66 In the Tunceli (Dersim) Symposium of 2010, Baskın Oran superficially characterized this attitude as “Stockholm Syndrome,” which is not only disparaging but also sociologically unsophisticated.

distinct regard of Kemalism as a “fascist military dictatorship” and its emphasis on the right to self-determination for the Kurdish nation.<sup>67</sup> The leader of the movement, İbrahim Kaypakkaya, was the first revolutionary who tied the 1937-38 events to Kemalism and its nationalist policies.

The Kemalist dictatorship seized all the rights of minorities, especially those of Kurds. It attempted to Turkify them by force. It forbade the use of their language. It ruthlessly suppressed the occasionally appearing Kurdish national movement while collaborating with the Kurdish feudality; and then it slaughtered. By declaring a “prohibited military zone” and “martial law,” it turned the Kurds’ life into hell. After the Dersim rebellion more than 60,000 Kurdish peasants were massacred.<sup>68</sup>

Kaypakkaya’s writings introduce historical reasons for the selection of Dersim as the field of battle. In addition to the historical background giving revolutionaries the opportunity to take root in the province and gain the support of the people, geographic conditions also had an impact. Dersim was chosen as the starting point of the armed struggle because it was considered geographically appropriate for waging guerrilla war. Doğan Munzuroğlu emphasizes the effect of geography in the choice of Dersim: “The region is mountainous and forested. It is ideal for the ‘*strategy of people’s war*.’ Even winter conditions which last seven months can be used to tip the scale in favor of organizations. Maoist groups are in competition with each other for influence.”<sup>69</sup>

The Alevism of the province also affected the decision of the staff of the party. In 1971, Kaypakkaya wrote a detailed report on Kürecik, a sub-district of the Akçadağ district of Malatya, which was part of the ancient Dersim. This elaborate “ethnography” included the economic, social, and political structure

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67 İbrahim Kaypakkaya criticizes leftist groups that support the right to self-determination for the Kurdish people. He argues that such support is tantamount to recognizing the right of making revolution. This is ridiculous; no one is entitled to bestow the right to make a revolution on a people. See İbrahim Kaypakkaya, *Seçme Yazılar* (Istanbul: Umut Yayıncılık, 2004), 302.

68 Ibid., 205.

69 Munzuroğlu, 54.

of Kürecik, its classes and their attitudes towards revolution, and class struggle and the activities of the revolutionary movement in this sub-district, emphasizing the impact of Alevi identity on the people's war. While describing Kürecik, he argues that religious pressure was lifted from Alevi villages unlike in Sunni villages:

The position of *dedes* to whom the people groveled for twenty years is miserable now. It is impossible to find a *dede* declaring that he is not revolutionary. Because the people know that *dedes* pretend to support revolutionaries due to social pressure, they see them as tricksters and do not weigh their words. In Sunni villages, the effect of religion continues: the impact of hajjis, hogjas, and reactionary religious functionaries on peasants persists. In the region, Sunnis generally play a conservative, reactionary role while Alevis play a progressive, revolutionary role.<sup>70</sup>

Alevism was interpreted as a progressive feature and seen as an advantage for the struggle. Because of the historical dissent that the Alevi community has maintained vis-à-vis the state since the fifteenth century, it was considered more inclined toward revolutionary movements. In any case, according to the revolutionaries, the revolution would shake the foundation of all religions, Alevism included.

With the reinvention of identities throughout the world, the left, which had ignored religious, tribal, and ethnic belongings in the 1970s, supporting the "achievement of class consciousness" instead of consciousnesses based on identity, faced heavy criticism. Both Kurdish nationalists and Zazaists<sup>71</sup> denounced the left for making Dersimlis forget their own culture and identity. Munzuroğlu is one such researcher who accuses the left of contributing to the disappearance of Zaza language. He highlights that revolutionaries spoke Turkish while organizing the community and that this created a rupture between Dersim and the rest of the East:

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70 Kaypakkaya, 75.

71 I use the term "Zazaists" for people who present Zaza speakers as a distinct ethnic group different from the Kurds and Turks and perceive the Zaza people as a nation. Zazaists are generally Dersimli immigrants living in Europe.

Revolutionaries coming to the region carried the Turkish language along with them. The books they possessed, the revolutionary songs they sang, and the heated debates in which they participated were in Turkish. The new generation influenced by them sought to learn the Turkish language, make speech in an elocutionary manner, and have full command of it. In short time, the thing that the state had not been able to achieve for hundreds of years was happening... Dersimlis started to feel ashamed of their language. This sin unintentionally committed by leftist organizations coming to the region would be the basis of the argument that “Dersimlis speak Turkish very well.” This situation rendered the approaches claiming that Dersimlis are Turks less alarming. None of the socialist organizations that had come to the region thought of propagandizing in the language of the region. Interestingly enough, they kept away from the Kurdish language. Amateurish attempts at “Kurdish slogan” campaigns by Kurdish-origin organizations that sought to survive in spite of being ineffective were received snidely [by leftist organizations]... One of reasons for the success of leftist organizations entering the region is the fact that people who had graduated from boarding schools and returned from exile were able to speak Turkish and were acquainted with the “Turkish History Thesis.” Officers commissioned in the region were also more tolerant of Turkish organizations in comparison to groups that stressed Kurdishness... They [the leftists] do not speak even a word and cannot shout a slogan in Kurdish. The language and the tradition of the people were ignored, probably because they felt that the people were scared of their past or because of concern about the possibility of the Kurdish left gaining power. Maybe they were unaware of what they had done due in the excitement of “making revolution.” Until 1980, the state left these organizations almost completely alone... Leftist organizations played a large part in the assimilation of region’s people... This process increasingly broke Dersim’s connections with other Kurdish regions.

Dersimlis were besotted with the revolution; however, they were detached from its language, customs, and *pir*<sup>72</sup> and were engaged in “*Qanune Hukumati*” instead of the “*Kırmancıye*” way of life. Dersimlis were almost nakedly left in the state’s hands in 1980.<sup>73</sup>

Cemil Yıldız, who wrote articles supporting Zaza identity as “Dersim’s national culture” in the journal *Roj* under the pseudonym Sait Çiya, also held the left responsible for assimilation. According to Çiya, leftist organizations participated in the genocide of Dersim.

The political identity and culture of Dersim is the left. There is a big influence of democracy and socialism. Dersim has supported the democratic left for seventy years. Isolation and resistance lasting 500 years, the dissident identity of Alevism, and the Kırmanc-Zaza identity un-submissive to the Ottoman-Turk regime have an intermingled role in the formation of leftist culture... The Turkish left exploited Dersim’s dissident-left culture and took the Dersim people along with it in its struggle against the regime; however, it transported Turkish culture without taking Dersim’s reality into account. The Turkish left which propagandize in Turkish while going from door to door for twenty-five years pursued the assimilation in the “left” front. There was even some claim that the people did not understand them and attempt to found [Turkish] literacy courses. What is interesting is the fact that all these were done for the sake of “internationalism.” Does one have to make propaganda in Turkish or act on behalf of [the Republic of] Turkey in order to be internationalist? Why did you [the left] not found a [Zazaki] literacy course? You support and help the regime psychologically and politically while saying that language is not important. You have taken part in genocide. The Turkish left must decide what to do.<sup>74</sup>

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72 A rank of dede.

73 Munzuroğlu, 53.

74 Çiya, *Dersim Yazıları*, 34-35.

Another researcher, Munzur Çem, took a similar approach to the left. According to Çem the left underestimated demands regarding linguistic and cultural rights and defined them as “bourgeois demands.”

Hitherto, the state was the only force attempting to alienate the Kurds from their language, culture, identity, tradition, and customs. Yet now, the same was being done by others, namely leftwing groups portraying themselves as emancipators – albeit for different reasons. This attitude of local leftist militants especially impacted children because those who had such an attitude were figures of inspiration for the children; they were elder brothers and sisters to whom they looked up. Should they say “language is unimportant for the working class has a single common language,” then this would be held as truth. Then what was the point of wasting time learning Kurdish when Turkish was already the official language of education? Indeed, newspapers, publications, and books were already in Turkish. Their conversations [and] heated revolutionary discussions were always held in Turkish. So was the revolutionary music they listened to. The poems of Pir Sultan Abdal were in Turkish, and Ruhi Su, Mahsuni, and the others sang in Turkish. Religion was already opium. Religious functionaries were nothing short of ticks exploiting the people. Not only religious beliefs and services but also customs and traditions were exploitative. The *Cem* ceremony, *gölbank*, and *ziyaret* were old-fashioned matters and symbols of reactionism. Revolution necessitated being absolutely against those things. In order to remove all these reactionary things, going to all lengths including the use of revolutionary violence was permissible.<sup>75</sup>

Anthropologist Dilşa Deniz approaches the relation between Dersim and the left in a different context. She argues that the left perceives Dersimliler as people who agree or must agree with the left. According to Deniz, Dersim is an ideal. Leftists regard the city as a fictional place and consider the people originating from Dersim to be a utopian community.<sup>76</sup>

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75 Çem, *Dersim Merkezli Kürt Aleviliği: Etnisite, Dini İnanç, Kültür ve Direniş*, 538.

76 Gamze Akdemir, “Dilşa Deniz: Dersimliler ya Ateizme ya da Sünni İslama Zorlandı,” 19.05.2012, <http://www.baskahaber.org>.

In spite of criticism leveled at the left, “leftist” (or “socialist”) identities still have a considerable effect on Dersimlis. The people’s support for leftist guerilla groups fighting in the rural areas of Dersim continues even today; the majority of the members of armed socialist groups are relatives of the Dersim people.<sup>77</sup> A strong emotional bond has developed between the revolutionaries and Dersimlis from the 1970s, and it has strengthened with the relationship by affinity. Explaining why Dersim adopted a political tendency originating in China – a country thousands of kilometers away – is complicated but a power different from the state has clearly established its legitimacy in Dersim society. This legitimacy has drawn strength from myths and traditions.

As far as the construction of the leftist identity of Dersim is concerned, one may observe that geographic, religious, and revolutionary myths intermingle with each other. İbrahim Kaypakkaya’s death under torture after being captured in the mountains of Dersim and his reticence despite that torture became a great legend.<sup>78</sup> His defiance evokes traditional and historical values and figures of Alevism. Akin to the Battle of Karbala in which Hussein (the son of the first Shia Imam, Ali) was killed along with all his supporters, the brutal execution of Kaypakkaya influenced the Dersim people deeply and turned into a myth in the course of time. In Cem ceremonies, the climax of the ritual is generally the narration of the death of Hussein in Karbala. Moreover, Alevis fast in the month of Muharrem to mourn ancestors considered martyrs. Kaypakkaya’s rhetoric and death resembles that of Hussein. Kaypakkaya, who said that “there are always people willing to die for revolution,” recalls Hussein who in his own words had “risen against the oppression of the tyrant” and “been honored to die while rebelling against the oppressor.” Both

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77 Since 1976, many separations have occurred in the TKP/ML. Nowadays, Maoist groups active in Dersim are the Maoist Communist Party (MKP) and another, smaller group using the name TKP/ML, which is known as Partizan.

78 Nihat Behram wrote a book on İbrahim Kaypakkaya in 1977: *Ser Verip Sır Vermeyen Bir Yiğit* (A Brave Man Who Willingly Gave His Life than Disclose any Secrets). Because Kaypakkaya did not give the police information about his organization, he was engraved in peoples’ minds as a leader who “willingly gave his life rather than disclose any secrets.” This saying is still in use today.

Hussein and Kaypakkaya are perceived by the people of Dersim as revolutionaries martyred in the struggle against their oppressors. Because Kaypakkaya fought against “tyranny” (as Hussein had done) he was embraced by the Dersim people who themselves suffered greatly from “tyranny.”

### 3.2.1.1 Myths and Symbols: Leftism Expressed through Fragments of Nature

The processes of creation, re-creation, maintenance, protection, and change of identities include both social structural and symbolic components.<sup>79</sup> Symbols and myths contribute to the sense of belonging to a particular identity group. The symbolic context and images of counterhegemonic ideologies take shape in parallel with the interventions of power and resistance oriented to them. In the case of the leftism of Dersim as an identity, one may claim that myths and symbols are considerably related to geographic themes distinct from religious ones.

The socialist guerrilla movement that took root in Dersim in the 1970s became part of local culture even though it has weakened in time from the state’s military operations and the rise of the Kurdish movement. From the beginning of its existence, the movement, which settled in the rural areas of Dersim, has been in communication with peasants. That is to say, the natural environment, encompassing living and non-living things, has been living space of its members. Lefebvre argues that natural (absolute) space made up of fragments of nature (such as caves, mountaintops, springs, and rivers) is also the space of rites and ceremonies.<sup>80</sup> Through symbolic means, this space turned into a political realm; however, nature can remain sacred even as all relationships change with the transition from town to city. A part of this space can appear “as transcendent, as sacred, as magical and cosmic [while continuing] to be perceived as part of nature,” despite the fact that political power removed the natural context from absolute space and reshaped its meaning.<sup>81</sup>

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79 Zdzislaw Mach, *Symbols, Conflict, and Identity: Essays in Political Anthropology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993), ix.

80 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 48.

81 *Ibid.*, 234.

Lefebvre emphasizes the role of political power in the attribution of a sacred character to an absolute space that is already stripped of its natural features. However, through the actions of people living in a space, part of absolute space can become sacred and magical even while being overlaid with political forces. In Dersim, the sacredness of fragments of nature has been reproduced in various ways. The religious aspect of this process – that is, the significance of natural items in Dersim Alevism – is crucial and worthy of attention. The relationship between the “sacredness” of nature and the construction and maintenance of leftist identity needs to be examined in detail.

The landscape of Dersim consists of mountains, precipices, hills, rivers, brooks, and valleys. Increasing urbanization outstanding, these natural elements comprise more than a “background” in the province. As mentioned previously, the history of the province and the determination of the city center are based on these geographic formations. They have functioned as shelter for rebels, and governments have always complained about impossibility of access to the province. In other words, the construction of the city is directly related to geography not only because of the physical obstacles that shape urbanization but also because of its impassable character that disallows state surveillance. This character has become the symbol of opposition and resistance since the 1930s and is identified with local culture. Even in periods when the left lost power, leftist culture continued to exist in Dersim by virtue of the myths and symbols established around revolutionary figures and ideas.

The analogy drawn between nature and the leftist identity of Dersim can be read in artistic and literary production. Revolutionary songs, folk songs, and poems reflect this analogy. From the beginning of the 2000s when the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to power and started to accuse the former regime of the Dersim massacre to defeat its historical rivals and win the support of Alevis and Kurds, the opportunity to produce artistic, cultural, and intellectual works in a relatively free environment has emerged. However, these productions generally concentrate on the 1938 events and the

ethnic identity of Dersim in parallel with the rise of identity politics throughout the world.<sup>82</sup> Unlike works that started with the political turn of the AKP and the more general “cultural turn,” previous artistic productions – which can be categorized as “protest art” – were illegitimate in the eyes of the power. The relationship between nature and the leftist identity of Dersim is more apparent in these protest productions.

Natural themes intermingle with revolutionary ones in many poems and songs. Ahmet Telli’s pastoral poem “Sıyrılıp Gelen” (The One that Manages to Come Out) which would later be set to music by Grup Yorum, the most popular band known for political songwriting, is a typical example of this intermingling. The verses are as follows:

It's obvious that from over mountains, seas, and lakes  
The dawn is en route, coming out  
Obviously it's close, the hour which will shake the nature and the life.

Köroğlu says, “Many valiant men are fed in the bosom of the mountains” in his poem, “Dağlar Koynunda” (In the Bosom of Mountains). In his poem “Dağlara Gel” (Come to Mountains), Gevheri also touches on physical space as a safe area for the opposition:

If something bad happens to you, dear, come to mountains  
It hides you, it doesn't turn you in.

Another song of Grup Yorum is as follows:

When rain becomes flood, come from rivers by pouring out  
When we start to fight come by falling into loves.<sup>83</sup>

These kinds of artistic and literary production are many in number. For Dersim, the nature-revolution analogy is more apparent. For example, in the first

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82 For a detailed analysis, see Ülker Sözen, “Neo-Dersim Kültür Alanı: Siyaset ve Piyasa Ekseninde Hafızanın ve Kültürün Nesneleşmesi,” in *Dört Dağa Sığmayan Kent: Dersim Üzerine Ekonomi-Politik Yazılar*, (eds.) Ş. Gürçağ Tuna and Gözde Orhan (Istanbul: Patika, 2013), 249-305.

83 Both Köroğlu’s and Gevheri’s poems were set to music by Grup Yorum.

album of Grup Yorum (1987) one track calls “Munzur Dağı” (Munzur Mountain) has a similar characteristic. These mountains carry a political meaning because guerrilla troops live and hide in the caves of the Munzurs. The lyrics are as follows:

While enormous Firat babbles  
My mother beats her breast  
Mothers’ screams overflow  
Requiems head towards Munzur  
I piled arms in Munzurs  
I howled loneliness at stars  
Towards misty mountains.

Another song of the band, “Şu Dersim’in Dağları” (These Mountains of Dersim) has similar characteristics in common:

These mountains of Dersim is the center of brave men  
The day was breaking when the comrades were cornered  
The silence was being broken by the bullet of guerrilla  
Warm breeze over the mountains joins in our struggle  
The sun rising in Dersim grows in Caniks,  
The sun rising in Dersim grows in Taurus Mountains  
They [comrades] did not die, they are still alive  
They became a song in Dersim mountains  
*Twelves*<sup>84</sup> grow, guerrillas fight.

In the songs of Grup Yorum, geographic themes are frequently used in ways that evoke revolutionary figures or fictional characters who fight in Dersim’s mountains. Their song “Cemo” (1989), for example, tells the story of a young girl who looks for her beloved Cemo who became a guerrilla.

On your forehead, starry beret  
With his rifle in his hand  
By going up to Dersim mountains  
So good singing is

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84 A name used for twelve guerrillas who died in the Dersim Mountains on 23 October 1993.

Oy Cemo, Cemo Comrade  
 The clouds which have gone down to grassy plain being thrown  
 They are the sign of the coming storm  
 In the glory of that big day  
 The children will go for dance.

The leftist culture constructed around mythical meanings of the geographic formations of Dersim is so strong that some political figures are perceived as local values of the province. Although socialist and leftist groups are generally internationalist by nature, the TKP/ML and ensuing legal and illegal organizations have been localized in the course of time. İbrahim Kaypakkaya, his comrade Ali Haydar Yıldız, and other revolutionaries are also mentioned in songs. There is even a song called “İbrahim’e Ağıt” (Requiem for İbrahim) composed by Grup Munzur (1992) who are distinguished by their political songs about Kaypakkaya and the guerrilla movement operating in the province. Every year at the Nature and Culture Festival of Munzur, which have been organized since 2000, this song is played in concerts without fail:

Rifle on his lap, covered with blood, lying there on his own  
 Comrade İbrahim  
 Would the brave ones die with few bullets  
 There standing up straight Comrade İbrahim  
 Ali Haydar is on the floor  
 Look, lying stretched out  
 A brave one dying like a hero  
 Towards Munzur whose tops are full of mist  
 Has already climbed up and going Comrade İbrahim  
 Tortures continue, they tear him to pieces and tell him to talk  
 But rather than confiding gives his life readily Comrade İbrahim  
 Our people are looking for you everywhere  
 The workers in mines, peasants in mountains.

As mentioned previously, geography is more than décor in these artistic products. The sources (*gözeler*) and waters of Munzur River, the mountains, and the caves enshrined by the Dersim people are the habitat of guerrilla groups; therefore, this geography and nature, which already have symbolic meanings

in Dersim Alevism, is ascribed a new mythical character by Dersimlis who give moral or material support to the socialist guerrilla movement fighting against the state. Interestingly, artistic and cultural productions about the city that contribute to its leftist identity – which are extreme in comparison to those about the rest of the country – are adopted and transformed to a thing innate to everyday life by Dersimlis. Because the Maoist movement which was effective in Dersim did not influence other provinces of the country, it inevitably became a “local” ideology and movement even if internationalist by nature. In other words, the failure of the movement rendered it limited to the city; consequently, socialist identity became an “authentic” feature differentiating Dersim from its neighbors.

To conclude, in spite of the decreasing power of the socialist armed struggle, a leftist identity is still embraced by the Dersim people. As far as the everyday life of the people is concerned, there is a cultural milieu in which revolutionary figures, natural themes, and crucial symbols and places of Dersim Alevism intermingle. This milieu is both an output of the armed movement of the 1970s and a pattern reproducing the leftist identity even today. Schoolchildren of Dersim sing the aforementioned songs during their play, so this belonging of the people can be interpreted as a cultural tendency and not only a political attitude.

In September 2013, workers of Fırat AKSA (the electrical distribution company), who had been subjected to a subcontracting system, went on strike when the employer did not heed their demands for a wage increase and better working conditions. After thirty-eight days, the employer was forced to accept the workers’ demands.<sup>85</sup> The victory of the workers is directly related to the support of the Dersim people. Non-governmental organizations, political parties operating in the city, labor unions, the mayor, and all the city’s citizens openly supported the strike.<sup>86</sup> In a period when labor is universally suppressed by capital such an achievement in such a short time can only be understood by taking the leftist identity and culture of the city into account. On one hand, the support was so extensive that breaking the resistance was not easy for the

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85 Birgün, 24.10.2013.

86 Evrensel, 14.10.2013.

employer. On the other, because of the predisposition of Dersimlis towards more severe forms of struggle diffusing the tension was the more rational choice. This example not only suggests the social solidarity established in the city, but also the perception of Dersim by capitalists.

### 3.2.2 *The Rise of the Kurdish Identity in Dersim*

As Amin Hassanpour indicates in a 1994 article, the Kurds are one of the largest non-state nations. Their homeland lies within official orders of Turkey, Iraq, Iran, Syria, Armenia, and Azerbaijan.<sup>87</sup> From the second half of the nineteenth century, like other subject communities of the Ottoman Empire, “Kurdish nationalism” began to appear in the modern sense. However, the so-called “Kurdish nationalist movement” was neither unified nor linear. The non-nationalist provincial movements of Kurds, troubled the central state more than any Kurdish nationalism developed by Kurdish intellectuals.<sup>88</sup> Only after the foundation of Iraq, Turkey, and Syria and their national policies of assimilating and denying the Kurds, Kurdish nationalism became clearer.<sup>89</sup> Lale Yalçın Heckmann suggests that like all ethnic groups, the Kurds sought to construct, revive, and reframe Kurdish culture as necessary to be a nation.

Just like hegemonic nationalist approach/approaches in Turkey, which look for the “Turkish culture” in certain historical, physical and ideological spaces; the Kurds (and also other ‘ethnic groups’) develop projects of ‘joining parts’ of their ‘culture’ together, constructing the Kurdish (or other) ‘culture’, reconstructing, reframing it as they wish by eliminating elements which have been ‘oppressed and have been

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87 Amir Hassanpour, “The Kurdish Experience,” *Middle East Report* 189 (July - August 1994), 3.

88 In her article, Janet Klein claims that until its fall, Kurdish intellectuals continued to emphasize that the Kurds were an integral element of the Ottoman Empire. She argues that ethnonational movements emerging in multiethnic states were not necessarily nationalist. Janet Klein, “Kurdish Nationalists and Non-Nationalist Kurds: Rethinking Minority Nationalism and the Dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1909,” *Nations and Nationalism* 13:1 (2007), 136 and 145.

89 *Ibid.*, 146.

forcibly forgotten.’ ‘Kurdish culture’ is divided into fields such as language, religion, folklore, clothing and tradition and assessed by fixing to its ‘origin’, ancient state assumed to exist. In this way, how much of it has changed or how much of it has ‘remained’ is ‘revealed.’<sup>90</sup>

Because the Kurds have never enjoyed political unity and have never had a common literature,<sup>91</sup> it is hard to determine what the Kurdish language is. Kurdish nationalism has always paid attention to Kurdish and its inadequacy as a written language because its elusiveness obstructs cultural development.<sup>92</sup> In this section, instead of determining the status of different languages or dialects spoken in the province or the identities developed in parallel with Kurdishness, I present Kurdish identity as both a dissident identity with the rise of the Kurdish movement and as a “hegemonic” identity seeking to absorb other belongings of Dersimlis. I focused on the effect of five constituents of the construction of the Kurdish identity by Kurdish nationalists in Dersim: language, geography, its relations to the state and other political rivals, the narrative of 1938, and religion. Kurdish identity and movements in Iraq, Iran, and Syria are not considered – the Kurdish identity in the context of Turkey forms the framework of this section.

### 3.2.2.1 “Zazaca is a dialect of Kurdish”

From the foundation of the Turkish state, the Kurds rebelled many times. The Sheikh Said Revolt (1925)<sup>93</sup> protesting laicization and the abolition of the Islamic caliphate and the Ararat Revolt (1928) led by İhsan Nuri, who defined Dersimlis as “Zaza-Kurds” in his 1955 book *Kürtlerin Kökeni* (The Origins of Kurds),<sup>94</sup> are major risings that occurred in the first decade of the republic. Religion and tribal belongings were effective in the construction of national identity in this decade. Konrad Hirschler argues that Kurdish nationalism in

90 Lale Yalçın Heckmann, “Ulus, Millet, Azınlık, Etnik Grup ve Kültür Kavramları,” *Birikim* 71-72 (March-April 1995), 85.

91 C. J. Edmonds, “Kurdish Nationalism,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 6:1 (1971), 88.

92 Celile Celil, *Kürt Aydınlanması* (Diyarbakır: Avesta, 2001), 84.

93 It is important that Alevi Kurds did not support this revolt.

94 İhsan Nuri, *Kürtlerin Kökeni* (Istanbul: Yöntem, 1997), 18.

Turkey has undergone four phases. The first phase lasted up until the 1940s and was characterized by religion, and the third phase in the 1960s and 70s, which followed a period of silence in the 1940s and 50s, was characterized by class politics.<sup>95</sup> The problem was formulated as the “underdevelopment” and poverty of the East; in this way, it was possible to rationalize class struggle as key to the solution. The 12 September 1980 coup was a milestone for both the Kurdish movement and for Kurdish nationalism. The Workers Party of Kurdistan (PKK) became the sole, exclusive representative of Kurds after 1980. Surpassing many Kurdish political organizations, it has determined the political, economic, and social life of Turkey from that date forward.

The PKK succeeded in obtaining great public support via armed struggle, mobilizing not only Kurds but also Turkish socialists who favored its party platform based on Marxist ideology and socialism. However, in the fifth Congress held in 1995 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the collapse of the socialist block, the party cancelled its hammer and sickle flag and moderated its socialist perspective. In other words, starting in the 1990s when the party began to cooperate with other Kurdish groups, ethnicity became essential for Kurdish identity formation. Since the capture of their leader, Abdullah Öcalan, in 1999, cultural and linguistic rights have taken the place of the ideal of a fully independent Kurdistan. Öcalan declared that he was focused on multiethnic states and seeking to envisage a new approach to “transcend narrow ethno-nationalism and achieve peace, justice, and prosperity for all citizens” with reference to Leslie Lipson’s *The Democratic Civilisation* (1964).<sup>96</sup> He formulated the idea of a “Democratic Republic” –a system in which Kurds and Turks would live together instead of struggling for autonomy, federation, or independence.<sup>97</sup>

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95 Konrad Hirschler, “Defining the Nation: Kurdish Historiography in Turkey in the 1990s,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 37:3 (Jul., 2001): 146.

96 Michael M. Gunter, “The Continuing Kurdish Problem in Turkey after Öcalan’s Capture,” *Third World Quarterly* 21:5 (Oct., 2000): 854.

97 Aliza Marcus, “Turkey’s PKK: Rise, Fall, Rise Again?” *World Policy Journal* 24:1 (Spring, 2007): 79.

To examine the rise of the Kurdish identity in Dersim, one must consider the ideological transformation of the Kurdish movement and the aforementioned phases of Kurdish nationalism. Indeed, the rise of Kurdish ethnicity in the politicization of Kurds goes back to the end of the 1960s when Kurdish student organizations such as the Revolutionary Cultural Hearths of the East (Devrimci Doğu Kültür Ocakları, DDKOs) were established. The aim of these organizations was to convince the Turkish state to recognize the Kurdish language and accept the cultural rights of Kurds. However, these groups rapidly turned to more revolutionary, radical, separatist rhetoric focused on the right of self-determination.<sup>98</sup> In the second half of the 1990s, with the abandonment of socialist goals and the elimination of Marxist concepts from the party program, national values that had always existed became more evident in both discourse and policy.<sup>99</sup> In his article “The Kurds in Turkey,” which states a short history of Turkey with respect to political developments involving Kurds, Martin van Bruinessen argues that even in the early years of national revival, the Kurdish language, literature, and culture were at the forefront.

Although all of the Kurdish organizations saw national self-determination as an ultimate goal, their activities were primarily directed towards the achievement of cultural rights. Their journals devoted some attention to the Kurdish language, literature and culture, in addition to the purely political articles. They published Kurdish grammars and dictionaries (and circulated them clandestinely, since they were immediately outlawed). They gave Kurdish literacy courses, since very few Kurds could read and write their own language.<sup>100</sup>

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98 Kemal Kirişçi and Gareth M. Winrow, *Kürt Sorunu* (Istanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt, 2007), 130.

99 As Hobsbawm expresses, the ancient nationalism based on the classic Wilsonian-Leninist form and self-determination seems not to be solutions for the twenty-first century; not only the PKK but also other nationalist movements have doubts about total informal separation. Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge [England]; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 186.

100 Martin van Bruinessen, “The Kurds in Turkey,” in *Kurdish Ethno-Nationalism versus Nation-building States: Collected Articles* (Istanbul: Isis Press, 2000), 225-36.

Language is considered a crucial part of nation-building, and a common language contributes to the mobilization of ethnic and national sentiments. Eric J. Hobsbawm argues that all movements emerging against central power require a “national costume” including ethnolinguistic styles.

All movements seeking territorial autonomy tend to think of themselves as establishing ‘nations’ even when this is plainly not the case; and all movements for regional, local or even sectional interests against central power and state bureaucracy will, if they possibly can, put on the national costume, preferably in its ethnic-linguistic styles. Nations and nationalism therefore appear more influential and omnipresent than they are.<sup>101</sup>

In seeking to construct its national costume, the Kurdish movement has tried to gather people living in the same geography under a single, unified, and standardized language. In this process, Kurdish nationalism neglected the various identities of small communities who live with the Kurds in order to gain the support of the majority of the eastern population. A new historiography claiming that all people living in this geography originated from Mesopotamia and that their ancestors were Kurds appeared. Until recently, Turkish nationalists designated the Kurds as “Mountain Turks;” in a similar way, some Kurdish nationalists in Mardin or Hakkari have considered the Assyrian people as “a branch of Kurds.”<sup>102</sup>

The impact of Kurdish nationalism on Dersim can be perceived by looking at linguistic analyses of the Zaza language. Kurdish historiography criticizes and seeks to disprove theses that claim that Zazaca is not a dialect of Kurdish.<sup>103</sup> Apart from the attempt to invent a common spatial origin for all, Kurdish nationalism has established a discourse that homogenizes all languages and dialects spoken in the province. Different languages or dialects of the

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101 Hobsbawm, 177-178.

102 Naci Kutlay, *Kürtlerde Değişim ve Milliyetçilik* (Ankara: Dipnot, 2013), 127.

103 The first linguist to define Zazaca as a language was Oskar Mann (1867-1917), who conducted research in Iran and Central Asia between 1901 and 1907. His research was published in 1932 by Karl Hadank. See Karl Hadank, *Zazalar ve Zaza Dili* (Ankara: Zaza Kültürü Yayınları, 1994).

Kurdish language were defined as Kurdish although speakers of these languages or dialects cannot speak or understand Kurmanci, the most commonly spoken dialect of the Kurdish language. Bruinessen's detailed research on the Kurdish language summarizes linguistic discussions on the subject. He argues that Vladimir Minorsky, a Russian orientalist who studied Kurdish and Persian culture, stated in the 1940s that there was a remarkable unity among Kurdish dialects.<sup>104</sup> However, he did not rank Zaza and Gurani among Kurdish dialects. Bruinessen continues with an analysis by David Neil MacKenzie who claims that Kurdish has a strong southwest Iranian element, while Zaza and Gurani belong to the northwest Iranian group. MacKenzie implies that "the Kurds have neither common origins nor basic cultural unity."<sup>105</sup>

Speakers of Gurani and Zaza are considered as Kurds by Kurmanci-speaking neighbors in spite of their considerable linguistic differences. People speaking Kurmanci and Sorani, for example, prefer to communicate in Turkish, Persian, or Arabic because they do not understand each other's Kurdish.<sup>106</sup> In other words, apart from discussions about the origin of the languages or dialects of all these groups, it is difficult to claim a unity of language for Kurds in daily life. The communication problem among inhabitants of different provinces and countries is generally explained by geographic obstacles that have broken contact among the people. More importantly, the attempt to classify these languages or dialects is often seen by Kurdish nationalists as a maneuver by the nation states of the Middle East (especially by Turkey) who are troubled by the unity of the Kurds even though urbanization processes have already rendered these mother tongues insignificant.<sup>107</sup> As far as the intense ideological struggle of the Turkish state against the Kurdish movement is concerned, this strategy of the Turkish state seems plausible. However, the Kurdish historiography and nationalism based on a discourse of resistance to the assimilation policies of the nation state strengthen the invisibility of the people who define themselves non-Kurdish. For instance, Munzur Çem, who wrote a

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104 Martin van Bruinessen, "Nationalisme Kurde et Ethnicités Intra-Kurdes," *Peuples Méditerranéens* 68-69 (1994), 14.

105 Ibid., 15.

106 Ibid., 16.

107 See, for example, Kutlay, 164.

detailed book about the ethnic diversity of Dersim, suggests that language discussions complement the state target to disrupt the unity of Kurds:

The diffusion of the idea that Kirmancs (Kirids/Zazas) are not Kurd and the support given to this thesis by (even a small group of) Kirmanc (Zaza)-speaking Kurds coincides with the post-1980 period. Before this date, there was no hesitation or discussion among Kirmanc (Zaza) Kurds about their ethnic identity – more precisely, about their Kurdishness. The rise of such discussion in this period is certainly not related to the emergence of new data about the ethnic origin of Kirmancs (Zazas). Indeed, supporters of this thesis have not undertaken serious research even today to constitute a basis for their claims. They cannot because the history, identity, and struggle of Kirmanc-speaking Kurds are so explicit that they have no chance. In that case, one must look at the reasons for this situation. In my opinion, one of the most important reasons for this situation is the vigorous effort of the state to convince Alevis and Zazas that they are not Kurd in order to divide and dissociate the Kurds ... It is important to distinguish evil-minded attempts, which exploit the subject for the sake of politics and even aim to transform this issue to a means of attack against our people's struggle for liberation from sincere approaches expressed by people who really think that Zazas are not Kurd.<sup>108</sup>

A similar interpretation can be found in Doğan Munzuroğlu's book on Dersim Alevism. He argues that the thesis claiming that "all Alevis are Turk [and that] Zazas are a separate nation" was created by the Turkish state to impair the Kurdish movement. He points out that Dicle Radio, which broadcasted in Eastern Anatolia in the time of the state of emergency, went to great expense to make special programs for Zazas. This was the strategy of Iran during both the Shah's regime and the republic.<sup>109</sup> "Until the republic, the group defining itself as Zaza scarcely existed. People defining themselves as Zaza in Diyarba-

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108 Çem, *Dersim Merkezli Kürt Aleviliği: Etnisite, Dini İnanç, Kültür ve Direniş*, 507-508.

109 Munzuroğlu, 67.

kır Province were generally communities not belonging to aşirets ... The number of people defining themselves Zaza increased with the diffusion of the official ideology.”<sup>110</sup> He highlights that Kurmancs named the aforementioned population as Zaza and the reason of this kind of denotations is generally tribal, regional or denominational differences. The dissociation of Kurds is not only related to the success of the strategy of Middle Eastern nation states but is also the consequence of social processes and everyday life among different groups living together in conflict according to Munzuroğlu. While Kurdish nationalists and authors supporting the Kurdish movement insist that Zaza identity was invented and try to prove the Kurdishness of Zazas, Turkish nationalists claim that “Zaza is the origin of all dialects” in order to convince them that they are essentially Turks.<sup>111</sup>

Finally, the most concrete attempt to mobilize Kurds within the context of language can be observed in the writings of Öcalan. The prohibition of non-Turkish languages contributed to the development of a national consciousness. In an interview in 1989, Öcalan expresses the relation of the Kurdish language to the Kurdish national awakening: “The Kurdish people are mute (or without language). They were left in the mountains without language. If people are mute, you know, their mentality does not develop. I mean, because language is not used, their ignorance increases. The thinking habits of the people are very weak.”<sup>112</sup>

### 3.2.2.2 Dersim as the “Silver Door of Kurdistan”

Kurdish nationalist emphasis on linguistic unity against the threat of the Turkification policies of the Turkish state overlaps with the ideal of a united

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110 Ibid., 71.

111 Edip Yavuz, *Doğu Anadolu’da Dil-Onomastik İlişkileri Üzerine Bir Deneme* (Ankara: Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü, 1983), 43.

112 Demir İlkey Alptekin, “Abdullah Öcalan’la Görüşme,” *Sosyalist Birlik Dergisi* (December 1989), 17. “Kürt halkı dilsiz bir halktır. Onları dağların dibinde dilsiz bıraktılar. Dilsiz oldu mu, bilirsiniz düşüncesi de gelişmez. Yani dil kullanılmadığı için düşüncesizliği geliştirir. Halkın düşünme alışkanlığı çok zayıftır.”

Kurdistan as a geographic unit. Anthony D. Smith argues that collective memories – a vital component of a nation – “must attach themselves to specific places and definite territories.”<sup>113</sup> In a process that Smith defines as “territorialization of memory,” territories whose boundaries fluctuated in pre-modern times become historic homelands.<sup>114</sup> Umut Özkırımlı also highlights the spatial dimension of the discourse of nationalism. Drawing on Robert J. Kaiser’s article on “Geography” in the *Encyclopedia of Nationalism* (2001), he states that nationalists develop many techniques to foster territorial consciousness, and the most common among these is mapmaking. Maps shape the frontiers of historic homelands and determine the geographic scope of the future community, contributing to the creation of states with national languages.<sup>115</sup> In other words, the territory forming the homeland is not just physical space – it is home.

The notion of territory is integral to the concept of nationality. All nations have territories, and sometimes nations or aspirant nationalities fight over territories that they believe to be theirs, to which they often lay some ancestral claim. The concept of a *homeland* is a romantic extension of this sense of territory. The homeland is more than just the physical space over which the nationality exercises or wants to exercise political control. It is always also a home, a place of origin and integrity; its members are imagined as sharing this home, as being part of the same family.<sup>116</sup>

The meaning of Kurdistan and Dersim for Kurdish nationalists can be discussed thoroughly in light of this approach. Hakan Özoğlu points out that for Kurds, who do not speak a common language and who belong to different

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113 Anthony D. Smith, “Culture, Community and Territory: The Politics of Ethnicity and Nationalism,” *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs)* 72:3 (Jul., 1996), 453.

114 *Ibid.*, 454.

115 Umut Özkırımlı, *Contemporary Debates on Nationalism: A Critical Engagement* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 180.

116 “Homeland,” in *Encyclopedia of Nationalism* 2, (ed.) Alexander Motyl (San Diego, Calif.; London: Academic Press, 2001), 217.

religious sects, the only common value is the shared territory in which they believe their people originated.<sup>117</sup> Özoğlu demonstrates the evolution of the social perception of Kurdistan with reference to the writings of Şerefhan Bitlisi, Ahmed-i Hani, Evliya Çelebi, and Şemseddin Sami.<sup>118</sup> The definitions and maps they drew were quite different. The boundaries of Şerefhan's map of Kurdistan (1596) stretch to the end of Malatya and Maraş,<sup>119</sup> but Dersim was not included in his Kurdistan. Indeed, Özoğlu highlights that Zaza-speaking people are not cited as a Kurdish group by Şerefhan.<sup>120</sup> Ahmed-i Hani describes Kurdistan more ambiguously (1695) and regards only Kurmanci-speaking people as Kurds.<sup>121</sup> Evliya Çelebi, who travelled in the province several times in the seventeenth century, provides detailed information about the languages spoken and the geographic definition of Kurdistan in his book *Seyahatname*. As far as provinces within the political boundaries of modern Turkey are concerned, Çelebi's map includes only Erzurum, Van, Hakkari, and Cizre.<sup>122</sup> Although he clearly states that Zaza-speakers are part of Kurdish society, he does not include Dersim in Kurdistan. However, the Kurdistan drawn by Şemseddin Sami in *Kamus-ul Alem* (1889) embraces a larger territory.<sup>123</sup> Dersim is included in Şemseddin Sami's map.

F. R. Maunsell, a British Army officer who visited the province at the end of the nineteenth century, describes Kurdistan as an area “ranging along the

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117 Hakan Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004), 42.

118 The administrative status of Kurdistan was also important for the Ottoman state. Annual year-books between 1847 and 1867 demonstrate that Kurdistan was established by the central government as an eyalet and Dersim was included in Kurdistan in 1849. Osmanlı Kaynaklarında Kürtler Çalışma Grubu, *Kürdistan Eyaleti'nin Kurulması ve Osmanlı Devlet Salnamelerinde Kürdistan Eyaleti*, 30.11.2001. <http://bgst.org> [20 December 2013]. However, the extent and meaning of Kurdistan in the eyes of people living in various centuries helps displaying the complex relation between Dersim and Kurdish nationalists that continues even today.

119 Özoğlu, *Kurdish Notables and the Ottoman State: Evolving Identities, Competing Loyalties, and Shifting Boundaries*, 29.

120 *Ibid.*, 28.

121 *Ibid.*, 32.

122 *Ibid.*, 34.

123 *Ibid.*, 37.

Persian frontier up to the Trans-Caucasus and west to the borders of Asia Minor”<sup>124</sup> and adds that “the north-western limit of this is the mass of rugged mountains of the Dersim country.”<sup>125</sup> During territorial discussions at the Paris Peace Conference after the First World War, Dersim was added to “independent Kurdistan” on the request of the Kurdish delegation, and it was envisaged as the northern frontier of their homeland.<sup>126</sup> With the establishment of the Turkish state and its nationalist policies, the use of the term “Kurdistan” almost completely disappeared by 1925.<sup>127</sup> However, the idea of Kurdistan as the homeland of the Kurds never disappeared and Dersim, albeit speaking the Zaza dialect or language, has always been part of this territorial unity according to Kurdish nationalists.

Territorial discussions and the discourse of Kurdistan among dissidents continued although the term was banned. Over the years, the policy with respect to Dersim of the PKK, the most powerful representative of the Kurdish people living in Turkey, also changed. After the coup d'état of 12 September, the PKK became the most crucial organization of Turkey's Kurds and rapidly bloomed. The main aim of the staff in those years was to turn the PKK into a mass organization.<sup>128</sup> The Dersim policy of the PKK took shape in tandem with its popularization. The ideal of an independent Kurdistan helped gather masses around the PKK and mobilize them.

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124 F. R. Maunsell, “Central Kurdistan,” *The Geographical Journal* 18:2 (August 1901), 121.

125 F. R. Maunsell, “Kurdistan,” *The Geographical Journal* 3:2 (February 1894), 81.

126 Kurds had to bargain with Armenians regarding the participation of Eastern Anatolia; therefore, Şerif Paşa left some parts of Erzurum and Kars to Armenians for independent Armenia. See Chérif Pacha, *Memorandum Sur Les Revendications du Peuple Kurde* (Paris: Imprimerie A.-G. L'Hoir, 1919); İsmail Göldaş, *Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti* (Istanbul: Doz, 1991).

127 Namık Kemal Dinç, “Kadim Anavatandan Bir İnkâr Coğrafyasına Kürdistan,” *Toplum ve Kuram* 2 (Fall 2009), 168; Philip G. Kreyenbroek, “On the Kurdish Language,” in *The Kurds: a Contemporary Overview*, (eds.) Philip G. Kreyenbroek and Stefan Sperl (London: Routledge, 1992), 57.

128 Aliza Marcus, *Blood and Belief: The PKK and the Kurdish Fight for Independence* (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 160.

The journal of the PKK, *Serxwebûn* (Independence),<sup>129</sup> which began publication in 1982, stated the early approach of the organization to Dersim. Articles on Dersim written in 1985 issues of the journal are mostly based on Abdullah Öcalan's book *Kürdistan'da Darağaçları, Kışla Kültürü ve Devrimci İntikam Görevimiz* (Gallows, Barracks Culture and Our Mission of Revolutionary Revenge)<sup>130</sup> and consist of quotations from this book. In an article published in June, Dersim is defined as the "silver door of Kurdistan."<sup>131</sup> In another, it is called the "cradle of Kurdistan and humanity."<sup>132</sup> In other words, Dersim is described as a place more so than as a part of Kurdistan; it is the "door," the "origin," and the "beginning" of Kurdistan.

The journal claims that the state selected Dersim as "pilot area" and applied the policies it realized there in other provinces of Kurdistan. In the October 1985 issue of the journal, the Dersim Massacre is interpreted as a "model" for the demolishing of Kurdish national identity: "It was specific to Dersim, but it was generally for Kurdistan."<sup>133</sup> Using the 1938 Massacre, the organization sought to construct a common history for the whole geography.

As is known, Dersim, which is the symbol of resistance and cannot be conquered from of old, is seen by the Kemalist dictatorship as the "head of a pustule (*çıbanbaşı*) that needs to be removed." The conquest of Dersim was determined as the central issue. In this period [before

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129 The first chief editor of the journal was Mazlum Doğan, a member of the central committee of the PKK, who set his own cell at Diyarbakır Prison on fire to protest inhumane prison conditions.

130 See Abdullah Öcalan, *Kürdistan'da Darağaçları, Kışla Kültürü ve Devrimci İntikam Görevimiz* (unspecified).

131 The word Dersim means silver door in the Kurdish language. The Koçan tribe, which is established in the west of Dersim, uses the term Dersim to mean the "door of Kurdistan" and defines members of the tribe as the guards of this door. Nuri Dersimi says that for ordinary people Dersim means Kurdistan. When they return to Dersim, they say "we have come to Kurdistan;" when they invite someone from outside, they say "come to Kurdistan." Dersimi, 8-9 and "Dersim'de Devrimci İntikam Eylemlerimiz Her Türlü İhanete Darbe Vurarak Yükseliyor," *Serxwebûn* 42 (June 1985), 1.

132 *Serxwebûn* 46 (October 1985), 14.

133 Ibid.

1938], Kurdistan was thoroughly occupied, from Urfa to Van. Administrative units of the colonial government were founded. Although people resisted in Ağrı, in Zilan, and notably in the Şeyh Sait [Rebellion], they were gorily suppressed. In 1938, the only place that could not be subjugated was the “Silver Door” Dersim of Kurdistan. Due to the pertinacity of the aşirets and the convenient geography, Dersim, like a thorn, has pricked foreign sovereigns and cannot be seized. In the end, however, the Kemalists came to Dersim to slaughter. They sought to capture the Dersim fortress ... After the massacre, Dersim was selected as pilot area by the Turkish republic. Everything to be applied in Kurdistan was first tested in Dersim and then gradually extended to the whole Kurdistan. There was a plan of annihilation and assimilation for the whole of Kurdistan, but the most developed version of this plan was applied in Dersim.<sup>134</sup>

In short, in seeking to take root in Dersim the Kurdish movement has insisted on a “common fate” shared by all inhabitants of the geography. The massacre that the Dersim people experienced was generalized to the whole of Kurdistan by defining the province as a “model.” Dersim has been reconstructed as a crucial part of Kurdistan via a common history, the milestones of which were shaped by state violence.

### 3.2.2.3 The Exhibition of the “Common Enemy” and the Elimination of Political Rivals

*Serxwebûn* presents “Kemalism” as the common historical enemy of the Dersimlis and of the Kurdish movement. The operations of the Kemalists in Dersim are cited in detail. According to the journal, because the Kemalists eradicated the historical consciousness of the Dersimlis after 1938 via official education, the Dersim people have come to believe that they are Turk. This is perceived as a comprehensive state strategy that was applied not only in Dersim but also in other cities in Kurdistan.

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134 *Serxwebûn* 42 (June 1985), 1.

Around the city center, barracks were constructed, administrative unites were founded. The colonialist Turkish state entered Dersim as it headed towards Kurdistan with all its power. It did what it had done in Urfa, Diyarbakır, Bingöl, and Antep ... In these barracks and schools, an intense Turkification activity started. Kemalism was syringed into young brains ... The seed sowed by the Kemalists took root even if just a bit and the flowers that grew denied the reality of Kurds and Kurdistan while poisoning others. In this period, articles and photos in the newspapers were mentioning the tombstone of Kurdistan and the definite suppression of the country, which was already imaginary.<sup>135</sup> ... The PKK's activities in Dersim function as a bridge linking youth to the past and helping them to perceive today's reality and play a crucial role in the breaking down of environments that deny their nation.<sup>136</sup>

The PKK's most crucial rival in Dersim in the middle of the 1980s was the left although the coup almost completely suppressed all leftist organizations. The PKK criticized the "Turkish left" which could not expose the sins of Kemalism: "They were trained in 'barracks culture' and educated in Kemalist schools; therefore, they disarrayed and fractioned all socialist organizations."<sup>137</sup> The article slams the social atmosphere under the influence of the military after the 1938 massacre with the term "barracks culture." One of Abdullah Öcalan's books to which *Serxwebûn* often refers scrutinizes this "barracks culture."<sup>138</sup> Öcalan expresses that the state founded two barracks in Dersim around which all new buildings were arranged, and in this way a colony was constructed. This colony consisted of schools and police and gendarmerie stations and created a model of the Turkish nation, assimilating the babies of Dersim. These public establishments were so effective that there was no longer any need for

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135 After the 1938 operation, a political cartoon which shows a tombstone was printed in newspapers. On the tombstone was written, "Imaginary Kurdistan is buried here." *Serxwebûn* 46 (October 1985), 13.

136 Ibid., 11.

137 Ibid.

138 See Abdullah Öcalan, *Kürdistan'da Darağaçları, Kışla Kültürü ve Devrimci İntikam Görevimiz* (unspecified).

castle walls.<sup>139</sup> The following quote hints at the PKK's approach to the Dersim people and to its political rivals in the middle of the 1980s:

Over the years, the seeds of Turkification bourgeoned and came to flower. The youth were trained in a Kemalist line; they broke their connection with their near history and were unable to know its reality. These people formed building blocks of the structure of the denial [of their own reality] that was wished to construct [by the Turkish state], by propagandizing Kemalism everywhere and seeking to instill it. The youth entering the universities had become supporters of Kemalism and CHP. One may say that the best Kemalist of this period was Mr. Kemal Burkay, which he proved with articles in the journal *Emek* in the 1970s. This kind of new, intellectual generation appeared generally between 1960 and 1970. However, the national alienation of the youth, their emancipation perspective based on Kemalism, and the adoption of the language and culture of the Turkish nation makes the history of Dersim after the 1940s more obscure. The large part of the people participating in the wave of leftism of the 1970s also came from here. They define themselves as leftist, but they do not break the wall of Kemalism. On the contrary, they are supporters of left-Kemalism. This means nothing other than supporting Kemalism in a different way... Colonialists also use these young people shaped by barracks culture and fermented with submission, betrayal, and the denial of their nation to fragment leftist organizations. Flowers blossoming [in Dersim] spread to Kurdistan; thus, next time poisonous flowers will grow in Urfa, Diyarbakır, Batman, and Elazığ... The fact that a large part of the instigators of organizational divisions are from Dersim is no coincidence. Yes, sprouts fed with barracks culture for years finally matured and started to bear fruit... The [PKK] gave an answer to the demagogy made by *Partizan* limiting itself to only the Dersim area. *Partizan* says the masses “do not support *Apocular*,<sup>140</sup> if they come [to Dersim] they

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139 *Serxwebûn* (October 1985), 15.

140 *Apocular* mean supporters of Abdullah Öcalan.

will attack police stations and the Turkish state will undertake a new 38." *Partizan* must see that it stands with colonialists.<sup>141</sup>

In the beginning of the 1990s, the PKK attempted to settle in Dersim by brutally eliminating socialist rivals. In order to consolidate its position in Dersim, Müslüm Durgun, the Dersim-born militant better known as Dr. Baran, was sent to Dersim by Öcalan as the "Dersim commander." In this way, the Dersim people were to be pulled into the Kurdish national struggle. However, Dr. Baran fell out with Öcalan. According to the daily newspapers, Dr. Baran stood up against his leader who had ordered him to organize bloody attacks in Dersim and he left the organization with his 200 fighters.<sup>142</sup> On 25 March 1994, the Ministry of the Interior declared that Dr. Baran had committed suicide;<sup>143</sup> however, it is commonly believed that Öcalan had him killed. The Dr. Baran event is a crucial example of the painful process by which the PKK settled in Dersim. Although there is not enough information about this process, Öcalan's criticisms of both the Dersim people and the Dersim cadre of the organization indicate the difficulty the PKK confronted during its foray into the province. Unlike other Eastern people, a considerable part of the Dersim people is not disposed to participate in the Kurdish national movement.

In a 1994 recording of Abdullah Öcalan, it is possible to observe the PKK's persistence with respect to Dersim. Organizing in Dersim was extremely important for the PKK; however, it was also difficult. In Öcalan's records, the Dersim people are criticized for not comprehending their Kurdishness. Öcalan examines and interprets the Dersim people and defines them as "dis-oriented" due to their specific history of assimilation. Instead of "identity," he uses the term "personality" (*kişilik*) in a psychological sense.

Everybody knows that we wanted to take one of the first steps of our movement in the Dersim area. I will not touch on its long history. As we experienced in every province and area, we met with disobedience

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141 Partizan is the name of followers for İbrahim Kaypakkaya.

142 *Kürdistan Devrimci Komite Bülteni*, October 1993; *Cumhuriyet*, 12 October 1993; *Milliyet*, 26.03.1994.

143 *Milliyet*, 25.03.1994.

and stubbornness in Dersim. I do not deem anyone responsible. Dersim is highly inconsistent with general common features [of the region]. The characteristics of Dersim are different from [those of the] Botan peasantry or Mardin's *aghalık*. It has witnessed an atypical Kemalist assimilation process; consequently, it has a personality caused by that. The [Dersim personality] is a state that is a bit disconnected from historical reality, alienated from its social characteristics but has a rebellious social ground... The Dersim personality is a personality that still searches for itself. It is both massacred and betrayed. It is also involved in betrayal. It lives in a complicated situation. It wants to rebel, as well. This is such a complex state. It is a little bit plaintive, very sensitive. It is interested in socialism but is very petit bourgeois. It was exposed to Turkification in terms of its national features. It is afraid of its Kurdish characteristics – refrains from them. It approaches politicization fanatically like an insurgent. It has a complex, conflicting, unique sentimental style and mentality; however, it is generally unable to escape from defeat vis-à-vis the enemy.<sup>144</sup>

Öcalan's concept of the "Dersim personality" is clearly pejorative. This personality structure refers to both infidelity and victimhood. Militants are called not to behave like the Dersim people who are in love with their murderers. The "Dersim personality" can be interpreted as the antithesis of the "Kurdish personality," which is defined as the "real" and "national" personality. According to Paul J. White, the "Kurdish personality" looks like "new Socialist man" or "new man" types of socialist movement.<sup>145</sup> On the other hand, the conceptualization of the "Dersim personality" had a function to show the people what not to be – what to avoid.

After the capture of Öcalan, the organization abandoned the idea of an independent state and focused on cultural demands. Indeed, on 5 October

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144 Abdullah Öcalan, "Politikleşmek, Yücelmek ve Özgürleşmektir," *Apocu Militan Kişilik I* (unspecified, 31 August 1994), 160.

145 Paul J. White, *İlkel İsyancılar mı? Devrimci Modernleştiriciler mi? Türkiye'de Kürt Ulusal Hareketi* (Istanbul: Vate Yayınları, 2012), 202.

1998 Öcalan indicated that the Kurds want democratic rights like those bestowed on the Irish and Scottish people, and he expressed the necessity of another method of struggle based on peace. This intention overlapped the norms, minority rights stances, and pluralist policies of the European Union.<sup>146</sup> The defense Öcalan sent to the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR), which would be published in 2001 under the name *Sümer Rahip Devletinden Demokratik Uygarlığa* (From Sumerian Priest State to Democratic Civilization), demonstrates the new approach of the movement for a democratic solution to the Kurdish question and the recognition of the democratic rights of Kurds.<sup>147</sup> The new perspective of the organization would be formulated in following years as a project of “democratic modernity” based on the thesis of radical democracy.<sup>148</sup> The model envisaged proposes an administrative system of “democratic confederalism,” which means a “democratic nation” instead of nationalist-statist nations surrounded by rigidly defined borders. The new perspective of the organization and the system “without the state” bear the traces of the ideas of the multitude, multiculturalism, multilingualism, and equal representation of different ethnic, religious, and cultural identities. The intellectual roots of this new perspective require the active “agency” of people. In other words, from the beginning of the 2000s, the PKK has reconstructed itself not only in terms of its method of struggle but also ideologically. The ideological transformation has included the recognition of all identities that had previously been absorbed into the Kurdish identity. Paul

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146 David Romano, *Kürt Dirilişi: Olanak, Mobilizasyon ve Kimlik* (Istanbul: Vate Yayınları, 2010), 201.

147 Abdullah Öcalan, *Sümer Rahip Devletinden Demokratik Uygarlığa: AİHM Savunmaları II* (Köln/Deutschland: Mezopotamien Verlag, 2001).

148 Radical democracy was developed by Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe as an alternative to the liberal democracy of the West. See Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985). For a detailed analysis highlighting the intellectual roots of the ideological transformation of the PKK, see Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya and Joost Jongerden, “Reassembling the Political: the PKK and the Project of Radical Democracy,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 14 (2012). <https://ejts.revues.org/4615>.

J. White points out that the PKK finally learned to live with people called “Dimili” or – from a different point of view – “Alevi Kurds,” and it even incorporated Alevi heroes into its renovated national myth.<sup>149</sup>

#### 3.2.2.4 Incorporating the Narrative of the 1937-38 Massacre into the Kurdish Historiography

Apart from language and territory, the Kurdish movement has functionalized history as have all national movements. The historiography of the events of 1937-38, marking the entrance of the modern state into the province, became a matter of debate and provided bases for the construction and maintenance of different identities in Dersim. Was there a rebellion before the 1937-38 massacres? If there was a rebellion, what was its motivation? Was it national or tribal? Why did the Turkish state undertake all-out slaughter? Did it bomb Dersim to prevent the establishment of a union of Kurds? Otherwise, did it undertake the massacre to abolish the aşirets and install its own authority in place of that of tribesmen? Did the Dersim people resist the Turkish army or submit themselves to Turkish security forces? Who was Seyid Rıza, the most prominent figure of the 1930s in Dersim? Was he a feudal chief, a marauder, or the Dersim general of Kurdistan? There are tens of narratives answering these questions in significantly different ways, and each one strengthens or disconfirms competing political stances in the province.

A general thesis of the 1937-38 events embraced by a significant part of the Kurdish movement can be observed in the writings of İsmail Beşikçi, a Turkish sociologist who was held in prison for seventeen years on charges of propaganda stemming from his research into the Kurdish population. In a panel discussion on 27 July 2013 in Dersim,<sup>150</sup> Beşikçi claimed that the 1938 Dersim genocide was a Kurdish rather than an Alevi massacre. As evidence, he argued

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149 White, 296.

150 This panel discussion was organized by the Beşikçi Foundation and was not within the scope of the Nature and Culture Festival of Munzur despite being held at the same time as the festival. In the opening speech, representatives of the foundation expostulated with the Tunceli Municipality about its indifference regarding Beşikçi’s visit to Dersim. After Öcalan’s famous Newroz speech that highlighted Islamic unity, which opened the peace process, Beşikçi criticized him for neglecting Alevi.

that the state resettled the Dersim people to Western Anatolian Alevi-Turk villages in order to assimilate them in accord with Turkish Alevism.

Another author interpreting the events in the context of the Kurdish policy of the republic is Munzur Çem. In the same panel discussion, Çem took the floor and argued:

Although the perpetrators of the genocide of 1938 clearly stated that they regarded the problem within the Kurdish question and the Dersimlis also clearly asserted national demands, some persistently do not want to see realities. Alevism was certainly a problem for the state, but the main reason for the 1938 genocide was not that. The main reason was the Kurdish identity of the Dersimlis and their demands in this respect.<sup>151</sup>

Roughly speaking, like Beşikçi, Çem also focuses on the Kurdishness of the Dersim massacre referring to official reports defining Dersim people as “Kurds,” and he handles the operation as an extensive colonization plan. In his book on Dersim, he defends this argument: “After collecting all information about the Kurds and Kurdistan, the [Turkish] state designed the outline of the Kurdish policy and determined a road map. The Reform Plan for the East (1926) is the main document on this matter. Naturally, Dersim was one of provinces discussed in detail in this context.”<sup>152</sup>

The principal source held up in support the Kurdishness of Dersim via the 1938 massacre is Nuri Dersimi’s book. Dersimi witnessed the events until his departure from Dersim on 11 September 1937. It is known that he conveyed a letter from Seyid Rıza to the United Nations; however, it is generally believed that the writer of this letter – signed by the “Dersim general of Dersim” – is Nuri Dersimi himself. Although his book written in Syria in the 1950s is considered among the most crucial sources about Dersim even today, it contains many exaggerated, fictional narratives – a natural result of his nationalist approach. He was not merely a writer. He had participated in the Koçgiri and

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151 The panel discussion of İsmail Beşikçi, 27.07.2013.

152 Çem, *Dêrsim Merkezli Kürt Aleviliği: Etnisite, Dini İnanç, Kültür ve Direniş*, 426.

Dersim movements with nationalist motivations and theorized these uprisings in the context of Kurdish nationalism. He was already a member of the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (Kürdistan Teali Cemiyeti).<sup>153</sup> However, his writings reflecting Kurdish nationalist rhetoric take precedence of his activism. His book can be understood as an early example of Kurdish historiography constructed around pioneer characters – especially around Seyid Rıza who is presented as the “great Kurdish hero” that would later become a national leader. Moreover, with “an address to Kurdish youth” and a “promise of revenge” as an afterword, the book reflects typical nationalist characteristics. As Dilek Soileau points out, Dersimi reconstructs the past in accordance with the present conjuncture by playing the role of the transmitter of history.<sup>154</sup> A linear historical narrative is constructed and the 1937-38 events are linked to the Koçgiri uprising, which Dersimi defined as the first Kurdish rebellion in the republican era. (He calls it the “Koçgiri Kurdish Independence War”).<sup>155</sup>

As mentioned above, the Kurdish movement embraced Dersimi’s thesis based on epic resistance to the Turkish state. In one 1985 issue of *Serxwebûn*, Nuri Dersimi’s book is recommended to the youth of Dersim: “The youth of Dersim must learn their own history from the book *Dersim in the History of Kurdistan*, from Nuri Dersimi... With the birth of the PKK, the voice [of resistance] reaching a more organized, modern, and strong base has continued to develop by dealing a big blow to colonialists. In this way, [we] seek revenge.”<sup>156</sup> As seen in the quotation, the 1937-38 narrative of Nuri Dersimi was adopted by the modern Kurdish movement and conveyed throughout the years as a part of the Kurdish nation-building process.

The thesis explaining the state operation and massacre as a response to the Kurdish national revival requires a narrative of unity among the Dersim aşirets against the Turkish state. Nuri Dersimi implies the presence of a united

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153 M. Nuri Dersimi, *Hatıratım* (Stockholm: Roja Nû Yayınları, 1986), 91.

154 Dilek Soileau, “Koçgiri ve Dersim Kürt Hareketliliği: Koçgirili Alişer Efendi ve Nuri Dersimi’nin Rolüne Dair,” *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, (ed.) Şükrü Aslan (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010), 354.

155 Dersimi, *Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim*, 84.

156 *Serxebûn* 42 (June 1985), 11.

struggle – the description of the leader (Seyid Rıza) reinforces the argument of unity. Faik Bulut, for example, also claims that Seyid Rıza was the representative of three million Kurds in reference to Rıza’s letter.<sup>157</sup> However, some aşirets compromised with the Turkish state and did not participate in the resistance. In spite the fact that Munzur Çem agrees with Dersimi on many points, one of his answers to the question of why Dersim went down in defeat is as follows: “Unity could not be provided in the province. Weak national consciousness, interminable tribal wars, and blood feuds prevented a common cause.”<sup>158</sup>

To sum up, the narrative of the 1937-38 events written by Kurdish nationalists and adopted by the Kurdish movement serves the purpose of establishing a bond among the uprisings that occurred in the geography. The Dersim massacre is handled as the counter attack of the Turkish state against the Dersim people who had mobilized around national feelings just as other Kurds had done in the Sheikh Said, Koçgiri, and Ararat Revolts. Another approach adopted by Kurds emphasizes that the state massacred people although there had not been any revolt.<sup>159</sup> This suggestion portraying the Dersim people as victims seems inconsistent with the resistance rhetoric; however, it contributes to the thesis that the state was undertaking a systematic, planned massacre of Kurds.

The attempt to historicize the oppression of the state and the resistance against it puts the event in a broader context. Moreover, Kurdish nationalism and the Kurdish movement bring Seyid Rıza to the fore and present him as the leader of the resistance. It is evident from Seyid Rıza’s letters and speeches that in his lifetime, he defined himself as “Kurd” and consecrated his struggle to the Kurdish nation. In virtue of his clear stance – leaving no room for hesitation about his motivations – he was well received by the Kurdish movement. More importantly, his mythical character, which became charismatic not only for Dersimlis but also for all dissidents after his execution, helped the Kurdish movement rally supporters. Seyid Rıza, who “walked to the gallows himself,

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157 Bulut, 27.

158 Çem, *Dêrsim Merkezli Kürt Aleviliği: Etnisite, Dini İnanç, Kültür ve Direniş*, 470.

159 See, for example, “Seyid Rızalar Her Yerde,” *Özgür Gündem*, 16.11.2013.

strung the rope around his neck, and boldly executed himself” after addressing the silence and emptiness as if the square were full of people, making his unforgettable speech –“We are the son of Karbala, we are blameless, it is shame, it is cruel, it is murder”<sup>160</sup> – possesses the qualities a national hero should have.

In 2009, Emine Ayna, the co-chairperson of the Democratic Society Party (DTP),<sup>161</sup> said in a public meeting in Muş that “today’s Seyid Rıza is Öcalan.”<sup>162</sup> In another speech in Dersim, she again made mention of Seyid Rıza: “If democracy has taken a step further, this has been possible because of the Kurds and the people who resist. Seyid Rıza is proud of his successors.”<sup>163</sup> The discourse drawing a parallel between Rıza and Öcalan demonstrates that the modern Kurdish movement is seeking to improve its relationship with the Dersim people by reconstructing a common history based on state violence against the Kurds and the heroic resistance of the Kurdish nation. The appropriation of the 1937-38 events is an attempt to include Dersim both historically and spatially in the Kurdish struggle. In response to the aggrieved position shared by all these people, the leader of the PKK is presented as the “grandson,” and the Dersim people are invited to support the Kurdish national struggle.

### 3.2.2.5 Alevism as the “Essential Form” of Kurdishness

The changing meaning of religion in the Kurdish movement and its role in the processes of the PKK’s massification need to be examined in detail in future research. In this section, I focus only on the inclusion of Alevism into Kurdish nationalism and its movement during the construction of the Kurdish identity in Dersim.

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160 İhsan Sabri Çağlayangil, *Anılarım* (Istanbul: Güneş Yayınları, 1990), 45-55.

161 The Democratic Society Party was founded in 2005 by veteran Kurdish politicians Leyla Zana, Orhan Doğan, Hatip Dicle, and Selim Sadak. On 11 December 2009, the Constitutional Court of Turkey banned the DTP.

162 *Bugünün Seyid Rıza’sı Öcalan’dır*, 19.11.2009, <http://iha.com.tr>.

163 *BDP’li Emine Ayna: Seyid Rıza Ardılları ile Gurur Duyuyor*, 25.05.2013, <http://haberdiyarbakir.com>.

Perhaps the most crucial obstacle to the embracement of Kurdish identity by Dersimlis is the absence of a common religious sect. Considering that a significant number of academic researchers do not define “Kurd,” many call the inhabitants of the province “Alevi Kurds.”<sup>164</sup> I prefer to stay out of this debate; nonetheless, the least common denominator for the majority of the Dersim people is their Alevi identity. Ayşe Betül Çelik points out that until recently, Alevi identity has always been more dominant than Kurdish identity among this population.<sup>165</sup>

Almost 80 percent of Kurds adhere to Sunni Islam.<sup>166</sup> Others are considered Alevi or Yezidi. The large part of the population known as “Alevi Kurds” (irrespective of whether they define themselves as Kurds or not) live in Dersim. This situation compels political organizations to develop special policies to succeed in the province.

Relations between Sunni and Alevi populations have a long history exceeding the boundaries of Dersim and the scope of this study. The changing importance of religion in the rhetoric of the Kurdish movement – which is intent on constructing Kurdish identity in the province and appropriating and including it in the Kurdish national struggle – is the main subject of this section. Examining this transformation requires a look at the historical background of the relations between the Dersim people and Sunni Kurds since the beginning of the republic. Certainly, the relation between these two groups has been evolving since the sixteenth century but the foundation of secular

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164 See, for example, Erdal Gezik, *Dinsel, Etnik ve Politik Sorunlar Bağlamında Alevi Kürtler* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2012). Gezik particularly examines the concepts used for the Dersim people and states the problems of ethnic and religious categories. See also, Munzur Çem, *Dersim Merkezli Kürt Aleviliği: Etnisite, Dini İnanç, Kültür ve Direniş*. Bruinessen also uses the term Alevi Kurds for the Dersim people, noting: “I shall use the term ‘Kurdish Alevis’ as a shorthand for all Kurmanci- and Zaza-speaking Alevis, irrespective of whether they define themselves as Kurds or not. My use of this term does not imply any claim that they are ‘really’ or ‘essentially’ Kurds or whatever.” Bruinessen, “Aslını İnkâr Eden Haramzadedir!” 2.

165 Ayşe Betül Çelik, “Alevis, Kurds and Hemşehris: Alevi Kurdish Revival in the Nineties,” in *Turkey’s Alevi Enigma: A Comprehensive Overview*, (eds.) Paul J. White and Joost Jongerden (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2003), 143.

166 Bruinessen, “Kurdish Society, Nationalism and Ethnicity, Refugee Problems,” 28.

Turkey altered the alliances and balances. Unlike the Ottoman state which was based on *ümme*t (Islamic community) rather than the *millet* (nation), the young republic embarked on the construction of a nation notably isolated from religion. This new sociopolitical atmosphere weakened ties between Turks and Kurds that had been established previously via Sunni Islam.<sup>167</sup> On the other hand, the Kemalist secularization project presented a more favorable social outlook for Alevis. This process dissolved the unity that had been founded on Sunni Islam in the Ottoman era and ameliorated relations between Sunni and Alevi communities.

Second, unlike other Alevi communities living under the threat of neighboring Sunni groups, the Dersim people were so powerful up until the second half of the 1930s that they live off of plundering (*talán, çapul, kelepür*) the goods of neighboring provinces.<sup>168</sup> Plundering necessitated weapons; therefore, they had the power to challenge foreigners. Advantageous geographic conditions protected them from attacks of foreigners. The near-homogenous Alevi population, its capacity to act as a block in spite of tribal compartmentalization, and the power of its aşirets – not only physical power but also their spheres of influence – put the province in the position of being able to bargain with Sunni groups.

The young Turkish republic succeeded in mobilizing both the Sunni and Alevi people, but Kurdish nationalism always had difficulty persuading Alevis to participate in national struggle. In his book, Erdal Gezik introduces the chapter on Alevi-Sunni relations among Kurds with a short story. This story, which has several versions, is well known in Dersim and was recounted by my interviewees, as well. According to story, Sheikh Said, a Kurdish sheikh of the Sunni order and the leader of the most crucial Kurdish rebellion (1925), sent two messengers to Dersim before the uprising to convince Seyid Rıza and his community to participate. Seyid Rıza welcomed the guests and sacrificed an

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167 Bruinessen, “Nationalisme Kurde et Ethnicités Intra-Kurdes,” p. 26.

168 For detailed information about plundering, see Dilşa Deniz, “Dersim’in Ekonomi Politiği İçinde Talanın Yeri: Antropolojik Bir Yaklaşım,” in *Dört Dağa Sığmayan Kent: Dersim Üzerine Ekonomi-Politik Yazılar*, (eds.) Ş. Gürçağ Tuna and Gözde Orhan (Istanbul: Patika Kitap, 2013), 71-111. The aşirets of Dersim were used to plunder goods of both foreign provinces and neighboring aşirets.

animal in their honor; however, the meat was refused by the guests because it had been cut by a “Kızılbaş.” According to their belief, the visitors claimed, they could not eat from the hands of the Kızılbaş people. Then Seyid Rıza said that he would not align himself with people who would not deign to eat from their hands. Whether or not this story is true, that the narrative is the most popular anecdote about the relation of Dersimlis and Sunni Kurds is itself interesting.<sup>169</sup>

To understand why the Kurdish identity is not internalized by the Dersim people, two uprisings that occurred in the geography must be scrutinized. The first is the Koçgiri Rebellion – the first uprising against the Kemalist regime to occur in the east of the new nation state. The branches of the Society for the Rise of Kurdistan (KTC) had considerable influence on the diffusion of nationalist ideas in Kurdish provinces. These were closed by Turkish administrators in 1920,<sup>170</sup> and the rebellion broke out the following year. The insurgents aspired to establish a Kurdistan composed of Diyarbakır, Van, Bitlis, Elazığ, and Dersim-Koçgiri. This was a crucial stage of Kurdish nationalism.<sup>171</sup> Alevi organized the movement. Leaving that Sunni Kurds would also participate, but what they expected did not occur. In the course of time, they were forced to change their goal and to demand autonomy for Dersim instead of for an independent Kurdistan. Hamit Bozarslan emphasizes the local character of the rebellion:

In spite of... evidence confirming the impact of Kurdish nationalism in Dersim, the Koçgiri rebellion had a local character, and was aimed

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169 Gezik, *Dinsel, Etnik ve Politik Sorunlar Bağlamında Alevi Kürtler*, 45-105.

170 Göldaş, 208.

171 Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Les Kurdes Alevi Face au Nationalisme Turc Kemaliste: L'alévitité du Dersim et son Rôle dans le Premier Soulèvement Kurds contre Mustafa Kemal (Koçkiri 1919-1921)*, July 1993, <http://www.hist.net>.

at a local rather than at a broader Kurdish autonomy, still less at independence. In this case, ‘local’ referred to the preservation of both the Kurdishness and the Alevi character of the Dersim region.<sup>172</sup>

The character of the Koçgiri rebellion, whether nationalist or religious, is still a matter of debate. It is possible to say that the movement was neither.<sup>173</sup> Gezik points out that the “Kurdishness” and “Kurdistan” were not yet unifying ideas that exceeded tribal or other traditional belongings.<sup>174</sup> On the other hand, historical sources make clear that during the rebellion Dersimlis and Sunni Kurds did not have any special problem.

The second important uprising hinting at the history of the relations of the Dersim people and Sunni Kurds is the Sheikh Said rebellion (1925). The dissatisfaction of local leaders who had lost hereditary rights under the Turkish governments’ secularizing and westernizing policies was increasing day by day. The suppression of the caliphate and Shari’ah law damaged the Islamic bond between Kurds and Turks.<sup>175</sup> In this way, Sheikhs and religious elements that already existed in the late nineteenth century became more apparent in the Kurdish politics.<sup>176</sup> Islamic sensibility was a crucial impulse of Kurdish nationalism: “Although the majority of the nationalists may not have shared this solicitude for religion, there is little doubt that they encouraged and fostered the Kurds’ religious identity, which promised to unite their compatriots at a time of great national crisis.”<sup>177</sup>

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172 Hamit Bozarslan, “Kurdish Nationalism in Turkey: From Tacit Contract to Rebellion (1919-1925),” in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, (ed.) Abbas Vali (California: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 173.

173 Hans-Lukas Kieser, *Les Kurdes Alevis Face au Nationalisme Turc Kemaliste: L’alévit  du Dersim et son R le dans le Premier Soul vement Kurds contre Mustafa Kemal (Koçkiri 1919-1921)*.

174 Gezik, *Alevi K rtler*, 81.

175 Wadie Jwaideh, *Kurdish National Movement: Its Origins and Development* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 210.

176 Abbas Vali, “Genealogies of the Kurds: Constructions of Nation and National Identity in Kurdish Historical Writing,” in *Essays on the Origins of Kurdish Nationalism*, (ed.) Abbas Vali (California: Mazda Publishers, 2003), 95.

177 Ibid.

Bruinessen highlights that the majority of Kurds who participated in the rebellion were Zaza-speaking Sunnis; however, participation or non-participation largely depended on tribal politics.<sup>178</sup> The leaders of the movement sought to influence and incorporate the aşirets of Dersim into the uprising, but Alevis did not participate.<sup>179</sup> According to Nuri Dersimi, the Dersim people were mere spectators to the massacre and oppression by the Turkish Army in Kurdistan.<sup>180</sup>

This second encounter of the Dersim people with Sunni Kurds demonstrates that a unity on the grounds of nationalism could not be established. The principal intent of Sheikh Said and other leaders was to construct an independent Kurdistan; however, they supposed that religious agitation rather than nationalist propaganda alone would extend and reinforce mass support.<sup>181</sup> This might have alienated Dersim's aşirets with respect to the rebellion. Moreover, the propaganda of the Turkish state succeeded. The Dersim people were convinced by Ağuçanlı Hüseyin Dede that the reason for the rebellion was to reestablish the Shari'ah law and that the rebels were against Alevis.<sup>182</sup> They preferred the "irreligious" regime of the Turkish state to the struggle for a new nation state under the control of the Sunni Kurds. The ensuing nationalist uprising, the Ararat Rebellion (1930), did not have a religious character.

In the early republican era, rebellions taking place in the East did not succeed in unifying Alevis and Sunnis. The last encounter occurred during the 1938 massacre; however, only Iraqi Kurds took action, appealing to international organizations to intervene in the pogrom.<sup>183</sup> These events clearly suggest that collaboration between Dersimlis and Sunni Kurds to found an independent state or to mobilize for nationalist demands was limited, and the principal reason for this was religious differences between two groups.

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178 Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 293-294.

179 Two Alevi tribes (the Khormek and Lolan) fought against insurgents. *Ibid.*, 285.

180 Dersimi, *Günümüz Türkçesiyle Kürdistan Tarihinde Dersim*, 126.

181 Bruinessen, *Agha, Shaikh and State*, 298.

182 Gezik, *Alevi Kürtler*, 93.

183 *Ibid.*, 97.

Contemporary discussions about the internalization or rejection of Kurdish identity by the Dersim people reveal these historical encounters. With the rise and expansion of the Kurdish movement in the 1990s, the religious distinctiveness of Dersim became a problem to be solved. The PKK criticized the approach of communist parties to religion. In the preface to *Din Sorununa Devrimci Yaklaşım* (Revolutionist Approach to Religion Problem), which consists of Öcalan's writings published in *Serxwebûn*, the party condemns the denial of religion. According to him, Alevism presents a progressive-revolutionist opportunity for the national struggle of Kurdistan in terms of its tradition of resistance.<sup>184</sup> Indeed, up until the Sivas Massacre in 1993, the PKK perceived the Alevi movement as a kind of sectarianism. According to the organization, identity politics on the basis of Alevism were invented by the state to divide the Kurdish movement. Krisztina Kehl-Bodrogi argues that when the Alevi movement became massive with the Sivas massacre, the PKK fundamentally changed its discourse on Alevism and incorporated it into Kurdish nationalist discourse.<sup>185</sup> The organization declared itself the real representative of Alevi.

In Kurdish nationalist discourse, Alevism has been upheld as the “real Kurdish culture” from this point forward.<sup>186</sup> The journal *Zülfikar*, which has been published by the movement since the mid-1990s, represents this new approach. Ali Haydar Cilasun, an Alevi *dede* (religious functionary) who supports the Kurdish movement and was a member of the Kurdish parliament in exile (1995-1999) initiated by the PKK, wrote *Alevilik Bir Sır Değildir* (Alevism is not a Mystery) in 1995. The book attempts to construct a new Alevism compatible with Kurdishness. According to Cilasun, Alevism is the first nucleus of the primitive, communal “communist movement.”<sup>187</sup> He claims that the emancipation of Alevism is possible only by participating in the Kurdish reality.<sup>188</sup>

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184 Abdullah Öcalan, *Din Sorununa Devrimci Yaklaşım* (Weşanên Serxwebûn, 2008), 46.

185 Ruşen Çakır, *Alevi Hareketi Toparlanıyor*, 26.08.2001, <http://www2.bianet.org>.

186 Ibid.

187 Ali Haydar Cilasun Dede, *Alevilik Bir Sır Değildir* (Unknown: Ceylan Ofset, 1995), 13.

188 Ibid., 61.

Another important reference source for the Kurdish movement to construct a new Alevism is the research of Etem Xemgîn. Xemgîn asserts that Kızılbaş Alevism is inconsistent with Islam in terms of belief and lifestyle; it is rooted in Zoroastrianism and Mazdeism.<sup>189</sup> According to the author, Zoroaster or Mazdean communities living in Kurdistan were forced into adopting Islam although they had long resisted. However, Islamic Arabism was on the verge of dividing in this period and these people favored the supporters of Ali because Alevism was closer to their belief.<sup>190</sup> This historiography implies that the original form of Alevism chronologically precedes Islam and is different from it. In an interview, Xemgîn expresses that Alevism is a culture with roots in the Kurdish and Persian people; in other words, it is unrelated to Arab people. Kurdish and Persian people were making ashure even before Islam.<sup>191</sup>

Another approach seeking to reconcile Alevis and Kurds is found in the books of Mehmet Bayrak. Bayrak positions Alevism on the side of the oppressed. He suggests that sovereign powers and oppressed people belong to different religions.

Generally, unlike official religions appearing as the doctrine of sovereign powers, the underclasses follow a different path. Sovereign elites who are educated are usually influenced by new and dominant religions while the underclasses are not much influenced by those religions, keeping their ancient beliefs and cultures. While they maintain their ancient beliefs and cultures against hegemonic new religion, they generally hide themselves in order to be safe from potential dangers. Thus, religions having a *secret* character and supported by ordinary *people* appear. Qizilbashism, Alevism, and Yezidism in Anatolia and

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189 Etem Xemgîn, *Aleviliğin Kökenindeki Mazda İnanıcı ve Zerdüşt Öğretisi* (Istanbul: Berfin, 1995), 7-8.

190 Ibid., 240.

191 Meral Çiçek, *Etem Xemgîn: Dedelik Kurumu, Osmanlı'nın Misyonerliğidir*, 23.12.2013, <http://www.kurdistan-post.eu>.

North Kurdistan; Ali-Ilahism in Eastern Kurdistan and Iran; [and] Ka-  
kaism, Yezidism, and Nusayrism in Mesopotamia and South Kurdistan  
are the “secret religions of people” rooted in this social formation.<sup>192</sup>

All these claims define Alevism as the “essential form” of Kurdishness and bridge Alevis and Kurds who had not succeeded in struggling together. Some claim that even Turkish Alevis have been influenced by the Kurds.<sup>193</sup> The Kurdish movement substantially adopted these approaches. According to Öcalan, the origin of Alevism goes back to the pre-Islamic period and includes communal-democratic values.<sup>194</sup> With the spread of Islam, oppressed tribes took the side of Imam Ali while feudal oppressors followed Sunni Islam, the official, rightwing interpretation of the religion.<sup>195</sup> Öcalan highlights that conflicts throughout history that seem religious are essentially class conflicts and national struggles. In light of these substantial conflicts, two branches appeared in Islam: the sect seeking to make Islam a form of power, state, and authority and the sect seeking to maintain the ideological, egalitarian, revolutionary, and righteous characteristics of the religion. However, the second sect which consisted of the supporters of Ali could not succeed in spite of being loyal to ideological purity and the essence of Islam because of its low level of politicization.<sup>196</sup>

The explanation of Öcalan has several emphases. First, he puts Alevism in a place close to original Islam, claiming that it contains within itself “ideological purity.” Second, he points out that unlike Sunni Islam, Alevism is not interested in appropriation or dominance. In this way, he depicts a belief system consonant with class struggle. Lastly, he states that the historical defeat of Alevis is due to their political apathy and he implies that they need to be politicized to overcome religious corruption. He invites Alevis to struggle with the Kurds who are oppressed and property-less like them.

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192 Mehmet Bayrak, *Ortaçağ'dan Modern Çağ'a Alevilik* (Ankara: Öz-Ge, 2004), 188.

193 See, for example, Cemşid Bender, *Kürt Uygarlığında Alevilik* (Istanbul: Kaynak, 1991).

194 “Komünal Demokratik Değerlerin Taşıyıcısı Olarak Direnişçi Alevilik Gerçeği I,” *Serxwebûn* 380 (August 2013).

195 Ibid.

196 Ibid.

### 3.2.2.6 Concluding Remarks

In this part of the dissertation, I demonstrate the efforts to install a Kurdish identity in Dersim. From the mid-1990s, the Kurdish national movement has become a massive power in the geography. In spite of being different in terms of language and religion, Dersim has always been considered part of the geography called Kurdistan. However, the contact of Sunni Kurds and Dersimlis was limited throughout history. The Kurdish movement sought to include the Dersim people in the national struggle by referring to several discourses and convincing them that they are Kurds who speak a different dialect of the same language, a part of Kurdistan, and the victims of the same state. Following the periodicals of the movement and scrutinizing the historical and religious sources adopted by Kurdish nationalists, different arguments underpinning the “Kurdishness” of Dersim are presented in this section.

Since 2004, Dersim has been governed by pro-Kurdish municipalities on the local scale. However, unlike other cities of Kurdistan, the percentage of the vote received by Kurdish parties<sup>197</sup> is not high due to the aforementioned social and political differences. Opponents of the Kurdish movement were dissatisfied with the new hegemonic position of Kurdish identity in the city. “The municipality is seeking to transform Dersim into Diyarbakır,” and “they want to Kurdify us” are prominent complaints expressed by those interviewees for this dissertation who do not define themselves as Kurd. On the other hand, socialists – taking inspiration from the Kurdish movement holding power in Dersim – decided to take part in the election of 2009 but were unable to win. During the second term of the Kurdish municipality, criticism of the “Kurdification of Dersim” continued.

One of the most apparent practices provoking these critics is the use of Kurmanci, the dialect spoken by most Kurds but rarely by Dersimlis, in activities organized by the municipality. For example, the mayor’s opening speech of the Nature and Culture Festival of Munzur in Kurmanci is always an issue. Dersim people who speak Kırmanç (Zaza) accuse the municipality of assimilation. Increasing reactions, the emergence of other political candidates, and

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197 Democratic Society Party (2005-2009); Peace and Democracy Party (from 2008 to the present).

2009 results of the local elections demonstrated again that Dersim no stronghold of the Kurds and compelled the Kurdish movement to revise its Dersim policy. In the party caucus meeting of the Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi, BDP), held on 2-3 October 2010, the former deputy of Dersim, Şerafettin Halis, raised the Dersim question and argued that the policy that “Dersim is Kurdish” must be abandoned: “The party must go beyond the ordinary policy pursued until today. Dersim needs a new sociological and historical analysis. One must approach Dersim with a *Dersimi* perspective instead of a *Kurdish* perspective.”<sup>198</sup>

The revision to the Dersim policy of the Kurdish movement cannot be understood without considering the new paradigm of Öcalan. His new political perspective based on the concept of the “democratic nation” – which means, in his own words, the “union of multiple cultures, multiple identities, and multiple nations including not only the Kurds but also the Turks, different ethnicities, and minorities”<sup>199</sup> – had a significant influence on this transformation. In the notes of the lawyers who visited him in prison, it is possible to find direct expressions highlighting that the BDP must incorporate Alevism.<sup>200</sup>

Since 2010, the municipality developed policies responsive to Dersim’s local culture. For example, the mayor has shown utmost attention to the use of Zazaca in her meetings and press conferences. The protection and development of the Zaza language were taken as a primary issue. The mayor led the drive for the organization of a children’s choir and a women’s chorus for the revitalization of Zazaca, which is recognized by UNESCO as an endangered language.<sup>201</sup> Second, the transformation of the Dersim policy of the Kurdish movement can be observed by looking at the municipality’s activities about Alevism. The municipality has held several activities on important holy days, especially Gağan (the New Year celebration), Ashura, and the Muharram and Khidr fasts. The mayor personally participates in these activities: she cooks

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198 *Tunceli’nin Sesi*, 05.10.2010.

199 *Notes of the Lawyers Discussion with Öcalan*, 01.01.2010, <http://www.yuksekovahaber.com>.

200 *Ibid.*

201 *Belediyemizden Kırmancki (Zazaca) Kadın Korosu Kuruldu*, 06.12.2012, <http://tunceli.bel.tr; Özgür Gündem>, 19.03.2013.

Ashura,<sup>202</sup> lights candles, distributes niyaz (gifts),<sup>203</sup> and attends Cem ceremonies. In the festival of 2013, she even participated in a semah with former deputy Gültan Kışanak and singer Ferhat Tunç.<sup>204</sup> However, the statement of the jailed Kurdish rebel leader Öcalan on the occasion of Newroz, which initiated the solution/peace process to solve the Kurdish question and end the Kurdish armed struggle, left the Dersim people disappointed. In this statement, dated 21 March 2013, Öcalan's emphasis on the Islamic unity angered Alevis. "Turkish people who know ancient Anatolia as Turkey should know that their co-existence with Kurdish people dates back to a historical agreement of fraternity and solidarity under the flag of Islam."<sup>205</sup> Especially the majority Alevi people of Dersim were annoyed by this emphasis on Islamic unity and Muslim brotherhood.

Kurdistan as a multicultural geography necessitates an approach embracing all identities. The Kurdish movement generally acts by taking this structure into account, albeit sometimes only theoretically. The movement frequently highlights that not only the liberation of the Kurds but the liberation of the geography as a whole is required. In its discourse, the movement promises the emancipation of minorities living in the geography via the Kurdistan revolution, which would form suitable conditions for their free development.

Although an ethnicist conception dominated the discussions of Kurdish identity, the national liberation discourse cannot be viewed narrowly as only seeking to construct an ethnicist conception of Kurdish identity. The main issue it problematised was Kurdistan's colonisation and exploitation. Kurdistan as a country, including its numerous minorities, was the nodal point in the national liberation discourse. For example, the *Kawa* group's defence stated: "What we are referring to is the problem of independence and freedom of the people of Kurdistan.

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202 *Tunceli'nin Sesi*, 29.11.2013.

203 *Milliyet*, 12.02.2014.

204 *Radikal*, 26.06.2013.

205 *Hürriyet*, 21.03.2013.

This is, the people of Kurdistan inclusive of various nations and minorities.” Similarly, the PKK stated: “The Kurdistan revolution, will destroy the oppression and exploitation beset on minorities, and will create the coalitions for their free development.”<sup>206</sup>

To conclude, the Kurdish identity in Dersim can be considered both as a dissident identity due to the rise of the Kurdish movement and as a “hegemonic” identity seeking to absorb the other belongings of Dersimlis. The adoption or rejection of this identity by the Dersim people is directly related to the Dersim policies of the Kurdish movement which have evolved from “Kurdification” to the recognition of the city’s distinctiveness. In either case, the construction of Kurdish identity in Dersim is always dependent on the historical idea of Kurdistan as a geography.

### 3.2.3 *The Rise of the Zaza Nationalism: An Identity Exceeding the Boundaries of Dersim*

Social anthropologist and philosopher Ernest Gellner argues that nationalism uses the preexisting, historically-inherited proliferation of cultures and cultural items and transforms them radically. In this process, “dead languages can be revived, traditions invented, quite fictitious pristine purities restored.”<sup>207</sup> The Zaza language, among endangered languages as mentioned above, is the main constituent of the Zaza nationalism that emerged in the mid-1980s in the atmosphere of a “cultural turn” affecting the whole world.

The majority of people defining themselves Zaza live in Dersim; therefore, the rise of Zaza identity has considerably influenced Dersim. However, the claim that Zazas are an ancient nation different from the Kurds emerged in Europe, not in Dersim. Some Zaza intellectuals who settled in European countries during labor migrations in the second half of the 1960s as well as political exiles after the coup d’état of 1980 led the Zaza enlightenment and stimulated Zaza national consciousness. They published the journals *Ayre* and *Piya* in

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206 Cengiz Gunes, *The Kurdish National Movement in Turkey: From Protest to Resistance* (London and New York: Routledge, 2012), 97-98.

207 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 55-56.

Sweden from 1987 onwards.<sup>208</sup> *Desmala Sure* and *Ware* are other crucial journals, published in Germany.<sup>209</sup> Ebubekir Pamukçu, Zülfü Selcan, and Seyfi Cengiz are prominent representatives of Zaza nationalism.<sup>210</sup>

Apart from the effect of a global ideology based on new modes of multiple subjectivities and identities, the rise of Zaza identity was also triggered by the political atmosphere of the country involved with the Kurdish question. The wave emerged with criticism of the fact that the Kurdish movement and Kurdish nationalism considered all the people living in the geography to be Kurd. Against the rhetoric of the Kurdish movement that defined the geography exclusively as Kurdistan, Zaza nationalists claim that the territory from Zara (Sivas) in the northwest, Çemişgezek (Dersim) in the west, Siverek (Urfa) in the south, Mutki and Tatvan (Bitlis) in the south east, Varto/Gıngım (Muş) and Hınıs (Erzurum) in the east, and Tercan and Çayırılı (Erzincan) in the north is their homeland – Zazaistan.<sup>211</sup> According to them, the center of Zazaistan is Dersim.<sup>212</sup> In other words, theses of the Turkishness or Kurdishness of Dersim are completely rejected and another identity of Dersim is constructed not only in terms of language but also in terms of geography.

The Zaza nationalist movement is neither organized nor powerful; however, their emphasis on Zazaca as a distinct language has been adopted by a considerable number of the Dersim people dissatisfied with Kurdish hegemony in the city. The claims of Zaza intellectuals have been articulated in an atmosphere where the mother tongue continued to be the major demand of the Kurdish nationalist movement. Zaza nationalists, like Kurdish nationalists, have insisted on the originality and “mother tongue” status of their language, and they described a territory whose borders were defined in accordance with the spread of the Zaza-speaking population. Consequently, they sided against

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208 For earlier issues of the journal, see <http://piyaportal.de>.

209 See <http://desmalasure.com>.

210 See Ebubekir Pamukçu, *Dersim Zaza Ayaklanmasının Tarihsel Kökenleri* (Istanbul: Yön Yayıncılık, 1992); Zülfü Selcan, *Zaza Milli Meselesi Hakkında* (Ankara: Zaza Kültürü Yayınları, 1994); Seyfi Cengiz, *Dış Kaynaklarda Kırmanclar, Kızılbaşlar ve Zazalar* (London: Desmala Sure, 1995).

211 Zülfü Selcan, “Zaza Dilinin Gelişimi,” 05.01.2001, <http://www.tunceli.edu.tr>.

212 Ibid.

both the Turkish state which maintains the official language policy until 1992 and the Kurdish movement which considered Zaza people as Kurd. According to them, this is a new injustice.

Although the Turkish government abandoned its stance [the claim that Zazaca is a dialect of Turkish language] in 1992, Kurdish agitators, politicians, and authors have continued to claim that Zazas are “Kurd,” [that] their language is a “dialect of Kurdish,” and [that] their homeland is “Kurdistan.” ... Kurdish politicians and organizations demand unjustly the land located within the borders of Zazaistan, the homeland of Zaza people, by propagandizing a so-called Kurdistan.<sup>213</sup>

It is a general belief that the Zaza revival is a strategy planned by the Turkish state in order to restrain the development of the Kurdish movement. Indeed, one of intellectuals who pioneered the current was accused of acting on behalf of the Turkish state.<sup>214</sup> Because the emergence of the Zaza movement coincided with the campaign of the government following the coup period, which aimed to encourage “scientific” research about Turkishness, several studies examining the Zaza language and culture as a part of the Turkish language and culture were supported by the state. Apart from institutional efforts within the frame of Turkification, such as the research of the Institute for the Study of Turkish Culture (*Türk Kültürünü Araştırma Enstitüsü*),<sup>215</sup> it is known that all these challenging Kurdish national unity were encouraged and financed. In this period, studies about the linguistic, cultural, and religious distinctiveness of minorities living and struggling with the Kurdish movement, written by authors belonging to these communities instead of by official institutions or Turkish nationalists, served the purpose of the state which was fighting against the Kurdish movement in all spheres. As a result, the Zaza revival has always been questioned by sympathizers of the Kurdish movement living in Dersim; however, the movement – which included not only linguistic analyses but also

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213 Ibid.

214 See, for example, Çem, *Dersim Merkezli Kürt Aleviliği: Etnisite, Dini İnanç, Kültür ve Direniş*, 527-528.

215 Ibid., 528.

national demands – continues to affect the population displeased with both Kurdish and Turkish powers.

As mentioned above, the origin of the Zaza movement is the Dersim diaspora. The influence of the movement is largely on the Dersim diaspora, as well.<sup>216</sup> The diaspora is always in interaction with the city due to developed *hemşehrilik*<sup>217</sup> relations. Because the Dersim people were forced to emigrate several times, the number of Dersimlis living abroad is high. Nevertheless, they are in the habit of visiting their homeland in the summer and some buy real estate there in order to settle there in the future. The significant difference between the summer and winter populations of the city reflects this trend. Although this group is limited in number and not particularly active in policy, it maintains strong ties with the city.

The city population peaks every year during the Nature and Culture Festival of Munzur with the arrival of immigrants living in Europe.<sup>218</sup> Panels and conferences play an important role in the Munzur festivals. The discussions organized within the scope of the festival generally concentrate on the Zaza language, Zaza identity, and the Kurdishness of Dersim. As far as these discussions are concerned, immigrants originating from Dersim are more prone to embrace Zaza than Kurdish identity. This may be explained by their exceptional duration of being emigrants. In the face of global capitalism and the integration policies of the European Union, nostalgia for the homeland overlaps with the most authentic micro-identity. Zaza identity is unique referring specifically to Dersim, unlike the Kurdish identity referring to a huge geography. Moreover, Dersim's central position as the geography of Zaza identity

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216 For research touching on the popularity of the Zaza identity among Dersimlis living in Berlin, see Besim Can Zırh and Mustafa Akçınar, "Derin Bir Kuyu Dersim'e Berlin'den Bakmak," in *Dersim'i Parantezden Çıkarmak: Dersim Sempozyumu'nun Ardından*, (eds.) Zeliha Hepkon, Songül Aydın and Şükrü Aslan (Istanbul: İletişim, 2013), 43-77.

217 Hemşehrilik roughly means economic and social solidarity among people who come from the same city or village.

218 Just in Germany, the number of people originating from Dersim is 200,000 according to the FDG (Föderation der Dersim Gemeinden in Europa, Federation of Dersim Communities in Europe). See *Alman İnsan Hakları Komisyonu Dersim Heyeti ile Görüştü*, 22.05.2013, <http://www.fdg-dersim.org>.

strengthens the adoption of this identity by emigrants. Because their homeland is assumed to be the “origin” of all Zazas, they prefer this identity to being an ordinary part of a more inclusive Kurdish identity.

Today, discussions about language and identity continue especially in internet environments. People supporting the distinctiveness of Zaza language and culture actively use internet forums and social media platforms.<sup>219</sup>

### 3.2.4 *Dersim Alevism: Legends and Space*

Dersim is the only city whose population consists of mostly Alevis. I have already examined Alevism as an identity attributed by the state and highlighted how the state defined it as safe vis-à-vis the threat of Kurdishness. However, it is also a strong identity for Dersimlis that transcends national ones. In this section, I do not describe Dersim Alevism in detail; I focus instead on Dersim Alevism as an identity in relation to space. The sacred places of Dersim are generally ignored by the state, and the *cemevi* recently built in the city center is presented as the institutional place of worship. On the other hand, dam projects and HPPs have damaged both the sacred, historical places. In order to reveal the spatial strategies of the state and other political actors, one must first introduce the fact that natural space is an inseparable part of Dersim Alevism.

Dersim Alevism, Alevism adopted by the Dersim people, is based on nature cults – trees, stones, mountains, caves, some animals, and water – were treated with great reverence and worshipped by the indigenous people. These physical elements are consecrated. People “visit” them to worship. Both sacred spaces and the practice of visiting them are called *ziyaret*. The worship practice is not limited to going to the *ziyaret*, it also includes offering animal sacrifices, praying, making vows, and distributing *niyaz/lokma* (food given as gifts).<sup>220</sup>

The legends that play fundamental roles in Dersim Alevism are deeply attached to space.<sup>221</sup> Important religious figures of Dersim such as Düzgün Baba, Munzur Baba, and Ana Fatma are holy persons but are also identified with

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219 <http://www.zazaki.de>, <http://www.dersimdersim.com>, <http://www.kirmancki.com>, etc.

220 Ahmet Kerim Gültekin, *Tunceli'de Kutsal Mekan Kültü*, 64.

221 For an elaborate study on the religious legends of Dersim, see Gürdal Aksoy, *Dersim Alevi Kürt Mitolojisi: Raa Haq'da Dinsel Figürler* (Istanbul: Komal, 2006).

elements of nature. All these figures refer to both *evliyas* (saints) and to natural spaces such as mountains, hills, rivers, and water sources. Munzur Çem lists ziyarets and categorizes them.<sup>222</sup> The most known ziyarets of Dersim are in the form of mountains, waters, trees, and animals.

The legends about ziyarets attribute sanctity to geography. For example, the legend of Munzur Baba is about the emergence of the Munzur River; however, it also mentions the significance of humbleness as a virtue. According to the legend, when he is far from home, Munzur, a poor shepherd, senses his agha wants to eat *halva*. He travels a long distance to bring him halva. When the agha returns home, he tells the people what Munzur did and shows them the plate. He declares that Munzur is a holy person. The people attempt to kiss Munzur's hands, but he feels embarrassed and runs away. As he is running, the milk he is carrying spills out of the cup. Munzur vanishes. In each point where a drop of milk fell, a spring appears. The white water emerging from the source (*göze*) of the Munzur River that looks like milk inspired the legend.

Another *ziyaret*, Ana Fatma (Mother Fatma), is on the drive between the central district and Ovacık. Until recently, there was almost nothing to indicate the sacred space. In 2010, the space was reorganized with a hook used to hang the carcasses of slaughtered animals and plaques giving information about Ana Fatma in Kurmanc and Zaza languages were hung. Ana Fatma is the wife of Ali and mother of Hasan and Hüseyin. Gürdal Aksoy argues that she is regarded like the Virgin Mary because her son Hüseyin was brutally murdered in Kerbela and "became a martyr" like Jesus, the son of the Virgin Mary.<sup>223</sup> In Alevism, Fatma is symbolized by the moon.<sup>224</sup> Like other cults of Dersim, she is part of nature. The aforementioned space along the riverside is dedicated to Fatma by the Dersim people and is frequently visited for worship. The female character of the space reflects the importance attached to women by Alevism.

One of the most crucial ziyarets is Düzgün Baba. According to that legend, Şah Haydar feeds his herd with the leaves that fall off the trees when he lightly touches with his staff. His father, Kur Kurêş, curious about how the animals

222 Çem, *Dêrsim Merkezli Kürt Aleviliği: Etnisite, Dini İnanç, Kültür ve Direniş*, 73-75.

223 Aksoy, 'Anadolu Aleviliği'nden Dersim'e: *Alevi Tarihine Coğrafi Bir Giriş*, 210.

224 Çem, *Dêrsim Merkezli Kürt Aleviliği: Etnisite, Dini İnanç, Kültür ve Direniş*, 101.

are so well fed, follows his son and witnesses the miracle. One of the goats bleats when it notices Kur Kurêş. Şah Haydar asks the goat why it is bleating. He says, "What is ailing you; have you seen Kur Kurêş?" Şah Haydar looks in the direction the goat is looking and notices his father. He feels ashamed because he called Kurêş by name. Customarily, children should not call their fathers by their names. Şah Haydar runs away and disappears because of his embarrassment. He goes to the mountains, stops eating, prays, and flagellates himself. After this event, his name became Düzgün Baba.<sup>225</sup> The ziyaret of Düzgün Baba is a cave on the top of a mountain 2100 meters high. One can reach it only by foot. People light candles, sleep for dreaming, pray, and sacrifice animals just as they worship in other ziyarets.

The legends and the sacred spaces attributed to the heroes and heroines of these stories are numerous. Besides, every legend has different versions. As expected, they have undergone changes over the decades. Local legends not only refer to important historical events occurring during the emergence and spread of Alevism, but they also introduce the social structure of Dersim largely based on the aşirets. Indeed, there is a close relationship between religious figures and the powerful aşirets of Dersim. For example, most of the holy people (*pirs* and *rehbers*) belong to the Kurêşan whose leader is Kurêş.<sup>226</sup> Ahmet Kerim Gültekin points out that because of the absence of a central authority in Dersim almost until the second half of the twentieth century, local political powers and religious ones were still intermingled.<sup>227</sup> The narratives of the 1937-38 events, which emphasize that certain aşirets stood up against the central government rendered those more reputable in the eyes of the Dersim people. For instance, the resistance offered by the Kurêşan in 1937-38 contributes to its dignity. Even today, members of the Kurêşan are treated with honor. Furthermore, the multiplicity of holy figures is a result of the system of fragmented political power. Because there was no central authority hierarchically superior to others and recognized by all, there are many spiritual characters in Dersim Alevism.

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225 Ibid., 137.

226 Ibid., 134.

227 Gültekin, 93.

Geographic, political, and religious features have clearly affected each other, and the belief system developed in accordance with the fragmented political and social structure. Both the forms of worship practice by the Dersim people and their perception of Alevism differ from those of the inhabitants of other Alevi provinces. Gürdal Aksoy claims that mountainous provinces are inhabited by less dogmatic people whose worship is based on certain rituals. Mountainous spaces do not coincide with crucial trade routes; therefore, their religious systems do not reflect trade relations.<sup>228</sup> Aksoy emphasizes that many of the religious elements of mountainous geographies like Dersim, especially the perception or impression of god, are different from those of belief systems in urban spaces. Paralleling the seminomadic social life of Dersim, the belief system is flexible and libertarian.<sup>229</sup> Mobile, mountain aşirets were accustomed to escaping from the agents of authority, especially from taxmen and military recruiters. They evaded military service on behalf of settled political authorities.

According to Aksoy, nomadic life has affected religious life. For example, women and men participate in cem ceremonies together in Dersim because they are isolated from the gender inequalities sharply circumscribed by urban social life. In urban space, everyday life is rigorously regulated by religion; however, the religious practices of mountainous societies have a more spiritual vision. The absence of strict norms about everyday life in Dersim Alevism is also a result of its oral culture. Unlike religions based on written texts, it depends on oral traditions, in which there is no capacity to fix or standardize rituals and principles.<sup>230</sup>

Due to its historical nomadic character and other factors deriving from its geography and fragmented political structure, Dersim Alevism does not have a bureaucratized, professional stratum and institutions.<sup>231</sup> The Dersim people did not need an institution for worship. The multiplicity and all-pervasiveness of religious figures and the close relationship between the belief system and nature created a perception of a spatially undefined religion. As scrutinized in

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228 Aksoy, 'Anadolu Aleviliği'nden Dersim'e: Alevi Tarihine Coğrafi Bir Giriş, 110.

229 Ibid., 111.

230 Ibid., 116.

231 Ibid., 115.

chapter 5, Dersimlis are mostly unconcerned with the cemevi because Dersim Alevism itself does not require artificial spaces.

One of the most crucial sacred spaces in Dersim's center is Gole Çetu. Gole Çetu or Hızır'ın Gölü (Lake of Hızır) is a ziyaret where the Munzur melds into Pülümür Brook. It is a general belief that this is the home of Hızır. The cult of Hızır (Xızır) underlies Dersim Alevism. In everyday life, he takes the place of god in the eyes of indigenous people. He is "*hazır ve nazır*" (ready and waiting) and he is everywhere. He comes to rescue of people in need wherever they are. According to another legend, Gole Çetu is the space where Ali became visible. Some people believe that Munzur Baba and Hızır, who were not on speaking terms, made peace there and turned into confluent rivers. Because this sacred space is at the center of the city, it is frequently visited by Dersimlis for worship. Hewtemalo Pıl, Black Wednesday (Kara Çarşamba), Newroz, and the ninth of March (Mart Dokuzu) are crucial sacred days memorialized at Gole Çetu.

With the submerging of Gole Çetu under the artificial reservoirs of dams, both dam projects – the number of which has increased dramatically since the beginning of the 2000s – and government's approach to Alevi places of worship have become current issues. The process of the destruction of Gole Çetu and its "reproduction" by the dam construction company coincides with the entering into service of the cemevi.

### § 3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I first discuss identities imputed to the people of Dersim by the state. Official reports of the republican era show that the regime sought to prove that the province was "essentially" Turkish and that it had been Kurdicized in the course of time. Not only the difference between Zazaca and Kurmanci (known as "Kurdish") but also Alevism are presented as evidence of the Turkishness of Dersimlis. Because Kurdishness was seen as a crucial threat to the regime, the state tended to tolerate the Alevism of Dersim and reinterpreted it in accordance with Turkish nationalism.

Second, I scrutinize the identities adopted by the Dersim people: leftism, Kurdish identity, Zaza identity, and Dersim Alevism. These identities sometimes coincide with each other, and one of them may come to the fore according to the political context. Furthermore, tribal identity (*aşiret kimliği*) still affects social and political relations to a large extent.

The chapter begins with the emergence of leftist ideologies in the city. From the Eastern Meetings to the foundation of the illegal Maoist party (TKP-ML), the development of leftist approaches in Dersim is described. Because of the liberal, humanistic values of Alevism and the historically “disobedient” character of Dersimlis, the city was seen as fertile soil by socialist movements. I suggest that the leader of the movement, İbrahim Kaypakkaya, was the first revolutionary to criticize Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, and the city – suffering under the severe restrictions of the republican regime – sympathized with him.

In parallel with the rise of identity politics, Dersimlis embraced new political positions based on ethnicity, religion, and language. These identities tended to denounce the left for making Dersimlis forget their own culture and identity. However, leftism (from social democracy to its most radical forms) is still adopted by Dersimlis today. I argue that revolutionary figures and themes have been reconstructed in everyday life through myths, images, and symbols related to fragments of nature that already have sacred meanings in Dersim Alevism. In this way, natural space gained a new mythical character. The cultural climate shaped by the complex interrelationships of natural, religious, and ideological aspects of Dersim contributed to the maintenance of leftist identity in the city.

In the section that followed, I scrutinize the development of Kurdish identity in Dersim. At the end of the 1980s when the Kurdish movement became the most crucial regional actor, Dersim became one of the provinces in which the PKK sought to take root. Because language has generally been considered an essential part of nation-building and because a common language contributes to the mobilization of national sentiments, the Kurdish movement first established a discourse that homogenized all the languages and dialects spoken in the province. Zazaca was presented as a dialect of Kurdish, and Zaza identity was defined as something “invented” by the Turkish state to break the

unity of the Kurds. Since the beginning of the 2000s, the PKK has reconstructed itself ideologically. This ideological transformation has involved the recognition of all identities, which had previously been absorbed into Kurdish identity.

Kurdish nationalist emphasis on linguistic unity vis-à-vis the Turkification policies of the state went hand in hand with the ideal of united Kurdistan as a geographic unit. I indicate the spatial dimension of the discourse of nationalism. Maps both remind people of the frontiers of historic homelands and proclaim the geographic scope of the future community. Although Dersim had not been included in Kurdistan in maps drawn in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, it was defined as the “silver door,” “origin,” and “beginning” of Kurdistan by the Kurdish movement in the 1980s. According to the movement, Dersimlis and other inhabitants of Kurdistan share a common fate: state violence. Hence, the 1938 events were incorporated into Kurdish historiography as an epic resistance – and Seyid Rıza as a national hero. This discourse establishes a bond among uprisings occurring in the geography. With the integration of Alevism into Kurdish historiography, Kurdish identity gained more widespread acceptance.

Another identity constructed not only in terms of language but also in terms of geography is Zaza identity. The Zaza nationalist movement is not organized; however, its emphasis on Zazaca as a distinct language has been adopted by a considerable part of the Dersim people who are dissatisfied with the Kurdish hegemony in the city. The critics of Zaza intellectuals have risen in an atmosphere where the mother tongue continues to be a significant discussion.

Finally, this chapter asserts Dersim Alevism as an identity adopted by Dersim people. I focus on natural cults and legends directly related to space in order to show how religion is influenced by geography, history, and social structure based on aşirets and nomadic life. Natural space is indispensable for the construction and maintenance of Dersim Alevism. On the other hand, the multiplicity of holy figures is a result of the fragmented political powers of Dersim. Geographic shapes have been transformed into sacred spaces while the characteristics of powerful tribes have been added to the legends.

All in all, this chapter is organized to reveal the identities, belongings, and political agendas through which the state and the non-state actors define Dersimlis. Some of them have been adopted by a majority or a group of the inhabitants of Dersim or Dersim's diaspora. I argue that they constitute the basis of socio-spatial perspectives of Dersim's actors. In following chapters, I discuss how they are produced, reproduced, and struggled over on space.

## The Transformation of the City in the 2000s: Space and Population

In an article written to clarify the arguments of *The Condition of Postmodernity*, David Harvey touches on the presence of words referring to generic qualities of place (milieu, locality, location, locale, neighborhood, region, territory) that mean particular kinds of places (city, village, town, megalopolis, state etc.) and have strong connotations of place (home, hearth, “turf,” community, nation, landscape).<sup>1</sup> This confusion of meanings is an advantage according to Harvey: the disappearance of spatial frontiers has made older, material, territorial definitions of place insignificant and has brought about new material definitions of place through which different identities can mobilize their members for action. Highlighting that place is – like space and time – a social construct, he asks the crucial question: “By what social process(es) is place constructed?”<sup>2</sup>

Harvey answers the question on the basis of the political economy of place and capitalism. Technological and organizational changes transform the character of places as does the effect of excess capital exported from one place to another. Since the beginning of the 2000s, the speed of geographic expansion

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1 David Harvey, “From Space to Place and Back Again: Reflections on the Condition of Postmodernity,” 3.

2 Ibid., 4.

and spatial reorganization has increased in Turkey, as it has around the world. In this process, the insufficiently exploited market potential as well as natural resources and labor force of Eastern Anatolia have become prominent. Nevertheless, the state of war in the east of the country has limited the flow of capital towards Kurdish provinces, which could otherwise be dynamic spaces of capital accumulation. The Turkey of the 2000s reflects this tension: as localities increasingly become more important in terms of the free geographic mobility of surpluses towards new areas, the Kurdish question and the atmosphere of conflict obstruct geographic expansion and reduce the intensification of capital accumulation in “untouched” places in the East.

In this chapter, I scrutinize the urban development of Dersim’s center from the 1930s onwards and its reorganization since the beginning of the 2000s in accordance with the requirements of both capital and governmentality during the years the Justice and Development Party (AKP) has been in power. The normalization of the regime with the removal of the military tutelage system and governmental attempts to solve the Kurdish question are handled in relation to the geographic expansion of capital. According to Harvey, the reorganization and reallocation of surplus capital and labor power in a new place is necessary to solve crises of overaccumulation within a given territorial system.<sup>3</sup> In *The New Imperialism*, Harvey connects spatial displacement and the global capital movements of imperialist countries; however, it is also worth noting geographic expansion within national boundaries towards new regions and localities to create fresh productive powers. Considering the spatial reorganization of the East as both a political and economic process, I demonstrate new governance methods in Dersim in the last decade once the army had relatively retreated. These spatial surveillance strategies are described both as part of urban transformation and as a process conducted by state institutions and organizations founded with the consent of the Dersim people.

At the opening speech of a meeting on the urban history of the republican era, İlhan Tekeli indicated that urban plans are not generally implemented; however, planning says a lot about a city, such as the importance that the state attaches to it and the economic value of its land.

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3 David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*.

It is generally supposed that if a plan was not implemented, it does not make any impact on society. However, this assumption does not reflect the true. If a plan was prepared for a city, it affects the city's dynamic of change although it was not implemented. It has been part of the history of city even if it was not implemented. From this perspective, we can consider planning as a kind of intervention in city. In this way, the history of a city and the planning history of a city become inseparable.<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter, I will discuss these plans and explain the emergence of a new hegemony through space.

#### § 4.1 The “Creation” of Space in Dersim

The former city center of Dersim was Hozat; however, after the 1938 events, it was replaced by Kalan (Mameki). In Article 1 of Code No. 3223, called the “Law on the Formation of Five Kazas” which came into effect on 23 June 1937, Kalan kaza was established (the center of Kalan kaza became Mameki).<sup>5</sup> And at the end of the period of the validity of the Tunceli Law, on 30 December 1946, this location where Munzur River and Harçık Brook unite was declared the new city center. Until this date, Tunceli had still been administered from Elazığ due to security concerns.

In a report written by Necmeddin Sahir Sılan to the General Secretary of the Republican People's Party on 11 December 1943, he expresses dissatisfaction with Tunceli's status which entailed its rule by another local government, that of Elazığ. Sılan highlights that the state was finally in control of the city and that Tunceli Province was well-equipped to have its own center given the many new buildings constructed by the government that were available to host

4 İlhan Tekeli, “Türkiye’de Planlama Tarihinin Yazılması Sırasında Düşünülebilecekler Konusunda Bir Tartışma,” *Erken Cumhuriyet Dönemi Şehircilik Tarihi: Deneyimler, Kaynaklar, Yöntemler Semineri*, MSGSÜ, 01.02.2017.

5 These five kazas are: İdil (Mardin), Mazıdağı (Mardin), Karayazı (Erzurum), Çınar (Diyarbakir), and Kalan (Tunceli). [http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR\\_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmco17/kanuntbmmco17/kanuntbmmco1703223.pdf](http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar/KANUNLAR_KARARLAR/kanuntbmmco17/kanuntbmmco17/kanuntbmmco1703223.pdf).

public officials.<sup>6</sup> He cites both his own and public opinion about the various districts that could be selected as the new center. According to the report, in a public meeting in Kalan, Ali Arslan, a farmer from Kahmut village who spoke in the name of people, expressed the public opinion: “Our Mameki is at the heart of the city in comparison to the other kazas (Pülümür, Nazımiye, Mazgirt, Ovacık, Çemişgezek and Pertek). In other words, it is not suitable to make Pertek the city center.”<sup>7</sup> Silan expressed that the people of Pertek and Hozat whom he encountered at other public meetings in various districts also wished the status of center for their own kazas.<sup>8</sup> At the end of his report, he evaluates all the alternatives in terms of their locations and facilities.<sup>9</sup>

Silan emphasizes that the center must be definitely selected as soon as possible and that the construction of government buildings must be completed in two to three years. After this preparation, Elazığ’s status as the administrative center for Tunceli must be annulled.<sup>10</sup> Silan also describes how the new city center should be determined: one must consider actual road conditions and the constructed facilities of the districts instead of their natural attractions. Moreover, it is crucial to take current conditions and potential necessities that may emerge at the end of the World War into account.<sup>11</sup> Under the circumstances, Silan disapproved of Pertek as the center because of the unsuitability of its buildings. He argues that the government office of Pertek was small and it would be necessary to rent an additional seventeen buildings to house all the public offices, not to speak of the lodging of officials. On the other hand, Hozat seemed more suitable to Silan, considering its government office, two large barracks, two stables (*tavla*), gendarmerie station, school, former government office, and serviceable house. He indicates that there were nine houses which could be used as offices and ninety-two lettable houses to use as lodging.

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6 “Doğu Sorunu” Necmeddin Sahir Silan Raporları (1939-1953), 196-197.

7 Ibid., 197.

8 For petitions from the Dersim people and the district chairmen of CHP demanding that their own districts become the city center, see *Dersimlilerden Mektuplar* (1941-1953), 61-62.

9 “Doğu Sorunu” Necmeddin Sahir Silan Raporları (1939-1953), 198-200.

10 Ibid., 198.

11 Ibid.

Nevertheless, he proposed two other places in addition to Hozat: Sin and Mameki. Sin was a subsidiary town of Hozat with barracks, a school, and buildings to large military officials, but it was on low ground and did not have sufficient water. On the other hand, according to Sılan, Mameki, the kaza center of Kalan, was suitable as a city center given its buildings and location.

All these buildings are suitable for the establishment of public offices. The iron bridge, which will connect Munzur town to the other side of the Munzur [River] is in the process of construction and the field on the opposite side is large enough to construct new buildings and new quarters.<sup>12</sup>

Mameki seemed to Sılan to be the best choice. He endorsed it again in terms of its location and roads. While the main road of Mameki connects Pülümür and Pertek along a north-south axis, another road passing through Sin connects Mameki to Hozat, Çemişgezek, and Ovacık. In the east of the district, lay Nazımiye and Mazgirt. In other words, it is at the heart of the province. Moreover, Sılan highlights that tap water and the electricity necessary for a city center could be provided by Munzur River flowing across the district.<sup>13</sup>

The geographic features and tribal powers of Hozat explain why Mameki was determined as the city center. As mentioned above, the former city center was Hozat. It is one of the highest districts of Dersim, some 1520 meters above sea level. Its east and north sides are surrounded by mountains. Forty-seven percent of the total area was forestland until the forests of Aliboğazı, Kavuttepe, Zağar, Akören, and Amutka were set on fire in 1994.<sup>14</sup> In other words, Hozat was so high and isolated that it could not be easily controlled by central authorities: “Today’s Hozat-Geyiksuyu-Ovacık area is always a blocked place, hard-to-reach, and tough. By means of its nature, this zone has always hosted groups inclined to rebel. No administration has completely put this troubled zone – covering 1500 square kilometers – under its influence since the Middle Ages.”<sup>15</sup>

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12 Ibid., 200.

13 Ibid.

14 Ali Kaya, *İlçemiz Hozat* (Istanbul: Can Yayınları, 2004), 17.

15 Akyürekli, 60.

On the other hand, the new city center, Mameki, which had been a small village until 1947, was relatively easy for the central power to control. Contrary to general administrative practices, a village with no traditional, historical, or symbolic meanings for the inhabitants of the province was preferred as the center. According to Ali Ekber Doğan and Ş. Gürçağ Tuna,

the zone where the city center of Tunceli was located is a place in a village form, which even did not have county seat, unlike Pertek, Çemişgezek, and Hozat. Thus, it was a city constructed almost from scratch... The city center, unlike other Anatolian cities, was transformed from village to city status by a political decision in the twentieth century. One of direct consequences of the administrative decision of the state, may in the 1930s largely with military and political concerns in mind, is the fact in social terms, Tunceli was established as a residential area for soldiers and civilian officials.<sup>16</sup>

When the city center was determined on 30 December 1946, inhabitants of other districts showed their displeasure with the decision. A petition dated 8 January 1947 written to Silan from Halis Güven, the district chairman of Pülümür, emphasizes that Aşgirik village would have been a better choice in terms of its water and air. He adds that Kalan is a “malarious” place devoid of water.<sup>17</sup>

Given Kalan’s central position, the reorganization of the place in compliance with a city’s requirements acquired currency. One may claim that the space configuration of the city was also achieved by additional resources like a “road tax” collected from the Dersim people and the forced labor of inhabitants who failed to pay.<sup>18</sup>

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16 A. Ekber Doğan and Ş. Gürçağ Tuna, “Tunceli/Dersim’de Tembelligin Kültürelleştirilmesi: Emek Süreçlerinin Özgünlükleri Çerçevesinde Bir Bakış,” 82.

17 *Dersimlilerden Mektuplar (1941-1953)*, 65.

18 Cemal Taş, “Sözlü Anlatılarda 1930-1940’lı Yıllar ve Dersim’de Gündelik Hayat,” in *Herkesin Bildiği Sır: Dersim*, (ed.) Şükrü Aslan (Istanbul: İletişim, 2010), 467.

When the city center was changed once the Tunceli Law became invalid, on 30 December 1946, a new era started for Mameki, the current center of Dersim. The first buildings established in those years were military installations and public buildings. Some had already been built and were used during the operation.



Figure 4.1 Mameki, Dersim at the end of the 1930s (Archive of Dersim Municipality)

As is seen in figure 4.1, the new city center consisted of barracks, a school, a mosque, and lodgings for officials. These spaces reflected not only the ideology of the regime but also the method through which the assimilation of the Dersim people was envisaged.

In his book on how the Hamidian regime legitimated its power, Selim Deringil emphasizes the importance of mosques and clock towers.<sup>19</sup> He points out that both clock towers and mosques were built in remote places in order to manifest power at the local level.<sup>20</sup> Independent of their secular or religious

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19 Selim Deringil, *The Well-Protected Domains: Ideology and the Legitimation of Power in the Ottoman Empire, 1876-1909* (London and New York: I.B. Tauris, 1999), 29-31.

20 *Ibid.*, 30.

meanings, government buildings are symbolic manifestation of power. Dersim's military and government establishments were constructed in an area visible from all quarters of the city, again reflecting the symbolic concerns of the regime. They are architecturally remarkable and placed at the city's heart on the hill overlooking the point where the Munzur and Pülümür rivers meet. As far as their grandeur and order are concerned, the buildings not only remind locals of their historical discontent with the regime and the defeat sustained vis-à-vis the modern state but also give the message that the state is strong enough to put down all future rebellions. In this way, the space in which the Dersim people lived became a political matter to be organized. As Timothy Mitchell argues for the case of Cairo, the inhabitants "themselves, as they moved through this space, became similarly material, their minds and bodies thought to need discipline and training. The space, the minds, and the bodies all materialised at the same moment, in a common economy of order and discipline."<sup>21</sup>

One of the institutional buildings erected at the end of the 1930s was the mosque (see figure 4.1). According to the dedication plaque, *Paşalar*, the oldest mosque of Mameki, was completed in 1942. For a city whose population mostly consists of Alevis, the construction of a mosque reveals the contradiction between the state and the inhabitants.

Since the 1970s, the number of mosques has increased significantly throughout the country.<sup>22</sup> After the coup of 12 September 1980, when Cem ceremonies were de facto forbidden, many mosques were constructed in various districts of Dersim in parallel with the assimilation policies of the period.<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, the Paşalar Mosque, one of the few buildings around which the city center was constructed, was founded in Mameki as an urgent need although the single party regime of the 1930s did not tend to construct

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21 Timothy Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 68.

22 Ahmet Onay, *Türkiye' nin Cami Profili: Fiziki ve Sosyolojik Açılardan Bir Analiz* (Istanbul: Dem, 2008), 15.

23 Documentary directed by Özgür Fındık, *Olağan Haller: 12 Eylül Dersim İnanç Asimilasyonu*, 2013.

new mosques in those years. A law concerning mosques approved on 15 November 1935 permitted existing ones to be used for other purposes or shut them down;<sup>24</sup> indeed, the law and its application is upheld even today as proof of the “anti-religious” character of the regime.<sup>25</sup> It is known that between 1939 and 1946, many mosques were closed or transformed into storage space throughout the country.<sup>26</sup> In Dersim, the number of mosques was thirteen in 1940; thirty-one in 1960; sixty-two in 1980; and 119 in 1990. From 1990 to 2013, no new mosque was built in the city.<sup>27</sup> As can be seen in the data, the state constructed mosques in the city in almost every period. Under the circumstances, the mosque of Dersim was envisaged as an image of the modern state rather than as an attempt to Islamize the city. The mosque was a part of Tunceli, the modern city, which could be finally be shaped and controlled by the central government. The mosque, like other buildings of the state, functioned as both the symbol of power and as a component of the hierarchical ordering of space which spatially confines its inhabitants.

Apart from the symbolic meanings of the buildings constructed in the republican period in Mameki, their function as apparatuses of the Turkfication project also needs to be examined. In addition to military establishments and the mosque, the regime constructed a school in the city center straight away. Public education played an essential role in the transmission of the messages of the new regime to the public and there is an extensive literature about the functions of modern education during the nation-building process in Turkey which exceeds the scope of this dissertation.<sup>28</sup> However, in addition to scrutinizing schools as institutions shaping people according to the ideology of the

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24 *Cami ve Mescidlerin Tasnifine ve Tasnif Harici Kalacak Cami ve Mescid Hademesine Verilecek Muhassasat Hakkında Kanun*, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr>.

25 See, for example, Mehmed Şevket Eygi, *Yakın Tarihimizde Cami Kısıymı* (Istanbul: Tarih ve İbret Yayınları, 2003).

26 Sinan Meydan, *Cumhuriyet Tarihi Yalanları II* (Istanbul: İnkılâp, 2010), 591.

27 The information was obtained by Özgür Fındık by petitioning the Tunceli governorship.

28 See, for example, İsmail Kaplan, *Türkiye’de Milli Eğitim İdeolojisi* (Istanbul: İletişim, 1999); Füsün Üstel, “*Makbul Vatandaş’ın Peşinde*” (Istanbul: İletişim, 2004); Selçuk Akşin Somel, *Osmanlı’da Eğitimin Modernleşmesi (1839-1908): İslamlaşma, Otokrasi ve Disiplin* (Istanbul:

regime, one can also consider them as a part of the spatial policies of the modern state. In the case of Egypt, Mitchell highlights that the planning of the streets of Cairo and that of schools did not coincide by accident.

Streets and schools were built as the expression and achievement of an intellectual orderliness, a social tidiness, a physical cleanliness, that was coming to be considered the country's fundamental political requirement. The new order of the army and the model village was to be extended to include the city and the civilian. In this process came into being the politics of the modern state.<sup>29</sup>

Consequently, both the choice of Mameki as the city center and its planning manifest governmentality in action. Given the “creation” of a new center after the military operation and the fact that people were forced to settle in this “foreign” space, the city was designed to prioritize security. In addition to military establishments, all the public institutions that served to diffuse the ideology of the regime also functioned as spaces representing the Turkish state, its power, what it had done, and what it could do. However, the meanings of spaces can be transformed in the course of time.

#### 4.1.1 *The Old Barracks*

The 1937-1938 events transformed not only the sociopolitical life of the province but also the space in which people live. Because disciplining Dersim and carrying out a military operation if necessary was on the agenda of the government even before 1935, certain spatial arrangements were already fulfilled by the second half of the 1930s. The most apparent “monument” of this decade and of the massacre is the barracks around which the city was created (see figure 4.1). This is Mameki’s oldest construction, founded in 1937 for the military operation. It was established on a site of 4304 square meters.<sup>30</sup> Young,

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İletişim, 2010); and Benjamin C. Fortna, *Learning to Read in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Early Turkish Republic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

29 Mitchell, 63.

30 *Kışla Binası-Tunceli*, 25.02.2013, <http://www.kulturportali.gov.tr>.

indigenous people were exempted from military service in return for their labor: they worked on the construction of the barracks.<sup>31</sup>

The building reflects the basic characteristics of Turkish architecture of the 1930s when many German and Austrian architects have been invited to work in the country. According to information obtained from Umut Kork, an officer in Tunceli Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanization, the barracks had also been planned by German architects and were built in the German style like many buildings of the decade.<sup>32</sup> It is composed of four wings forming a square around a courtyard. The ground floor is comprised of small chambers allocated for horses. With the construction of new military installations in the city, the barracks were transferred to the Ministry of Finance. The director of the housing department of Dersim Municipality, Mahmut Nizam Özlütaş, indicates that since 1949 it was used to house all public servants living in the city.<sup>33</sup> Nowadays, only the poorest stratum of the city of approximately sixty families resides in the barracks even though the building itself is now unfit for human habitation. There are defects in the drainage, plumbing, lighting, and ventilation that increase the risk of illness among the occupants of the barracks. After a major fire which out broke in 2011,<sup>34</sup> living conditions worsened.

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31 Rüştü Demirkaya, "Tarihe Direnen 'Kışla,'" *Birgün*, 06.12.2007.

32 Umut Kork, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 15.07.2012.

33 Mahmut Nizam Özlütaş, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.

34 *Sabah*, 12.11.2011.



Figure 4.2 Photo of the Barracks from the Courtyard, 2012.

The barracks is an interesting example of the transformation of the meaning and use of a space. A building produced to accommodate soldiers who arrived in Dersim to participate in an operation that would cost the lives of tens of thousands of locals became a shelter of the descendants of those same people. Today, in spite of the unsanitary conditions, residents of the barracks do not consent to leave because of the cheap rent and its central location. The process of transforming the building into public housing can be read as a kind of re-appropriation of urban space and an attempt to overthrow the hierarchical order of the space. Considering that a large part of Dersim's territory belongs to the military, the transformation of the barracks by lower classes has symbolic, social, and political importance. The space was reorganized by people who were different from its creators in terms of both their stance vis-à-vis power and their class. As Lefebvre indicates, space produced by and producing social relations has a social dimension when used and changed by people.<sup>35</sup>

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35 Lefebvre, 68-169.

Following from this perspective, the barracks has been reshaped in accordance with the needs of the poor of the city through collective mental and practical action. In other words, the transformation of the barracks by civilians was in the direction of splitting the use value of the building rather than its exchange value. It became “an environment as a place to live and to call home.”<sup>36</sup>

At the end of 2012, the barracks was put up for bid by the Special Provincial Administration for building surveys, restitution, and restoration.<sup>37</sup> The barracks will eventually be transformed into a city museum containing exhibition halls, art studios, cafes, and restaurants.<sup>38</sup>

#### § 4.2 The Transformation of Space in Dersim since 1987

The first AKP government (March 2003) coincided with the rescission of the state of emergency (*OHAL*) (July 2002) in Dersim, which had been in force since 1987. Thus, the power of the army in the city has relatively diminished and more civil-society-based governance practices have emerged. In this section, I scrutinize the transformation of space in the *OHAL* period and its reorganization in the 2000s. The urban space of Dersim was considerably affected by forced displacements in the 1990s and has been influenced by new spatial strategies in the 2000s. These spatial changes can be read not only as the manifestation of a new governmental approach to the province but also as one of regionally-constructed methods of governing in this decade. How a space organized according to military requirements, security concerns, and a social hierarchy built on the basis of a civil-military dichotomy was reorganized on the basis of a reconciliatory discourse is the main question of this part of the dissertation.

According to the archives of the Provincial Bank (İller Bankası), the central district of Dersim was planned four times. The first plan was prepared on 25 May 1951; the second, by İlhan Artuner, on 8 July 1966; the third one, by

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36 Kevin Fox Gotham, Jon Shefner, and Krista Brumley, “Abstract Space, Social Space, and the Redevelopment of Public Housing,” *Critical Perspectives on Urban Redevelopment* 6 (2001), 314.

37 *Tunceli Emek Gazetesi*, 17.09.2012.

38 Mahmut Nizam Özlütaş, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.

Vedat Yalçınkaya, on 26 April 1984; and the last one, by Özhan Elgin, on 18 January 2000. However, first two plans are not available in the archives. In my research, I found two other plans dated May 1999 and November 1999, but these are not recorded in the index of the archive. There are few differences between 1999 and 2000 plans, so the 1999 plans seem to be early versions of the 2000 plan. According to information gathered from the municipality, the master plan was renewed with a revision accommodating the Cumhuriyet Neighborhood in 2013.

Because the 1951 and 1966 plans of the city are lost, there is limited knowledge about the urban space of Dersim before the 1980s. However, old photos, a documentary film produced in 1979 by the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT), and orally-conveyed information sheds light on the pre-1980 period of the city.

#### 4.2.1 *Dersim as Part of the OHAL Region*

The geography including Dersim was ruled –until recently– by the regime of the “state of exception.” Giorgio Agamben’s book *State of Exception* offers an important framework for this “zone” between public law and political fact. In the state of exception, the juridical order is suspended for security reasons such as the threat of civil war, revolution, and – now – terrorism. In reference to several applications of states of exception from the decree of Napoleon to that of Hitler, Agamben reveals that states have always been disposed to bypass their own juridical order via states of exception in the name of national interests, and this trend has become the dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics.<sup>39</sup> Historical examples demonstrate that in time, the diffusion of military wartime powers in the civil sphere and the suspension of constitutional norms that protect individual liberties, the rights of citizens, and the separation of powers intertwine and take the form of the state of exception.<sup>40</sup>

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39 Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 2.

40 *Ibid.*, 5.

The state of exception has both temporal and spatial meanings. It is the capture of a space. This state devoid of law, which was to be temporary, becomes a perpetual arrangement in a certain space.<sup>41</sup>

In truth, the state of exception is neither external nor internal to the juridical order, and the problem of defining it concerns precisely a threshold, or a zone of indifference, where inside and outside do not exclude each other but rather blur with each other. The suspension of the norm does not mean its abolition, and the zone of anomie that it establishes is not (or at least claims not to be) unrelated to the juridical order. [...] To understand the problem of the state of exception, one must first correctly determine its localization (or illocalization). As we will see, the conflict over the state of exception presents itself essentially as a dispute over its proper *locus*.<sup>42</sup>

The large part of Turkey's east and southeast, in terms of official regional designation, were subject to the state of exception. The geographic frontiers of this area under the control of the emergency rule changed over the decades. The state of exception was first declared on 1 March 1984. Starting then, the scope and the extension of the time of the implementation were reconfigured every four months at the request of the council of ministers. Before the state of exception, the Turkish government had imposed martial law in thirteen provinces in 1978 in response to the Maraş Massacre. Until the military coup, the number of cities included in the scope of martial law increased.<sup>43</sup> After the coup d'état, when the entire country was incorporated into the martial law system,<sup>44</sup> military rule was gradually withdrawn. Cities categorized in the 1982 constitution as places where the government had "doubts about the emer-

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41 Giorgio Agamben, *Means Without End: Notes on Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 38.

42 Agamben, *State of Exception*, 23-24.

43 Zafer Üskül, *Olağanüstü Hal Üzerine Yazılar* (Istanbul: Büke, 2003), 11.

44 Hikmet Özdemir, *Rejim ve Asker* (Istanbul: Afa Yayınları, 1989), 303.

gence of acts of violence intended for the abolishment of the democratic system or of fundamental rights and freedoms”<sup>45</sup> were redefined by the state of emergency law and added to the state of exception.

Carl Schmitt points out that it is the sovereign who decides on the exception.<sup>46</sup> Like other states (including so-called democratic ones) that adopted its application in times of crisis and made it permanent, the Grand National Assembly of Turkey extended the state of exception tens of times for four-month stretches. In the east and southeast of the country, the state of exception became the norm.<sup>47</sup> With the Decision No. 285 having the force of law (10 July 1987), a governor for the state of emergency was appointed:

On the basis of Article 121 of the Constitution and Article 3 of the Emergency Law, the governorship of a state of emergency region including Bingöl, Diyarbakır, Elazığ, Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt, Tunceli, and Van is founded. [...] A governor is appointed by the council of ministers according to Article 59 of State Personnel Law 657.<sup>48</sup>

The governor of the region under the regime of the state of emergency was entrusted with broad powers. From 1987 to 2002, six governors ruled the region as “super-governors.”<sup>49</sup> They were authorized by law to evacuate, reallocate, or disappropriate villages, hamlets, and other residential areas.<sup>50</sup> In other words, the spatial organization of the region within the boundaries of the state of emergency, by its nature, was always variable, arbitrary, and blurred.

The process of creating the state of emergency region – called the “OHAL region” – demonstrates not only the temporal unexceptionality of its application but also the emergence of a new region determined by security concerns. At the First Geography Congress in 1941, the territory of Turkey was divided

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45 *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti Anayasası*, <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr>.

46 Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2005), 5.

47 Üskül, 75.

48 *Olağanüstü Hal Bölge Valiliği İhdası Hakkında Kanun Hükmünde Kararname*, <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr>.

49 Yıldırım Türker, “Kısa ‘Süper Vali’ler Tarihi,” *Radikal*, 22.08.2011.

50 *Olağanüstü Hal Bölge Valiliği İhdası Hakkında Kanun Hükmünde Kararname*.

into seven regions according to geographic, demographic, and economic features; however, this regional classification had no administrative meaning. The borders of the OHAL region, on the other hand, overlap an administrative unit. Although its composition changed over time, the governing practices of the authority, taking its legitimacy from emergency laws, were peculiar to the OHAL region.

The justification for the extension of the state of emergency after the 1980 coup was based on the PKK-state war. The OHAL region as defined and frequently reshaped by the state was both a “combat zone” and a living space. Interestingly, the region under the state of exception embraced the geography historically defined as Kurdistan and coincides with the homeland of Turkey’s Kurds. Because the geography characterized by Kurdishness was ruled via exceptional measures not enforced in the rest of the country, the local people’s perception of the state and citizenship was inevitably different from that of others. In other words, for people who could not benefit from the rights of citizenship, the government’s spatial policies meant the embodiment of extraordinary state-society relations. As Nicole F. Watts points out,

both because of the dominance of the security regime, and because the PKK sought to sever typical mediation channels between government and people (for instance, tribes) and monopolize others (pro-Kurdish political parties), the context of the 1980s and 1990s created an image of a dense state-society barrier and a high level of polarization between authorities and local people. Many Kurds in the southeast came to see the state as highly unrepresentative, impenetrable, and fundamentally different than themselves. This can be thought of as a ‘de-naturalization’ of the state (see e.g. Hansen and Stepputat 2001) as it took on the image and practice of above and beyond the reach of ordinary people, of being disassociated from society, and of being an imposed rather than “natural” feature of daily life.<sup>51</sup>

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51 Nicole F. Watts, “Re-Considering State-Society Dynamics in Turkey’s Kurdish Southeast,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (2009), <http://www.ejts.revues.org>.

Although the frontiers of the region were reshaped several times and certain cities were removed from the region or their statuses were downgraded to neighboring provinces (*müçavir il*), Dersim was always at the center of the region from the beginning until the end of its application. The state declared a *sıkıyönetim* (state of siege) in Tunceli in April 1979 which lasted eight years. A new era started with the declaration of the state of emergency in 1987. In sum, Dersim was ruled under extraordinary provisions for twenty-three years three months and four days.<sup>52</sup> In this period, like all inhabitants of the OHAL region, Dersimlis were exposed to countless human rights abuses.

Like the entire region, Dersim was reshaped spatially in the OHAL period. This period was both an urbanization process with the rise of the population of the city center and a reorganization process of the urban area according to security needs. These two processes are interrelated and directly connected to the Kurdish guerilla war that accelerated in the 1990s. The migration from villages to the city center sharply intensified in the period from 1990 to 1994.<sup>53</sup> Among OHAL provinces, the most dramatic population decrease in rural areas occurred in Dersim. When the data of 1990 and 2000 population censuses are compared, one observes that the urban population of the city increased in this decade even though the total population decreased.

Table 4.1 Urban and Rural Populations of Dersim in 1990 and 2000

	Total	Urban	Rural
The population of Dersim in 1990	133,143	50,779	82,785
The population of Dersim in 2000	93,584	54,476	39,108

SOURCE: TÜİK

The Turkish state used village evacuations and the burning of houses and possessions as methods of fighting terrorism. Controlling dispersed, small, mountainous settlements was too difficult for the state. Concentrating the population in appropriate centers was a rational strategy both to struggle

52 Üskül, 162.

53 Özkan Yıldız, "Tunceli'de (Dersim) Göç, Yoksulluk ve "Toplumsal Dışlanma," in *Dersim'i Parantezden Çıkarmak: Dersim Sempozyumu'nun Ardından*, (eds.) Zeliha Hepkon, Songül Aydın and Şükrü Aslan (Istanbul: İletişim, 2013), 241-242.

against the PKK and to punish indigenous people who aided the guerillas. A commission report of the parliamentary inquiry dated 9 February 1996 demonstrates that the total number of villages evacuated in the OHAL region was 517 and that of hamlets was 1614. Some 183 villages and 823 hamlets were evacuated in Dersim,<sup>54</sup> the highest numbers among the six cities within the boundaries of the region in 1996. However, the same report also quotes Orhan Veli Yıldırım, the Dersim deputy: “Official statistics about evacuated villages are wrong. For example, Baylık is my own village. It is empty now; however, it is recorded as occupied... Çemçeli, Yeşilkaya, Ulukale, [and] İbimahmut vil-lages are also empty although they are recorded occupied.”<sup>55</sup>

The evacuation and destruction of villages and hamlets, the establishment of the village guard system, and disappearance of economic opportunities forced people to migrate. In general, rural populations forced to migrate tend to settle in the nearest urban center.<sup>56</sup> The petition written by Mazlum Arslan, the mayor of Dersim from 1994 to 1999, to the parliamentary commission reflects on the demographic and social changes in the city center.

In 1994, as a consequence of a rise in terrorist incidents, the inhabitants of 70 percent of the villages of the provincial center were left to abandon their homes by some means or another, and they were obliged to settle in the Tunceli city center. These people encountered economic difficulties in the center. Housing shortages and problems with health and education services have emerged. These people were compelled to meet all their needs with the help and support of the municipality and

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54 *İstanbul Milletvekili Algan Hacaloğlu ve 9 Arkadaşının, Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu’da Boşaltılan Yerleşim Birimleri Nedeniyle Göç Eden Yurttaşlarımızın Sorunlarının Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Tedbirlerin Tespit Edilmesi Amacıyla Anayasanın 98inci, İçtüzüğün 104 ve 105inci Maddeleri Uyarınca Bir Meclis Araştırması Açılmasına İlişkin Önergesi ve (10/25) Esas Numaralı Meclis Araştırması Komisyonu Raporu*, 09.02.1996, <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr>.

55 Ibid.

56 Ayşe Betül Çelik, “Globalization of Human Rights and Its Impact on Internally Displaced Kurds in Turkey,” in *Forced Migration and Global Processes: A View From Forced Migration Studies*, (eds.) François Crépeau, Delphine Nakache, Michael Collyer, Nathaniel H. Goetz, Art Hansen, Renu Modi, Aninia Nadig, Sanja Spoljar-Vrzina and Loes H. M. van Willigen (Lanham: Lexington, 2006), 195.

the Social Assistance Foundation. The population of the city center was 24,400 according to the census of 1990. By the year 1997, it exceeded 40,000. Because of insufficient funds, the municipality cannot help [all] these people.<sup>57</sup>

With the destruction of living conditions in the villages, the OHAL governorship seized control of rural areas. However, the city center, whose population had increased significantly, also needed to be kept under control. Both the urbanization process and the spatial design of the city center took forms in accordance with security requirements and the desire of the Turkish state to show its strength. The inevitable expansion of the city in the second half of the 1990s was as a new dynamic forcing changes in governance and urban planning.

#### § 4.3 The Expansion of the City

As mentioned above, Mameki was a “created” city center. From its creation, the city grew around public buildings constructed at the end of the 1930s and the 1940s. The residential areas surrounded this government-owned space. As a result of this expansion, up until the 1990s almost all public buildings in Mameki were at the heart of Dersim, in the Moğultay Neighborhood, the first neighborhood of the center which contained the old barracks.<sup>58</sup> The Munzur River is the natural order of the Moğultay Neighborhood to the west and south. Because the area northwest of the city center extends along the Munzur Valley was declared a “national park” in 1971, the city could not develop in this direction. Moreover, because guerillas were in the mountains above the valley, the space extending to the center of Ovacık was defined as “insecure.” During

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57 *İstanbul Milletvekili Algan Hacaloğlu ve 9 Arkadaşının, Doğu ve Güneydoğu Anadolu’da Boşaltılan Yerleşim Birimleri Nedeniyle Göç Eden Yurttaşlarımızın Sorunlarının Araştırılarak Alınması Gereken Tedbirlerin Tespit Edilmesi Amacıyla Anayasanın 98inci, İçtüzüğü’nün 104 ve 105inci Maddeleri Uyarınca Bir Meclis Araştırması Açılmasına İlişkin Önergesi ve (10/25) Esas Numaralı Meclis Araştırması Komisyonu Raporu*, 09.02.1996, <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr>.

58 In figure 4.3, the Moğultay Neighborhood is labeled “Tunceli.”

the 1960s and 1970s, people inevitably settled to the west and northeast of the Moğultay Neighborhood.

Therefore, the Cumhuriyet Neighborhood (better known as Gazik, the historical name used by native people) to the west started to be established. The river is the border between the Cumhuriyet and Moğultay neighborhoods. In the 1980s, disaster homes for the accommodation of families damaged due to several natural disasters were constructed in this area. The 1984 1/5000 scale plan of the city (signed on 29 August 1978) indicates the initial state of Gazik.



Figure 4.3 The Neighborhoods of Dersim, 2013 (Google Earth)

The disaster homes are present even in the 1984 plan. Indeed, Gazik was planned as a space consisting of these disaster homes, parks, schools, and governmental agencies. There are a primary school, a secondary school, a high school, a teacher's high school, a playfield, a park, and residences in the 1984 plan; however, almost all of the educational sites were transformed to military

areas in the May 1999 plan. Some riverfronts of Gazik, which were indicated as landslide sites in 1984, were included in military zones in 1999.

On the other hand, a significant development appeared to the northeast of Mameki. Because this territory is mountainous, it is called the Dağ (Mountain) Neighborhood in everyday speech. Over years, the Dağ Neighborhood has grown towards higher areas where the danger of land and rockslides are ever present. Along this axis, the physical geography of Mameki looks like a half-bowl: the Moğultay Neighborhood is the lowest level of Mameki and the Dağ Neighborhood rises along the north and east sides. The population of the Dağ Neighborhood increased considerably in the 1990s with the evacuation of rural areas. People forced to migrate squatted in this area where infrastructure and services were insufficient. In short time, the zone became a heavily populated urban settlement characterized by substandard housing. The neighborhood known as Dağ was redefined as the Alibaba, Yenimahalle (to the north of Alibaba), and Esentepe neighborhoods.<sup>59</sup>

The Dağ Neighborhood is not in the scope of the 1984 plan. The bold part of figure 4.4 (in the upper right-hand corner) corresponds to the Moğultay Neighborhood. The Dağ Neighborhood, surrounding Moğultay, does not appear in the figure. In ensuing plans, this space is partly within the scope of the urban plan but is demarcated as forestland. Even in the 2013 plan, this territory is left unplanned. Because it was categorized as a landslide site and geologically unfavorable, planners disapproved of zoning it for housing development. However, a considerable population still lives there in slum conditions, and the inhabitants benefit from the services of the municipality.

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59 Mahmut Nizam Özlütaş, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.

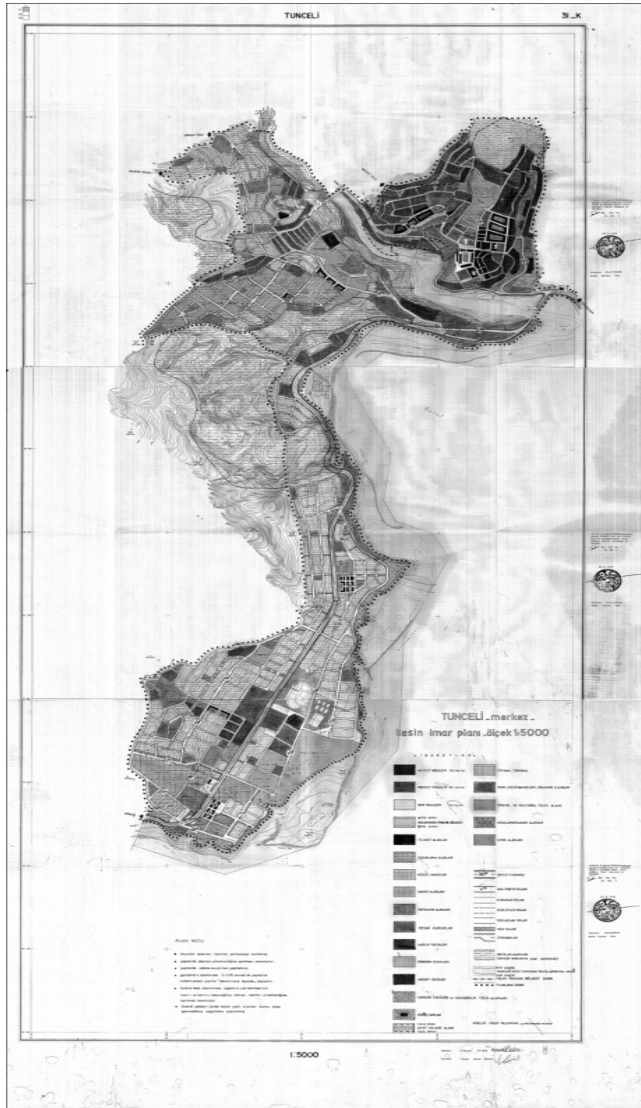


Figure 4.4 1984 Plan of Dersim (Archive of İller Bankası)

In the face of an increasing urban population and dwelling problem, new axes were needed for the development of the city. Due to physical obstacles, the city could develop only in two directions. The first is towards Elazığ, to the south of the Moğultay Neighborhood. In order to reorganize the city, the Atatürk Neighborhood (better known as Sihenk, the historical name used by natives)

had been planned in detail even in the 1980s.<sup>60</sup> It was planned on both sides of the road heading out towards Elazığ (see figure 4.5).

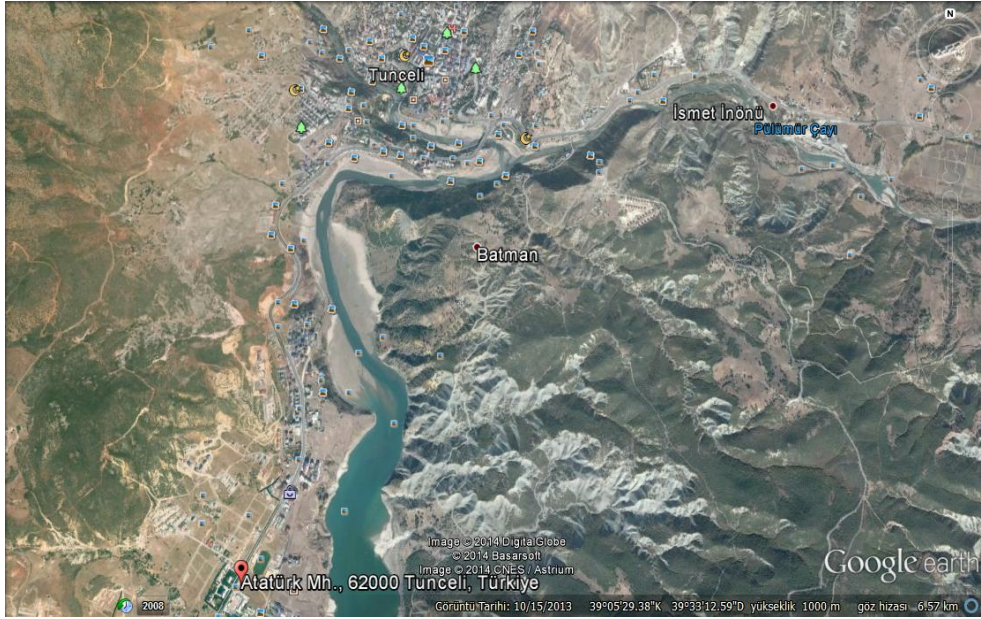


Figure 4.5 New neighborhoods: Atatürk and İsmet İnönü (Google Earth)

Hasan Korkmaz, the CHP candidate who was elected mayor of Dersim twice (in 1984 and 1999), speaks in detail about the establishment of the Atatürk Neighborhood:

When I was elected [in 1984], there was no Atatürk Neighborhood, yet. Sihenk was a village. The inhabitants were carrying water up from the Munzur; there was no water system in the houses. The governorship was at the center [in Moğultay]. Our governor was a supporter of the Motherland Party (ANAP) but he was an honorable person. In these days, there was an intention to change the location of the governorship. Sihenk was selected, but the citizens opposed it. They even appealed to the ministers. They collected 3000 signatures for the governorship to stay [in Moğultay]. However, I believed that we had to change the location of the governorship for the sake of the extension of the city. I,

60 In figure 4.4, Sihenk is the large area in the south.

along with the governor, decided to carry it out standing the objections. In 1984, we made the master plan and the people started to move to Atatürk Neighborhood by and by.<sup>61</sup>

Although the location of the governorship was allocated to Sihenk in the 1984 plan, it stayed in Moğultay until 1999-2000. However, the Atatürk Neighborhood was zoned for housing and started to be built. The water supply network was established with the support of Turgut Özal, the president at the time.<sup>62</sup> The infrastructure works of the neighborhood were completed by İller Bankası between 1984 and 1989. The neighborhood still uses this sewerage system even today. In order to attract population from ancient neighborhoods, the Dersim people were encouraged to buy houses via cooperatives:

Between 1984 and 1989, there were only five to ten settlements in Sihenk. There was neither a cooperative nor an idea about the cooperative system. I founded seven cooperatives to encourage people to buy houses and construct buildings after I talked to Özal. These were Municipality Co-op, Timaş Building Society, State Hydraulic Works Co-op, National Education Co-op, Rural Services Co-op, Public Works Co-op, etc. We would build 1500 houses, but we could not find enough members. We only convinced 350 people. We could terminate the construction of houses into two years. Thereby, 350 families settled in the Atatürk Neighborhood.<sup>63</sup>

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- 61 “1984’te seçildiğimde daha Atatürk Mahallesi falan yoktu. Sihenk bir köydü. İnsanlar Munsur’dan evlerine su taşıyordu, evlere su gelmemişti. Hükümet konağı merkezdeydi. Valimiz ANAP’lıydı ama saygıdeğer biriydi. O dönem hükümet konağının daha iyi bir yere taşınması düşünülüyordu. Sihenk tespit edildi, ama vatandaşlar karşı çıktı. Bakanlara kadar gittiler. 3000 imza topladılar hükümet konağının kalması için. Fakat ben şehrin açılması için hükümet konağının yerinin mutlaka değişmesi gerektiğine inanıyordum. İtirazlara rağmen valiyle birlikte karar aldık. 1984’te imar planını yaptık ve insanlar yavaş yavaş yerleşmeye başladılar.” Hasan Korkmaz, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 03.03.2014.
- 62 Hasan Korkmaz, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 03.03.2014.
- 63 “1984-1989 arası Sihenk’te sadece 5-10 köy vardı. Ne bir kooperatif ne de kooperatifçilikle ilgili bir fikir vardı. O zaman, Özal’la görüştükten sonra yedi tane kooperatif kurdum ev edinme ve inşaat için. Belediye Kooperatifi, TİMAŞ Yapı Kooperatifi, DSİ Kooperatifi, Milli Eğitim

The actual development of the city towards the Atatürk Neighborhood occurred at the end of the 1990s. A considerable number of people had left Dersim due to the war and war-related economic problems of the 1990s. The Dersimlis who had been forced to emigrate from their motherland organized in many cities of Turkey and Europe via Tunceli Associations, which unified under the umbrella of the Tunceli Associations Solidarity Committee (Tunceli Dernekleri Dayanışma Kurulu) in 1999 and transformed into the Federation of Tunceli Associations (Tunceli Dernekleri Federasyonu, TUDEF) in 2004.<sup>64</sup> A sharp decline in Dersim's population and the PKK's declaration of a ceasefire pushed these people living in the diaspora to launch a return campaign. To bring OHAL conditions, the evacuation of villages, the food embargo imposed on the city, and the depopulation policy of the state to the agenda of the country, they decided to organize a festival that would be held annually and continues today.<sup>65</sup>

Although the first festival was prevented by the OHAL governorship, significant public outcry was generated against the blockade of the city. The Dersim people were invited to their motherland for vacation and to return.<sup>66</sup> In 2003-2004, some families who had left the city returned. After the rescission of the OHAL, many Dersim-born people living abroad have bought summer houses or land there. The striking difference between the summer and winter populations of the city is related to the increasing number of returnees on vacation; however, year-round settlement by returnees is unremarkable.

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Kooperatifi, Köy Hizmetleri Kooperatifi, Bayındırlık Kooperatifi falan. 1500 konut yapacaktık, ama üye bulamadık. Zorla, dolaşa dolaşa 350 kişiyi anca ikna ettik. Evleri 2 sene içerisinde tamamladık. Böylelikle 350 aile Atatürk Mahallesi'ne yerleşti." Hasan Korkmaz, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 03.03.2014.

64 Özkan Tacar (president of DEDEF), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 9 October 2010. The name of the federation became the Federation of Dersim Associations (DEDEF) in 2010.

65 Fevzi Konak (one of organizers of the first festival), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 01.07.2012.

66 Astarê Asmen, "Asi Coğrafyada Filizlenen Munzur Kültür ve Doğa Festivalleri," *Kırmancıya Belekê Kültür-Tarih-Halkbilim Bilimsel İnceleme, Araştırma, Eleştiri Dergisi* 4.

Major social, economic, and spatial changes occurred with the onset of an atmosphere for the development of capitalism after the rescission of the OHAL regime. The normalization process brought about a convenient environment for investment and trade opportunities. Almost all formulas recommended for poor cities have been realized: development based around a university, tourism, and sectors dependent on natural resources. However, the most outstanding sector is construction which grew rapidly in the city in the 2000s, as it has in the entire country.

One prominent project of diaspora Dersimlis is Munzur Inc., which was founded on 28 December 1999 as a social project with the contributions of 240 shareholders.<sup>67</sup> The company built a water-bottling factory in Ovacık in 2005 to create employment opportunities, develop the economy of the city, and help local businesses.<sup>68</sup> Apart from the factory, Munzur Inc. led the “return to Dersim” campaign by constructing a housing estate of forty houses. The establishment located in Batman (see figure 4.5) is being undertaken by the Kırkevler Building Cooperative and is not finished yet. The houses will be constructed to a high standard and the majority of the owners lives in Istanbul.<sup>69</sup> In other words, the return campaign and the invitation to spend holidays in Dersim as resistance to the strategy of spatially isolating Dersim has affected the urban space, if only a little.

As far as urban development is concerned, the foundation of the university has completely transformed the city. Tunceli University was founded in 2008 and began to accept students in 2010. Both its integration into the city as a representation of central power and the demographic effect it has created need to be examined in detail; however, in this section, I only focus on the university as a part of the urbanization process and leave its role in the political atmosphere of the city for the following section.

Instruction started at the university before the campus was established; therefore, some institutional buildings in the Atatürk Neighborhood were temporarily given over to the university. According to the 1984 plan, these

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67 Ş. Gürçağ Tuna and Bayram Güneş, “Munzur’dan Şirket Yaratmak: Munzur A.Ş. Üzerinden Dersim’de Sermaye Birikiminin Dinamikleri,” 99-119.

68 Ibid.

69 S. A. (homeowner), interview by the author, via e-mail, Istanbul, Turkey, 01.02.2012.

buildings belonged to the agricultural technical school. In the May 1999 plan, the university was formalized. Until the end of 2013, when the construction of the campus finished, the university provided services with limited means.

In the same area, next to the first location of the university, another facility indicated as a building of the agricultural technical school in the 1984 plan is used by the police. Although there is no signboard at the entrance, locals say that the National Intelligence Organization occupies the building. This suggests the urban organization of Dersim at the end of the 1990s. First, military areas or areas given to the gendarmerie and police are prominent in 1999, as is clear from the plans of May and November 1999. Because the majority of grand, institutional buildings were assigned to the police or military, it was difficult to find a public building suitable for the university until the construction of the campus was completed. Second, because the city was considered insecure for many years, a university could only be established in 2008 when the government undertook the objective of founding at least one public university in every city.<sup>70</sup> That is to say, the government hesitated to found university in Dersim until recently because the reaction of inhabitants and the consequences were unpredictable. The selection of buildings located in a tightly-controlled space can be interpreted as a precaution taken against the potential negative response of the Dersim people who may perceive the university as yet another agency of the state.

When the Tunceli University began to admit students, an acute housing problem emerged. The total number of dormitory beds built for students and the existing guesthouses of public bodies were not sufficient. Municipal employees say that in this period they encountered students sleeping on streets and accommodated them in their own houses. The first year, some inhabitants opened up their houses to students. In following years, like inhabitants of every university town, they also tended to benefit from new economic opportunities.

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70 As of 2007, there was still no university in ten cities: Ardahan, Bartın, Bayburt, Gümüşhane, Hakkari, Iğdır, Manisa, Şırnak, Dersim, and Yalova. *Üniversitesi Olmayan 10 İl Kaldı*, 30.05.2007, <http://www.sendika.org>; *Türkiye’de Üniversitesi Olmayan İl Kalmadı*, 06.12.2012, <http://www.akparti.org.tr>.

Rents peaked when students started to move to the city. The price hikes could be overcome by increasing the supply of housing but to build houses became impossible because of the strict application of Article 18 of the Construction Law.<sup>71</sup> Article 18, published in the Official Journal on 2 February 1985, regulates not only the space within the municipal borders or in adjacent areas (*mücavir alan*) under the responsibility of the municipality but also spaces beyond these borders including arrangements about plots (*arsa*) and lands (*arazi*) within the application plan.<sup>72</sup> The “development readjustment share” is defined in the legislation. This is the share taken from property owners by the municipality (or by the governorship if the land is outside of municipal borders) to meet urban requirements such as roads, squares, parks, parking areas, green spaces, mosques, schools, and police stations. For roads and other common areas, the municipality can expropriate at most 35 percent of the land of a property owner.<sup>73</sup> Because of unfair enforcement of the law in recent years, many lawsuits were filed against the municipality; therefore, construction came to a halt.

The municipality, which was administered by the BDP and previous pro-Kurdish parties since 2004, made three enforcements of Article 18: in 2006, 2008, and 2012. The people were dissatisfied with the first two enforcements and went to court claiming that they were unjustly treated. As a consequence of complaints, the enforcement of 2008 was annulled by the court. From 2008 to 2012, when a new enforcement of Article 18 was completed, contractors could not meet increasing housing demands due to the judicial process. As soon as the new enforcement was finished, the construction of 1300 new houses began.<sup>74</sup>

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71 Yusuf Cengiz (president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tunceli), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 29.07.2012.

72 *İmar Kanununun 18inci Maddesi Uyarınca Yapılacak Arazi ve Arsa Düzenlenmesi İle İlgili Esaslar Hakkında Yönetmelik*, <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr>.

73 This was increased to 40 percent in Law No. 5006 published in the Official Gazette on 17 December 2003. *İmar Kanunu ile İmar ve Gecekondu Mevzuatına Aykırı Yapılara Uygulanacak Bazı İşlemler ve 6785 Sayılı İmar Kanununun Bir Maddesinin Değiştirilmesi Hakkında Kanunda Değişiklik Yapılmasına İlişkin Kanun*, <http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/tutanaklar>.

74 Mahmut Nizam Özlütaş, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.

The director of the housing department of Dersim Municipality, Mahmut Nizam Özlütaş, argues that local authorities sought to solve land conflicts via negotiation after the cancellation of the enforcement of 2008. In 2009, when they started over, they requested that discontented citizens submit petitions to the municipality instead of resorting to the courts. Özlütaş says that they evaluated every petition and investigated each of the 700 parcels with an expert and city councilors. When they prepared a tentative plan, they organized a public meeting to win public approval. They made new arrangements and new public meetings in the following stages in order to please the maximum number of people. By the end of the process in 2012, only seven law suits have been filed; six of them withdrew their petitions after a final negotiation.<sup>75</sup> Özlütaş emphasizes that the enforcement of 2012 was a radical change for the urbanization of Dersim because some land had been matters of dispute even since 1938.

Until recently, conflicts over private properties (some continuing since 1938) were standing in our way. We could not decide only within the framework of the rule, because, in Dersim, there are other dynamics that we have to consider. There are stories outside of the “rational.” For example, an old man says that his tree fell outside his land after the enforcement. The point at issue is not only economic losses. He has an emotional bond with this tree. We are obliged to take heed of the desires of our people who survived the 1938 massacre.<sup>76</sup>

On the other hand, Article 18 is always vulnerable to special accommodations and other unfair practices. In a city like Dersim where tribal ties, kinship, po-

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75 Mahmut Nizam Özlütaş, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.

76 “Yakın zamana kadar çok fazla mülkiyet sorunu ile-ki bunların içlerinde 1938’den kalan tartışmalı durumlar da var - karşı karşıyaydık. Biz burada, sadece kurallar neyse ona göre hareket edemiyoruz; çünkü Dersim’de dikkate almamız gereken başka dinamikler de var. “Rasyonel” olanın dışında hikâyeler var. Örneğin bir amca diyor ki uygulamadan sonra, benim şu ağacım arsamın dışında kalıyor. Mesele sadece ekonomik kayıp meselesi değil. Amcanın ağacıyla duygusal bir bağı var. 1938’i yaşamış bu insanların isteklerini dikkate almak zorundayız.” Mahmut Nizam Özlütaş, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.

litical engagements, and ideological belongings influence daily life, the distribution of rents are generally not independent of local power relations. In the creation of new public spaces, land expropriated by the municipality was replaced with other land; however, the estates given to the titleholders were determined by the municipality and their values could be lower or higher than the expropriated ones depending on location. It is a general belief that this process opened the door for patronage and favoritism in the first term of the pro-Kurdish local government (2004-2009). A high number of lawsuits were filed in this period and the 2008 decision of the court to cancel the enforcement of Article 18 shows that the distribution of rents was not meticulously and fairly fulfilled in this period. This could be attributed to the inexperience and lack of educated staff in the first pro-Kurdish municipality; however, complaints of some inhabitants suggest that unusual, arbitrary, and irregular methods also influenced rent distribution mechanisms. In the second term of the pro-Kurdish municipality (2009-2014) the organization of urban space was handled within the frame of the consent of the people.

As mentioned above, the city was caught unprepared by the increasing housing demand that occurred with the foundation of the university. Nonetheless, a significant number of inhabitants take advantage of new opportunities that emerged with it. The campus was established in Aktuluk (better known as TÜRÜŞMEK, the historical name used by natives), which had been a small village south of Sihenk until being annexed to the municipality via referendum (see figure 4.6).<sup>77</sup> The university was moved from the Atatürk Neighborhood to TÜRÜŞMEK at the end of 2013. When TÜRÜŞMEK was determined as the place of the university campus, land prices significantly increased.<sup>78</sup> The speculative purchase of real estate in TÜRÜŞMEK coincided with the general housing problem of the city arising from the imperfect enforcements of Article 18. Consequently, land speculators benefited most from the new situation. The rector of the university explains the speculative atmosphere as follows: “In 2010, we expropriated an estate of 118 thousand square meters. We paid 25,000

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77 134 of 267 registered voters went to the polls. Seventy-seven people voted to join the municipality as a neighborhood. Fifty-seven voted to remain a village. *Tuncelinin Sesi*, 02.07.2010.

78 Yusuf Cengiz, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 29.07.2012.

TL per 1000 square meters. Today, the price [per thousand square meters] in TÜRÜŞMEK is 400,000 TL.”<sup>79</sup>



Figure 4.6 Aktuluk (TÜRÜŞMEK)

The transformation of TÜRÜŞMEK from a village into a fast-growing student center not only influenced property prices but also led to the growth of several sectors. For example, there were few minibuses for transportation before the construction of the campus. Since the second half of 2013, the number of people using this transportation line and the frequency of services have risen notably. In other words, this line has abruptly become a crucial income channel.<sup>80</sup> Once TÜRÜŞMEK was included within municipal borders, the line has been a subject of dispute between the cooperative founded by the minibus drivers of the TÜRÜŞMEK-MOĞULTAY Neighborhood line and the Dersim municipality, which seeks to put the line up for bid.

79 “Biz mesela burada 118 dönüm arsa kamulaştırdık 2010 yılında. Dönümünü 25,000 TL’ye almıştık, şu anda 400,000 TL TÜRÜŞMEK civarında.” Durmuş Boztuğ, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

80 Cömert Metin (minibus driver), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

The campus of the university was constructed by the Housing Development Administration of Turkey (Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı, TOKİ) – the first time that TOKİ has taken the responsibility for building a university campus. The administration had already constructed schools, libraries, and dormitories in cooperation with the General Directorate of Higher Education Credit and Hostels Institution (Yüksek Öğretim Kredi ve Yurtlar Kurumu, YURTKUR); however, the first attempt of the administration to construct a university campus was with the Tunceli University. Upon the demand of the university, two institutions – TOKİ and YURTKUR – entered into an agreement and signed a protocol on 29 December 2009.<sup>81</sup> TOKİ had just completed the construction of the campus including education buildings, administrative buildings, social establishments, laboratories, dormitories, and infrastructure on a site of 595,000 square meters.<sup>82</sup> The rector, Durmuş Boztuğ, narrated the process.

After I was appointed as rector, a nice surprise occurred. On 25 October 2008, Dear Mr. Prime Minister and some ministers graced us with their presence. Dear Mr. Governor was Mustafa Yaman at this time. I offered an opinion to our prime minister. We opened up maps. I said that my university was two months old; there were no faculties or deanships. The university consisted of Firat Vocational School of Higher Education. We had only six academic faculty, twelve administrators, and eleven security guards. It would take many years to bring engineers here. I said to him that I wished to build the campus as soon as possible for the university to put down roots in Tunceli. I demanded that TOKİ construct the campus. He accepted. I expressed my gratitude to him once again. He gave instructions to his ministers and officials. He ordered that the university be built. He joked: “and one for luck.” We talked playfully. In those days, we were fifteen to twenty rectors from Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia applied. Thanks to him, he prioritized Tunceli. This is a first in the history of the Republic of Turkey: service buildings, classrooms, and sports fields were built by

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81 *Üniversitelerin Kampüsü TOKİ'den*, 22.11.2011, <http://www.tokihaber.com.tr>.

82 Ibid.

TOKİ as a turnkey project. A protocol was signed in approximately one year among the Ministry of Finance, the General Directorate of Budget and Finance Control, TOKİ, the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), and our university. Fortunately, TOKİ laid the foundation on 17 January 2012 and we moved to the campus on 11 November 2013. We have 65,000 square meters of door area. Thank god, our heating, transportation, and electrical systems are perfect. Initially there were some problems, but these kinds of things happen everywhere.<sup>83</sup>

To conclude, the main axis of the city developed in the direction of Elazığ with the foundation of the university. Indeed, ancient neighborhoods had already reached their natural boundaries; therefore, the development of the city in the direction of Elazığ was inevitable. There is also another new axis suitable for urban development (see figures 4.5 and 4.6) called the İsmet İnönü Neighborhood to the east of the city center extending along the road to Erzincan. This area is home to the Tunceli Organized Industrial Zone (Tunceli Organize Sanayi Bölgesi, TOSB) whose shares belong to the Tunceli Special Provincial Directorate of Administration (50%), the Dersim Municipality (25%), and the

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83 “Ben rektör olarak atandıktan sonra güzel bir tesadüf oldu. 25 Ekim 2008 tarihinde sayın başbakanımız, bazı bakanlarımız buraya teşrif etti. Sayın valimizin, Mustafa Yaman vardı o zaman, makamında ben başbakanımıza arz ettim. Haritaları açtık, benim üniversitem dedim 2 aylık bir üniversite. Fakülte şeklinde bir yapılanma yok, dekanlık benzeri bir yapılanma yoktu. Sadece Fırat meslek yüksek okulu vardı. 6 tane öğretim görevlisi, 12 tane memur, 11 tane güvenlik memuru vardı. Buraya mühendislerin gelmesi yılları alır, ben kampusu bir an önce yapıp Tunceli’de üniversitenin kök salmasını arzuluyorum. Uygun bulursanız kampusumuzu TOKİ’ye yaptırmak istiyorum. Sağolsun kendisine tekrar şükranlarımı arz ediyorum, hay hay dedi. Bakanlarına, memurlarına talimat verdi. TOKİ’ye söyleyin dedi hocamın üniversitesini yapsınlar, bir bina da fazla yapsınlar. Öyle bir esprili ortamda. O zaman 15-20’ye yakın rektör, doğu ve güney doğudan başvurduk. Sağolsun başbakanımız Tunceli’ye büyük bir öncelik verdiler. Türkiye Cumhuriyeti tarihinde bir ilk oldu, hizmet binaları, derslikler, spor alanları anahtar teslim TOKİ tarafından yapıldı. Maliye Bakanlığı, Bütçe Mali Genel Kontrol Genel Müdürlüğü, TOKİ, YÖK ve üniversite arasında aşağı yukarı 1 yıl süren bir protokol imzalanması işlemleri sürdü. Çok şükür TOKİ 17 Ocak 2012 tarihinde temel attı, 11 Kasım 2013 tarihinde de taşındık. 65 bin m2 kapalı alanımız var. Allaha çok şükür ısınmamız, elektriğimiz, ulaşımımız mükemmel. İlk başlarda bazı sorunlarımız vardı, o her yerde olur.” Durmuş Boztaş, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tunceli (25%).<sup>84</sup> The infrastructure for the TOSB was almost finished in 2001; however, because it did not attract the interest of investors, it was temporarily liquidated on 11 September 2002. In 2010, upon the demand of entrepreneurs for industrial areas, the TOSB was included in the investment program of 2011 by the Ministry of Science, Industry, and Technology. The number of parcels was increased from thirty-six to forty-three due to the demand.<sup>85</sup> In other words, the İsmet İnönü Neighborhood was planned as the industrial zone of Dersim and the TOSB has been materialized by virtue of the normalization process, even if late.

The İsmet İnönü Neighborhood hosts TOKİ houses. TOKİ has constructed mass housing in *Harçık*, an area within the İsmet İnönü Neighborhood, for low-income families. The project consisting of 260 houses was finished and distributed by lot in 2012. Before the construction of those homes there were already 150 houses in the İsmet İnönü Neighborhood.<sup>86</sup> New ones needed to be built in order to meet the need of the urban poor and the need for workers at the TOSB which would soon start production. *Harçık* would be an example for industrial zones located outside of the city center.

All in all, the urban development of Dersim is directly related to political processes such as the creation of a new city center as a precaution against potential insurgents, the emergence of the OHAL regime and increasing military control in the 1990s, the effect of forced migration, and finally, the appearance of non-military institutions that transformed the space in accordance with the new developmentalist approach of the government in the 2000s. Such ruptures have determined the formation and transformation of neighborhoods and changed the composition of their populations over the decades. The ceasefire declared on 1 September 1999, the cancellation of the OHAL, and the appearance of new institutions – especially the university – have enlivened city life and generated a relatively favorable atmosphere for economic development. However, this trend has also engendered spatial segregation based on income status.

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84 <http://www.tunceliosb.org.tr>.

85 Ibid.

86 Mahmut Nizam Özlütaş, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.

#### § 4.4 Spatial Segregation in Dersim

I am university student in Elazığ. I have come to Dersim for summer vacation. In the summer, I also work here in temporary jobs. Now I am working in the distribution of promotional products. I go from door to door to deliver sample packets. I start in the Dağ Neighborhood. In the Dağ Neighborhood, when they see our car, they gaze through the window curiously. They come out to get more free products. However, when I go to Sihenk I have difficulty distributing promotional products. I knock on the doors, but they generally do not open up. They look through the peephole but do not answer.<sup>87</sup>

The development of urban space in the 2000s has entailed an explicit socio-spatial differentiation. Before the expansion of the city towards Elazığ, urban poverty was relatively evenly spread because the population was squeezed into the ancient neighborhoods. Since the beginning of the 2000s, both urban space and the structure of the population changed. These processes are inter-related: spatial segregation reflects existing inequalities while new neighborhoods influence the composition of inhabitants. Neighborhoods and geographic areas allow us to explore the processes through which the composition of the inhabitants has become more conspicuous. Urban development in the 2000s hints at this composition based on social hierarchy and economic status rather than the previous one based on inhabitants' positions vis-à-vis the civil-military dichotomy.

Due to security concerns, the population of military and administrative officials in Dersim is consistently high. Doğan and Tuna argue that the male

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87 “Elazığ’da üniversite öğrencisiyim. Yaz tatili için Dersim’e geldim. Yazın gelmişken burada geçici, küçük işlerde çalışıyorum. Şu an eşantiyon dağıtma işinde çalışıyorum. Kapı kapı dolaşıp promosyon ürünler dağıtıyoruz. Dolaşmaya Dağ Mahallesi’nden başlıyorum. Dağ Mahallesi’ne gittiğimizde bizim arabayı görür görmez mahalleli camlara çıkıp merakla bize bakıyor. Bedava ürünlerden daha fazla alabilmek için sokağa kadar iniyorlar. Fakat Sihenk’e gittiğimde elimdekileri dağıtmakta zorlanıyorum. Kapıları çalıyorum ama genelde açmıyorlar. Delikten bakıyorlar ama açmıyorlar.” Gülşen Kaya, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 15.07.2012.

population of the city (47,290 people, 60% of the total population) is significantly higher than the female population (35,771, 40% of the total population), and the reason for this marked difference is the presence of a large number of police officers and soldiers. Moreover, they highlight that the people registered in Dersim constitute only 75 percent of the city's actual population and 70 percent of the population of the city center.<sup>88</sup>

The substantive presence of military and administrative officials in Dersim can also be observed by investigating social expenditures. According to the regional report of the Union of Southeastern Anatolia Municipalities prepared by Mustafa Sönmez, even in 2012, when the conflict lessened, Dersim ranked first among all the cities of Turkey in terms of its share of security expenditures. The share of Dersim's budget allocated to "public order and safety" was 38 percent, and that to "military expenditures" was 23 percent. That is, 61 percent of the budget of Dersim was allocated to security.<sup>89</sup> Dersim also ranks first in terms of spending per capita for police and military – 4,203 TL per person or six times Turkey's average.<sup>90</sup>

Data on tax revenues collected in the city also supports the presence of a record number of military and administrative officials and public servants living in the city. The ratio of taxes paid to taxes payable reaches 90 percent in Dersim. Even though the amount of tax collected in the city is low, Dersim ranks third in terms of the ratio of tax paid to the tax assessed in 2009. This rate was 91.11 percent in 2009 and 87.3 percent in 2011.<sup>91</sup> The tax paid by wage earners is 66.2 percent of the total income tax and these taxes are deducted at source, meaning that tax avoidance and evasion are difficult.<sup>92</sup> In other words, the high ratio of tax paid to tax assessed in Dersim is related to the presence

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88 Doğan and Tuna.

89 Mustafa Sönmez, *Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi Belediyeler Birliği Bölge Raporu 2013* (Istanbul: Gün, 2013), 45.

90 Ibid., 46. The second city in terms of security spending per capita is Hakkari with 2,227 TL, but this is almost half that of Dersim.

91 *Milliyet*, 04.03.2010 and *Sabah*, 18.01.2012.

92 *Gelir İdaresi Başkanlığı 2012 Yılına Ait Faaliyet Raporu*, <http://www.gib.gov.tr>.

of a great number of wage earners in the city. Given Dersim's chronic unemployment and limited job opportunities are concerned, the majority of wage owners living in the city are clearly public officials.

The numerical superiority of males in the city, significantly high social expenditures, and the high ratio of tax paid to tax assessed show that public officials are a crucial group impacting both the economy and spatial organization of the city. This group is socially, culturally, and economically distinct from other inhabitants of Dersim. The majority of public officials are soldiers living in military garrisons located in different places in the city. Their contact with inhabitants is limited. For example, a police officer I met when I was invited to the Tunceli Police Department, which is guarded by high walls and heavily-armed police, recommended that I see a natural water source near his workplace. I was surprised at his recommendation. This place was at the center of the city and insignificant when compared with the places actually worth seeing in Dersim. It made me think that his "movement area," even outside of working hours, was bordered by unspoken rules. He mentioned the natural attractions of Dersim and implied that he could not see them due to security concerns although he had been living there for years.<sup>93</sup> In other words, even though the city appears to be blockaded by security forces, the lives of these police and soldiers are themselves blockaded. They seem to feel anxious or uncomfortable outside of their barriers; they "feel out of place" in Dersim.

The plans of the city show that military establishments and police stations are many in number and scattered throughout the city. They are located not only at the entry and exit points of the city, but also at its heart. That is to say, these places are embedded throughout the city though they are spatially isolated from the civilian population on account of high security measures. On the other hand, high walls separating domains do not mean that soldiers and police officials do not have contact with the Dersim people. On the contrary, they get in touch as "consumers" because they have a regular income unlike the Dersimlis who struggle with unemployment and are largely dependent on remittances sent by immigrants.

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93 I did not intend to interview police officers for this research, but I encountered them several times. This proves the extent of the area of their activities.

Public servants do not consist of only security personnel. There are many public institutions in the city and each has many elected and appointed employees and officials. Because most are appointed through a central examination called the KPSS (Public Personnel Selection Exam), they come to Dersim from other cities. During the 1990s, public personnel – especially teachers working in Dersim’s schools – were intimidated by the PKK. They were forced to resign or resigned voluntarily due to the absence of security. Many were detained or killed on the grounds that they were “representatives of the Turkish state” and that they “served the assimilation policies of the state.”<sup>94</sup> Apart from Diyarbakır, the largest number of teachers were executed in Dersim.<sup>95</sup> In other words, Dersim in the 1990s was a place that public officials did not tend to settle if they were not fulfilling a compulsory service. However, since the declaration of the ceasefire in 1999, this situation has gradually changed even though many events in the 2000s also increased tensions. Nowadays, the most advantaged group in Dersim apart from security personnel is public officials.

The expansion of the city towards Elazığ coincided with the foundation of new institutions such as Tunceli University, the Munzur Educational Establishments supported by the Gülen community, the Cemevi (the gathering and worshipping place for the Alevi people), and the Fırat Development Agency (Fırat Kalkınma Ajansı, FKA). The number of officials living in the city increased in this new atmosphere, ensuring their relatively safe conditions. The foundation of new institutions supported this trend. Thus, from the beginning of the 2000s, the impact of public officials who have economic power but different social-cultural characteristics began to become apparent in the city. The population structure of the city and the development of urban space were largely influenced by the foundation of new institutions, especially the university, and the arrival of “foreigners.”

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94 In the issues of the journal *Serxwebûn* from the years 1993-1994, there are many news items about teachers detained or killed.

95 For a complete list of teachers killed in Dersim, see <http://www.meb.gov.tr/belirligunler/sehitogretmenler>. There is a memorial for these teachers in the schoolyard of the Tunceli Anatolian Teacher High School. It consists of a list of these teachers’ names inscribed on a bust designed to evoke memories of the 1990s.

Gazik is the biggest neighborhood in terms of the number of houses and households.<sup>96</sup> Sihenk, Ali Baba, Moğultay, Yenimahalle, and Esentepe follow it respectively in terms of population. The most underpopulated neighborhoods are İsmet İnönü and Türüşmek – new ones which are in the process of development.<sup>97</sup> Sihenk is the largest in terms of land zoned for housing.<sup>98</sup> The municipality intends Sihenk to be a planned, modern, residential area and is prompting people to settle there. Because newer and more suitable dwellings are constructed here, outsiders coming to the city generally prefer Sihenk, particularly since almost all the buildings of government agencies have been moved there. As a planned neighborhood, Sihenk responds to the requirements of a group with a regular income. Amenities include parking places and shopping centers and the municipality has planned trade areas along the main road dividing the neighborhood in two, as well.

In order to comprehend the socioeconomic profiles of Dersim's neighborhoods, one can look to research undertaken by the municipality. The Dersim Municipality conducted a questionnaire in 2010 in eight neighborhoods of the city and the resulting report was titled the *Investigation of the Social and Economic Structure of Tunceli*.<sup>99</sup> Albeit methodologically weak, this research based on systematic sampling supports the claim that spatial segregation was related to the processes by which the city expanded and increasing influence of outsiders. It includes demographic data about age, gender distribution, educational background, marital status, employment situation, access to social security, housing conditions, total monthly income, number of children, patterns of property ownership, and average rents, classifying inhabitants according to the neighborhood. Moreover, residents were questioned about migration processes and social problems with which they are confronted. According to the data I received from the Dersim Municipality, the average monthly household income for the various neighborhoods of the city is as follows:

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96 Akın, 54.

97 Umut Kork, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 15.07.2012.

98 Akın, 54.

99 *Tunceli Belediyesi Tunceli Sosyal ve Ekonomik Yapı Araştırması* (unpublished report), (March 2010). Members of 943 households were interviewed for this research.

Table 4.2 Average Monthly Household Income in Dersim by Neighborhood

	0-500 TL	501-1000 TL	1001-1500 TL	1501-2000 TL	2001+TL
Sihenk	%9,1	%42	%20,8	%12,6	%15,6
Gazik	%24,5	%48,6	%16	%7,5	%3,4
Moğultay	%8,4	%33,6	%29	%13,1	%15,9
İsmet İnönü	%26,5	%55,1	%14,3	%2	%2
Ali Baba	%20	%55,8	%20	%2,1	%2,2
Yenimahalle	%31,9	%45,1	%9,9	%11	%2,2
Esentepe	%29,7	%50,5	%10,9	%7,9	%1
Türüşmek	%40	%50	%10	-	-

SOURCE: Dersim Municipality

Table 4.2 confirms that the poorest of the city's dwellers live in ancient neighborhoods which are known collectively as Dağ Neighborhood (Ali Baba, Yenimahalle, and Esentepe) and Gazik. As mentioned, these neighborhoods developed in the 1990s due to forced migration; therefore, they generally consist of lower-income inhabitants. The table reflects that even in 2010, lower-income residents still live in slum-type settlements under the threat of land and rockslides. Which is to say, urban poverty deriving from war and deportation became entrenched in these neighborhoods.

Apart from these, the table shows that İsmet İnönü Neighborhood, one of the newest, also accommodates some of the poorest residents of the city. The high ratio of its population living on less than 1001 TL a month ensues from the presence of TOKİ houses located there. The majority of the population living in İnönü Neighborhood resides in this housing estate built for lower-income inhabitants. Because it is far from the center and public transportation to it is insufficient, the access of the inhabitants to the center is limited. A similar situation is valid for Türüşmek, as well. However, the data about Türüşmek is more striking. Given that Türüşmek was until recently a village, poverty would be expected. After the establishment of the university campus, inhabitants possessing land or property get wealth.

According to the research, two neighborhoods – Moğultay and Sihenk – are explicitly different from the others. The ratio of households living on less than 1001 TL per month is fewer. Moreover, the ratios of households earning

more than 1500 TL per month are almost equal (28,2 percent in Sihenk and 29 percent in Moğultay) and are significantly higher than those of other neighborhoods. Although these ratios demonstrate that Dersim on the whole is among the poorest cities in the country, middle-income families of the city clearly prefer to settle in certain neighborhoods.

Although the city has grown significantly and important public buildings have been moved to Sihenk, the Moğultay Neighborhood is still the core of the city. Many supermarkets, shops, and restaurants have been opened in recent years in Sihenk; however, bank branches, the municipality, workplaces, law offices, and the offices of political parties, associations, and organizations are in the Moğultay Neighborhood. Social and cultural activities take place there. Important squares and arenas of political deliberation and participation are there, too. Demonstrations, press statements, and meetings, which are daily social routines for the Dersim community and an inseparable part of everyday life in the city, occur in Moğultay. Because of this social liveliness, the neighborhood maintains its high population.

Apart from public officials with their regular incomes, another group of “foreigners” is students who came to Dersim after the foundation of the university. By 2014, Tunceli University had 6,500 students<sup>100</sup> and a majority was from Kurdish cities such as Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Şırnak, Urfa, Mardin, and Batman.<sup>101</sup> The arrival of students had both socioeconomic and political outcomes that I continue to discuss below.

As mentioned previously, rents have risen drastically with the increased demand for housing. Only two dormitories were founded in the city by the General Directorate of Higher Education Credit and Hostels Institution (YURTKUR) – in Gazik and Sihenk. The dormitory in Sihenk is mixed-gender and hosts more than 800 students. The other is especially for male students and only 250 students can stay there. YURTKUR has just finished the construction of a new dormitory in Sihenk but it has not yet been put in service.<sup>102</sup>

The housing deficit and insufficient number of beds to meet demand have triggered the emergence of private dormitories. Islamic communities such as

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100 Durmuş Boztuğ, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

101 A. Y. (university student), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 15.07.2012.

102 E. G. (university student), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 03.03.2014.

the Gülen community and a group known as *Süleymancılar* have made use of the situation: two private dormitories founded in Sihenk belong to these Islamic communities, and students who come from low-income families are obliged to stay in these inexpensive accommodations.<sup>103</sup> These dormitories are allocated for only male students. Islamic communities also rent private houses for female students in Sihenk, Gazik, and Moğultay.<sup>104</sup> There are more than fifty houses financed and run by the Gülen community in Dersim. These dormitories and houses are crucial for the organization of these Islamic groups which have no opportunity to muster support in the city through Islamist ideological discourse and dare not openly engage in political activity. The students whom I interviewed claimed that there are no signs on the outsides of these dormitory buildings.

Students who do neither live in the dormitories of YURTKUR nor those of the Islamic communities rent apartments. They generally rent in Sihenk because it is close to the university and it is easier to find an apartment there. When the campus moved to Türüşmek and the village was annexed to the municipality, new buildings were built to accommodate newcomers and create rental opportunities. Eylem Külahçı, who resides in an apartment, complains that homeowners generally do not want to rent their apartments to students and if they do, they demand higher rents. She says that in general, four to eight students share a house to reduce the cost, and rents in Sihenk are between 500 TL and 800 TL.<sup>105</sup>

The university student population of 6,500 has had a significant impact on the city since the foundation of the university. Because most live in Sihenk, the neighborhood has been reshaped according to their demands. Unlike public officials with their more sophisticated consumption patterns, most students at Tunceli University subsist below the poverty line.<sup>106</sup> For example, a faculty

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103 Eylem Külahçı (university student), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 01.03.2014.

104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 Some students work in large cities to earn enough to live on. Strikingly, one of the ten workers who died in an elevator accident that occurred at the construction site of the Torunlar Center at 6 September 2014, Hıdır Ali Genç, was a student of Tunceli University. Milliyet, 07.09.2014.

member pointed out that he had prepared a course syllabus and advised students to buy the assigned books and readings from the copy center; however, students could not afford to do so.<sup>107</sup> Another instructor who came to Dersim from Istanbul describes the poverty of the students as follows: “Their clothes, their image do not resemble the university students of Istanbul. Rather, these poor students remind me of the youth of shantytowns in Istanbul.”<sup>108</sup>

Students are not only “consumers.” Some work at cafes and restaurants even in the summer when most return home. Like all new universities founded in the last decade, Tunceli University accepts students with lower scores on the Transition to Higher Education Examination (Yükseköğretime Geçiş Sınavı, YGS). The instructors emphasize that youth living in Kurdish cities generally prefer to study in neighboring cities because in larger cities the cost of living is too high. Indeed, socioeconomic status and access to resources are crucial factors that influence the academic achievement of high school students. The socioeconomic inequality between the east and west in Turkey is reflected in student achievement; therefore, the majority of students in the universities established in eastern cities are poor and ineffective.

Student settlement in Dersim has not created spatial segregation based on class differences. They share similar economic conditions to the Dersim people, although their consumption habits may differ. However, the coming of students to the city triggered conflicts based on social, cultural, and political differences which are revealed in urban space. The Dersimlis who reside around the dormitories and student houses grumble about the students and their lifestyles, which they regard as a threat to “Dersim culture.” As the city and especially Sihenk become a “student center” day by day, Dersimlis, who perceive their culture as substance whose existence is dependent on no other thing, are concerned about the corruption of their values implicit in space.

At first glance, the discord between Dersimlis and students seems to be a conflict between generations which can be seen in almost all small cities where universities were founded. What is interesting in the case of Dersim is that

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107 A. K., interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 02.03.2013.

108 “Üst başları, tarzları İstanbul’daki üniversite gençliğine benzemiyor. Bu yoksul öğrenciler bana daha çok İstanbul’un varoş gençliğini anımsatıyor.” K. G., interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 10.10.2011.

these young outsiders who comprise a considerable population in comparison to the present urban population of the city are generally Sunni Kurds, and most support the Kurdish movement. In other words, because the students are large in number and almost homogenous in terms of religion, language, and political engagement, they are not mere consumers contributing to the city's economy, but rather social and political actors able to upset the balance of the city.

#### § 4.5 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I scrutinize the development of Dersim's neighborhoods in parallel with crucial political and social ruptures. From the beginning of the republic, the state has intervened in both natural and urban spaces and proved its capacity to access everywhere. The 1937-38 events, forced migration in the 1990s, the establishment of the OHAL regime, and its rescission triggered spatial changes in Dersim.

Especially during the OHAL period, inhabitants suffered the intense oppression of the state. The AKP government, on the other hand, diminished the use of force and sought to win Dersimlis' consent by incorporating them into the capital accumulation process to an extent. State control over the timing and spacing of human activities were fulfilled by civil institutions and with the help of new surveillance technologies. In other words, urban spaces, which reflect the dominant mode of production and which are developed by a knowledge serving as the proxy of the state, are still being produced and controlled.

From the beginning of the 2000s, the city has been reorganized in line with the development policies of the AKP regime based on the foundation of a university in every city, tourism, building trade, and the commercialization of natural resources. This chapter focuses on the spatial transformation of the city since 1980s and the change of the population structure due to the foundation of the university. The development strategy of the state based on the foundation of the university and the shaping of space in accordance with this target has entailed a demographic change with both political and social implications.

Lastly, university students are not the only group contributing to the expansion of the city. The growing building trade has conducted to the temporary migration of construction workers from neighboring cities. Most of these come from Diyarbakır where unemployment is high. Their number is insignificant; however, they have become a significant part of the stories about the “new Dersim.” According to one narrative, these workers do not accept to eat “from the hands of” Dersimlis because this is *haram* (forbidden by religion). I do not know if this story is true; however, its frequency hints at the vitality of the Sunni-Alevi conflict that recurred with the spatial expansion of the 2000s.

Based on city plans and maps, this chapter shows historically how the city has been planned and how it has expanded in parallel with the Dersim policies of various governments. In this way, the transition from military tutelage to civil-society-based mechanisms of governance led by state institutions is introduced. As far as urban planning practices are concerned, the basic motivation of the state for changing Dersim’s natural and urban spaces up until the 2000s was clearly concern about security. As can be seen in the maps, the city has been reshaped since the 2000s. Some military installations and public buildings have been moved to a new neighborhood established on the road heading towards Elazığ. The city’s development patterns reveal that the new hegemony is organizing urban development not only with regard to security concerns but also the increase and mobility of capital. In the following chapter, I discuss through which spatial and economic strategies the state has intervened in space.

## Spatial Strategies for Dersim

In the previous chapter, I investigated the urban development of Dersim from the 1930s to the 2010s. I described how urban space was transformed and new neighborhoods appeared in the course of time. In the following chapters, I scrutinize improvements to the urban design of Dersim by both local actors and the state. I claim that all have sought to frame or reappropriate space in tandem with their political, economic, and ideological perspectives, cultural codes, and historical references. In this context, space is examined as a realm of conflict where the central state and the local confront each other.

The attempts to change the natural and social spaces of the province are not merely “urban policy;” they are the strategies of competing actors in the city. In following chapters, I focus on the spatial policies of each of these actors in order to depict Dersim’s public sphere. These policies differ from each other. In this chapter, I first present the actors, their historical roots, and their contemporary influence on Dersim communities. Thereafter, I investigate by which mechanisms the AKP has sought to transform the urban space of Dersim. These mechanisms can be discussed under two categories. The first consists of institutions and projects structured or invented to directly control and reshape urban space in Dersim. The second are those founded parallel with the place-specific developmental strategies of the AKP government which include establishing university in every city and reviving local economies

through local development agencies. The impact of the aforementioned mechanisms on urban transformation derives from spatialized politics appearing in accordance with the relativization of scale. The latter are examined in chapter 6.

The government's spatial strategies and economy policies regulating urban development and urban design have strong institutional ties and entail a legal infrastructure. Recently established state agencies control and standardize socio-spatial and economic transformations. On the other hand, strategies developed by other actors are reactive, symbolic, and nostalgic. These consist of a resistance based on creating counter-spaces against the expansion of the state. I discuss them in chapter 7.

### § 5.1 The Actors: The Pro-Kurdish Party, Socialists, the CHP, and the State

Dersim, known as the “stronghold of the left,” accommodates almost the entire spectrum of leftist and socialist approaches. Both legal and illegal leftist and socialist groups and parties have contributed to shaping not only the political life of the city but also its urban areas as a representation of interwoven conflicts. Before scrutinizing through which instruments and institutions the state and other actors have attempted to transform the people and the space, I first introduce the political actors of the city. In chapter 2, I describe in detail the historical references of the identities adopted by Dersimlis. The political parties and movements now embraced by the Dersim community tend to differentiate it from others on the basis of distinct sociocultural characteristics – mobilizing around them and using them for political purposes. What are the powers of the local, regional groups, and government in Dersim? The constitutional referendum of 2010 and general and local elections in the 2000s are analyzed in order to interpret the influence of these actors in everyday life and politics.

From the beginning of the republic to present, the CHP has been the most successful party in Dersim as far as parliamentary elections are concerned.<sup>1</sup> The city was also long governed by the CHP at the local level. Since the middle of the 1990s, the Kurdish national movement has become a considerable power in the region. Since 2004, the Dersim people have elected pro-Kurdish candidates in local elections. However, unlike other cities of Kurdistan, the percentage of votes received by Kurdish parties in Dersim is not too high.<sup>2</sup> This is because of the presence of a strong socialist and Maoist block, continuing support for the CHP, and the ceaseless effort of government powers to win the city.

In Dersim, both the socialist and the Kurdish movement have been nourished by deep historical roots;<sup>3</sup> therefore, the impact of these movements cannot be reduced to election results. Nonetheless, they have participated intensively in local elections in the last decade. Their attempts to form electoral alliances, their conflicts with each other, and their discourses provide insight into the power balance in Dersim.<sup>4</sup>

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- 1 For a list of all deputies of the province since the beginning of the Republic of Turkey, see the subchapter “Administrative Structure.”
  - 2 Democratic Society Party (2005-2009); Peace and Democracy Party (from 2008 to the present)
  - 3 See the chapter on the construction of identity in Dersim.
  - 4 In 2004, a coalition called the Democratic Union of Forces (Demokratik Güçbirliği) was formed by social democratic, socialist, and pro-Kurdish parties for local elections. The coalition participated in the elections under the umbrella of the Social Democratic People’s Party (SHP) established in 2002 by Murat Karayalçın. However, this project was defeated. The union managed to win only five cities, thirty-three districts, and thirty-one subdistricts (belde). Dersim was one of these five cities. The popular socialist-Maoist organization supported by a considerable number of Dersim people – the Democratic Rights Federation (DHF, known as the Democratic Rights Platform, DHP, before 2008) which took İbrahim Kaypakkaya as inspiration – challenged the decision to participate in the elections under the umbrella of the SHP. It nominated another candidate (Haydar Beltan) but was not successful. The Dersim candidate of the Democratic Union of Forces, Songül Erol Abdil, was elected mayor with 3,812 votes. The number of registered voters was 16,803, and the number of actual voters was 10,959. (For the central district, the voter turnout was 65 percent. *TC Başbakanlık Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü, Mahalli İdareler Seçimi 28 Mart 2004* (Ankara: Devlet İstatistik Enstitüsü Matbaası, 2005), 360. She became the only woman mayor of any city in Turkey and governed the city

Moreover, the constitutional referendum of 2010 and the general election of 2011 show the influence of the CHP in the city. Although the pro-Kurdish party succeeded in local elections, the CHP was still preferred in Dersim in the general elections. Lastly, the sphere of influence of the government is discussed. I argue that the government seeks to reach the Dersim people through its civil and commercial channels led by Sunni-Islamic communities rather than the activities of the party itself.

The candidate of the pro-Kurdish party in the 2009 local elections, Edibe Şahin, won the mayoral seat by a narrow margin, reflecting that the Kurdish movement and its legal form have a strong rival in Dersim – the socialist, Maoist block – which is competitive in elections. Both of these political actors draw their strength from illegal armed organizations, the PKK and the MKP (Maoist Communist Party). Although the armed force of the latter is limited compared to the former, it has a great impact on inhabitants as mentioned in detail in previous chapters.

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from 2004 to 2009. This was the first time a Kurdish municipality governed Dersim. Some could not find what they expected. In 2009, the DHF, criticized Abdil and the practices of the pro-Kurdish party of the period at the municipal level, deciding to take part in local elections with a more powerful candidate, Murat Kur. The organization participated in the elections under the platform of the Dersim Democratic People Solidarity (Dersim Demokratik Halk Dayanışması). Indeed, until recently, the DHF had boycotted elections due to its stance against parliamentarism and the electoral system; however, after 2004 it participated in local elections to consolidate its supporters while the Kurdish movement extended its sphere of influence. Hereby, the local elections in 2009 were characterized by a fierce battle between the pro-Kurdish party of the period, the Democratic Society Party (2005-2009), and the DHF. The results of the elections were as follows: The number of registered voters for the central district was 17,415; voter turnout was 80 percent: the Democratic Society Party (Demokratik Toplum Partisi) won 4,327 votes (32%); the Dersim Democratic People Solidarity (Dersim Demokratik Halk Dayanışması) won 3,364 votes (25%); the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) won 2,908 votes (21.4%); the Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) won 2,024 votes (15%); and the Independent Turkey Party (Bağımsız Türkiye Partisi) won 442 votes (3%). In fact, the Independent Turkey Party (BTP) had no influence in Dersim. Indigenous people say that these votes were made by mistake due to a resemblance among party names. The name "BTP" resembles both the "DTP" and the "independent candidate." (Murat Kur, the candidate for the DDHD, participated in the elections as "independent.")

The results of 2009 elections demonstrated that the Kurdish movement needed to change its Dersim policy and embrace Alevis and socialists who largely voted for other parties. Many Dersimlis criticized the Kurdish movement for attempting to Kurdify the province. It was understood by the movement that the insistence on the “Kurdishness” of the Dersimlis polarizes the city. The distinctiveness of the city needed to be accepted in the new era.<sup>5</sup>

The two rivals of the DTP are the AKP and the CHP. The interviewees generally argued that the high percentage of votes for AKP in the 2009 local elections was artificial. It may have arisen from an aid campaign conducted by the Tunceli governorship shortly before the elections in which appliances and furniture were distributed to 3,500 families.<sup>6</sup> The campaign was widely criticized and perceived as bribe for the people’s vote. It became subject to investigation following the objection of the Supreme Committee of Elections (Yüksek Seçim Kurulu).<sup>7</sup>

Since 2009, political developments affecting the entire country and the demographic transformation of Dersim changed this table drastically. First of all, the peace process rendered the pro-Kurdish party (its name would become the Peace and Democracy Party, BDP) the most crucial actor in negotiation with the government. Second, a Dersim-originated person, Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, was elected chairperson of the CHP on 22 May 2010. This contingency brought success to the CHP. The impact of Kılıçdaroğlu’s leadership on the rise of the CHP in Dersim is observed in the constitutional referendum held on 12 September 2010 and in the general elections of 2011.

The constitutional referendum on several changes to the constitution triggered sharp political polarization throughout the country. The conflict between the new hegemony and those worried about increasing the extent of government authority crystallized into a struggle between two camps: the “yes” camp led by the AKP and the “no” camp led by the CHP. Meanwhile the pro-Kurdish party declared that it would boycott the referendum on the

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5 For detailed information about the change in the Dersim policy of the Kurdish movement, see the subchapter on Kurdish identity in Dersim.

6 *Radikal*, 06.02.2009.

7 *Hürriyet*, 04.09.2009.

grounds that it failed to address their demands for greater cultural and political autonomy. The Democratic Rights Federation (Demokratik Haklar Federasyonu, DHF) also indicated that their organization would boycott the referendum because they believe that the reforms nearly reproduced the current system.<sup>8</sup>

The majority in Turkey supported the constitutional amendments: 58 percent voted “yes.” The voter turnout was 74 percent. Dersim bucked the trend once again: the highest ratio of “no” votes (81%) came from Dersim. Moreover, the voter turnout of Dersim was not as low as other eastern cities (67%).<sup>9</sup> That is to say, the Dersim people did not abide by the boycotts; their reactive stance against the AKP and its Sunni-Islamic policies outweighed loyalty to Kurdish and socialist movements.

The CHP exceeded again in the general elections of 2011. Unlike in local elections, inhabitants from all districts vote in general elections. For example, in the district where Kılıçdaroğlu was born, Nazımiye, the vote for the CHP reached 71.5 percent. The CHP gained two seats in parliament.<sup>10</sup>

The impact of Kılıçdaroğlu on the rise of the CHP in Dersim can be understood by examining the results of the 2002 and 2007 general elections. In 2002, it received only 24.6 percent of the vote. This ratio decreased to 16.6 percent in 2007<sup>11</sup> when pro-Kurdish politicians first attempted to enter parliament as independent candidates.

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8 Ozan Doğan, interview by the author, Istanbul, Turkey, 14.07.2010.

9 <https://sonuc.ysk.gov.tr>. The boycott campaign succeeded in many cities. Voter turnouts were as follows: 35% in Diyarbakır, 22% in Şırnak, 44% in Van, 41% in Batman, 9% in Hakkari, 56% in Ağrı, 43% in Mardin, 51% in Siirt, 51% in Iğdır, 54% in Muş.

10 The number of registered voters was 57,593. The number of total votes was 47,191. The voter turnout was 82%.

11 *Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, Milletvekili Genel Seçimi İl ve İlçe Sonuçları 2011, 2007, 2002, 1999, 1995, 1991* (Ankara: Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu Matbaası, 2012), 142.

Table 5.1 Results of the General Election 2011 for the Province of Dersim

Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi)	26,703 votes	56.6%
Independent Candidate of the Pro-Kurdish Party (Ferhat Tunç)	10,344 votes	22%
Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)	7,309 votes	15.5%

The CHP had a breakthrough in Dersim in 2011; however, the Dersim people have always had a deep sympathy with it. The percentage of votes it wins in Dersim has always disproportionately been higher than its average in the country as a whole. Some liberals have difficulty explaining this sympathy and interpret the tendency as “Stockholm syndrome.”<sup>12</sup> However, it seems that Dersimlis prioritize the protection of their lifestyle, beliefs, and rights. They regard the CHP as the ultimate guarantor of secularism. Indeed, “Sunnification” is an older, more crucial threat than the Dersim policies of the single party regime.

Political Islam and the National Vision were never able to succeed in Dersim. The AKP earned the support of some Dersimlis on account of its policy of opening up democracy; however, the government's pro-Sunni foreign policies have made it difficult for the AKP in Dersim. Alevi dissatisfied with the government's approach to the crisis in Syria, which is based on the framework of the Sunni Islamic Brotherhood, have tended to move away from the AKP. In fact, a mutual relationship between the foreign and domestic policies of the government has been clear for several years. The Alevi opening, which started in November 2008, has been set aside parallel to the transformation of the Middle East – especially the increasing importance of the Kurdish movement as an international actor and the rise of Salafism in neighboring countries. Inclusive discourse has been replaced by a polarized one.

12 Baskın Oran, a liberal academic, made the opening speech of a symposium organized by the Tunceli University on 4 October 2010. He claimed that the Dersim people suffer from Stockholm syndrome because they support a party responsible for the Dersim Massacre.

The local elections of 2014 demonstrated the fade of the AKP's Alevi opening in tandem with a new political conjuncture. In contrast to the 2009 elections, the AKP set its target of being the winning party in Dersim in the background. Indeed, the polemic of the Dersim Massacre, which started with a speech by Onur Öymen on 10 November 2009<sup>13</sup> and the unofficial apology of the president, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan,<sup>14</sup> increased the popularity of the AKP. However, unlike in the local elections of 2009, the party made do with nominating a candidate and participating symbolically in the 2014 elections.

Changes in urban space were observable. The AKP was almost invisible in Dersim in the election period. For example, it did not even use billboard advertising. This can be interpreted as a part of the peace process to an extent:<sup>15</sup> because the number of voters for the AKP is generally low in the city, the party may have preferred a pro-Kurdish municipality open to dialog instead of one of the CHP or of socialists. When a Dersim-born deputy assumed the chairmanship of the main opposition party (the CHP), the AKP was content to discredit its long-standing rival by tolerating the rise of the BDP.

As previously highlighted, Sunnification is seen as a crucial threat in the Dersim community. However, the discourse of the Kurdish movement tends to embrace Sunni Islamic values in order to win the support of Kurds who previously voted for the AKP. For this reason, the 21 March 2013 Newroz letter by Öcalan emphasizing the "historical agreement of fraternity and solidarity under the flag of Islam" disappointed and annoyed Alevis. Some supposed that the proclamation of an Islamic union by Öcalan would decrease the vote of the BDP in Dersim; however, the demographic changes accompanying the

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13 CHP deputy Onur Öymen gave the example of the Dersim operation to express his opinion about fighting terrorism. He said: "Didn't mothers also cry at the time of the Sheikh Said Rebellion? Didn't mothers also cry at the time of the Dersim Rebellion?" His remarks supporting bloody military operations were criticized by both Dersimlis and the AKP. More importantly, the city and the massacre became common issues of everyday politics.

14 *Milliyet*, 23.11.2011.

15 The conflict between the AKP and the Gülen community left its mark on the 2014 local election; however, I leave this conflict out of the analyses of the dissertation. During the electoral period, the Gülen community withdrew its support for the AKP. According to the supporters of the pro-Kurdish party, the Gülen community in Dersim voted for the CHP.

foundation of the university balanced the negative reaction directed towards the Kurdish party.<sup>16</sup>

According to the interviewees, the CHP and the DDHD receive their votes from the same base in Dersim. This base consists of socialists aiming to establish a new type of local government based on “people’s assemblies” and Alevis annoyed with the “Kurdification” of Dersim by the Kurdish movement (see figure 5.1). For example, the CHP candidate in the 2014 elections admitted that he voted for the candidate of the DDHD in 2009.<sup>17</sup> During their election campaigns both the CHP and the DDHD highlighted the “uniqueness” of Dersim.

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16 The number of registered voters and the voter turnout were higher in the local elections of 2014. According to the report of the Supreme Committee of Elections, the number of registered voters was 21,140 and the voter turnout was 83% for the central district. The BDP won the mayoral seat by a landslide. Both its total votes and its percentage increased by comparison with the previous elections. The Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi) won 7.244 votes (42.4%); the Dersim Democratic People Solidarity (Dersim Demokratik Halk Dayanışması) won 2.290 votes (13.4%); the Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi) won 1.592 votes (9.3%); the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi) won 5.258 votes (31%); and the Independent Turkey Party (Bağımsız Türkiye Partisi) won 238 votes (1.4%).

17 Hızır Bahtiyar Aytaç, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 28.02.2014.



Figure 5.1 From the Election Campaign of the DDHD

The CHP brings the values associated with Alevism to the fore in Dersim. For example, one of the slogans the party used derives from the cult of *Hızır*. According to legend, *Hızır* is the last-minute rescuer from disaster. The name of the candidate of the CHP was also *Hızır*, and this coincidence was used in the campaign (see figure 5.2). Alevism was foregrounded in the campaign of the DDHD, too. The candidate for the DDHD, Ali Tacar, indicated that *Kızılbaşlık* is the most inclusive identity for the Dersim people:

[Dersim's] past is full of [cultural] richness. The society has lived with a unique belief system since the Ottoman era. It has distinctive features. The *Kızılbaş* belief system is dominant here. One can define oneself as Kurd or Zaza, but everybody in Dersim defines themselves as *Kızılbaş*.<sup>18</sup>

18 “Geçmişine bakılırsa zenginliklerle doludur. Osmanlı’dan günümüze ayrı bir inanç, ayrı bir sistem içerisinde yaşamış toplumun kendine has özellikler taşıdığı görülür. *Kızılbaş* inancı burada dominant bir durumdadır. Kim kendini Kürt, Zaza olarak ifade ederse etsin *Kızılbaş* dendiğinde herkes kendini orada ifade edebiliyor.” Ali Tacar, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 27.02.2014.



Figure 5.2 From the Election Campaign of the CHP

In some respects, the emphasis of the BDP's rivals on the "distinctiveness" of Dersim's culture and society can be interpreted as an attempt to sever the city from the geography under the influence of the Kurdish movement. The Kurdish movement – which had evaluated Dersim from a Kurdish nationalist perspective and insisted on the Kurdishness of the city – started to pay attention to the local. Its strict policies started to change in 2010 with the rise of critical approaches and the "radical democracy" perspective within the BDP. In this way, the "distinctiveness" of the city started to be recognized and articulated by the BDP, as well. The BDP considered the criticism and started to produce special policies for Dersim; thus, it increased its share of the vote. However, behavioral change is not the only explanation for the rise of its vote. The presence of university students determined the destiny of elections.

The majority of university students are from Kurdish cities and support pro-Kurdish parties and organizations. The number of students is high enough to change election results because the permanent city population is low; however, no one was sure how many students would go to polls. Some

interviewees declared that when they came to the city, the municipality recommended them to officially change place of residence in order to vote in Dersim. Many acted accordingly and were registered in Dersim.

On the eve of the local elections of 2014, the political atmosphere of the city was ambiguous. The BDP and the DDHD negotiated for collaboration to prevent the rise of the CHP; however, the central administration of the BDP decided not to ally with the DDHD in the elections. Thus, the BDP and the DDHD offered up their own separate candidates.<sup>19</sup> The BDP was aware that in the absence of a DDHD candidate, people dissatisfied with the pro-Kurdish municipality would vote for the CHP; therefore, the participation of the DDHD in the elections favored the BDP. In addition, the new candidate of the DDHD was less influential than the one nominated in 2009, and his chances of winning were limited.

The BDP conducted detailed analyses of the tactics and methods to apply during the election campaign. However, the calculations and estimations were essentially based on the vote of the university students. Students were clearly a considerable group in the city. In comparison to voters for the CHP, which consisted of an elderly population, those of the BDP were young and dynamic. It is possible to predict that this group will increase its political influence and change the political structure of the city.

Although the socialist, Maoist tradition was not able to show a significant success in the central district after 2009, they are still a crucial actor in the province.<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, the sphere of influence of the pro-Kurdish

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19 Some socialist groups such as the EMEP, ESP, and Partizan supported the BDP. The BDP formed an umbrella organization including these socialist groups for the local elections called the “Dersim Revolutionist Union of Forces (Dersim Devrimci Güç Birliği). In acknowledgment of its support, the EMEP was rewarded with the vice presidency.

20 It won the local elections in two other districts of Dersim in 2014: Ovacık and Mazgirt. Mazgirt had been governed by the DHF since 2009. Hozat was governed from 2009 to 2014 by another mayor of the DHF, but the CHP won the seat in 2014. The most popular development occurred in Ovacık. The candidate of the DHF who took part in the election under the umbrella of the Communist Party of Turkey, Fatih Maçoğlu, was elected as the mayor of Ovacık becoming the country’s “first communist mayor.”

party is limited to the central district, and it has difficulty winning the hearts and minds of the inhabitants of other districts where the population is older.

The AKP seeks to get involved in this picture. The soldiers and police officers – the population of which is quite large – constitute their base in the city; however, as a political actor advocating Sunni-Islamic values, the party fails to contact with Dersimlis and convince them to support it. Before 2009, the party assertively sought to gain control in Dersim through electoral politics. The distribution of appliances before the election undertaken by the governorship affected its image in a negative way. The mayor candidate of the AKP, Cihan Açıkgöz, accepted the blame: “Dersimlis are honorable and proud and they do not sell their votes; therefore, the distribution was a mistake.”<sup>21</sup>

The AKP, which did not hesitate to violate pre-election rules with the distribution of appliances in 2009, has since abandoned competition with the CHP and has organized neither electoral campaigns nor populist social support in Dersim in ensuing years.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps it was supposed that the party no longer had a chance in the face of support for the CHP which started to become popular in Dersim with the “Kılıçdaroğlu effect.” Second, representatives of the AKP tend to charge the Dersimlis with not appreciating the AKP’s achievements.<sup>23</sup> They reproach the people for prejudging the AKP, disregarding the development of the city, and “behaving ideologically.” On the other hand, the case of the distribution of appliances demonstrated that the government needed a more sophisticated strategy in order to win the Dersim people.

Indeed, for the state Dersim, has always been an “unconquered summit.” The famous saying of the Dersim people – “You may have journey to Dersim but no victory” – refers to the perpetual failures of governments. They have

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21 *Vatan*, 11.03.2009.

22 This is also related to the transformation of the government’s Alevi policy. Political developments in the Middle East, especially the stance of the government towards Syria, demonstrate that Sunnis are openly preferred. The polarization of Alevis and Sunnis has been sharpened in recent years.

23 Veli Suroğlu (provincial chairman of the AKP in 2010), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 12.10.2010; Sinan Yerlikaya (provincial chairman of the AKP in 2014), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 26.02.2014.

desired to remain apart from the state from centuries both because of suspicion of state authority and because of a culture that glorifies insubordination. The AKP, aware of historical prejudices against rightist parties and organizations, has not been content with electoral processes and the services of its Dersim office. It has preferred to mobilize civil networks rather than rely on more conventional political activities. In this period, Sunni-Islamic communities – especially the Gülen community – played an active role in the construction of mainstream ideology in Dersim.

In following pages, I introduce the strategies of the government with respect to Dersim. I discuss through which ways it tries to win over Dersim, a city whose majority disapproves of it. I argue that the strategies of the government are related to space; they serve to control not only space but also the population.

## § 5.2 Spatial Strategies of the AKP Government in the 2000s: Tunceli Cemevi, Dams and HPPs

In the previous chapter, the urban development of Dersim is evaluated from a historical perspective, and the new era – which began with the rescission of the OHAL which in turn overlapped with AKP's rise to power – is examined in terms of the formation of neighborhoods and new social groups. In this chapter, I focus on the spatial strategies of the AKP directed at transforming the city into a more controllable space. I discuss how natural spaces have been turned into man-made spaces in the course of urbanization and how the AKP has managed this process in accordance with an ideological model which itself stems from a specific set of moral values.

I first examine the Tunceli Cemevi, the construction of which was finished in the second half of the 1990s. Although the Dersim people do not feel the need for a cemevi for worship, it was constructed to meet the needs of increasing trend of urbanization. In the end of the 2000s, the cemevi was restructured to act in the name of the government in Dersim by defining a universal Alevism and frame it in the context of Islam. The institutionalization of Alevism in Dersim goes hand in hand with the policy of the commercialization of natural sources. The HPPs and dams as modern social engineering projects have

sprung up across the province. This chapter also indicates the multidimensional function of dams and HPPs in Dersim by examining these as a counterinsurgency strategy, a component of a regional development strategy, and as a solution for crises of overaccumulation.

I investigate the cemevi and these modernist projects in the same context because these mutually complementary, rationally ordered, and ideologically organized strategies contribute to the hegemony of the government. They all reflect “state space” in Dersim and reproduce the discursive regime of rationality.

### 5.2.1 *From Nature to the Cemevi: The Institutionalization of Alevism in Dersim*

What would remain of the Church if there were no churches?<sup>24</sup>

In a country where Sunni Islam is hegemonic, mosques function as symbolic manifestations of power. The place of worship of Alevis is not recognized by state; indeed, the cemevi can be interpreted as space of a counter-culture or as a counter-space. With the suppression of all dervish orders in 1925 in parallel with the secularist drive of the regime, popular religions went underground. Although some orders had had close relations with the Committee of Union and Progress during the First World War, their closed and secretive culture and the unrestrainable organizational structures of these mystical brotherhoods made them unsustainable under the new regime.<sup>25</sup> After being banned, they continued their activities in secret. In the case of Dersim, the 1937-38 events reinforced mystical features of the forms of worship and belief. The indigenous people argue that ancestors who abandoned their villages in order to save themselves from the military operation lived for a long time in mountains and continued to worship there beyond the control of the state.

Because the cemevi is the place of worship of an oppressed community, its meaning exceeds the boundaries of religion. Throughout the country, cemevis

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24 Ibid.

25 Erik J. Zürcher, *Turkey: A Modern History* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 1998), 192.

are not only the gathering places of Alevi but also serve as the milieu in which counterhegemonic approaches flourish. These places are “undefined” and embrace people who do not belong to that form of Sunni Islam controlled and shaped in accordance with the needs of the regime; therefore, they have been perceived as a threat by the state. Bruinessen argues that when the state relaxed the ban on Alevi associations in 1989, *cemevis* were opened, Alevi communities began to discuss the issues of Alevism, and these developments triggered the emergence of new publications. In other words, an Alevi revival occurred, transforming the character of Alevism: it entailed a “transition from a secret, initiatory, locally anchored and orally transmitted religion, which it had been for centuries, to a public religion with formalised, or at least written, doctrine and ritual.”<sup>26</sup>

This institutionalization (or re-institutionalization) has certainly been a crucial step towards the recognition of Alevism within the law. The founding of *cemevis* required a great struggle. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the construction of *cemevis* has generally been undertaken illegally by Alevi associations and they are presented as “cultural centers” because of their lack of legal status.<sup>27</sup> That the state has rejected the demand for the recognition of *cemevis* as places of worship for years has made their legal status a central issue for Alevi movements. In other words, the policy that has reduced the *cemevi* to a cultural center is perceived by Alevi as the most concrete example of discrimination targeting them. This longstanding discrimination policy of the state for Alevi’s place of worship has rendered *cemevis* counter-spaces.

The construction of *cemevis* is itself a kind of resistance. Moreover, historical events have reinforced the counter-space character of *cemevi*. The funeral ceremonies of leftist activists, guerillas, and political prisoners are generally organized in *cemevis*. The Gazi *Cemevi* was both a gathering place and a symbol of resistance during the Gazi events that occurred in March 1995. Many

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26 Martin van Bruinessen, “Kurds, Turks and the Alevi Revival in Turkey,” *Middle East Research and Information Project (MERIP)* 200 (Summer 1996), 8.

27 Murat Es, “Alevi in *Cemevis*: Religion and Secularism in Turkey,” in *Topographies of Faith: Religion in Urban Spaces*, (eds.) Irene Becci, Marian Burchardt, José Casanova (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 28.

leftist and socialist groups take an active role in these places. This is of course directly related to the fact that Alevi communities are loyal supporters of leftist parties and organizations. The relation between Alevis and leftists and socialists strengthens the image of *cemevis* as the places where people who oppose the state and the regime gather. This view has been frequently expressed even by politicians.<sup>28</sup> Although most Alevis moved away from leftist politics and focused on identity politics after 1980, the relations between the two groups – based on historical roots and mostly on *hemşehrilik* – have continued. These intermingling social ties have produced the *cemevi* as a space unlike other religious spaces.

However, during the “Alevi Opening” started by the AKP government, many Alevi organizations that founded and managed *cemevis* became allies of the state. The most popular is the Cem Foundation (Cem Vakfı), which has developed several projects together with the AKP government such as the joint mosque-*cemevi* project devised by Fethullah Gülen. This project entailed a social complex with both a mosque and *cemevi* in the same place. It was introduced by the state and the Cem Foundation as the spatial manifestation of Sunni-Alevi fraternity; however, it has been widely criticized, and the foundation was accused of assimilation – melting Alevism down within moderate political Islam. Most Alevi communities highlighted that without legal recognition of *cemevis*, “subjoining” it to a mosque would make it an outbuilding of the mosque.<sup>29</sup> This spatial organization would imply that Alevism is a sect of Islam (not a distinct religion), although the sect-religion discussion is still a matter for debate among Alevis. To be more precise, the *cemevi*, which was interpreted as a counter-space above, has been re-institutionalized by the government and some Alevi associations in accordance with the needs of the *de facto* official religion of Turkey.

The example of the joint mosque-*cemevi* project reveals that some counter-spaces reflect existing power relations<sup>30</sup> and do not constitute a challenge

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28 Recently, AKP deputy Mehmet Metiner defined *cemevis* as terror nests. *Yurt*, 08.10.2013.

29 *Alevi Dernekleri: Cami-Cemevi Projesi Asimilasyonun Yeni Bir Yüzüdür*, 05.09.2013, [www.t24.com.tr](http://www.t24.com.tr).

30 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 382.

to the state. They may even contribute to the hegemonic consolidation of a specific ideology. The constructions of mosque-cemevis have not yet been realized;<sup>31</sup> however, the re-institutionalization attempts of the government are not limited to them. In the case of Dersim, the cemevi serves to define a universal Alevism and frame it within the context of Islam.

Dersim Alevism, unlike other Alevisms, is directly related to nature; therefore, it is generally considered deviant and primitive by the state. In this part of the dissertation, I scrutinize the transformation of the places of worship in Dersim in accordance with the government's attempt to institutionalize Alevism. The Tunceli Cemevi, the construction of which was finished in the second half of the 1990s, is scrutinized in terms of its relationship to the Dersim people and the state.

In order to overcome legal obstacles preventing the establishment of *cemevis*, the Alevi people founded associations. In Dersim, the process of establishing a cemevi started with the foundation of the Tunceli Association for the Dissemination and Solidarity of the Culture of Hacı Bektaş-1 Veli (Hacı Bektaş-1 Veli Kültürünü Yayma ve Yardımlaşma Derneği) in 1993-1994.<sup>32</sup> With increasing urbanization, the cemevi has become a requirement for inhabitants. Previously, the people generally attended religious services in the houses of *dedes* or in *ziyarets* (sacred natural spaces). The migration from country to town necessitated gathering places for Alevi people. Kadir Bulut, one of the *dedes* of the Tunceli Cemevi and the director of the Research and Application Center of Alevism at Tunceli University, describes its foundation as follows:

An estate was bought in Gole Çetü with the moral and material support of the people and a contribution by the municipality. Indeed, this [estate] belonged to the municipality. The [cemevi] was constructed here upon the initiative of the mayor. In other cities, mayors do not undertake such initiatives. In municipal plans, there are green spaces

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31 After the July 15th coup attempt, the joint mosque-cemevi projects were abolished with the claim of being the projects of Fethullah Gülen.

32 Kadir Bulut (one of the *dedes* of the Tunceli Cemevi), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 04.07.2012.

[and] areas for mosques, parks, and schools; however, there is no space planned for a *cemevi*. [Tunceli Cemevi] was built upon the initiative of the municipal council. This was made because 90-95 percent of the people – the majority – are Alevis in Tunceli. The rest was done by the administrative body of the association and with the support of the people.<sup>33</sup>

The establishment of the Tunceli Cemevi was well received by the Dersim people. All interviewees from various political positions agreed that founding a cemevi in the city was essential because they were in need of a place to hold funerals. Indeed, the basic function of the cemevi for the Dersim people is for funeral services since they are not in the habit of participating in cem ceremonies. During my visits to the cemevi I attended some cem ceremonies. The weekly ceremony that takes place every Thursday was never crowded. The indifference of Dersimlis to the cemevi's activities has both religious and political reasons. In following pages, I analyze these.

#### 5.2.1.1 Gole Çetu: From a Natural to a Man-made Space

As mentioned before, Gole Çetu is one of the important ziyarets for Dersimlis. The reservoir behind the Uzunçayır Dam, constructed in 1994, began to be filled on 17 August 2009. After the water was retained, a channel of twenty kilometers was flooded.<sup>34</sup> Apart from villages, many ziyarets were doomed to disappear under the water. A representative of the Human Rights Association, the lawyer Barış Yıldırım, filed a complaint on 19 August 2009 about the dam,

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33 “İnsanların maddi ve manevi desteğiyle, belediyenin de katkısıyla Gola Çetu dediğimiz alanda arsa alındı. Burası normalde belediyeye aittir. Belediye başkanının inisiyatifiyle yapılmıştır. Diğer illerde belediyeler böyle bir inisiyatif kullanmıyor. Belediyenin yerleşimlerde yeşil alan projesi varken, cemevi alanı yoktur. Cami alanı vardır, park ve okul alanları vardır. Cemevine ait bir yer ayrılmıyor. Belediye meclisinin inisiyatifiyle yapılmıştır. Tunceli'nin çoğunluğunun yüzde 90-95 alevi olmasından dolayı inisiyatif kullanarak bu alanı vermiştir. Gerisini ise dernek içerisindeki yönetim kurulu ve halkın destekleriyle yapılmıştır.” Kadir Bulut (one of the dedes of the Tunceli Cemevi), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 04.07.2012.

34 *Radikal*, 08.09.2009.

denouncing that places of worship would be destroyed. He argued that this situation was contrary to the freedom of thought and faith, and the offence of damaging a place of worship would be committed.<sup>35</sup> The office of the chief prosecutor of Tunceli opened an investigation in order to determine whether Gole Çetu is a worship place or not and charged a police team with making an examination of the area. The team examined the area on 28 September 2009 and wrote an official report: “From interviews it is understood that the point where the Pülümür and Munzur rivers unite is enshrined according to Alevi customs and belief because Hızır was seen there and Ali passed by there. It is understood that it is a space where people sacrifice animals, make wishes, light candles, and pray. Moreover, it is seen that at the mentioned ziyaret there is no building for worship.”<sup>36</sup> On 11 February 2010, the decision not to take legal action was issued. According to the office of the chief prosecutor, Gole Çetu could not be considered a place of worship because “it is an open space consisting of some trees and rocks and there is no *ibadethane* made by the hand of man and allocated for worship.”<sup>37</sup>

The decision of non-prosecution hints at the approach of the state to the natural places of worship of Alevi. By examining the process of restructuring the Tunceli Cemevi and the destruction of Gole Çetu, I demonstrate how Dersim Alevism has been reshaped spatially. In accordance with the attempt of the state to “define” a single, overarching Alevism, the Tunceli Cemevi has replaced natural sacred spaces. Although the Tunceli Cemevi was founded long before the submersion of Gole Çetu and its construction can be considered a form of resistance because of the legal obstacles, it has served the purposes of both standardizing and depoliticizing Alevism.

The submersion of Gole Çetu is an interesting case because it not only reveals the cultural policies overlapping the Alevi Opening but also the government’s approach of prioritizing economic growth and maximizing the benefits of capital flow. The story of the “relocation” of Gole Çetu demonstrates that the sacredness attributed to a specific place is open for discussion if it belongs

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35 *Radikal*, 22.02.2010.

36 *Ibid.*

37 *Ibid.*

to a non-hegemonic belief system and if its presence conflicts with the economic interests of investors. The submersion and reconstruction of Gole Çetu can also be seen as an example of negotiation among investors, the central administration, and the local government.

Ozan Munzur, a young documentary filmmaker, attempted to shoot a documentary during the submersion of Gole Çetu. The film *Jiare (Ziyaret)* focuses on the last thirteen days of Gole Çetu. The thirteen-minute film displays the anxious wait of elderly people crying for their worship place. The ziyaret completely disappeared under the waters of the reservoir at the end of thirteen days despite the strong resistance of inhabitants. The documentary film finishes with this scene; however, the process that followed the destruction of Gole Çetu is more interesting. Limak Incorporated, the company that had built the Uzunçayır Dam, announced that it would reconstruct the ziyaret in a high, safe area. The company and the governorship collaborated on the “new” Gole Çetu.<sup>38</sup> Not only the ziyaret but also a large park was established by the company as a kind of social responsibility project. The governor at the time, Mustafa Taşkesen, describes the establishment of the new worship place.

It is I who led Limak Incorporated to build the park of Gole Çetu. When I saw the people coming there for worship, I asked the *dedes* if it is alright for them to change the location of Gole Çetu. They saw no harm. They said that it would not matter if it were established in a higher area. I gave instructions to the relevant company to fill the riverside with land. I am satisfied; I am very happy.<sup>39</sup>

The submersion of Gole Çetu was protested by the majority in Dersim. The pro-Kurdish BDP municipality of Dersim also participated in the protests. After the relocation of the ziyaret and the landscaping by Limak Incorporated,

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38 *Tuncelinin Sesi*, 29.03.2011.

39 “Gole Çetu Parkı’nı Limak’a yaptırtan benim. Buraya insanların ibadet etmeye geldiklerini görünce dedelere sordum, buranın yerinin değiştirilmesinin mahsuru var mı diye. Dediler ki mahsuru yok. Bir kat üstte de olur dediler. İlgili firmaya talimat verdim, orayı doldurttum. Bu konuda memnunum, çok sevinçliyim.” Mustafa Taşkesen, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 23.07.2012.

the municipality built part of the environmental design of the park and hung a sign at the entrance. Yusuf Cengiz, the chief of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tunceli, emphasized that the Tunceli governorship did not accept the name “Gole Çetu Parkı” at first, but the municipality insisted on it.<sup>40</sup> The park is one of the largest green space of the city. A corner of the park was designed as a ziyaret. The municipality annexed the area into its sphere of activity and took charge of landscaping, irrigation, and tree and plant upkeep.

In spite of the fact that the new ziyaret and park were built by the dam company, Dersimlis adopted these spaces in a short span of time. Because the stance of the municipality towards the park changed, the “created” worship place gained legitimacy more easily. As far as the high percentage of housing and the lack of green spaces in the city are concerned, a park of 16,500 square meters clearly fulfilled a crucial need. The park has been widely accepted, and both the municipality and the governorship have attempted to take credit. Each seeks to arrogate the establishment for itself and highlights its own contribution to the making of the new Gole Çetu.<sup>41</sup>

The Cemevi’s *dede*, Kadir Bulut, expressed his opinion on Gole Çetu:

The submersion of Gole Çetu is not so important. Frankly, a bit of a populist approach has emerged. Look, this geography as a whole is Gole Çetu. The people were lighting candles there because it was the shallowest point of the river. Then the dam retained water. People struggled with all their might against the dams. Unfortunately, this place has been submerged. Then, thanks to struggles in the democratic sphere, legal means, and the tolerance of the dear governor, a place was formed on the upper side of Gole Çetu. Look, the place [or] space is not so important in the Alevi belief system. However, in the course of history, some spaces, of course, take on specific identities and they must be protected. The disappearance of this identity means the disappearance of the social fabric. Look! The space where two rivers unite, as a whole, was called Gole Çetu ziyaret. People were going under the bridge to light candles. Of course, I am in favor of protecting [Gole

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40 Yusuf Cengiz, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 29.07.2012.

41 *Tuncelinin Sesi*, 29.03.2011.

Çetu] in its original state; however, unfortunately we could not. In addition to it, two or three other ziyaretets were submerged. The company that built the dams is wrong. The general inclination was for the dams to not be built. It was demanded that other methods be used for the production of electricity. It was wished that the natural environment be protected. However, I am opposed to creating the perception that Gole Çetu has been completely submerged and that it has been destroyed. Gole Çetu still exists today. A place was made 100 meters above [its original location]. The people fulfill their religious duties [there].<sup>42</sup>

Bulut's statement is in harmony with state policies attempting to institutionalize (or re-institutionalize) Alevism and with the interpretation of Alevism by the Cem Foundation based on the principle of a single Alevism. Because Bulut defines Alevism as a universal belief system, he does not pay attention

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42 "Gola Çetu'nun sular altında kalması çok da şey değil, biraz popülist bir yaklaşım oldu açıkçası. Bakın şu coğrafyanın hepsi Gola Çetu'dur. Halk yukardan gidip mum yakamadığı için suyun en az olduğu aşağıdaki kısımdan gidip çıra yakıyordu. Sonra orasını baraj tuttu. Barajlara karşı çok mücadele verildi. Ne yazık ki ilk nokta sular altında kaldı. Sonra demokratik anlamda yapılan mücadelelerle, hukuki mücadeleyle ve sayın valinin hoşgörüsüyle Gola Çetu'nun üst tarafı kumlarla doldurularak bir alan oluşturuldu. Bakın Alevi inancında yer-mekân çok önemli değil. Fakat tabi tarihsel süreçte bir kimliği vardır o mekânın ve o kimliğin korunması gerekir. O kimliğin kaybolması toplumun dokusunun kaybolması demektir. Bakın şu alanın hepsine iki suyun birleştiği yere Gola Çetu derlerdi, ziyaret derlerdi. İnsanlar köprü altına gelerek orada mumlarını yakar giderlerdi. Tabi ki ben orijinal yapısının tamamen korunması taraftarıyım ama ne yazık ki onla birlikte şu baraj üstünde 2-3 tane daha ziyaret kaldı sular altında, onları koruyamadık. Baraj projesini yapan şirketin büyük bir eksikliği var. Barajlar konusundaki halkın inisiyatifi barajların yapılmaması yönündeydi. Elektrik üretiminde başka yöntemlerin kullanılması isteniyordu. Doğal yapının korunması isteniyordu. Fakat Gola Çetu tamamen sular altında kaldı ve yok edildi imajının yaratılmasına karşıyım, bugün Gola Çetu hala var. 100 m. üzerinde aynı şekilde bir yer oluşturuldu. İnsanlar inançlarını yerine getiriyorlar." Kadir Bulut (one of the *dedes* of the Tunceli Cemevi), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 04.07.2012.

to the specific spaces of Dersim Alevism. Indeed, there is not a “Dersim Alevism” according to him.<sup>43</sup> In the interview, when I suggested the concept of “Dersim Alevism,” he corrected me. However, from the indifference Dersimlis exhibit towards activities organized by the cemevi, it is clear that the people maintain their traditional worship practices and prefer going to ziyarets rather than the cemevi. The sacred spaces identified with the legends of Dersim are seen as basic houses of worship by the indigenous people.

While there are many *dedes* in the Tunceli Cemevi with varied political viewpoints (for example, one indicated that he is a member of the CHP),<sup>44</sup> the prevailing approach (especially that of the chairman of the board) overlaps with that of the government. The discourse of the cemevi is not independent of the Alevi Opening. The ideological aspect of the institution and its relations with the central government are a second, maybe most considerable reason for the indifference of the Dersim people to the cemevi. In the following section of this chapter, I scrutinize how the state contacts with the Dersim people and how this strategy contributes to spatial changes in the city.

#### 5.2.1.2 The Cemevi as State Space

Elise Massicard points out that culture is the most consolidative item and the lowest common denominator for Alevis in the eyes of Alevi organizations. However, the emphasis on culture entails a degree of neutralization because focusing on folklore leaves the subversive dimensions of Alevism aside and imposes silence.<sup>45</sup> Many organizations hold to culture in order to avoid ethnic, religious, and political categorizations, and they attempt to develop a universal version of Alevism. As Massicard suggests,

any religious interpretation implies adopting a position with regard to the Diyanet and questioning the foundations of the state. Furthermore,

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43 Kadir Bulut (one of the *dedes* of the Tunceli Cemevi), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 04.07.2012.

44 Yılmaz Kılıçoğlu, (one of the *dedes* of the Tunceli Cemevi), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 04.07.2012.

45 Elise Massicard, *The Alevis in Turkey and Europe: Identity and Managing Territorial Diversity* (London; New York: Routledge, 2013), 134

with the rise of the political Islam, the term ‘religion’ (*din*) has acquired derogatory connotations for many Alevis, and many of them distinguish themselves by making Aleviness a more open and less dogmatic phenomenon. Equally, explicitly positioning Alevism within the political sphere results in very strong demands. The involvement in culture only fully makes sense in relation to these alternatives.<sup>46</sup>

The discourse constructed around culture provides both the state and Alevi associations an environment for dialogue and reconciliation. Nevertheless, this “dialogue” does not include the basic demands of the Alevi communities; the agenda is generally restricted to symbolic gestures. This kind of relationship free of “politics” seems preferable for the state. On the other hand, some associations have always insisted on political and religious demands. The state tends to eliminate these groups and has pursued a balanced policy in order to prevent the radicalization of Alevis. Massicard emphasizes that the state has made use of the multi-headedness of Alevi society; therefore, it has not supported the development of a unique representative and has played on divisions in Alevi society. In this way, it has avoided establishing a hierarchy among Alevis.<sup>47</sup> However, some associations are supported more than oppositional associations in recent years. For example, the Cem Foundation was treated by the government and the Gülen community as a crucial ally during the Alevi Opening. In other words, certain foundations funded by the government in the scope of the public interest have become prominent and have attempted to act as the movement’s dominant actors.

The common feature of Alevi associations supported by the state is that they define Alevism as a subgroup of Islam. As Markus Dressler highlights, the AKP government reaffirmed Islam as the framework for the Alevi Opening.<sup>48</sup> The approaches defining Alevism as “an interpretation of Islam” enable the state to refuse the autonomist demands of non-Sunni communities.<sup>49</sup> The

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46 Ibid., 135.

47 Ibid., 140.

48 Markus Dressler, “Making Religion Through Secularist Legal Discourse: The Case of Turkish Alevism,” in *Secularism and Religion-Making*, (eds.) Markus Dressler and Arvind-Pal S. Mandair (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 196.

49 Ibid., 198.

associations defining Alevism under an Islamic reference system – seeking to deprive it of its subversive character and bringing folklore to the fore – have become legitimate and have played a central role in the new era.

As far as their declarations and social activities are concerned, the Tunceli Association for the Dissemination and Solidarity of the Culture of Hacı Bektaş-1 Veli is among associations defining Alevism in parallel with the government. However, their relationship is not only a theoretical consensus. More important is that the *cemevi* acts as a representative of the government by getting involved in the everyday life and political agendas of the city. Returning to the first question, the crucial reason for the indifference of Dersimlis to the *cemevi* is this parallel between the policy of the state with regard to Alevism and the discourses and practices of the *cemevi*. The close relationship of its members with the agents of the central authority has drawn a reaction from inhabitants. The institution has been perceived as one of the strategies of the government to reach and “tame” the Dersim people.

On the other hand, some of the *dedes* of the *cemevi* work in government institutions. For example, the head of the *cemevi* was appointed as director of the Research and Application Center of Alevism at Tunceli University in 2011<sup>50</sup> and became the provincial director of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies in 2012 with the approval of the ministry.<sup>51</sup> He is also member of the development committee of the Fırat Development Agency (FKA). On that matter, the Dersim Branch of the Confederation of Public Workers’ Unions (Kamu Emekçileri Sendikaları Konfederasyonu, KESK) prepared a written statement in February 2012 titled “Irrepressible Rise of a Dede” and criticized him for using his status as a springboard.<sup>52</sup> The new director of the Research and Application Center of Alevism at Tunceli University became another *dede* at the *cemevi*. These networks bring the *cemevi*’s staff into disrepute. Some think that employment relations with state institutions damage the virtue and neutrality that religious officials must possess. On the other hand, the situation displays the close cooperation between the *cemevi* and the university.

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50 *Sabah*, 16.12.2011.

51 *T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı Tunceli İl Müdürlüğü*, <http://www.tunceli.aile.gov.tr>.

52 *Özgür Gündem*, 19.02.2012.

The stance of the cemevi towards public authorities, government policies, and the dissatisfaction arising from the central administration gives an idea about its role in the political life of the city. During a visit of the President of the Republic, Abdullah Gül, displeasure and critique directed at the cemevi deepened. In November 2009, Gül came to the city with Minister of State Faruk Çelik and chair of the Cem Foundation İzzettin Doğan to hold official talks. One of the places he visited was the Tunceli Cemevi. As a friendly gesture to Gül, the cemevi organized a cem ceremony, an event severely criticized by the majority of Dersimlis for disregarding the values and principles of Alevism and reducing the semah ceremony to a spectacle. Cihan Söylemez, lawyer and author of the local newspaper *Tuncelinin Sesi*, emphasized that bodyguards for Gül entered the house of worship with their guns and that a hierarchy based on state protocol was established although all are equal in cem. Moreover, the timing of the ceremony was determined according to the program of the state officials.<sup>53</sup>

A similar event was organized on the occasion of the opening of the academic year for Tunceli University. Minister of State Mehmet Aydın and the governors and rectors of the region participated in the ceremony which was called a “unity cem” (*birlik cemi*).<sup>54</sup> However, the event deepened reactions and reinforced the perception that the cemevi represents the government. Many independent dedes and some NGOs accused the rector and the cemevi of playing politics with cem ceremonies. They argued that these made-to-order (*ısmarlama*) activities are inconsistent with the essence of Alevism.<sup>55</sup> They also emphasized that to invite the ministers of the government that do not recognize the cemevi as place of worship is insincere.<sup>56</sup>

It seems that the cemevi is seeking to contact with the central authority through the cultural values of Alevism. These values are presented as authentic, touristic components of the city. Massicard theorizes this tendency by defining it as “the neutralizing effect of spectacle.”

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53 Cihan Söylemez, *Seyir İçin Olan Cem'ler, Vali Emrinde Dedeler, Bu Yol Nereye Gider Ey Erenler...* 02.12.2010, <http://www.tuncelinin sesi.com>.

54 *Yeni Şafak*, 26.11.2010.

55 *Vatan*, 26.11.2010.

56 *Milliyet*, 26.11.2010.

Folklore is a way of imposing silence and producing a “productive misunderstanding” (Massicard 2003). Cultural markers mean that anybody and everybody is able to attend the transmission of heritage without asking what Aleviness is. This is particularly important in public ceremonies of *cems* or festivals, attended by people who do not know each other and where disagreements could easily break out about the meaning of Aleviness. Music is a way of drowning out alternative voices and debate. The *cem*, the *semah* and the *saz* take on a large number of different interpretations, while at the same time providing a collective space in which differences (in experience, interpretation, belief and ritual practice) may be managed and overcome (Stokes 1996: 198). The staging of Alevi culture would seem to be exempt from ideological combat, conferring an appearance of unity and concord both for the group and for those outside the group. But it is difficult to maintain this silence.<sup>57</sup>

As Massicard points out, the *semah* and the *cem* are the lowest common denominators for both Alevi communities and for Sunnis. The Tunceli Cemevi compromises with the state by bringing culture to forefront and depoliticizing the belief system as a whole. In this way, its performance reduces it to a “spectacle” (*seyirlik*).

On the other hand, state authorities show great interest in the cemevi. This interest is not only related to the Alevi Opening. The cemevi is one of the rare institutions through which the government can communicate with the Dersim people who generally keep their distance from government structures. The AKP cannot attract supporters in the city using conventional methods; instead, it mobilizes civil society. The Gülen and other Islamic communities played an active role in the social construction of the cemevi.<sup>58</sup>

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57 Massicard, 134.

58 The conflict between the AKP and the Gülen community that came to light in 2013 is a milestone for the AKP government; however, I keep this development out of the discussion.

The impact of the Gülen community and others on the cemevi is frequently expressed by the Dersim people in interviews. Especially the representatives of political groups and parties argue that they had sought to be affiliated with the cemevi; however, the administrative body prevented their joining by changing the membership regulations of the association. They indicate that one must be a supporter of the Gülen community or, at least, not opposed to it in order to take part in the cemevi.<sup>59</sup>

The activities of the cemevi reveal its strong ties with Islamic communities. For example, the cemevi organized a wedding ceremony en masse for the low-income couples on 29 June 2012 in cooperation with the Mehir Foundation. Located in Konya, the Mehir Foundation was established in 1996 by a group of businessmen and academics to support young people who plan to marry but lack the financial means to do so.<sup>60</sup> It is affiliated to the Association of Turkish Voluntary Enterprises (Türkiye Gönüllü Teşekküller Vakfı, TGTV) that supports the establishment of single-sex schools<sup>61</sup> and has come out strongly in favor of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in presidential elections.<sup>62</sup> The Mehir Foundation is also a member of the Union of NGOs of the Islamic World (İslam Dünyası Sivil Toplum Kuruluşları Birliği) established in 2005 by the TGTV. The union had opposed a lawsuit demanding the closure of the AKP,<sup>63</sup> and had leaned towards the government in the matter of Syria by protesting the Assad regime.<sup>64</sup>

On the billboard announcing the wedding ceremony en masse was not only the logo of the Mehir Foundation, but also those of the Directorate of Religious Affairs, Tunceli University, and the Governorship of Tunceli. The announcement included a hadith (Hadis-i Şerif) and was signed by Hüseyin Yıldırım, the mufti of Tunceli, Ali Ekber Yurt, the chairman of the cemevi, and Mustafa Özdemir, the chairman of the Mehir Foundation. It was indicated that governor Mustafa Taşkesen and rector Durmuş Boztuğ would participate in

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59 S. L. (of the DHF), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 17 July 2012.

60 <http://www.mehir.org> [1 March 2014].

61 *Sabah*, 16 March 2012.

62 *Hürriyet*, 6 August 2014.

63 *Zaman*, 17 March 2008.

64 *Zaman*, 20 November 2013.

the ceremony. Indeed, this simple event announcement encapsulated the pro-government block of the city.

The administration of the cemevi frequently convenes with state officers and provincial representatives of the Directorate of Religious Affairs. They often organize *iftar* (the meal ending a daily fast), not only on the holy days of Alevis (*Muharrem*) but also on those of Sunnis (*Ramadan*). For example, the Munzur Schools – which are known as educational institutions of the Gülen community –,<sup>65</sup> the provincial organization of the AKP,<sup>66</sup> the provincial mufti,<sup>67</sup> and the governor<sup>68</sup> hosted iftars in the cemevi during the month of Muharrem. Moreover, riot police (*çevik kuvvet*) visited the cemevi in the same month and broke their fast with the dedes.<sup>69</sup> This new habitude can be interpreted as part of the “Muharrem Opening” of the government. In the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM), an iftar meal has started to be served during the month of Muharrem, a development sharply criticized by the Tunceli deputy, Hüseyin Aygün. Aygün claims that because Muharrem is a month of mourning, Alevis do not break their fasts with ostentatious invited iftar events and there is no tradition of making crowded iftars.<sup>70</sup> Although many Alevis find such iftar events wrong and inconsistent with the principles of Alevism, the Tunceli Cemevi declared that it regards these invitations as opportunities for unity and solidarity.<sup>71</sup>

In the month of Ramadan in 2013, the administration of the cemevi invited bureaucrats and military personnel in the city for an iftar. The governor, the commander of the commando brigade, the chief public prosecutor, the lieutenant governor, the provincial gendarmerie commander, the provincial po-

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65 *Zaman*, 09.11.2013.

66 *Yeni Şafak*, 13.11.2013.

67 <http://www.tuncelimuftulugu.gov.tr> [16 August 2014].

68 *Zaman*, 13.11.2013.

69 *Milliyet*, 19.11.2012.

70 *Evrensel*, 05.11.2013.

71 *Yeni Şafak*, 13.11.2013.

lice chief, and the directors of several governmental bodies accepted the invitation.<sup>72</sup> The participants in these iftars are people with whom the Dersimlis have almost no contact.

Relations between the cemevi and the provincial security directorate are worth paying attention to. On the notice board of the cemevi was information about their joint work. In January 2012, a seminar to introduce Alevism to police officers was arranged. The honored guests of the seminar were once again bureaucrats of the city. According to the activity report, the provincial police chief Hayati Yılmaz stated that Alevism, like the police, fights against crime and criminals. Alienation from Alevism increases the burden of the police.<sup>73</sup> In other words, because being faithful is seen as a virtue that contributes to social peace, the police prefer the Alevism of the city to the atheism of illegal organizations even though it is different from the dominant religion or religious sect. One of the speeches made by a dede confirms this. He argued that if Alevis fought for their rights they would be left holding a rose and a *saz*.<sup>74</sup>

Indeed, this statement of the dede summarizes the main approach of the Tunceli Cemevi. The crucial political actors of the city are clearly not content with this passive form of resistance; they adopt aggressive and active policies against the strategies of the state and seek to take part in all the processes of everyday politics. Second, the provincial security directorate is on the black list of Dersimlis for unresolved murders that occurred in the 1990s. In the social atmosphere of Dersim, police are not trusted. The people would rather keep their distance from the police. The police also do not engage with the inhabitants except when using force. The cemevi tries to build a bridge between the security forces and Dersimlis through a discourse of complacency and social peace; however, a considerable part of the city thinks that the main intent is to curry favor with the government.

Consequently, due to the legitimacy it has gained through open or implicit support of the state and Islamic communities, the cemevi feels empowered to act as the religious authority of Alevis living in Dersim. It has created a new

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72 *Tuncelinin Sesi*, 19.07.2013.

73 *Tuncelinin Sesi*, 19.01.2012.

74 *Ibid.*

interpretation of Alevism that occasionally conflicts with the conventional, local religious values and practices of Dersimlis. It tries to teach the people Alevism's "universal" principals and forms of worship. In other words, it assumes a leading role and reconstructs the belief system by restricting it to a specific space.

Spontaneously, the cemevi has been the means of domestication of the Dersim people. I do not believe that the state or the *cemaat* would specifically make a plan to eradicate Dersim Alevism while founding the cemevi. I do not want to propagate a conspiracy theory. However, the directors of the period took advantage of the cemevi. The originality of Dersim Alevism is seen as anomalous by the state. The spaces of Dersim Alevism are Gole Çetu, Mother Fatma, all the mountains, stones, waters, etc. anyone can produce a place of worship next to their home anywhere they want by putting some stones there. In Dersim Alevism, there is no spiritual leader who preaches to people. There are no central spaces speaking on behalf of the community. However, Dersim Alevism has been put into central spaces and has been socialized. The system benefits from this trend. It openly exploits it. This situation has not been publicly discussed. The active role of the cemevi is to tame Dersim Alevism. The aim is to produce particular spaces and religious leaders.<sup>75</sup>

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75 "Hani şöyle bir şey olmamıştır: Ne devlet ne cemaat, 'hadi burada cemevleri kuralım, Dersim Aleviliğini yok edelim'... Komplote teorisi olarak kurgulamıyorum. Doğal olarak böyle gelişti. Zamanının yöneticileri tarafından fırsat olarak görüldü. Dersim Aleviliğinin özgün yanı, devlet açısından en aykırı yanı olarak görüldü. Ehlileştirilmenin aracı haline getirildi cemevleri. Dersim Aleviliğinde Gola Çetu'dur, Ana Fatma'dır, bütün dağlar taşlar, suyun aktığı yerler.[...] Her evin en yakınında, en rahat ulaşabileceği yerde taşları düzenleyerek yaptığı bir şeydi. Başında vaaz veren bir ruhani lider yoktur. Onu merkezileştiren, toplum adına konuşan, söz söyleyen merkezi mekânlar yoktu. Dersim Aleviliği merkezi mekânlara kavuşturuluyor ve toplumlaştırılıyor. Ve bunu sistem çok iyi kullanıyor. Açıkta kullanıyor, tartışılmıyor toplum nezdinde. [...] Buradaki cemevlerinin oynadığı güncel rol dersim Aleviliğini ehlileştirmenin aracı haline geliyor. Belli mekânlara kavuşturuluyor, o mekânlarda bir önder oluyor." S. L. (of the DHF), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 17.07.2012.

The institutionalization of Alevism via the cemevi not only enables control over Dersimlis conducting out of the ordinary rituals but also incorporates them into Islam. It encourages the people to turn to religion and fulfill religious duties, and as the provincial police chief expressed, it lessens the burden on security forces. In the 1970s, leftist organizations ignored the religious values of Dersim. Their indifference and even hostility towards religion have been criticized long with the rise of cultural politics; however, their rejection of religious values clearly contributed to the development of more materialist approaches in the city. In this period, the expansion of socialist ideas and the decline of religious customs occurred in parallel and fed each other, which is why irreligion is seen more dangerous than Alevism.

Besides, the Alevism supported by the government is “formal” type Alevism, free from politics and from the natural patterns that were perceived as deviant. The cemevi incorporates Dersim Alevism into a universal interpretation of Alevism defined by Sunni Islam and framed by pro-government Alevi associations. Thus, it has been “normalized” and standardized. The discourses and practices of the cemevi overlap those of the government and of government agencies seeking its restriction in cultural realms. On the other hand, the government seeks to reach Dersimlis through the cemevi with a discourse of the fraternity of the Sunnis and Alevis and of mutual tolerance. Islam has been described as the common ground between the inhabitants of the city and the state. The mediators of this relation, the dedes of the cemevi, play the essential role of not only “teaching” a sterile Alevism purged of dangerous demands but also of transferring the messages of the government and Islamic communities to Dersimlis. The mutual affinity between the state and the cemevi inevitably entails prestigious positions for the dedes of the cemevi offered to them independent of an open merit system.

### 5.2.2 *Changing Natural Space: Hydroelectric Power Plants (HPPs) and Dam Projects*

One of the most prominent spatial strategies of authoritarian powers to reconfigure society and the economy is large-scale development projects, which James C. Scott scrutinizes in *Seeing Like a State*. Vast engineering projects such as huge dams, centralized communication and transportation hubs, factories

and farms, and grid cities enable the state to control space more easily. According to Scott, under emergency conditions (times of war, revolution, and depression) when the capacity of civil society to resist these projects considerably weakens, the authoritarian state is able to build them. “The legibility of a society provides the capacity for large scale social engineering, high-modernist ideology provides the desire, the authoritarian state provides the determination to act on that desire, and an incapacitated civil society provides the leveled social terrain on which to build.”<sup>76</sup>

Scott also notes that the carriers of these huge projects may be capitalist entrepreneurs; however, they require state action in order to accomplish them.<sup>77</sup> Interests are imbedded in a set of complex relations and social networks. That is to say, state-initiated social engineering is the embodiment of intermingled economic and political interests.

In this section of the study, I introduce the dams and HPPs founded in Dersim as the result of the overlapping political and economic interests of the state and the private sector. Dams and HPPs started to be established in the 1990s in a particular temporal and social context. This decade can be characterized as wartime – “the most fertile soil” in the words of Scott. Because the people were already intimidated under OHAL rule, civil society’s capacity to resist was weak. However, in the 2000s, the situation changed. Dam projects have been the engine of a social movement mobilizing 20 thousand people.

Engineering projects have drastically transformed both the urban and rural space of Dersim. This process is discussed under several headings. First of all, the legal infrastructure that allowed spatial transformations via dams and HPPs are presented. Second, the strategy is analyzed in the context of political priorities and the security concerns of the state. Lastly, unintended consequences of the process are revealed.

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76 Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, 5.

77 *Ibid.*, 4.

### 5.2.2.1 A Short Overview of the Legal Infrastructure of Spatial Transformation through Natural Resources

Dam and HPP projects have increasingly expanded throughout the country over the last three decades. The private sector, which has been on the rise since 1980, has also taken part in the management of natural resources. A 1996 publication by the State Planning Organization (Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, DPT) indicates that only three small-scale HPPs would be built using the “build-operate-and transfer model” over the following decade.<sup>78</sup> As of 1996, 90 percent of the generation and transmission and 80 percent of the distribution of electricity were provided by the state.<sup>79</sup> Nowadays, innumerable HPPs and dams which do not allow public access and do not allow the public to take advantage of opportunities such as irrigation, flood control, and water supply are in operation. Many others are in the project phase or under construction. The number of the streams opened to private sector is more than 2000.<sup>80</sup>

The legal basis of this development was fulfilled in 2001 with Law No. 4628 about the foundation of the Electricity Market Regulatory Authority (Elektrik Piyasası Düzenleme Kurumu), the name of which would later become the Energy Market Regulatory Authority (Enerji Piyasası Düzenleme Kurumu).<sup>81</sup> With the passing of the law, opportunities for constructing dams were transferred to the private sector. After the AKP’s coming to power, this process was furthered. The Energy Market Regulatory Authority was authorized by the Electricity Market Law No. 4628 (2001), the Natural Gas Market Law No. 4646 (2001), the Petroleum Market Law No. 5015 (2003), and the Liquefied Petroleum Gases Market Law No. 5307 (2005). The goal of these laws was to establish an energy market whose rules would be determined according to private

78 *Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı, Doğal Tekellerde Özelleştirme ve Regülasyon* (Ankara: DPT Yayınları, 1996), 145.

79 Edip Yılmaz, *Türkiye’de Elektrik Enerjisi Sektöründe Özelleştirme Nedenleri / Uygulamalar ve En Uygun Özelleştirme Seçeneği Araştırması*, (Ankara: TC Başbakanlık Hazine Müsteşarlığı Ekonomik Araştırmalar Genel Müdürlüğü, 1996), 7.

80 Çiçek Tahaoğlu, *Su Forumu’nun Amacı HES Yapımı İçin Organizasyon*, 04.05.2011, <http://www.bianet.org>.

81 <http://www.epdk.gov.tr>.

law sanctions within the frame of free competition.<sup>82</sup> As per Item 3 of Article 3 of the Electric Market Law, natural and legal persons founding production facilities whose capacity is up to 500 kilowatts and micro cogeneration units are exempt from the obligations of obtaining a license and being incorporating,<sup>83</sup> thereby making the establishment of HPPs and dams on small streams became easier.

In the 2000s, a series of amendments to the definition of “renewable energy resources” were made. The Electricity Market License Regulation dated 4 August 2002 defines the “production facility based on renewable energy resources” as such: “Production facilities based on wind, sun, geothermal energy, waves, tides, biomass, biogas, and hydrogen energy; reservoir-less type hydroelectric production facilities on rivers or canals; [and] hydroelectric production facilities with reservoirs whose power is less than or equal to twenty megawatts.” With the Electricity Market License Regulation dated 24 February 2005, the limitation of twenty megawatts was increased to fifty megawatts.<sup>84</sup> On account of this increase, investors could benefit from cheap credit facilities of the World Bank reserved for renewable energy resources.

Lastly, Law No. 5346 was replaced by Law No. 6094 on 29 December 2010. With this change, it became possible to establish electrical production facilities based on renewable energy resources in national parks, natural parks, natural monuments, nature reserve areas, protected forests, wildlife protection areas, and natural protected areas.<sup>85</sup> This legal change enabled the construction of HPPs independent of master plans. Moreover, another legal change cancelling the protected status of specific areas was planned; however, parliament was forced to remove the proposed Law on Nature and Biological Diversity Conservation from the agenda when protests erupted in Gezi Park.

The emergence of HPPs occurred after 1980. Between 1970 and 1979, only thirty-two HPPs were built; between 1980 and 1989, sixty-nine HPPs were

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82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid. The regulation was promulgated on 3 December 2010 in the Official Journal No. 27774. For European Union countries, the limitation is ten megawatts.

85 <http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr>.

constructed.<sup>86</sup> Certainly, this increase is directly related with a developmentalist approach that backgrounds ecology and sacrifices nature for the sake of economic growth. Governments tend to legitimize human intervention in nature with a discourse of public interest. What is new in the 2000s is the growing participation of the private sector and legislative regulations that have rendered even a rivulet a factor of production.

Dersim is one of the cities whose rivers are subject to dam projects and HPPs.<sup>87</sup> As mentioned, the commodification of natural resources is not peculiar to this city – throughout the country, almost all rivers are threatened by dams and HPPs. However, those established in Dersim differ from others. In this part of the dissertation, I scrutinize the function of dams and HPPs as a governmental strategy applied to reorganize spaces pursuant to the political priorities and security concerns of the state.

#### 5.2.2.2 Establishing Dams and HPPs as a Counterinsurgency Strategy

Joost Jongerden, who makes a crucial contribution to the history of state-society relations by approaching the Kurdish conflict from a geographic perspective, examines ecological destruction in Kurdistan as a counterinsurgency strategy in an article written with Etten, Vos, Klaasse, and Hoeve.<sup>88</sup> According to the authors, the Turkish army discovered that the PKK could not be defeated by simply occupying territory or removing of insurgents from a specific place. It recognized that the physical and social landscape had to be changed

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- 86 Gaye Yılmaz, *Suyun Metalaşması: Kıtılığın Nedeni Kıtılığa Çare Olabilir mi?* (Istanbul: SAV, 2009), 395.
- 87 For detailed information about the dams and HPPs established in Dersim and resistance to them, see Gözde Orhan, “Ekoloji ve Siyaset: Munzur Baraj Projelerine Karşı Toplumsal Direniş Örneği,” in *Dersim’i Parantezden Çıkarmak*, (eds.) Zeliha Hepkon, Songül Aydın and Şükrü Aslan (Istanbul: İletişim, 2013), 253-272.
- 88 Jacob von Etten, Joost Jongerden, Hugo S. de Vos, Annemarie Klasse, Esther C. E. von Hoeve, “Türkiye Kürdistan’ında Kontrgerilla Stratejisi Olarak Çevre Tahribatı,” *Toplum ve Kuram* 1 (May 2009), 71-97.

and rendered controllable.<sup>89</sup> The field domination does not consist only of village evacuation and burning: natural space has also been irreversibly transformed.

Jongerden and his colleagues focus on forest burning in Eastern Turkey. Based on interviews, they claim that resource destruction is intentional and widespread in this geography and that the Turkish state has played an active role in setting the fires.<sup>90</sup> Forests are indispensable hideouts in guerilla warfare.<sup>91</sup> However, there is not sufficient proof of the responsibility of the Turkish state for the fires. Thus, the authors applied a methodology based on remote sensing by which burned areas can be easily perceived. They selected Dersim as case study. Because peasants do not use fires as a standard agricultural practice in the city, forest fires do not generally derive from such negligence.<sup>92</sup> A report written in 1995 claims that soldiers use gasoline and chemicals to set fire to forests.<sup>93</sup>

Satellite image-based evidence confirms substantial resource destruction. The study also states that the proportion of burned forest areas is higher around settlements than in unpopulated areas. In other words, the forests around villages that had been forcibly evacuated were burned in addition to the settlements proper in order to dissuade the return of inhabitants. According to the authors, these findings support the conclusion that the army changed its strategy in the early 1990s and attempted to transform the space of war by isolating guerillas from local people.

In the early 1990s and before, PKK fighters hid especially in the forests close to settlements, where they could obtain various resources from

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89 Ibid., 76.

90 Ibid., 78.

91 Nabin Baral and Joel T. Heinen, "The Maoist People's War and Conservation in Nepal," *Politics and the Life Sciences* 24:1-2 (March-September, 2005), 7.

92 Etten et al., 83.

93 Netherlands Kurdistan Society, *Forced Evictions and Destruction of Villages in Dersim (Tunceli) and the Western Part of Bingöl, Turkish Kurdistan, September-November 1994*, (1995). [http://www.hum.uu.nl/medewerkers/m.vanbruinessen/publications/Forced\\_evacuations.pdf](http://www.hum.uu.nl/medewerkers/m.vanbruinessen/publications/Forced_evacuations.pdf).

the villages and at the same time enjoy the protection of forest cover. Retrospectively, it is clear that the new military strategy indeed achieved the desired effect. After the village evacuation and resource destruction of the first half of the 1990s, guerrilla cells were forced to live in uninhabited areas and to develop more survivalist livelihoods (Pamukoğlu, 2003). The burned forests around rural settlements are thus a very clear, tangible expression of this separation of social spaces.<sup>94</sup>

In brief, when incapable of controlling it, the state transforms the space. In Eastern cities, the depopulation of space has been regarded as indispensable for preventing inhabitants from assisting fighters; therefore, the army sees no harm in annihilating the living conditions of the local people. However, the counterinsurgency strategy based on ecological destruction was not limited to forest burning. Dam projects and HPPs may be interpreted as an extension of it.

A report prepared by the Human Rights Association (İnsan Hakları Derneği, İHD) reveals that the state attempted to build “security dams” – dams established to prevent the mobility of guerillas – throughout the region. Most of them are constructed along borders. For example, there are eleven security dams under construction in Şırnak.<sup>95</sup> Another was constructed on the Botan River in Siirt. According to the report, in just the Munzur Valley, there are four security dams under construction. Moreover, on the Tağar River in Çemişgezek, another security dam is being established. Many dams are located in Aliboğazı, the most crucial refuge of the PKK and MKP.

As mentioned before, the geographic structure of Dersim is difficult for the state to control and survey. The security of the province has been a fundamental issue for centuries. Deep valleys and hidden caves protect people escaping from danger. Aliboğazı is one of these difficult-to-access places. Although within the district borders of Çemişgezek, it is in the triangle of Ovacık,

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94 Etten et al., 92-93.

95 *Geri Çekilme Sürecini İzleme Komisyonu Bölge Geneli Askeri Hareketlilik ve Sınır Hattı*, 22.07.2013, <http://www.ihd.org.tr>.

Hozat, and Çemişgezek.<sup>96</sup> The space is under the control of the Amutka Police Station from the Hozat side and the Akirek Police Station from the Çemişgezek side. The Ovacık side of the area is surrounded by a precipitous slope covered with snow.<sup>97</sup> Some argue that it is named after Ali because only Ali is capable of conquering the space. According to another narrative, its name comes from an insurgent called Ali who defended the territory against enemies single-handedly.<sup>98</sup>

The space has embraced the oppressed, escapees, and outlaws for centuries. The Koç Uşağı aşiret that subsisted on banditry and spoils, taking advantage of the chaotic atmosphere after the Sheikh Said Rebellion, lived in the territory between Aliboğazı and Tağar River.<sup>99</sup> During the 1937-38 events, many aşirets took refuge there once they understood the severity of the situation.<sup>100</sup>

Official reports also deal with the area. In a report about the military operation of 1907, it is emphasized that insurgents who set out for Aliboğazı disappear without a trace. Another report written in the 1930s indicates that Aliboğazı has plenty of caves in which hundreds of people can live. “Until 1928 there were tribes that made this place their homeland; even today it is shelter for suspicious, condemned people and marauders.”<sup>101</sup> The area is also discussed within the context of forced resettlement. In 1929, the Resik and Koçlu aşirets were evacuated from Aliboğazı.<sup>102</sup> After the 1937-38 events, with the demand of the Fourth General Inspectorship and the consent of the Minister of the Internal Affairs, the area along the line of Kutudere-Kırmızıdağ-Haçlıdere to Karacakale at the foot of Mercan Mountains and the area of the Aliboğazı-Tağar Valley were declared forbidden zones and closed to settlement.<sup>103</sup>

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96 *Serxwebun 1997-1998 Alburna Şehîda*, 515.

97 *Ibid.*

98 *Ibid.*

99 Akyürekli, 52.

100 *Ibid.*, 155.

101 Çalışlar, 24.

102 *Ibid.*, 72.

103 Reşat Hallı, *Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Ayaklanmalar* (Ankara: Genelkurmay Başkanlığı Harp Tarihi Başkanlığı Genelkurmay Basımevi, 1972), 437.

Since the PKK entered Dersim, the Aliboğazı Valley has been used as winter camp by several groups.<sup>104</sup> The Turkish army conducted numerous military operations there but has not succeeded due to the physical conditions of the space. Air operations are ineffective in the space. In 2013, Bülent Arınç, the deputy prime minister, announced on a television program that security forces had finally entered Aliboğazı for the first time, and he congratulated the soldiers.<sup>105</sup> In other words, in the eyes of the state, the space is still uncontrollable, mysterious and open to the attacks of terrorists. Because the army cannot completely control the rural area, it needed new methods to block the paths and sanctuaries used by illegal organizations.

According to the majority of Dersimlis, the new counterinsurgency strategy of the state consists of dams and HPPs built on almost all the rivers of Dersim. From the second half of the 1990s, these high-modernist projects considerably transformed both rural and urban spaces. Even the city center has been affected by the dams: not only were places of worship submerged, but also recreation areas located on both sides of the river. However, the scope of the spatial transformation is larger in rural spaces.

The Uzunçayır Dam, the first established in Dersim, dramatically changed the geography and climate. In 1994, when the construction of the dam started, the Dersim people expected new employment opportunities and development: “For the groundbreaking of the Uzunçayır Dam, Tansu Çiller, the prime minister at the time, came to the city. Two thousand or two thousand five hundred people welcomed her with a flourish of trumpets.”<sup>106</sup> However, the companies employed few local people, dashing their hopes.

How many people were employed by the Uzunçayır Dam? They [the companies] employed only a few young people living in surrounding villages. They employed some boys from Burmageçit village. In addition, some boys from Göktepe village worked building roads for Cemil

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104 “Tehlike ve Zor Görevlerin Militanı,” *Serxwebûn* 169 (January 1996), 23.

105 *Milliyet*, 04.05.2013.

106 “Uzunçayır barajının yapıldığı süreçte Tansu Çiller gelmişti, dönemin başbakanı. 2000-2500 kadar insan davul zurnalarla karşılamıştı.” Haydar Çetinkaya (founder of Munzur Nature Activists), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 09.10.2010.

Özgür Construction. The first company entitled to build the Uzunçayır Dam was Cemil Özgür Construction, but the company could not fulfill its obligations. The project was to tender one more time. Limak won. The number of workers [from Dersim] that it employed did not exceed ten.<sup>107</sup>

The first dam did not elicit a reaction. Interviews with the representatives of ecology organizations in the city show that there were several reasons for this. First of all, the people had no understanding of dams and their effects on nature. As mentioned, some expected that inhabitants would benefit from the investment. On the other hand, people whose lands were expropriated highly profited. The expropriation prices offered by the state were so substantial that none attempted to resist. Indeed, in the war conditions of the 1990s, resistance against dam projects supported by the government was not easy.

The inhabitants received a lot of money. However, they filed a lawsuit to get more. In the 1990s, the people did not have the luxury of rejecting the offer in the expropriation process. They [the dam companies] were knocking on their doors in the company of the gendarmerie [and] soldiers. They said that they were expropriating lands for dams and gave the amounts that they had determined. You should be informed! Because they used to come with soldiers, the people did not have the right to object. The inhabitants filed an action against the expropriation after some time. Turkey has been relatively more democratic and the people have started to think that it is possible to challenge the state.<sup>108</sup>

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107 “Uzunçayır barajında kaç kişi çalıştı ki? Çevre köylerden üç beş tane genç çalıştırdıkları var. Burmageçit köyünden çalıştırdığı üç beş tane çocuk var. Bir de Cemil Özgür İnşaat’ın yol şantiyesine gönderdiği Göktepe’li birkaç çocuk var. İlk yapımçı firma Cemil Özgür İnşaat’tı; taahhütlerini yerine getiremediği için yeniden ihale yapıldı. Bu sefer Limak aldı. Saysan 10 tane adam ya çalıştırdı ya çalıştırmadı.” Nazım Arslan (chief of Radio Munzur and ecology activist), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 08.10.2010.

108 “İnsanlar çok yüklü miktarlarda para aldılar. Aldıkları parayla yetinmediler, gittiler davalar açtılar. 90’lı yıllarda baraj yapıldığında istimlak sürecinde insanların arazisini vermemek gibi

According to environmental activists living in the city, Dersimlis recognized the ecological destruction stemming from dams and HPPs once the Uzunçayır Dam started to impound water on 17 August 2009. Indeed, anti-dam protests arose in this period. “Uzunçayır’s construction started in 1993-1994. The dam was completed silently. When the waters started to rise and cover fields, houses, and graves, especially those who had sold their estates began to cry. They had been unaware of the results.”<sup>109</sup> With the emergence of distinct, negative impacts, public opposition against the dams increased.

During the OHAL period in the 1990s, even the slightest attempt to demand justice was violently suppressed. With the water retention, the people saw what dams entailed. The Uzunçayır Dam was a fantasy for us. Everyone had thought it would not affect the city center; the waters would not reach there. After the water retention in the Uzunçayır Dam, one started to think what would occur if water were retained in the valley.<sup>110</sup>

In order to win the consent of locals, authorities tried (or pretended) to incorporate Dersimlis into the investments as labor power. For example, central au-

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bir lüksleri yoktu. Jandarmayla, askerle geliyordu senin kapına. Arazini istimlâk ediyoruz, baraj gelecek, haberin olsun, sana da şu kadar para veriyoruz. İtiraz hakkın yok askerle geldiği için. Daha sonra istimlâka itiraz davası açtılar. O zaman Türkiye görece biraz daha demokratiğeşmeye başlamıştı. Devlete itiraz edilebilirmiş, diye düşünmeye başladılar.” Ibid.

109 “1993-1994’te yapılmaya başlandı. Baraj sessiz sedasız yapıldı, bitirildi. Ne zaman ki su yükselmeye başladı ve yavaş yavaş tarlaları, evleri, mezarları yutmaya başladı, öncelikle o arsalarını satmış olan insanlar ağlamaya başladılar. Sonuçlarının bu kadar acı olacağını bilmiyorlardı.” Haydar Çetinkaya, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 09.10.2010.

110 “1990’larda, OHAL döneminde en küçük hak arayışları bile şiddetle bastırılıyordu. Uzunçayır barajının su tutulmasıyla beraber insanlar barajların ne getirip ne götürceğini gördüler. Bizim için bir hayaldi Uzunçayır barajı. “Su tutulsa da o kadar olmaz, etkilemez, şehir merkezine kadar su gelmez” diye düşünüyordu Dersim’de herkes. Ama Uzunçayır barajının su tutulmasıyla beraber bu sefer vadilerde su tutulduğunda neler olabileceğini düşünmeye başladı insanlar.” Nazım Arslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 08.10.2010.

thorities interfered in the labor process of the Tatar dam project whose construction started in 2008. However, the number of local workers recruited by dam companies was limited. This situation strengthened the general perception that dams and HPPs are established for regional security and in the interests of a handful of investors.

The construction of the Tatar dam started. For the purposes of hoodwinking, it was promised that local people would be employed. The governor of the period was Mustafa Erkal. Supposedly, Mustafa Erkal made an agreement with Limak [the dam company] that all workers would be from Tunceli. He laid this down as a condition. He would make things easier [for Limak] at the Uzunçayır Dam in return. [Limak] started to carry two busloads of people to Tatar for show. Considering that there are usually two shifts, the number of workers did not exceed two hundred. After a while, it stopped employing local people. Only for a few months were local people put to work. It was only for show.<sup>111</sup>

Although the government itself regulates and conducts the spatial transformation, it evades responsibility for ecological destruction and abstains from dealing with the indigenous people. This relation is generally established through subcontractors. The subcontracting system, which had brought about a fundamental restructuring of the labor market and industry throughout the country, obscures the role of the state in the mushrooming of dams and HPPs. Some bureaucrats pretend to oppose dams and issue statements that they support the protection of natural resources. However, there are many irregularities in their construction – for example, the Munzur valley is a national park,

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111 “Tatar barajı inşaatı yapıldı. Bir dönem işte göz boyamak için buradan insanlar çalıştırılacak dendi. Dönemin valisi Mustafa Erkal’dı. Mustafa Erkal Limak’la bütün çalışanlar Tunceli’den alınacak diye anlaşmıştı güya, bu şartı koşmuştu. Buna karşılık da Uzunçayır barajında kendisi yardımcı olacaktı. Tatar barajı için her gün göstermelik iki otobüs insan götürüyordu. İki vardiya desek çalışan insan sayısı toplam 200 eder. Daha sonra o da kesildi. Bir iki ay taşdılar, sonra kestiler. Göstermelikti yani.” G. S. (environmental activist), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 12.10.2010.

and therefore the usage and exploitation of its resources are forbidden by law – and representatives of the central administration are unmoved. Despite court decisions against the dams, state institutions retreat and leave the people to deal with the subcontractors. In other words, the subcontracting system that has emerged as the international strategy of capitalism around the world in the 1980s and dramatically increased in Turkey during the AKP era<sup>112</sup> not only reduces costs and mitigates risks but also functions as an extension of authority in spaces where resistance may occur.

In the eastern provinces, under war conditions, guerilla groups have often targeted the institutions or symbols of the state in both urban and rural spaces. Public banks, public vehicles, and other state-owned properties are damaged in instances of insurgencies. In such an atmosphere, the privatization of dam construction and the subcontracting system that conceal the role of state institutions that pave the way for the legal foundation of the transformation favor the government. On the other hand, large companies that won the bids to construct dams and HPPs tend to subcontract out projects strongly contested by the indigenous population for fear of being attacked. In other words, the major agents of the spatial process do not want to appear responsible of the ecological destruction.

The Dinar HPP can be given as example. A local company serves the subcontractor for the construction. Our counterpart is not the main company, it is the subcontractor. This is the problem. We do not know who is really responsible. For example, the Tatar Dam is on the Peri River. Limak built it. It does not regard a subcontractor to be necessary. However, in areas where resistance may arise, it employs a subcontractor.<sup>113</sup>

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112 The number of subcontracted workers was 387 thousand in 2002. The number reached to 1.6 million in 2011. F. Serkan Öngel, “Türkiye’de Taşeronlaşmanın Boyutları,” *DİSK-AR Bülteni* (Winter 2014), 40.

113 “Örneğin, Dinar HES. Yerel bir şirket taşeronluk yapıyor. Bizim muhatabımız şirketlerin kendisi değil direkt taşeron şirket. Problem de bu. Asıl muhatabın kim olduğunu bilmiyorsunuz. Örneğin Peri Çayı üzerinde Tatar barajı var. Limak girip onu yapabiliyor. Taşerona

Consequently, establishing dams and HPPs – one of the strategies of the state to reorganize space according to its security concerns – is possible in Dersim only through the mediums of privatization and the subcontracting system. Needless to say, privatization and subcontracting are not only applied to dams built in Dersim, nor is the main aim of these processes to hide the agency of the state. In many provinces with rivers, similar relationships are observed in dam construction. What is different in the case of Dersim is the presence of armed groups that, in addition to public opposition, pose a concrete threat to the investment.

However, this mystification aside, in the eyes of the Dersim people the main actor behind dam construction is the state. Accustomed to approaching exogenous developments cautiously as a result of the 1937-38 events, they perceive the expansion of dams and HPPs as a “second 1938” rather than as part of the commodification of natural resources. In other words, although the central authority seeks to found its discourse on the basis of regional development, productivity, and greater engagement of the private sector in the era of globalization, Dersimlis tend to perceive the transformation as a continuity. According to the majority of the Dersim people, “the dam projects are not government projects, they are a state projects.”<sup>114</sup>

The dam projects are perceived as “the second ’38” because according to inhabitants the dams, like the 1937-38 massacres, are intended to depopulate Dersim. Indeed, official reports written in the late Ottoman era and in the single party period of the republic demonstrate that interventions in the natural spaces of Dersim have historical roots. A report of the Gendarmerie General Command (1932) reveals that Marshall Samih Pasha, the governor of Erzurum, suggested the idea of founding “block pools” – a kind of barrage – at crucial points in Dersim in 1875 in order to control and rule the people “who

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gerek duymuyor. Ama direnişin olabileceği yerlerde kendisi yapamıyor, taşeron kullanıyor.” G. S., interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 12.10.2010.

114 “Baraj projeleri bir hükümet projesi değildir, devlet projesidir.” Haydar Çetinkaya, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 09.10.2010. Although in English, government and state are used interchangeably; this sentence highlights a long state tradition with respect to Dersim policy.

live as a government into another government,” but this plan was not applied.<sup>115</sup> In the following years, similar ideas were put forward. The most prominent was prepared by Fevzi Çakmak, the commander of the Turkish Armed Forces at the beginning of the 1930s. The report includes measures to be taken to establish authority. In addition to military activities and assimilation strategies, “establishing block pools at certain places” is mentioned.<sup>116</sup>

The aforementioned block pools were not built in the 1930s; they were not necessary after military operations targeting non-combatants and the systematic assimilation of survivors. Moreover, as far as the technology of the period is concerned, one can presume that it was not a realistic project. In the following decades, with the growth of demand for energy over time, building dams and HPPs became a current issue. The State Hydraulic Works (Devlet Su İşleri, DSİ) started to study and plan water resources on the Fırat River. After the preparation of the Fırat Basin Development Report (Fırat Havzası İstikşaf Raporu) of 1964 and the Lower Fırat Development Report (Aşağı Fırat İnkişaf Raporu) of 1966 by the Fırat Planning Directorship (Fırat Planlama Amirliği) founded in Diyarbakır in 1961, the Southeastern Anatolia Project (Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi, GAP) was shaped.<sup>117</sup> In 1983, the Munzur Project Master Plan including seven dams was drawn up by the DSİ.<sup>118</sup>

The most ancient and largest example of dams built in the east is the Southeastern Anatolia Project.<sup>119</sup> This multi-sectoral and integrated regional development project hints at high-modernist ideology and the strategy of changing

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115 Çalışlar, 154.

116 Bulut, 257.

117 USİAD (Ulusal Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği), *GAP Raporu* (Ankara: Ertem, 2008), 24.

118 *Konaktepe Barajı ve HES I-II Projesinin Gelişim Süreci*, <http://www.konaktepe.com.tr>.

119 See, for example, Dursun Yıldız, *GAP: Bölgede Ekonomik, Stratejik ve Siyasal Gelişmeler* (İstanbul: Truva Yayınları, 2009); Hasan Taşkın, *İsrail'in GAP Senaryosu: Güneydoğu Topraklarında Neler Oluyor?* (Trabzon: Ra Kitabevi, 2005); Ramazan Topdemir, *Atatürk'ün Doğu-Güneydoğu Politikası ve GAP* (İstanbul: Truva Yayınları, 2009); For analysis emphasizing state's goals such as “to ease EU membership,” “to control Syria and Iraq” see Ahmet Özer, *Modernleşme ve Güneydoğu* (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1998); Nilay Özok, *Social Development as a Governmental Strategy in the Southeastern Anatolia Project*, MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2004; Elif Onmuş, *Economic Development and Convergence in Turkey: A Province-Based*

space via high-modernist projects. The main objectives of the GAP are “to include the improvement of living standards and income levels of people so as to eliminate regional development disparities and contribute to such national goals as social stability and economic growth by enhancing productivity and employment opportunities in the rural sector.”<sup>120</sup> Using theoretical framework of Scott, Ali Çarkoğlu and Mine Eder argue that the mentality of this development project, which started as an energy production project following from a “high-modernist ideology,” shifted from hydroelectricity to regional integration. Not only were improving living standard and economic conditions in the region considered, but also easing political tension and polarization.<sup>121</sup> However, according to the authors, the project has not fulfilled these targets, and the style of its implementation is the most crucial reason for this. They demonstrate that the GAP, like other top-down models, failed because its designers did not take local knowhow and the practical knowledge of the region into consideration.<sup>122</sup>

On the other hand, unlike the GAP, the Munzur dams and HPP projects have no social purposes with respect to the city and its inhabitants. In this respect, they have increased political tensions and polarization because social and economic benefits are absent almost all parts of the projects. There is an alignment between the GAP and the projects located in Dersim in terms of the government approach: albeit inadequate and late, the state tended to incorporate local people into GAP projects. As Çarkoğlu and Eder argue, the knowledge and practical experience of locals were generally overlooked; however, with the influence of international community, concepts and values such

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*Assessment with a Special Emphasis on the Southeastern Anatolia Project (GAP)*, MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2004; Bedriye Tunçsiper, *Güneydoğu Anadolu Bölgesi'nin Kalkınması ve GAP*, MA Thesis, Uludağ University, 1987; Suphi Varım, *Bölgesel Kalkınma ve Türkiye Örneği GAP*, MA Thesis, Dokuz Eylül University, 1989; Selim Erdoğan, *Bölgesel Kalkınma Açısından Güneydoğu Anadolu Projesi (GAP)*, PhD Dissertation, Marmara University, 1989; and Müge Şensal, *Socio-economic Transformation in GAP Region*, MA Thesis, İstanbul University, 1990.

120 <http://www.gap.gov.tr>.

121 Ali Çarkoğlu and Mine Eder, “Developmentalism alla Turca: The Southeastern Anatolia Development Project (GAP),” in *Environmentalism in Turkey: Between Democracy and Development?* (eds.) Fikret Adaman and Murat Arsel (Hants and Vermont: Ashgate, 2005), 170.

122 Ibid.

as “environment,” “sustainability,” and “participation” were incorporated into the goals of the GAP. In the projects in Dersim, political participation and local involvement in the design and implementation of the dams and HPPs have been absent, even in a discursive sense. The projects, relatively smaller-scale in comparison to those of the GAP, were completely left to the will of entrepreneurs. This situation strengthened claims that the principal aim of the dams, in the eyes of the state, was to restore its own authority by precluding the mobilization of the fighters.

To conclude, there is some truth in the metaphor of the “second ’38” which refers to the depopulation of the province and destruction of nature that emerged with the dams and HPPs. A slogan coined during anti-dam protests implies the relation between these colossal projects that drastically transform space and the approach of the state towards the city. The general belief is that the state is seeking to wipe Dersim off the map, that is, to complete the task left unfinished in 1938.

“To wipe off the map” is not only an expression. As mentioned several times, Tunceli as an administrative unit has always been an “anomaly” for governments. The AKP era is no exception, the apology of the prime minister for the 1938 massacre notwithstanding. The approach of the government has distinctly changed since 2010 when Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu was elected as the chair of the CHP. Electoral failures despite populist policies annoyed the AKP, which was accustomed to success in the rest of the country.

The 2014 presidential election revealed that the expostulation and resentment expressed by local representatives of the AKP had turned into “derecognition” of the city at the level of the party’s central organization. The new attitude of the AKP appeared in caricatured form in the electoral campaign of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. A map of Turkey was placed on the website created for the campaign ([www.rte.com.tr](http://www.rte.com.tr)). However, the map contained only eighty cities.<sup>123</sup> Dersim was “wiped off the map.”

In a chapter focusing on dams and HPPs, this minor incident (or mistake) may look irrelevant; nonetheless, according to the interviewees, it hints at the continuity of the mentality of government. The general belief is that the AKP

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123 *Hürriyet*, 17.07.2014; *Aydınlık*, 17.07.2014; *Cumhuriyet*, 17.07.2014.

is seeking to complete what the single party regime began in the 1930s. However, the method used by the AKP to depopulate and abolish the city differs from previous ones. Instead of forced migration and slaughter, the AKP government's plan is to dissolve Dersim via security dams in the point of view of Dersimlis. An environmental activist living in Dersim supposes that

after the retention of water in Munzur Valley, when the climate changes, when the province becomes depopulated, when the center is disconnected from the districts of Ovacık, Hozat, Nazımiye, [and] Pülümür, what remains of [the provincial center of] Tunceli will only be a small town. Probably, the next step will be to declare Kovancılar<sup>124</sup> as a province. They will probably make Tunceli a district and append it to Kovancılar. Tunceli will become an island. This is their plan. The population of Kovancılar exceeds 25 thousand.<sup>125</sup> The population of Dersim is low discounting the number of soldiers. Çemişgezek has no connection to Dersim except for official business. Some villages of Pertek have connections with Dersim, but those located on the other side of the mountain have connections with Elazığ. Similarly, Pülümür has connections with Erzincan. In order to go anywhere from Ovacık, one had to drive through the provincial center of Dersim; however, with the new highway Ovacık is also connected to Erzincan. Once the dams have been established, Ovacık will be completely isolated from Dersim. The connection to Hozat, which is already limited, will be completely cut. Another highway is being built between Hozat and Ovacık. The inhabitants of Ovacık will be able to reach Hozat directly. After the dams begin to operate, the connection to Pertek will also disappear. With the dams built on the Pülümür River, Pülümür and

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124 Kovancılar is a district of Elazığ. It is located at the intersection of the Elazığ-Bingöl and Elazığ-Dersim highways. In recent times, the Elazığ Airport shuttles went to Dersim via Kovancılar rather than via Pertek because of the higher quality of the highways. In the local elections of 2014, the AKP, the Felicity Party (SP) following "National Vision" line, the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), and the fundamentalist Islamic Free Cause Party (HÜDA-PAR) obtained more than 90 percent of the votes in Kovanılar.

125 According to the population census of 2013, the total population of Kavanclar is 40,094. It is the most densely populated district of Elazığ.

Nazimiye will also be isolated. Only Kovancılar will remain connected to the provincial center of Dersim. They [the central government] would not make Kovancılar a district of Dersim. [The inhabitants of] Kovancılar would not want this. They may turn Dersim [center] into a district of Kovancılar. What does this change? This means wiping the most insurgent, leftist city of Turkey – the entire populace of which is Kızılbaş – off the map. Even if they appended Kovancılar to us, this is the end of Dersim. Why? Because [the inhabitants of] Kovancılar vote for the AKP.<sup>126</sup>

As the interviewee points out, a potential administrative reorganization of the city as a result of the dams and HPPs would change the political and cultural patterns of Dersim. All the neighboring cities of Dersim (Erzincan, Malatya, Elazığ, and Bingöl) consist mostly of Sunnis who support the AKP; therefore, a redistricting of Dersim would abolish its unity. Admittedly, there is no concrete data or information concerning an administrative regulation to change provincial frontiers of Dersim; however, the ruling party is expected to make

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126 “Munzur Vadisinde su tutulduğunda, bu iklim değiştiğinde, öbür taraftan bölge insansızlaştırıldığında, Ovacık ilçesinin merkezle iletişimi kesildiğinde, Hozat’ın, Nazimiye, Pülümür’ün iletişimi bittiğinde geriye Tunceli küçük bir ilçe olarak kalıyor. Muhtemelen bir sonraki adımda Kovancılar’ı il yaparlar. Tunceli’yi de ilçe yapıp Kovancılar’a bağlarlar. Burası bir ada şeklinde kalacak. Hesap olarak bu var. Kovancılar’ın şu anda nüfusu 25.000’in üstünde. Dersim nüfusu düşünülüğünde, askerler düşüldüğünde çok az insan yaşıyor. [...] Çemişgezek’in Dersim’le hiçbir bağı yok devlet işleri dışında. Pertek’in dağın bu tarafındaki köylerinin tamamı Dersim’le ilişki içerisinde, dağın diğer tarafı Elazığ’la ilişki içinde. Pülümür de Erzincan’la ilişki içinde. Ovacık’tan diğer şehirlere gitmek için illa Dersim merkeze gelinmesi gerekiyordu ama şimdi Ovacık’ı karayoluyla Erzincan’a bağlıyorlar. Barajlar yapıldıktan sonra Ovacık’ın Dersim’le tüm irtibatı kesilir. Hozat’ın zaten az olan irtibatı komple kesilmiş olacak. Hozat-Ovacık arasına da karayolu yapıyorlar. Ovacıklılar oradan direkt Hozat’a da gidebilir. Barajlardan sonra Pertek bağı da kesilecek. Öbür tarafta yapılacak barajlarla Pülümür ve Nazimiye de bitmiş olacak. Dersim merkezle ilişkili bir tek Kovancılar kalacak. Kovancılar’ı da Dersim’in ilçesi yapmazlar. Kovancılar istemez. Dersim’i Kovancılar’ın ilçesi yaparlar. Bu neyi değiştirir? Türkiye’deki en direngen, sol, tamamı Kızılbaş bu kentin haritadan silinmesi demektir. Kovancılar’ı bize bağlasalar bile bunun anlamı kalenin yıkılmasıdır. Neden? Çünkü Kovancılar’ın tüm oyları AKP’ye gidecek.” Nazım Arslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 08.10.2010.

legislative arrangements to seize control of local governments it has not been able to win by other methods.<sup>127</sup>

Consequently, the dams and HPPs built on the rivers of Dersim both strengthen the hand of the state in the war against the Kurdish armed movement by forming natural obstacles and entail depopulation in the long run due to ecological destruction, climate change, and the spatial isolation of districts that will inevitably emerge. The physical transformation of the province may make way for administrative change in favor of the state; in this way, cultural and political distinctiveness may melt into the conservative, Sunni-Islamic patterns of neighboring cities.

On the other hand, local authorities never accept claims that dams are built for security reasons. For this research, I asked for an interview with the governorship. When I expressed that I wished to discuss dam projects in Dersim, the secretary said that an expert on dams was working in their institution and recommended I interview this person. This individual accepted my request; however, he invited me to the police department instead of the governor's building. When I asked why, he explained that he was an officer in the Anti-Terror Branch (Terörle Mücadele Şubesi, TMS). Ultimately, the interview about dams occurred in the police department.

The authorized person clearly rejected the notion of "security dams" propagated by the inhabitants of Dersim and other Eastern cities. He insisted that the state intended no such function and that isolating terrorists with dam reservoirs was technically impossible. When I asked why the state insisted on founding dams despite the resistance of Dersimlis, he talked about the "investment" made in Dersim. According to him, establishing dams and HPPs is the incontestable right of the state: "Until now, the state has given too much to Dersim; now, it is time to take back what it has given. Constructing dams

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127 For example, the Metropolitan Law, passed in 2012 after a long debate in parliament, transformed thirteen city municipalities into metropolitan municipalities before the local elections of 2014. The change turned some villages into neighborhoods within the boundaries of those metropolitan municipalities. Because the inhabitants of these new neighborhoods were entitled to vote in metropolitan municipality elections, the regulation allowed the AKP to win more municipalities.

means taking back what belongs to the state.”<sup>128</sup> This statement manifests the approach of the state board to Dersim. The dams are the means by which Dersimlis repay their debts to the state.

The interviewee expressed that the police and governorship worked in cooperation on the dams.<sup>129</sup> Indeed, his position (he introduced himself as an official of both the governorship and police) is the embodiment of this cooperation. Although public authorities abstain from identifying dams with the war against guerilla groups, it seems that the police are so interested in the dams that someone was put in charge of this matter. This cooperation itself reinforces the claims dams are being built for security reasons.

In conclusion, the strategy of the AKP to transform space in tandem with its own interests, especially political ones, has coincided with those of enterprises disposed to invest in natural resources. However, instead of an “incapacitated civil society” required to establish high-modernist projects, they met with powerful resistance that would evolve into a strong social movement.

The state’s attempt to govern Dersim by controlling natural resources and Dersimlis’ resistance to it recall another of James C. Scott’s arguments. Scott traces the distinction between hill or forest people (self-governing or ungoverned people) and valley or cleared-land people (state-governed people). Ungoverned spaces represent a challenge for the state. First, because their populations are mobile, economic activities are intractable to state appropriation. Second, hill people are regarded as a potential threat because they tend to raid the settlements of the valley people who are subject to the state, seizing their crops, and becoming rivals to the state. But the most important consideration is that hill people and the presence of an ungoverned periphery represent a “constant alternative to life within the state.”<sup>130</sup>

The spatial strategies of the AKP appear to have several characteristics in common with the model of Scott. The AKP government has sought to depopulate the “ungoverned spaces” of Dersim via HPPs and dams while making its people similar to “valley people” through the standardization of religion.

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128 Emrah B., interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 10.10.2010.

129 Ibid.

130 Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed: An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*, 6.

However, as Scott articulates, characteristics such as mobility, religious heterodoxy, and egalitarianism, as well as nonliterate, oral cultures<sup>131</sup> seem to strengthen their survival and capacity for resistance.

### 5.2.2.3 Unintended Consequences of Spatial Intervention

Scott introduces the inverse relation between the power of the state and that of civil society in the process of decision making with respect to vast engineering projects: “As a rule of thumb, cadastral mapping was earlier and more comprehensive where a powerful central state could impose itself on a relatively weak civil society. Where, by contrast, civil society was well organized and the state relatively weak, cadastral mapping was late, often voluntary, and fragmentary.”<sup>132</sup> As mentioned, Scott highlights that a particular temporal and social context is necessary to suppress civil society. Although the Dersim people have always been labeled as insurgent in official reports, its capacity to block the projects imposed upon it in the 1990s was weak because of the OHAL conditions. An activist participating in anti-dam protests narrates the atmosphere of the decade as follows: “The people strove for their lives. They were so affected by state violence that they could not think of anything else.”<sup>133</sup>

The dams and HPPs the construction of which were started or projected in the 2000s have met with resistance, unlike the Uzunçayır Dam constructed in 1994. The AKP came to power in 2002 with a landslide victory and institutionalized quickly. In the decade since, Turkey has witnessed the political dominance of a single party that has succeeded in extending its influence and linking itself to various sectors of society.<sup>134</sup> On the other hand, the democratic reform process upon which the government embarked satisfied a majority of people who had suffered under the previous hegemony (the “military tutelage

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131 Ibid., 9.

132 Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed*, 49.

133 “İnsanlar kendi canlarının derdine düşmüştü. Devlet şiddetinden başka şey düşünecek halleri yoktu.” G. S., interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 12.10.2010.

134 Meltem Müftüler-Baç and E. Fuat Keyman, “The Era of Dominant-Party Politics,” *Journal of Democracy* 23:1 (January 2012), 91.

system” in the words of the AKP hegemony). The “new Turkey” that emerged under the AKP rule overthrew the influence of the army in politics and is more democratic than the “old Turkey” according to religious conservatives, liberals, and Kurdish nationalists.<sup>135</sup> Some sections of the Dersim people also supported the ruling party, getting even with Kemalists held responsible for the 1937-38 events.

The political environment of Dersim has drastically changed in the last decade. To talk about the Dersim Massacre and even to use the word “Dersim” was considered an offence until recently. This historical tragedy has become a means by which the AKP gains advantage over the CHP. The AKP has sought to keep this memory of Dersimlis alive and has offered them unlimited freedom when it comes to history.

The government has eliminated obstacles to the right to protest and to freedom of speech with respect to the 1937-38 events. Moreover, the dramatic decline in the power of the military in politics is apparent, especially in the eastern provinces; therefore, a relatively libertarian atmosphere has emerged in the city. However, the new democratic milieu is bounded by historical events. Considering lawsuits filed against activists participating in protests that occurred in the city in the last decade, anti-dam protests and protests against the government or Gülen community have stimulated the most.<sup>136</sup> According to the president of the Tunceli Bar Association, Uğur Yeşiltepe, the majority of people arrested or detained on the grounds of being members of terrorist groups had played a significant role in anti-dam protests and had protested the government and the dam companies.<sup>137</sup>

Although Dersimlis living in the diaspora started to criticize dams and put them on the agenda via the Munzur Culture and Nature Festival at the beginning of the 2000s, the first widespread anti-dam movements emerged in 2009

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135 Ziya Öniş, “Sharing Power: Turkey’s Democratization Challenge in the Age of the AKP Hegemony,” *Insight Turkey* 15:2 (Spring 2013), 103-122.

136 In indictments of certain leftist activists prepared in 2013, “protesting the Dersim Massacre” was presented as evidence of terrorist activities. İsmail Saymaz, “Dersim’i Anmak’ Terör Suçu Oldu: Altışar Yıl Üçer Ay Hapis,” *Radikal*, 27.06.2013.

137 Uğur Yeşiltepe, tape-recorded interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 01.07.2014.

after the Uzunçayır Dam impounded water. A legal struggle and massive protests were organized by leftist groups with the support of NGOs and the municipality. Independent ecology groups and ecology commissions of political parties and organizations were formed in the city in a short time. The largest ecology-oriented demonstration in the country was organized: 20 thousand people participated in the protest “No Dams in Munzur.”<sup>138</sup>

In the course of time, anti-dam discourse became the main theme of the Munzur Culture and Nature Festival. All social and political groups in the city agree with the slogan “the Munzur will flow freely.” Public opinion has substantially turned against the dams, HPPs, and the government willing to commodify Dersim’s nature in cooperation with dam companies. The ecological movement fed by and feeding other social movements has developed particularly after 2007 when the government became more authoritarian. On the other hand, the PKK declared a ceasefire in 1999 and abandoned its goal of an independent nation-state in the 2000s following the capture of Öcalan. Both the Kurdish movement and the socialists were losing blood and took the opportunity to mobilize the people by means of these high-modernist projects. In other words, the threat of ecological destruction due to the dams and HPPs revitalized civil society in the city at a conjuncture in which the opposition had been overshadowed by the AKP’s commitment to democratization. The relatively democratic atmosphere that emerged with the elimination of the ancient military hegemony contributed to the development and revival of the opposition, which would side against the AKP hegemony.

The high-modernist projects to be established in the province strengthened not only traditional opposition parties but also new, local approaches emphasizing the distinctiveness of Dersim identity and perceiving the dams as a threat to the unity of Dersim. Nature has a significant place in Dersim Alevism; the dams pose a threat not only to the environment but also to their places of worship. The DEDEF (the Federation of Dersim Associations) has led this process by encouraging Dersimlis living abroad to return and protect both their living space and their places of worship. The Munzur Culture and

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138 *Radikal*, 10.10.2009.

Nature Festival has become a public sphere reproducing polarization in the new era.

Anti-dam protests and ecological movements have grown throughout the country with the increasing commodification of natural resources under a regime in which “exchange-value predominates over use-value in the production of commodities.”<sup>139</sup> However, movements occurring in Dersim differ from others in terms of the substantial participation of inhabitants and the motivations that extend beyond ecological sensibilities. Currently, the authoritarian state is insisting on establishing dams and HPPs in Dersim in spite of contrary court decisions and ever-developing social resistance; however, its uncompromising stance with respect to high-modernist projects damages the legitimacy and democratic discourse of the regime. Because the intervention of the state in nature (and in space more broadly) has increased the significance of the local and the values characterized by the space, such colossal projects have stimulated all types of social movements and transformed inhabitants into their agents.

### § 5.3 Concluding Remarks

The discursive regimes of theory that derive from scientific knowledge rationalize urban space according to the dominant ideological power. The Tunceli Cemevi discussed in this chapter is both an actor that attempts to shape space and spatial projects that serve the ideology of the state per se. It reflects a knowledge through which the government contacts with the local people and seeks to take part in social and political practice. On the other hand, it has emerged as a public space while natural worship places have disappeared.

Second, high-modernist projects – HPPs and dams – were examined as parts of the spatial strategies of the state. Since the second half of the 1990s, these “high-modernist projects” have considerably transformed both rural and urban spaces. The state has depopulated the spaces of Dersim that it sees as a threat to its sovereignty. These projects not only reshape residential areas and accelerate migration from villages to the city center but also function as a

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139 Kovel, 39-40.

counterinsurgency strategy. In this way, both the spaces and the inhabitants of Dersim are reorganized parallel to the government's security concerns.

However, both the Tunceli Cemevi and the dams and HPPs are perceived by inhabitants as attempts by the state to "tame" the Dersim people and to appropriate the city although the central authority seeks to found its discourse on the basis of serving the local people. They think that the spatial strategies of the AKP are a "second '38" invented to wipe Dersim off the map and thoroughly assimilate its people with a defined religious authority.

## Economic Strategies of the AKP Government: Changing Urban Space through State Institutions

In this chapter, I present public institutions established in the 2000s in Dersim: the Firat Development Agency (Firat Kalkınma Ajansı, FKA) founded by a 2006 law and Tunceli (Munzur) University founded in 2008. I examine their roles in the urban development of Dersim and their influence on economic and demographic transformations that have induced a new political climate. I seek to scrutinize how the AKP government attempts to control and reframe the population through these institutions. Unlike under the OHAL regime, the AKP government seeks to make the urban space “profitable” in addition to rendering it controllable.

Although their functions differ from each other, this study claims that both these aims serve to “integrate” Dersim – which is considered anomalistic in terms of political life, cultural features, and economic issues – into the hegemonic system of values of the country and of global capitalism. Considering these institutions as social actors playing a *socializing* role rather than being themselves *socialized*,<sup>1</sup> I examine the relations that they “imply, contain and dissimulate.” Lefebvre states that

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1 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 191.

it would be more accurate to say that [space] is at once a precondition and a result of social superstructures. The state and each of its constituent institutions call for spaces – but spaces which they can then organize according to their specific requirements; so there is no sense in which space can be treated solely as an a priori condition of these institutions and the state which presides over them.<sup>2</sup>

Because the institutions on which I focus are produced by planners, urbanists, economists, and technocrats, they can be categorized as “representations of space” defined as “conceptualized space” by Lefebvre,<sup>3</sup> which is attached to the relations of production and to the “order.”<sup>4</sup> According to Lefebvre, representations of space – the dominant space in current society – are about the history of ideology.<sup>5</sup> The notion includes “the logic and forms of knowledge, and the ideological content of codes, theories, and the conceptual depictions of space linked to production relations.”<sup>6</sup> That is to say, representations of space consist of a knowledge based on *connaissance* and ideology.<sup>7</sup> Ideology can exist only by interfering in social space and thus by embodying itself in it.<sup>8</sup> In this context, one may argue that the functions of the institutions I investigate in this chapter do not consist of only economic development but also ideological re-design of the urban space and its users. They are part of the mental space occupied by the state – in other words, the representations of the state.

This chapter introduces how institutions founded in recent years in Der-sim meet the needs of government. The questions of how these institutions – functioning as administrative and political apparatuses of the state – intervene in space and how they contribute to shaping political and economic life of the city is discussed.

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2 Ibid., 85.

3 Ibid., 38.

4 Ibid., 33.

5 Ibid., 116.

6 Rob Shields, *Lefebvre, Love and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics* (London: Routledge, 1999), 163.

7 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 41.

8 Ibid., 44.

This research was conducted during a peace process when a suitable atmosphere for economic activities was created; therefore, it reflects an optimistic perspective on the part of interviewees. That process collapsed in July 2015, and since then the economy of the region has dramatically deteriorated.

### § 6.1 The Fırat Development Agency: Transforming Space through Local Projects

One institution acting on behalf of the government in Dersim is the Fırat Development Agency (Fırat Kalkınma Ajansı, FKA), a regional development agency responsible for the cities of Malatya, Elazığ, Bingöl, and Dersim. The institution is worth examining due to its position as a mediator between the central government and local people since the end of the 2000s. The questions of how the state seeks to reach the local and how economic activities enable it to be involved in the spatial (and therefore political, economic, and social) transformation of the city is scrutinized. I argue that the agency incorporated local actors – who were not previously inclined to cooperate with government institutions – into projects approved by central authorities. In this respect, the FKA can be handled as a strategy through which the state controls and configures the local economy, politics, and space.

Analyzing the activities of the FKA allows us to observe the commodification process occurring in the city. As mentioned, the natural resources of Dersim have already been exposed to commercialization; however, this process has accelerated since the beginning of the 2000s and has been institutionalized with the establishment of the FKA. How a certain spatial, scalar horizon (local, regional, or national) comes into prominence according to the needs of capital in general or a faction of capital particularly, in tandem with the government's objective of spatial reorganization in Eastern Anatolia, is the starting point of this section.

The concept of scale is useful for formulating place-specific developmental strategies in recent decades because the production of localities is related to

the production of scales.<sup>9</sup> Neil Smith points out that scale introduces a distilled expression of spatial ideologies such as nationalism, localism, and regionalism. Scale is produced and represented on the basis of spatialized politics.<sup>10</sup> In other words, because scale is political, it is possible to read the political life of the city by focusing on the scale the significance of which is increasing in a certain moment.

In the era of globalization – often assumed to be characterized by global social structures, the end of the nation-state, and the transformation of space and time<sup>11</sup> – global governance is supported by the agents of international regimes, especially by NGOs, via strategic alliances orchestrated by both transnational enterprises and locally- and regionally-based firms. While some regional and local economies reemerge within national economies as part of the overall globalization process, the forms of the state are restructured in accordance with the relativization of scale due to the inability of traditional state forms to organize and control the new economy.<sup>12</sup> However, the rise of a scale and the primacy of certain governing forms of the state are contextual and contingent. Scales are produced so they can be transformed or destroyed.<sup>13</sup> Neil Brenner argues that the *process of scaling*, generally perceived as *hierarchization* and *rehierarchization*, mostly resembles mosaics, not pyramids. Meanings of the global, national, regional, and urban differ qualitatively according to the historical context of scalar partitioning of the socio-spatial process.<sup>14</sup> In

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- 9 Kevin Cox and Andrew Mair, “Levels of Abstraction in Locality Studies,” *Antipode* 21:2 (1989), 130.
- 10 Neil Smith, *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital, and the Production of Space* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2008), 230.
- 11 For an approach suggesting that globalization is not a new age, see Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Petersson, *Globalization: A Short History* (Princeton, N.J.; Woodstock: Princeton University Press, 2005), 147-150.
- 12 Bob Jessop, “The Crisis of the National Spatio-Temporal Fix and the Tendential Ecological Dominance of Globalizing Capitalism,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24:2 (2000), 348.
- 13 Anssi Paasi, “Place and Region: Looking Through the Prism of Scale,” *Progress in Human Geography* 28,4 (2004), 542.
- 14 Neil Brenner, “The Limits to Scale? Methodological Reflections on Scalar Structuration,” *Progress in Human Geography* 25,4 (2001), 600-606.

other words, the rise of a specific scale depends on a specific historical geographic moment of capitalist development.

Although the “reinvention” of localities is often well-received by researchers who interpret the transformation as the “death of the nation-state” and exalt the “borderless economy,”<sup>15</sup> as well as by international organizations that often articulate the concepts of “pluralism,” “participation,” and “governance,”<sup>16</sup> there are also many approaches that examine the new locality cautiously, taking the capitalist state as the focus of analysis instead of the nation-state. Second, the role of neoliberal political projects in shaping the dynamics of spatial changes also needs to be emphasized. For example, Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore discuss the new localism through the analytical lens of neoliberalism by considering the governance methods of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Trade Organization, the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the European Union.<sup>17</sup> I refer to these studies that scrutinize rescaling as an implicit process in the capitalist state and neoliberalism. From this perspective, the globalization of capital and the rescaling of state territorial power are also regarded as interrelated.<sup>18</sup>

The globalization of capital requires the reorganization of time and space. David Harvey argues that resolving overaccumulation crises of capital that arise from the chronic tendency of capital to accumulate is only possible through temporal displacement and geographic expansion. To create fresh

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- 15 See, for example, Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press, 1995). On the other hand, Bob Jessop argues that the concepts of the new paradigm – such as “middle way,” “consultation,” “negotiation,” “subsidiary,” “reflexivity,” and “dialogue” – have positive connotations and are favored over the anarchy of the market and the state’s “iron fist.” Bob Jessop, “Governance and Meta-Governance: On Reflexivity, Requisite Variety and Requisite Irony,” in *Governance, as Social and Political Communication*, (ed.) Henrik P. Bang (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 104
- 16 Birgül Ayman Güler, “Yönetişim: Tüm İktidar Sermayeye,” *Praksis* 9 (Winter-Spring 2003), 102-103.
- 17 Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, “Preface: From the ‘New Localism’ to the Spaces of Neoliberalism,” *Antipode* 34:3 (2002), 342.
- 18 See, for example, Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; Neil Brenner, “Global, Fragmented, Hierarchical: Henri Lefebvre’s Geographies of Globalization,” *Public Culture* 10:1 (Fall 1997): 135-167.

productive powers, the surpluses created in a given territorial system can be deployed in a new space. In this way, capitalists reach new markets, new production capacities, and cheaper resources and social and labor possibilities.<sup>19</sup> Geographic expansion and reorganization imply dynamic spaces for capital accumulation.

Do the spatial movement of capital and rise of a specific scale operate independently from territorially-organized institutions and institutional arrangements? The functioning of development agencies (of the FKA in the case of Dersim) demonstrates that the circuits of capital – a constantly moving and dynamic process – affect and are affected by government policies. States can regulate spatial displacements through the tools of economic policy that they possess in accordance with geographic inequalities and can reshape a place in line with their short-, mid-, and long-term goals. To illustrate, for imperialist states, this means the colonial, neo-colonial, and imperial processes of appropriation that Harvey narrates in detail in *New Imperialism*. For countries such as Turkey, a similar process occurs mostly within the national boundaries. The surplus of capital is transferred from one part of the path to a new locality or region and is absorbed in order to redirect capital flows inward or outward.<sup>20</sup> States and other forms of governance still regulate and negotiate these processes through new institutions determined according to the needs of the new scale.

The strategy of attracting capital investment in new localities and offering capitalists the advantage of territorial competitiveness requires new frameworks of cooperation between the central administration and regional and local administrative structures. Institutional reforms reflect the rescaling of state place. From this point of view, the state – not only as an actor organizing accumulation but also as a scale – needs to be discussed in detail. Brenner insists on the role of the state in political geography, though many researchers of globalization tend to omit state-level processes. According to him, the state organizes and reorganizes the spatiotemporal foundations of the economic

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19 Harvey, *New Imperialism*, 109.

20 Harvey, *The Limits to Capital*, 415-431.

system. In his article on Lefebvre, he argues that Lefebvre himself attributes a major role to the state scale.

Against the state demise argument, Lefebvre suggests that both urbanization and capital accumulation necessarily remain territorialized within geographical spaces organized by configurations of state power. The current transformation, therefore, signals a re-scaling of state sociospatial organization, not the dissolution of state territoriality as such.<sup>21</sup>

Erik Swyngedouw takes a similar approach, clarifying the necessity of political-institutional organization for the process of the scalar transformation of the networks of economic organization shaped by socio-spatial power relations. Neither supra-national or global scales nor local, urban, or regional configurations persist. Flows of capital impose the production of new spatial configurations and scales; however, the state still as a crucial actor for the crystallizing and resolving of the tensions and conflicts appearing during the rescaling process.<sup>22</sup>

From this point forward, the projects of the FKA for Dersim are examined within the framework of rescaling and the spatial movement of capital. Swyngedouw's concept of "glocalisation" is useful for understanding socioeconomic, cultural, and political relations, struggles, and consensus between the state and the local.<sup>23</sup> Glocalisation is a two-sided process involving rescaling of institutional and regulatory arrangements as well as economic activities. These changes affect the geometry of social power: the power and control of some groups increase while that of others decreases.<sup>24</sup> Scalar economic and political strategies are developed as parts of strategies of different groups, in

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21 Neil Brenner, "Global, Fragmented, Hierarchical: Henri Lefebvre's Geographies of Globalization," 160.

22 Erik Swyngedouw, "Globalisation or 'Glocalisation'? Networks, Territories and Rescaling," 32.

23 See Erik Swyngedouw, "The Mammon Quest: 'Glocalization', Interspatial Competition and the Monetary Order: The Construction of New Scales," in *Cities and Regions in the New Europe. The Global-Local Interplay and Spatial Development Strategies*, (eds.) Mick Dunford and Grigoris Kafkalas (London: Belhaven Press, 1992), 39-67.

24 Swyngedouw, "Globalisation or 'Glocalisation'? Networks, Territories and Rescaling," 33.

tandem with cooperation and competition among them: “The mobilisation of scalar narratives, scalar politics and scalar practices, then, becomes an integral part of political power struggles and strategies.”<sup>25</sup>

Because socio-spatial power struggles alter the importance and function of certain geographic scales, regional developments agencies are the state’s negotiation, control, and domination of space and the will of local powers to take part in the accumulation process. The agencies constitute the corporate infrastructure of the reorganization process of the local in accord with spatial movement requirements of capital. In the following pages, I focus on the FKA as the embodiment of institutional arrangements for rescaling territorialities of governance and as a medium for establishing cooperation with local powers. The investment advice given by the FKA reflects the economic role attributed to Dersim. On the other hand, the economic stimulus package passed at the end of the 2000s incorporates the city into a new scale and redefines it. I examine governmental strategy with respect to Dersim in light of investment incentives and advice that has reconstructed the city as a part of a new scale and space of capital.

#### 6.1.1 *Cooperation with the Local through the Regional Development Agency*

One of mediators of the new localism is regional development agencies (RDAs).<sup>26</sup> Generally, RDA have been defined as “regionally based, publicly financed institution outside the mainstream of central and local government

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25 Ibid., 34.

26 For detailed information and analysis of RDAs, see Kevin Morgan, “The Learning Region: Institutions, Innovation and Regional Renewal,” *Regional Studies* 31:5 (1997): 491-503; A. Harding, S. Wilks-Heeg and M. Hutchins, “Regional Development Agencies and English Regionalism: the Question of Accountability,” *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* 17:6 (1999): 669-683; Iain Deas and Kevin G. Ward, “From the ‘New Localism’ to the ‘New Regionalism’? The Implications of Regional Development Agencies for City-Regional Relations,” *Political Geography* 19:3 (March 2000): 273-292; Gordon MacLeod, “New Regionalism Reconsidered: Globalization and the Remaking of Political Economic Space,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 25:4 (December 2001): 804-830; Jamie Gough, “The Genesis and Tensions of the English Regional Development Agencies: Class Relations and

administration designed to promote indigenous economic development through an integrated use of predominantly ‘soft’ policy instruments.”<sup>27</sup> Henrik Halkier and Mike Danson, who compare top-down and bottom-up regional policy approaches, point out that the former are departmental while the latter are semi-autonomous in terms of organization; the former aims to redistribute growth and increase economic hardware while the latter aims to strengthen indigenous growth and improve economic software in terms of strategies. The former uses “hard” resources in a non-selective, reactive manner while the latter uses both “hard” and “soft” resources in a selective, proactive manner as far as policy instruments are concerned.<sup>28</sup> In other words, the new model embodied in RDAs more effectively accommodates the interests of the region and the capitalist state.

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Scale,” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 10:1 (January 2003): 23-38; For detailed information and analysis of RDAs founded in Turkey, see Serap Kayasü, Melih Pınarcıoğlu, Suna Senem Yaşar and Sencer Dere, *Yerel/Bölgesel Ekonomik Kalkınma ve Rekabet Gücünün Artırılması: Bölgesel Kalkınma Ajansları* (İstanbul: ITO, 2003); Melih Pınarcıoğlu and Oğuz Işık, *Yeni Kalkınmacılık: Bölgesel Kalkınmada Arayışlar* (Ankara: GAP-GIDEM, 2004); *Bölge Kalkınma Ajansları Nedir Ne Değildir?*, (ed.) Menaf Turan (Ankara: Paragraf, 2005); Ebru Loewendahl-Ertugal, “Europeanisation of Regional Policy and Regional Governance: The Case of Turkey,” *European Political Economy Review* 3:1 (Spring 2005): 18-53; Fuat Ercan, “Bölgesel Kalkınmada Değişim: Devlet Merkezli Bölgesel Kalkınmadan Piyasa Merkezli Bölgesel Birikime,” in *Bölgesel Kalkınma Politikaları ve Yeni Dinamikler*, (ed.) F. Aylan Arı (İstanbul: Derin, 2006), 45-112; Barış Övgün, “Bir Politika Transferi Örneği: Kalkınma Ajansları,” *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi* 62:3 (2007): 233-255; Trevor Young-Hyman, “The Potential for Effective Regional Development Agencies in Turkey: A Comparative Analysis,” *Regional & Federal Studies* 18:4 (2008): 375-402; Arnoud Lagendijk, Serap Kayasu and Suna Yasar, “The Role of Regional Development Agencies in Turkey : From Implementing EU Directives To Supporting Regional Business Communities?” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 16:4 (2009): 383-396; Koray Karasu, “Yeni Bir Tür Merkezleşmenin Aracı Olarak Bölge Kalkınma Ajansları,” *Memleket Mevzuat* 4:46 (Nisan 2009): 24-33; Mustafa Sakal, *Bölgesel Kalkınma Sürecinde Kalkınma Ajansları* (İzmir: Altın Nokta, 2010); and Burcu Yavuz Tiftikçigil, *Türkiye’de Bölgesel Kalkınma Politikalarında Yaşanan Dönüşüm ve Kalkınma Ajansları* (İstanbul: Derin, 2014).

27 Henrik Halkier and Mike Danson, “Regional Development Agencies in Europe: A Survey of Key Characteristics and Trends,” *European Urban and Regional Studies* 4:3 (1997): 243-256.

28 Ibid.

RDAs emerged since the 1950s and 60s in many European countries in order to animate and develop provincial economies. The EU was in need of improving the regional capacities of EU candidate countries, therefore RDAs were widely promoted. In the course of time, the capacities and scopes of RDAs have increased as far as the size of projects they manage and the actors with which they cooperate are concerned.<sup>29</sup> Indeed, the belief that every region or locality has its own specificity and that this specificity contains the potential for economic development reinforces this reorganization. However, the model supposes a common economic interest for all inhabitants of a region or locality.

The first RDAs were founded in Turkey in 2006 following the Law on RDAs enacted as a part of EU accession process.<sup>30</sup> In the 2000s, Turkey, which was frequently subject to sanctions and the structural adjustment programs of the EU, jumped into the deep end and adopted the regional policies of other European countries even though it has not undergone a similar decentralization. In her study comparing EU and Turkey in terms of regional policy, Ebru Loewendahl-Ertugal argues that unlike the EU, Turkey has no such tradition (except for GAP), its regional policy is weak, its approach to regional policy is detached from its other policies (while that of the EU is designed to integrate many sectors), its choice of projects as well as management, monitoring, and control capacities are unclear, and the involvement of the private sector is low

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- 29 The most significant practice of RDAs is the establishment of the European Association of Development Agencies (EURADA). 130 regional development agencies from across the European Union gathered under the umbrella of the EURADA, claiming that “disseminates good practice in economic development for the benefit of its members” via strong international links, particularly through the International Economic Development Council (IEDC) in the United States, but also via its networks in China, Japan, Australia, and New Zealand. <http://www.eurada.org>.
- 30 In the early 1990s, the first RDAs were established under the leadership of non-governmental organizations: the Aegean Regional Development Foundation (EGEV) in 1993, as well as initiatives of the Izmir Chamber of Commerce (IZTO) and the Mersin Chamber of Commerce and Industry (MTSO). The foundation of the Regional Development Institute of Small and Medium-sized Industry Development Organization (KOSGEB), intended to foster regional development through the support of small and medium sized enterprises and investors, followed them. Legendijk et al., 387.

or limited.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, the development of local and regional identities has often been perceived as a threat to the central state and the values constructed around it, such as “indivisible unity” and “national independency.”<sup>32</sup> However, the AKP declared that it would pursue policies to integrate Turkey into the international division of labor, and it promised to establish RDAs as soon as possible to encourage and organize investment while mobilizing local potential.<sup>33</sup>

The agencies, whose foundation was supported by the EU, the government, the business associations,<sup>34</sup> were legally defined as follows:

A development agency coordinates with the DPT at the national scale, and it has specific technical and financial (budget) mechanism. It is non-profit. It can make decisions and apply them quickly. It is independent of central and local administrations. It joins forces with the public sector, private sector, and NGOs. It is a legal entity. Its operations are regularized by the Law No. 5449 and are subject to private law sanctions. RDAs are development units the technical capacities of which are high. They are not agencies that implement [projects] but support, coordinate and catalyze [them]. They are founded by a decree of the council of ministers on the basis of the İstatistiki Bölge Birimleri Sınıflandırması, İBBS.<sup>35</sup>

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31 Loewendahl-Ertugal, 24.

32 For example, the current system determined in the first Geography Congress in 1941, which divided the country into seven regions according to features such as climate, location, and agricultural diversity, displays that the state abstained from defining the regions according to ethnic identities.

33 T.C. 58. *Hükümet Acil Eylem Planı* (AEP) (Ankara, 2003), 34-35.

34 For a detailed analysis of the stance of business associations concerning the foundation of RDAs, see İbrahim Gündoğdu, “Sermayenin Bölgesel Kalkınma Eğilim(ler)i: Kalkınma Ajansları Yasası Üzerine Tarihsel-Coğrafi Materyalist Bir İnceleme,” *Praksis* 19 (2009): 267-302. Gündoğdu argues that while capital organizations based on small and medium sized enterprises welcomed the law, the Turkish Industry and Business Association (TUSIAD) which represented the largest, most established companies, insisted on prioritizing the national scale. Gündoğdu, 291.

35 <http://www.fka.org.tr>.

The İBBS, which was developed in 2002 and is emphasized in the law provides the basis for the foundation of these agencies. The categorization defined by council of ministers' decision number 2002/4720 collects and enhances regional statistics, analyzes regions in terms of social and economic indicators, frames regional policies, and builds a comparable statistical database pertinent to the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) – the hierarchical classification system for dividing up the economic territory in the EU. In this hierarchy, eighty-one cities were identified as “Level 3,” and twenty-six groups of cities were identified as “Level 2.” With the regrouping of these “Level 2” groups, twelve “Level 1” regional statistical units are obtained. This classification does not refer to an administrative hierarchy; it is a statistical categorization. Development agencies are formed for Level 2 regions.<sup>36</sup>

The formation of regional agencies coincides with the reorganization of the incentive system. Questioning how Dersim experiences these two processes provides a more comprehensive picture of the government's strategy for the city. In addition to the İBBS, the Socio-Economic Development Index of Cities 2011 (SEGE-2011), which forms the basis of the new incentive system and determines the fund that every RDA receives from the budget, positioned the city into hierarchies and redefined it according to its investment value. The investors who tend to invest in a certain city are oriented towards certain sectors by these mechanisms.

The FKA is the agency for the TRB<sub>1</sub> region consisting of Malatya, Elazığ, Bingöl, and Dersim. According to the SEGE-2011 prepared by the Ministry of Development, Elazığ is the 39th, Malatya is the 42nd, Dersim is the 58th, and

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36 <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr>. According to the law, Middle East Anatolia is defined as a Level 1 unit. The Malatya region (including Malatya, Elazığ, Bingöl, and Tunceli) and the Van region (including Van, Muş, Bitlis, and Hakkari) are regional statistical units Level 2 beneath Middle East Anatolia. Although it is claimed that Level 1 and Level 2 classifications are determined according to the resemblance of economic, social, and geographic features of the cities grouped together, the most crucial criteria is obviously geographic proximity. Mehmet Temiz, “Düzyey 2 Sınıflandırmasında Bölge İçi Gelişmişlik Farklılıkları: TRB<sub>1</sub> Örneği,” *1. Uluslararası Bölgesel Kalkınma Konferansı Bildiriler*, (eds.) Coşkun Can Aktan et al. (Malatya: FKA, 2011), 142.

Bingöl is the 72nd city.<sup>37</sup> Dersim's higher position on list is because of misleading statistics that ignore the soldier and police populations whose presence ameliorates the economic conditions of the city.<sup>38</sup>

When the SEGE-2011 was taken as a reference for the new regional investment incentives system in April 2012, the status of Dersim as a space changed. In the previous investment incentives system (2009-2012), the country was distributed into four regions depending on investment and development priorities. Dersim had been included in the fourth region – the most advantageous region in which to invest. With the new system of six regions, Dersim moved to the fifth region. In this new system, the state offered great opportunities to investors in the sixth region, which consisted of Ağrı, Ardahan, Batman, Bingöl, Bitlis, Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Iğdır, Kars, Mardin, Muş, Siirt, Şanlıurfa, Şırnak, and Van.

The state provides provinces in the sixth region a higher contribution rate in terms of tax deduction, support for the employer's share of social security premiums for a longer term and a higher rate and amount of interest rate support.<sup>39</sup> The crucial advantage for investors in these cities is support for the employer's share of social security premiums. Under the new system, investors are encouraged to invest in eastern cities where unemployment is high. Exemption from social security expenditures means transforming eastern and southeastern provinces into spaces for labor-intensive industries. According to Mehmet Şimşek, the Minister of Finance, these regions will be "Turkey's China."

Wherever you invest in Turkey, there is substantial support. We minimized taxes. We cancelled them altogether in the sixth region. There is

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37 <http://www.dpt.gov.tr>. SEGE indicators are as follows: demographic indicators, educational indicators, health services indicators, employment indicators, competitive and innovative capacity indicators, fiscal capacity indicators, accessibility indicators, and life quality indicators.

38 I discuss the demographic effect of the high population of soldiers and police in the previous chapter.

39 <http://www.incentives.gov.tr>.

neither an income tax nor a social security contribution. Even for corporate income taxes, we offer a discount of 90 percent. The east and southeast of Turkey will become Turkey's China.<sup>40</sup>

Dersim, on the other hand, is separated from the rest of the east by the declaration of the arrangement. Although the classification seems to be “scientific,” the criteria of the SEGE are criticized by interest groups in aggrieved cities.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, the determination of these criteria that create a hierarchy among cities is a political process; being relegated to the fifth versus sixth region is no accident. Some Dersimlis believe that the government was punishing them for the result of the 2010 constitution referendum.<sup>42</sup> I disagree; in addition to Dersim, the status of many conservative cities was changed in the new incentives package and many were reclassified into less advantageous categories.<sup>43</sup> However, it would not be correct to reduce the system to a hierarchy technically determined. The classification process, production of data, and regional development strategies of the state are intermingled. I argue that Dersim –unlike the rest of the Eastern Anatolia in terms of population structure and social and cultural features – was not included in the “space of cheap labor;” it was regarded as another factor of production, the “space of natural resources.”

### 6.1.2 *Making Dersim a Tourism Paradise*

The bulletins of the FKA, news published about investment opportunities, and the statements of the officers of the FKA, project officers, the municipality, and the chief of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tunceli reveal that Dersim was imagined as a “space of tourism.” For many cities and regions,

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40 “Vergiler Sıfırlandı, Güneydoğu Çin Olacak,” *Radikal*, 12.04.2012.

41 See, for example, the statement of Şükrü Başdeğirmen, the president of the Chamber of Industry and Trade of Isparta. He argues that because the social determinants of Isparta were high, the city was put in the second region. He insists that these values are not associated with economy. <http://m.haber32.com.tr>.

42 81 percent of the inhabitants of Dersim voted no in the referendum. This is the highest rate of any city.

43 For example, Rize, Trabzon, Kayseri, Konya, Elazığ, Kastamonu, Bayburt, Erzurum, Gümüşhane, and Çankırı.

tourism has long been seen as the prominent sector for socioeconomic development; Dersim is no exception. However, the reasons Dersim was presented as a tourism paradise and why it was not included in “Turkey’s China” hint at the state’s Dersim policies.

Regional development agencies prepare certain brochures and bulletins for each city. The FKA prepared several for Dersim. The exotic items identified with Dersim are illustrated on the cover of the brochure: snow-capped mountains, rivers, wild animals and birds, red speckled trout, and the endangered curved-horned goat. The title of the brochure is “Hidden Paradise of the East.” This description, paralleling the discourse of official reports from the republican period picturing the city as a closed box, isolated and surrounded by four mountains, refers to the city’s authenticity and wilderness not only in terms of its unique natural attractions but also in terms of its diverse investment opportunities. Dersim is an almost unspoiled area for capital; thus, investors are invited to discover it.

Neither industry nor agriculture have ever played a significant role in Dersim’s economy. Reports of the FKA dated July 2011 state that the most remarkable investments made in the city are those of the Fırat Electricity Distribution Inc. (Fırat Elektrik Dağıtım AŞ, FEDAŞ), General Directorate of State Hydraulic Works (Devlet Su İşleri, DSI) and the Village Infrastructure Support Project (Köy Altyapısını Destekleme Projesi, KÖYDES).<sup>44</sup> These high cost projects generally belong to energy sector. The Uzunçayır Dam and HPP the costs of which reached 300 million TL is the most crucial. Investments in the transportation, education, and health sectors follow it. The Tunceli Organized Industrial Zone, which concentrates on the food sector to a large extent, is a means to develop the industrial capacity of the city; however, it is of course not enough to make Dersim an “industrial city.”

As far as agriculture is concerned, the FKA recommends investors in Dersim investing in certain fields such as viticulture, vegetable-fruit growing, and forage plant breeding. According to the agency, the presence of rich supplies of underground and surface waters and irrigable agricultural lands in the

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44 *Annual Report of the Fırat Kalkınma Ajansı*, 2011.

south is an advantage for irrigation farming. It heralds the laboratories for water, soil, and plant analysis that will be founded by the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture and that peasants will no longer have to go to neighboring cities for laboratory services.<sup>45</sup>

On the other hand, the proposals of the FKA concerning agricultural investment in other cities in its jurisdiction are more varied. Malatya, Bingöl, and Elazığ have characteristic agricultural products, respectively apricots, walnuts, and grapes; Dersim does not. Dersim's "main source of income" is defined as stockbreeding, although animal husbandry in the city is not organized. Pisciculture and beekeeping have improved in recent years, but their competitive capacity is limited given that the infrastructure for stockbreeding, poultry husbandry, and aquaculture in Malatya and Elazığ has already been established.<sup>46</sup> In addition, dams built on the Munzur River threaten aquacultural resources and economies based on them. Another line of business recommended by the FKA – drinking water bottling – has also suffered from dams. In other words, although investors are encouraged to benefit from the rivers, it is irrational to invest in lines of business the future of which seems unclear because of unsustainable energy policies.

The bulletins of the FKA show that Dersim has no specific agricultural product, no potential for industrial production based on a specific good, and no other prominent sector takes precedence over that of other cities of the TRB1 region. On the other hand, the population characteristics of Dersim prevent it from taking part in "Turkey's China." Its net migration rate is high; its population is low. For example, the FKA indicates that Bingöl is suitable for "establishing contract manufacturing ready-made companies that require low capital." Elazığ remains ahead of the game in terms of skilled labor. It has vocational schools that train intermediate staff needed in the business world in various fields such as metal casting, textiles, furnishings, mining, marbles, plastics, and food. The advantage of Malatya is defined as the "opportunity of

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45 Ibid.

46 76% of the trout production of the TRB1 region is met by Elazığ according to data from 2008. <http://www.tuik.gov.tr>. By year 2010, there were twelve aquacultural facilities in Dersim and four new facilities were under development. <http://www.fka.gov.tr>.

providing skilled labor with competitive wages.”<sup>47</sup> In short, Malatya and Elazığ, which are in the fourth region under the new incentive system, are presented with an emphasis on the presence of skilled labor, while Bingöl is presented as a production space favorable for sectors requiring cheap, unskilled labor. However, the FKA does not provide any information about the labor power of Dersim. Certain features of the Dersim people render them undesirable as a labor force.

Some characteristics of the labor power of Dersim reveal why authorities insist on reconfiguring Dersim’s economy on the basis of exploiting natural resources instead of pursuing a development strategy on labor-intensive industry. It is clear that conflict and forced migration have already limited its economic activities; however, the employable population is significant. The dependency rate<sup>48</sup> of the city is thirty-five while that of Turkey is forty-eight.<sup>49</sup> After 2010, the population aged 20-24 increased due to the foundation of the university. Nevertheless, because the city does not offer favorable job opportunities, students predictably move to other cities after graduation.

An important factor that affects the motivation of the labor force is the presence of a powerful diaspora. Dersimlis who left their homeland both before and during the 1990s maintain their bonds with relatives and support them financially as much as possible. These transfers of cash are a crucial means of livelihood for local people.<sup>50</sup> In spite of the high unemployment in the city,<sup>51</sup> inhabitants behave selectively when it comes to finding work on ac-

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47 *Annual Report of the Fırat Kalkınma Ajansı*, 2011.

48 Age-population ratio of those not in the labor force measuring pressure on the productive population.

49 Türk Girişim ve İş Dünyası Konfederasyonu, *Bölgesel Kalkınmada Yerel Dinamikler: Tunceli Modeli ve 2023 Senaryoları* (İstanbul: Fam, 2014), 54.

50 Doğan and Tuna, “Tunceli/Dersim’de Tembelliğin Kültürleştirilmesi: Emek Süreçlerinin Özgünlükleri Çerçevesinde Bir Bakış,” 81-94.

51 According to data from TÜİK, unemployment rates in Dersim were as follows: 17.9% in 2008, 18.6% in 2009, 11.5% in 2010, 9.3% in 2011 and 7.6% in 2012. <http://tuik.gov.tr>. Although the rates have decreased in the last few years, unemployment is still a crucial issue for the city.

count of financial aid coming from Dersimlis who live abroad. Their selectivity and dependence on the diaspora has strengthened the label that they are “lazy.”<sup>52</sup> A frequently cited example is the fact that because Dersimlis disdain working in construction, contractors have to hire workers from Diyarbakır or other Kurdish cities.

The selectivity of Dersimlis with respect to jobs is closely related to their high level of education. The Turkification policy imposed after the 1938 events had a great impact on the configuration of labor power. As mentioned, the educational achievement of Dersim is high due to education policy during the republican era as a part of Dersim’s assimilation. However, current data demonstrate that while Dersim (42%) is above average (36%) in terms of the rate of people through graduated from high school or a university, it is among the worst cities in terms of the net elementary schooling rate.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the quantity and quality of vocational schools needs to be improved for the sectors supported by the agencies to develop. The imbalance among different educational stages is not independent of village evacuations and migration, but this exceeds the scope of this chapter. What I want to highlight here is that because the labor power of Dersim is well-educated in comparison to eastern cities put in the sixth region, the inhabitants are less eager to work in labor-intensive industries.

Last, the leftist identity of the city has contributed to the shaping of labor. There are a few employers that can afford to hire workers in the city and it can be suggested that they pretend to comply with the economic rights of workers. In comparison to a conservative city where labor relations are constructed within the cultural hegemony of the employer and through informal religious tools,<sup>54</sup> the labor power of Dersim is less “submissive.” This may be attributed

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Moreover, employment increases after 2010 reflect short-term employment opportunities created by İŞKUR and SODES. Yusuf Cengiz, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 29.07.2012.

52 For an article about the discourse of laziness, see Doğan and Tuna, “Tunceli/Dersim’de Tembelliğin Kültürelleştirilmesi: Emek Süreçlerinin Özgünlükleri Çerçevesinde Bir Bakış.”

53 <http://tuik.gov.tr>.

54 For an example, see Yasin Durak, *Emeğin Tevekkülü: Konya’da İşçi-İşveren İlişkileri ve Dindarlık* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2011).

to Dersim's cultural codes which are unlike those of Sunni Islamic culture that include gratitude to one's employer and consent to one's lot. Due to the leftist tradition and high level of education in the city, the people are acquainted with Marxist values that encourage organization in labor unions and leftist groups. Work stoppage and strikes happen more easily in cases of disagreement.<sup>55</sup> As far as these features of labor are concerned, Dersim is a troubling city for employers. Its worker profile and labor market are far from those expected by capital.

To conclude, Dersim does not resemble other Eastern cities in terms of the features of its labor power. Besides, the FKA only superficially mentions investment opportunities in the textile and clothing industries and does not stress them. Indeed, the role attributed to the city in the rescaling process is not one of supplying low-cost labor for labor-intensive industries. Both the FKA and the incentive system seek to reconfigure Dersim as a tourism space and to commodify its natural resources rather than its work force.<sup>56</sup>

First of all, the processes of commodification are central for the basis of tourism.<sup>57</sup> The production and development of tourism spaces is part of a

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55 See, for example, the strikes of AKSA and Munzur Inc. In September 2013, the workers of Firat AKSA Electricity Distribution Company (FEDAŞ) went on a strike that lasted thirty-eight days. The strike was directly supported by all leftist groups and parties of Dersim. The municipality also visited the workers in an expression of solidarity. The strike succeeded and the demands of the labor union were accepted. The employer was obliged to retreat in the face of the complete support of the social-political atmosphere of the city. Second, in August 2014, forty workers of Munzur Inc., a multi-partnered enterprise founded for social purposes, went on strike for their union rights. At the end of the fourth day, the strike was ended when the employer declared the formation of a commission consisting of representatives of political parties, the bar association, NGOs, labor unions, and workers. The strike coincided with the ISIS attacks on Kobane and was postponed by common consent. Public opinion in the city clearly had a profound effect on the course of both strikes.

56 Tourism is also labor intensive; however, the strategy proposed to investors investing in Dersim is, rather, nature-based tourism.

57 Kevin Meethan, *Tourism in Global Society: Place, Culture, Consumption* (New York: Palgrave, 2001).

more general process of spatial restructuring. Tourism, which requires relatively low capital investment,<sup>58</sup> is the most effective strategy for local development in almost all cities. In the Ninth Development Plan (2007-2013) the tourism sector is presented as a tool to reduce the imbalance of welfare and development among provinces. The plan targets economic and social development in locations with tourism potential that has not been fully explored and marketed.<sup>59</sup>

The FKA also prepared several plans giving wide publicity to tourism. In the Regional Plan of the TRB1 for 2010-2013, the development of the industry and service sectors was one of six strategic goals. The development of tourism is examined in this framework. The strategies are as follows: the development of sports tourism, the amelioration of current facilities and establishment of new ones that offer geothermal resources to tourism, the development of health tourism, the development of potential for culture, art, and convention tourism, the development of tourism facilities for the observation and research of flora and fauna, and innovative methods of advertising.<sup>60</sup>

In the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan for the TRB1 region, types of tourism favorable to the region are introduced: history and culture tourism, religious tourism, health tourism and thermal, and winter tourism.<sup>61</sup> According to the plan, Dersim has a wide range of tourism facilities. Its most crucial tourism areas are the Munzur, Pülümür, and Peri valleys, and the city is suitable especially for nature tourism. Wildlife observation, trekking, rock climbing, mountaineering, water sports, rafting, and botanical tourism are cited in the report.<sup>62</sup> In the Investment Opportunities brochure of the FKA, the details of these activities and information about target groups are given to

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58 David Harrison, "Tourism, Capitalism and Development in Less Developed Countries," in *Capitalism & Development*, (ed.) Leslie Sklair (London: Routledge, 1994), 232-258.

59 Dokuzuncu Kalkınma Planı (2007 - 2013), *T. C. Resmi Gazete*, no. 26215, 01.07.2006, 81.

60 *Fırat Kalkınma Ajansı, TRB1 2010-2013 Bölge Planı*, 189.

61 *Fırat Kalkınma Ajansı, TRB1 Bölgesi Sürdürülebilir Turizm Stratejisi ve Eylem Planı Nihai Rapor*, September 2012, 123.

62 *Ibid.*, 169.

investors: “The fact that many Tunceli-originated people who migrated to Europe return to their homeland in the summer months creates a considerable tourism potential for Tunceli.”<sup>63</sup>

The FKA emphasizes on the mountains in addition to the rivers. It indicates that the mountains are covered in snow for six months and the snow depth is 129-253 centimeters; therefore, they are suitable for skiing and climbing. On the other hand, it highlights that because the flow of Dersim’s rivers is high, it is possible to develop rafting. It also mentions that glacial and crater lakes have touristic value. Fishing is indicated as an opportunity although some species are under threat of extinction. The red speckled trout, which is under protection, is presented as delicious.<sup>64</sup> At the same time, Dersim is considered suitable for ecotourism based on principle of responsible travel to natural areas, conserving the environment, and improving the well being of the local people.

This charming picture drawn by the FKA begs two questions. First, the development of nature tourism inevitably requires the protection of nature and the sustainability of natural resources. The same is true for religious tourism in Dersim so far as the places of worship embedded in nature are concerned. However, conserving and enhancing biocultural diversity and protecting natural and cultural heritage do not seem compatible with the “high-modernist projects” on which the government insists. As mentioned, in the valleys where the FKA is prompting investors to establish tourism facilities, many dams and HPPs are under construction. These two forms of commodification contradict each other.

The second problem is the security issue. Both Dersim’s provincial strategic plan (2010-2014) prepared by the Provincial Special Administration and the reports of the FKA state that tourism investment is possible only in a secure atmosphere. The principal disadvantage of the city is defined as “the absence of a peaceful and stable environment.”<sup>65</sup> The stakeholder analysis made

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63 *Firat Kalkınma Ajansı, Tunceli Yatırım Fırsatları*, 2011.

64 *Ibid.*

65 *Tunceli İl Özel İdaresi, Stratejik Plan 2010-2014*, 44.

by the FKA also suggests that state institutions and organizations see the security problem as the essential threat to the development of tourism in the city. The governorship, the Directorate of Nature Conservation and National Parks, the Provincial Special Administration, and the university call it a “terror problem.”<sup>66</sup> But what is ironic is that it is due to the insecure atmosphere that the natural resources of Dersim have remained untouched. Although ecological destruction has often been used as a counterinsurgency strategy by the state, the large part of the region’s valleys and mountains have not begun to be commercialized until recently because of the conflict.

### 6.1.3 *Changing the Scale: Incorporating Local Actors into the Process*

With the elimination of the long-standing military hegemony, local actors in cities that had been administered by OHAL governors found opportunities to become more involved in economic activities. The OHAL governors were not only the political power but also had authority over tender processes and gathered business networks around themselves. Ali Asker Güler, the former chief of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tunceli, argues that tender procedures were not conducted normally in OHAL regions: “The state was in the habit of inviting certain companies to participate in tenders but their competence was not clear. They had some certificates but nobody knows from where they were given. If we are subject to normal tender procedures with the abolition of the OHAL, a fairer competition environment will emerge.”<sup>67</sup> One of Dersim’s deputies, Kamer Genç, also claims that under the pretext of OHAL, some people obtained unlawful profit.<sup>68</sup>

The new hegemony established by ex-Islamist cadres organized under the AKP has brought about radical changes in both politics and economy. The rise of the local and regional scales and the legal and institutional changes offering local actors more opportunities coincide with the limitation of the role of the military. As civilian government gradually suppressed the military elite, culturally and economically excluded groups – Islamic or conservative capitalists

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66 Ibid., 185-208.

67 Harun Odabaşı, “OHAL’in Yerine Ne Gelecek?” *Aksiyon* 392 (June, 2002).

68 Ibid.

and Kurdish business circles – have come into prominence. Indeed, the former organized as early as 1990 under the Independent Industrialists' and Businessmen's Association (Müstakil Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği, MÜSİAD) consisting of small and medium sized enterprises mostly founded in the second half of the 1980s.<sup>69</sup> In 2001, MÜSİAD and Anatolian businessmen more generally, which had expanded through export-promotion towards international markets, supported Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and his colleagues who at the time leaned towards globalization and the European Union.<sup>70</sup> During the AKP era, not only MUSİAD but other Islamic business associations and confederations such as the Confederation of Businessmen and Industrialists of Turkey (Türkiye İşadamları ve Sanayiciler Konfederasyonu, TUSKON) and All Industrialist and Businessmen Foundation (Tüm Sanayici ve İş Adamları Derneği, TÜMSİAD), founded in 2005, developed rapidly and expanded their market shares.<sup>71</sup>

The second group is businessmen who desire to become involved in investment processes, especially on the local and regional scales, in the more peaceful atmosphere established by the ruling party. From the beginning of the 1990s, some business associations were founded in eastern cities. The Diyarbakır Entrepreneurial Businessmen's Association (Diyarbakır Girişimci İşadamları Derneği, DİĞİAD, 1993), which is known to be related to the Gülen community, the Southeastern Industrialist and Businessmen Foundation (Güneydoğu Sanayici ve İşadamları Derneği, GÜNSİAD, 1993), and Diyarbakır Industrialists and Businesspeople Foundation (Diyarbakır Sanayici ve İş İnsanları Derneği, DİSİAD, 1996) were among the first. On the initiative of DİSİAD and GÜNSİAD, the Federation of Eastern and Southeastern Industrialist's and Businesspeople's Association (Doğu ve Güneydoğu Sanayici İş

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69 Ayşe Buğra, "Dini Kimlik ve Sınıf," in *Sürekli Kriz Politikaları: 2000'li Yıllarda Türkiye*, (eds.) Neşecan Balkan and Sungur Savran (Istanbul: Metis, 2004), 134.

70 Şevket Pamuk, *Türkiye'nin 200 Yıllık İktisadi Tarihi* (Istanbul: İş Bankası Yayınları, 2014), 309.

71 Sadi Özdemir, "Muhafazakâr Cephe Saflar Yeniden Tutuluyor," *Radikal*, 27.01.2014.

İnsanları Dernekleri Federasyonu, DOĞÜNSİFED), consisting of twenty-two member associations, was formed in 2004.<sup>72</sup>

DOĞÜNSİFED is a member of the Turkish Enterprise and Business Confederation (Türk Girişim ve İş Dünyası Konfederasyonu, TÜRKNONFED)<sup>73</sup> which was founded in 2004 with the support of the Turkish Industrialist and Businessmen Association (Türkiye Sanayicileri ve İşadamları Derneği, TÜSİAD) as the national confederation of regionally-based federations. The foundation of TÜRKNONFED can be interpreted within the framework of changing scales, the increasing emphasis on the potential of local and regional spaces, and the capacity of small- and medium-sized capital to mobilize regional and local dynamics and provide regional and local development. The essential target is to integrate subnational spaces with supranational spaces to increase the competitiveness of small- and medium-sized capital. Considering that the only way to survive in global conditions is to stimulate local and regional advantages (raw materials and low-cost labor, for instance), TÜRKNONFED welcomes administrative and organizational reforms that strengthen localities.<sup>74</sup> DOĞÜNSİFED, which belongs to TÜRKNONFED, has similar goals for eastern and southeastern provinces.

Due to the atmosphere that emerged with the AKP's rise to power, businessmen from the east could enlarge their businesses. This flourishing of economic activity depends on the establishment of regional security. The rescission of OHAL, the overthrow of the OHAL governors, and the normalization of both political and socioeconomic life have opened the way for greater and more intense capital accumulation and have allowed eastern entrepreneurs to receive share of the profit of the capital. The interrelation between the government and the nascent capitalist class whose fate substantially depends on a

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72 There are two other federations – the Dicle Federation of Industry and Business (DİCLESİFED) and the Fırat Federation of Industry and Business (FİRATSİFED) – active in the East; however, DOĞÜNSİFED is most prominent.

73 Industrialists and business organizations founded in Anatolian cities (SİADs) form the basis of TÜRKNONFED.

74 For a detailed analysis, see İbrahim Gündoğdu, *Rescaling of Social Relations towards Subnational Regional Space: An Investigation of Turkish Case*, MA Thesis, Middle East Technical University, 2006.

peaceful environment reflects new balances and coalitions that emerged during the construction of the new hegemony.

Like Anatolian businessmen who long supported (and are supported by) the AKP, eastern businessmen support the Kurdish policy of the government in general terms. The political position of DOĞÜNSİFED and eastern businessmen in a broader sense corresponds to AKP's social reforms. For example, DOĞÜNSİFED, which in its own words "thinks globally, acts locally,"<sup>75</sup> encouraged the democratic and Alevi openings. It declared that it supported the 2010 constitution referendum along with GÜNSİAD, DİSİAD, and DİĞİAD.<sup>76</sup> In the following years, the presidents of almost all foundations proclaimed that they sincerely promote the peace process.<sup>77</sup>

The collaboration between the government and the business world on the spatial movement of capital towards Eastern cities and rescaling territorialities of governance has been increasingly legitimized. The chair of the board of DOĞÜNSİFED, Tarkan Kadooğlu, became a substitute member on the board of TÜSİAD in January 2010<sup>78</sup> and a permanent member after three years.<sup>79</sup> This manoeuvre of TÜSİAD was interpreted as an "opening" and as strong support for the peace process.<sup>80</sup> One hundred members of the association, including Koç, Sabancı, and Boyner, visited Cizre and declared that they would "invest in the solution."<sup>81</sup> Thus, although TÜSİAD tends to focus on the national scale, it plays a part in local development processes in the East through distinct scalar strategies.

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75 <http://www.dogunsifed.org.tr>.

76 *Hürriyet*, 20.08.2010.

77 For the 1 September 2011 statement of Tarkan Kadooğlu, the chairman of the board of DOĞÜNSİFED, see <http://www.dogunsifed.org.tr>; for the 26 March 2013 statement of Erkan Güral, the chairman of TÜGİK, see <http://www.tugik.org.tr>; for the 30 March 2013 statement of Süleyman Onatça, the chairman of the board of TÜRKONFED, see <http://www.turkonfed.org>; and for the statement of Hakan Akbal, the chairman of GÜNGİAD, see *Zaman*, 31.08.2013.

78 *Milliyet*, 15.01.2010.

79 *Vatan*, 16.01.2013.

80 Eylem Türk, "TÜSİAD 'Açılımı' Yedekten Yaptı," *Milliyet*, 15.01.2010; *TÜSİAD'dan İmralı Sürecine Destek: Nişanlar Yapılmış, Sıra Düğünde*, 26.02.2013, <http://t24.com.tr>.

81 *Radikal*, 26.06.2013.

In brief, investing in Eastern provinces as a part of a process of strengthening the subnational, regional scale is welcomed by various capital factions. Starting from this point, the questions of how local capitalists and entrepreneurs of Dersim experience these processes and what role government institutions, especially the FKA, play should be raised. To understand the ways in which government reaches locals and becomes involved in the transformation of the city, I focus on Dersim-born businessmen who invested in their homeland, their opinions about the government, and their relationships with government institutions founded for local development.

As mentioned, until recently there have been no economically significant private enterprises or employers in Dersim. The first considerable investments appeared at the beginning of the 2000s when Dersimlis who had been forced to migrate started to return home. Dersim-born investors living in large cities, especially in Istanbul, gathered to set up a business in the city when the OHAL was abolished. Musa Bulut, the chairman of Tunceli Industrialist and Entrepreneurs Foundation (Tunceli Sanayici ve Girişimcileri Derneği, TUSGİD) and one of 240 shareholders in Munzur Inc., the foundation of which goes back to December 1999, depicts the economic climate of the decade.

The first serious investments started in 2004. The first attempt was Munzur Water. Munzur Inc. is a company with 240 shareholders. We shared the risk. Otherwise, nobody would invest there. Nobody could take this risk. In 2005, Munzur Inc. went into business. After Munzur Inc. started production, other companies and cooperatives started to be founded. Transportation cooperatives, hotels, etc. A revival has occurred in all spheres of life. Other businessmen following us have come to the province and set to work. The Organized Industrial Zone (OSB) started to be formed thereafter. Now, there are fifteen small and medium sized enterprises in the OSB.<sup>82</sup>

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82 “İlk ciddi yatırımlar 2004 yılında başlıyor. Munzur Su ile birlikte ilk girişim. Munzur Su 240 ortaklı bir şirket. Bir risk bölüşmek suretiyle girişimde bulunduk. Yoksa kimsenin yatırım yapacağı yoktu. Tek tek kimse bu riske giremezdi. Devlet insansızlaştırma politikası güttü. 2005 yılında Munzur AŞ faaliyete girdi. Bundan sonra su taşımak için su taşıma kooperatifleri,

The new era starting with the rescission of the OHAL had crucial advantages. According to Bulut, before the 2000s it was almost impossible to carry on business in the city because of the physical and psychological threats of law enforcers. More moderate policies towards the Kurds relatively enhanced business life in both the region and the city; nevertheless, it is thought that the state substantially excluded Dersim from the advantages of the new period.

The only change is that finally people are able to breathe again. However, the government does not work for the development of Dersim. The city was put in the fifth incentive region. This is misleading policy. Dersimlis understood that nobody except themselves invested in Dersim. Dersim should rely on its own resources and abilities.<sup>83</sup>

Bulut indicates that the incentive system encourages capital flows from different places to specific ones; however, the system does not work in Dersim. Only Dersim-born businessmen start businesses in the city and their main aim is to develop Dersim rather than to make a profit. According to him, this malfunction arises from the new incentive system that separates the city from a region endowed with attractive opportunities. The chief of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tunceli, emphasizes the new incentive system as the crucial obstacle to capital mobility towards Dersim.

All the cities in the region were put in the sixth incentive region but we [Dersim] were put in the fifth due to the incomes of soldiers, military operations, dams, etc. Even damages paid to inhabitants are calculated as income. We discussed the matter with Zafer Çağlayan, Ali

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otel vs. gibi şeyler kuruldu. Hayatın her alanında bir canlanma oldu. Diğer iş adamları da bunu izleyerek bölgeye giderek bazı projelere giriştiler. Sonraki yıllarda OGS oluşmaya başladı. Şu an orada 15e yakın KOBİ tarzı işletmeler faaliyete geçti.” Musa Bulut, interview by the author, Istanbul, Turkey, 02.12.2014.

83 “Ancak devlet Dersim’in gelişmesi için hiçbir çaba harcamıyor. Teşvikte beşinci bölgeye atıldık. Bu tam kandırmaca politikadır. Dersimliler şunu gördü: kendi gücünden başka kimse gelip buraya yatırım yapmadı. Dersim kendi kaynaklarına ve kapasitesine güvenmek zorunda.” Ibid.

Babacan... we wrote about the issue; however, the decision was published in the official gazette. Our real life is not even remotely close to the data of TÜİK. Dersim is the city most damaged by the war.<sup>84</sup>

In spite of their criticisms and complaints, Dersim-born businessmen are optimistic about the new era. First of all, the government has taken considerable steps to eliminate the conflict between the Kurdish movement and the Turkish state, the most important pre-condition of economic activity. A safe climate that capital requires has appeared with the AKP's reforms. Moreover, the AKP government has cleared the field for employers and has enacted laws making them partners in the regional development process. Public-private partnerships were strengthened through new institutions and legal regulations.

The FKA has mediated between the central government and the local since the end of the 2000s. The agency serves to incorporate local actors – who were not previously tended to cooperate with government institutions – into the projects of the central government. The parallels between the investment projects proposed by the FKA and the investment preferences of Dersim-born employers demonstrates that local and central actors work cooperatively when it comes to economic activities. A representative of the FKA expressed that the main aim of the agency is to develop small- and medium-sized enterprises,<sup>85</sup> an objective which overlaps with those of TÜR KONFED, DOĞÜNSİFED, and TUSGİD.

Businessmen agree with the FKA in terms of the roles attributed to the city. Bulut claims that the development strategy that TUSGİD adopts is based on three pillars: establishing a “green economy” and creating the infrastructure for organic agriculture, supporting stockbreeding, and creating the conditions for nature tourism.<sup>86</sup> Bulut describes a kind of “moderate” capitalism

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84 “Tüm bölge illeri 6. bölgeye alındı, biz 5. bölgede kaldık. Asker, operasyonlar, barajlar için gelen paralar nedeniyle... Zarar ziyan parası vs. hepsi sayılıyor. Zafer Çağlayan, Ali Babacan'la görüştüğ, metinler yazdık, uğraştık ama Resmi Gazete'de yayınlandı. TÜİK verileriyle bizim gerçek yaşamımızın alakası yok. Biz savaş ortamında en çok zarar gören iliz.” Yusuf Cengiz, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 29.07.2012.

85 Şafak Tayşı, interview by the author via e-mail, Turkey, 25.12.2014.

86 Musa Bulut, interview by the author, Istanbul, Turkey, 02.12.2014.

for the development of the city, and this model tallies with the envisagement of the government.

Even if we want, we cannot make Dersim into an industrial city. Indeed, the state does not promote industry here. We [TUSGİD] wish that Dersim remain a secret garden where people can breathe. We do not take the side of wild capitalism. We emphasize this everywhere. Everybody knows that restraining water [in reservoirs] when the province has renewable energy sources does not make sense. The problem is not limited to the quantity of investment – a people-oriented policy perspective is necessary. We argue that Dersim is the center of the Alevi belief... We demanded that the city be constituted as a belief center... We focus on tourism. We have just founded a tourism company named Munzur Turizm and developed a holiday village project with 200 beds.<sup>87</sup>

The formula of TÜRKNÖFED is the same. According to Süleyman Onatça, the chairman of the board of the association, Dersim can develop only through the “green economy,” sectors based on organic agriculture, stock-breeding, and tourism.<sup>88</sup> He indicates that the formula envisaged for Dersim is a “model,” and its success depends on internal harmony among local actors: “The local and national policies must be in accord. When these conditions are met, the cultural environment, urban infrastructure, and human capital of the city must be restructured according to the model’s requirements.”<sup>89</sup> Onatça

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87 “Biz istesek de bu saatten sonra burası sanayi kenti olsun dememizin bir anlamı yok. Teşviği bize vermiyor zaten devlet. Biz Dersim’in nefes alınabilecek bir saklı bahçe olarak kalmasını düşünüyoruz. Biz vahşi kapitalizmden yana değiliz. Bunu her yerde dile getiriyoruz. Yenilenebilir enerji kaynakları varken suyu tutmanın mantıklı olmadığını herkes biliyor. Sıkıntı, yatırımın gidip gitmemesi değil sadece. İnsan odaklı bir siyaset anlayışı gerekiyor. Dersim’in özellikle Alevi inancı bakımından bir merkez olduğunu... savunuyoruz. Dersim’in bir inanç merkezi olarak belirlenmesini de istiyoruz... Turizme odaklanıyoruz. Munzur Turizm adında Turizm üzerine bir şirket kurduk, 200 yataklı bir tatil köyü projesi geliştirdik.” Ibid.

88 *Yerel Dinamikler: Tunceli Modeli ve Tunceli’de Yatırım Fırsatları Toplantısı Konuşma Metni*, 13.11.2014, <http://www.turkonfed.org>.

89 Ibid.

expresses that TÜRKFED works with the FKA, the Tunceli governorship, and TUSGİD and that their number one priority is the peace process. Indeed, a book prepared by TÜRKFED on the green economy was financially supported by FKA.<sup>90</sup>

You know, we decided to call Tunceli by the name “Dersim” because we were aware that using the term “Dersim” meant standing up for the solution and peace. We insist on saying “Dersim” and taking the part of the solution and peace. We will continue to say it. Without peace, tranquility, and democracy, which constitutes the basis of these values, it is impossible to talk about “life,” let alone investment, progress, or development.<sup>91</sup>

TUSGİD also puts great emphasis on the peace process and plays an active role in it. For example, the association held a meeting with the Committee of Wise Men – a group comprised of authors, artists, academicians, and NGO representatives to guide the solution process in the Kurdish issue. Different sections of the business world and the government clearly agree on establishing security and stability in the region. A political agenda – the achievement of peace – hides the fact that the interests of various capital factions overlap. As an actor pretending to be neutral, the FKA has gained acceptance in this process.

A new discourse resonant with the politico-cultural sensibilities of Dersimlis characterizes the new era in which Dersim-born businessmen and local small- and medium-sized enterprises take the opportunity of receiving more. This discourse involves ecological assessments and seems to give precedence

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90 Şafak Tayş, interview by the author via e-mail, Turkey, 25.12.2014.

91 “Biliyorsunuz biz Tuncelimiz’e ‘Dersim’ de deme kararı almıştık. Çünkü biliyorduk ki Dersim demek, “çözümde yanayım, barıştan yanayım” demektir. Biz, Dersim demeye devam ediyoruz, çözümden ve barıştan yana olduğumuzu her platformda söylemeye devam ediyoruz, edeceğiz. Dünyanın neresinde olursa olsun, barış olmadan, huzur olmadan ve bu unsurların temeli olan demokrasi olmadan bırakın yatırımı, gelişmeyi, kalkınmayı; ‘yaşamdan’ bahsedebilmek bile mümkün değil.” *Yerel Dinamikler: Tunceli Modeli ve Tunceli’de Yatırım Fırsatları Toplantısı Konuşma Metni*, 13.11.2014, <http://www.turkonfed.org>.

to nature over development. The importance of civil society is frequently highlighted. Moreover, cultural distinctiveness has been presented as an advantage for tourism. Dersim is envisaged as a center of Alevism like Hacibektaş, a small Anatolian town whose economy is based on Alevi-Bektashi faith tourism. In short, both the FKA and businessmen offer a model based on a green economy and on religious tourism as a reasonable, “innocent” means of development, and Dersimlis seem to perceive it as preferable in comparison to models relying on high-modernist projects.

The concept of the “green economy” was developed by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and is nothing but a new stage of capitalist expansion according to critical social scientists. As Meethan points out, all tourism development, including “alternative” development claiming to be in harmony with nature, must have a market in mind.<sup>92</sup> According to Brian Wheeler, ecotourism is “nothing more than astute short-term business practice, part of the conventional tourism industry which utilizes the same infrastructure [and] is driven by the same motivation, namely profit.”<sup>93</sup>

Cultural tourism is, of course, not independent of commodification processes either. The religious tourism on which stakeholders insist carries the risk of turning local cultures and (localized forms of ethnic identity) into commodities and transforming sacred spaces (and the collective meanings of particular places) into commercial areas. Nevertheless, the local people consent to this “moderate” capitalism peddled by local stakeholders (especially Dersim-born businessmen) who are acquainted with local priorities and who articulate a populist, leftist rhetoric. The foundation of the Munzur bottling plant is an example. The Dersim people who venerate the Munzur kept quiet about the commercialization of their sacred water because the actor was an enterprise comprised of Dersimlis who claimed that they had organized for the benefit of Dersim society. It was not the state or foreigners who undertook the project. Being a member of the Dersim community and using rhetoric of social responsibility vis-à-vis the development of the city and the common good of Dersimlis have a powerful influence over the people.

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92 Meethan, p. 57.

93 Brian Wheeler, “Here We Go, Here We Go, Here We Go Eco,” in *Tourism and Sustainability: Principles to Practice*, (ed.) M. J. Stabler (Wallingford: CABI Publishing), 48.

In this process, the FKA is not perceived as a government organization because of its complex relations with the local and central government. The organizational structure of a development agency that appears to be pluralist increases the legitimacy of the FKA in the eyes of Dersimlis. The law on the establishment and duties of development agencies states that its administrative board consists of the governor, mayor, chairman of the provincial council, and chairman of the chamber of commerce and industry of a given province.<sup>94</sup> In other words, not only representatives of the central government but also those of local government take part in the governing body. The fact that the mayor of Dersim participates in the FKA makes the agency acceptable to Dersimlis who tend to object to almost all activities of state institutions in the city.

To conclude, since the beginning of the 2000s, Dersim's local actors have increasingly engaged in economic activities in accordance with new regional policies and approaches shaped by both international conjuncture that encourages economic and political revival of localities and a new balance of forces in the national scale emerging with the recission of the OHAL and AKP's rise into power. Regional development agencies whose enhancement has occurred in tandem with both national and global trends have contributed to the configuration of investment choices.

The central government, the FKA, TÜRKONFED, the Dersim municipality, and Dersim-born businessmen gathered under the umbrella of TUSGİD fully agree on the development solutions based on the green economy. Although this trajectory conflicts with energy investments undertaken or licensed by the government, it is clear that a kind of moderate capitalism into which local actors are incorporated is one of the government's ways of reaching the Dersim people. Unlike dam and HPPs projects, the economic projects framed by the FKA are found reasonable by almost all social factions. With its organizational structure embracing local actors, "nature-friendly" rhetoric, and awareness of Dersim's social and religious culture, the FKA stands out

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94 *Kalkınma Ajanslarının Kuruluşu, Koordinasyonu ve Görevleri Hakkında Kanun*, 25.01.2006, <http://www.resmigazete.gov.tr>.

among other government agencies. This enables the central authority to become involved in the spatial (and therefore political) transformation of the city.

## § 6.2 Tunceli (Munzur) University

The foundation of the university began a new era in the city. It triggered a transformation not only of the economy but also of the cultural, political, and daily life of the city. As mentioned, the AKP aimed to establish at least one public university in every city. The government accomplished this objective only in 2008 with the establishment of Tunceli University. The government was unsure about founding university in Dersim until recently. Not only infrastructure problems but also the dynamism that a university would bring to the public domain affected the government's deliberations. Since 2010, when Tunceli University began accepting students, the intended and unintended consequences of the university have become clear.

In this part, I scrutinize the university as an institution acting on behalf of the government and representing the central government in the local arena. On the other hand, one must consider that the university as a social space (a space of human action) is not a given; rather, it entails a continuous production of spatial relations. The university contains a multitude of interactions. Its production and transformation depends on relations of production independent of the actions of the state bureaucracy. The "production" of the university is also the embodiment of power relations and spatial practices of the members of Dersim society.

As Lefebvre points out, the act of creation of space is a process, not the work of a moment.<sup>95</sup> It is reasonable to assume that the production of the university as a social space embraces the various motivations of both its "managers" and "users." Although the government decided to establish the university, inhabitants – tired of the lack of employment opportunities – were optimistic

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95 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 34.

about its economic outcome. The expectation that the university would respond to the problem of underdevelopment paved the way for a general, unwritten agreement between the central authority and local powers.

It is possible to examine the “creation” of the university from different perspectives. First of all, it is the “dominant form of space,” the space of power, as far as its management and mission are concerned. It symbolizes the new hegemony. The representation of the previous hegemony was military installations; that of the AKP government in the city is the university. Apart from its ideological function deriving from education, it is also part of an urbanism that entails an ideology.

Second, the state produces knowledge via the university. Specific academic units formed to research the social, political, and cultural issues of the region and city exist within the structure of Tunceli University. These research centers are intended to solve social problems “scientifically.” Considering that knowledge has a constituting impact on power relations and reorganizes hierarchies of epistemic authority, the university contributes to establishing and reinforcing government discourses and projects. The university contains an ideological tenet with a range of norms, claims, narratives, and definitions about the values of Dersimlis. Like the schools of the republican era that played a considerable part in the diffusion of Kemalist ideology, Tunceli University functions as an institution that “teaches” official justifications of matters in dispute to the city.

Lastly, the university has triggered a spatial and economic transformation of the city – not only additional job opportunities but also a significant demographic transformation. With the arrival of students in Dersim, its cultural and political homogeneity started to break down. Because the population of the city is low, the establishment of the university has drastically increased the population of the central district and changed the ethnic composition of the city. It is unsurprising that the arrival of outsiders – people who are not from Dersim – engenders a new political climate favorable to the flourishing of mainstream political approaches.

In this part of the dissertation, I focus on the university as both a new spatial intervention different from those of the prior hegemony and as a site of

ideological struggle in an Althusserian sense. I argue that the government expected to contact with the Dersim people through institutions over which it exercises influence. The foundation of the university is an attempt to do this; in addition, it is a spatial embodiment of the government's challenge to the inhabitants of Dersim where previous governments could not maintain control. Moreover, I examine the "production" of the university as a strategy to make the population of Dersim heterogeneous and "normalize" it ideologically with the help of the demographic change that the university would trigger. Demographic features of the city have dramatically transformed, as expected; however, the political consequences of the new composition of the population are surprising and need to be examined in detail.

#### 6.2.1 *The University as the Representation and Representative of the Central Government*

Tunceli University is the only significant public investment in Dersim. Until the end of the 2000s, military installations comprise the characteristic urban (and rural) scenery of the province. Since the 2000s, in tandem with the rescission of the OHAL and the limitation of the role of the military by the AKP government, the visibility of military facilities in the city center has been reduced even as new forms of high-security police checkpoints (*kalekol*) have been constructed in rural areas by TOKİ. As mentioned before, many military and administrative buildings have been moved to Sihenk, the direction in which the city is expanding. The campus of Tunceli University was also built on this direction, at the entrance of the city.

As far as the scale and infrastructure of the city are concerned, the campus is the most conspicuous structure in Dersim. It conveys a symbolic meaning different from previous spatial interventions. Until recently, Dersim has been defined as a space of "low-intensity conflict" and generally associated with tight security precautions. Both the number of police stations and the domination of the military over civilian life increased in the 1990s. Apart from huge military establishments, a giant Turkish flag painted on the sides of mountains or quotes of Mustafa Kemal such as "How happy is he who can say I am a Turk," carved into the countryside were the symbols of the prior hegemony

and part of the official ideology of refusing to recognize non-Turkish identities.

On the other hand, the university symbolizes a new era characterized by a (relative) normalization process. Unlike military installations, it is a civilian and accessible place. The campus was built by TOKİ, which is directly linked to the prime ministry, reflecting the spirit of the time in terms of the AKP regime's role in developing the construction sector. In a city where economic conditions clearly manifest themselves in space – both shaping it and being shaped by it – the campus embodies the financial means of the central authority and sends the message that the AKP will do more in the future if the people cast their votes for it.

The university is presented as concrete evidence of the government's future investments. For example, before the June 2011 general elections, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan expressed that the party had significantly invested in the city and that “Tuncelilis should see the reality.” The principal investment Erdoğan emphasizes is the university: “When they [CHP parliamentarians] asked if we would found a university in Tunceli, we did. Come on, thank us! They cannot.”<sup>96</sup> Arguably, in the eyes of the government, the university is a “goodwill gesture” to Dersimlis rather than a public investment. Both Erdoğan and the provincial head of the AKP highlight that the government invested in Dersim even though it is the only city that did not vote for the AKP. The foundation of the university clearly proves AKP's egalitarian approach towards Dersimlis.<sup>97</sup> In a similar vein, the rector of the university expressed his position.

We, as Tunceli University, are the reflection of the great activity of our governments formed since 2002. We are the reflection of this state because the state has become an affectionate, benevolent state that embraces its citizens, handles their problems, and makes its peace with

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96 “Tunceli'ye üniversite açacak mısınız dediklerinde, evet açtık. Hadi çık da bize teşekkür et be. Edemez bunların karakteri buna müsait değil.” *Milliyet*, 21.04.2011.

97 Sinan Yerlikaya (provincial chairman of the AKP in 2014), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 26.02.2014.

their symbols and values. We, as Tunceli University, are the smiling face of our government, of our state that generates solutions within the frame of peace, reconciliation, universal law, and democracy for the structural troubles of our country. With these values, we represent the reflection of our state.<sup>98</sup>

To sum up, the university is the representation of the central government in the city as a “civilian space.” It heralds the coming of the new era in which the military has limited influence over matters other than military matters. In a spatial sense, it is “open” to all, unlike the previous hegemony’s spaces which were well-protected with heavy weapons. TOKİ, which is identified with AKP rule, assumed full responsibility for the construction of the university, reflecting not only the architectural tendencies of the AKP era – generally a revanchist architecture that seeks to erase republican elements from urban space and reframe the city referring to Seljuk and Ottoman architectures<sup>99</sup> – but also introducing the institutional interrelations of the day.

On the other hand, the university functions as one of the highest-level institutions representing the government in the city. Along with the governor and the provincial chief of police, the rector participates in all formal ceremonies and holds official talks. He behaves not only like the head of a university but also, in a way, like a representative of the state. For example, he is invited to the opening ceremonies of many schools.<sup>100</sup> He participated in the openings of state institutions and organizations such as the Family Support Center (Aile

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98 “Biz, Tunceli Üniversitesi olarak, ülkemizde 2002 yılından sonra gelen hükümetlerimizin yaptığı büyük icraatların yüzünün yansımasıyız. Devletimiz artık şefkatli, sevecen yüzüyle yurttaşları bağrına basan, onların sorunlarıyla hemhal olan, onların sembol değerleriyle birleşen, bütünleşen, barışan bir devlet haline geldiği için biz, bu devletin yansıyan bir yüzüüz. Tunceli Üniversitesi olarak, ülkemizdeki birikmiş problemlerin hepsine barış, uzlaşma, evrensel hukuk ve demokrasi çerçevesinde çözüm üreten hükümetimizin, devletimizin gülen yüzüüz. Bu değerlerle devletimizin halkımıza yansıyan yüzünü temsil ediyoruz.” *Radikal*, 10.12.2014.

99 Ali Uzay Peker, “AKP Döneminde Rövanşist Mimari,” *Mimarlık Dergisi* 386 (November-December 2015), <http://www.mimarlikdergisi.com>.

100 *Tunceli Vilayetler Birliği Anaokulu Açıldı*, 13.12.2011, <http://www.tunceli.gov.tr>.

Destek Merkezi, ADEM)<sup>101</sup> and the provincial sports center.<sup>102</sup> He even attended the mass wedding ceremony for low-income couples in 2012, as mentioned before. Moreover, he is a member of the development committee of the FKA<sup>103</sup> and gets personally involved in the economic issues of the city. He participated in the committee formed to visit President Abdullah Gül in 2009.<sup>104</sup> The point being that the rector looks like (and is perceived as) a local agent of the central government. His “work place” is larger than the university. Unlike the rectors of well-established universities, he is interested in almost every subject about the city, embodying a new type of rector that looks like a governor.

The relationship between the university and the government is not limited to bureaucratic matters. The university management is widely criticized for being directly attached to the hegemonic ideological position. The speeches of the rector reproduce the AKP’s historiography and disseminate its ideas. To illustrate, he touched on the history of modern Turkey in our interview though I had not broached the topic. The periodization that he proposes and the leaders he considers important are similar to those of AKP.

Our republic, founded in 1923, can be examined in four periods. I am an engineer; I am not social scientist. Some say seven, some say three periods... I think that the republic has gone through four phases. The first is the statist economy period (1923-1950). This is the founding period... The second is between 1950 and 1983. The transition from a single party to multi-party politics occurred. This is the democracy period. The private sector was invited to take responsibility. Our businessmen appeared. This is the mixed economy period. The third is the period that began with Özal and extends to 2002. Özal led the transition from a mixed economy to a free market economy. He initiated

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101 *Aile Destek Merkezi'nin (ADEM) Açılışı Yapıldı*, 18.02.2013, <http://www.tunceli.gov.tr>.

102 *Özgür Dersim*, 30.06.2012.

103 *Fırat Kalkınma Ajansı Kalkınma Kurulu Üye Listeleri*, <http://www.fka.org.tr>.

104 *Cumhurbaşkanı Gül: “Tunceli'deki Gelişmeleri Yakından Takip Ediyorum,”* 04.09.2009, <http://www.tccb.gov.tr>.

the process of internationalization and the phase of international expansion. The fourth is the period that began with our government's rise to power in 2002. This is the period of globalization in terms of law, democracy, human rights, and especially the economy. Özal started the internationalization process. Our government made it universal. Indeed, one must add a fifth period. This is the period – known as the solution process, peace process, or İmralı process by the public – which started last year. I think that in recent months given the occasion of the Diyarbakır meeting organized under the leadership of our dear prime minister and with the participation of dear Mesut Barzani and dear Şivan Perwer, the process deserves a new name: re-fraternization, re-embracing, reunion, re-consolidation process.<sup>105</sup>

According to Boztuğ, the AKP government completed the democratization process initiated by Menderes and developed by Özal. However, “the city has excluded itself from the major developments of the country for three main

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105 “1923 yılında kurulan cumhuriyetimiz başlıca 4 dönem halinde incelenebilir. Ben mühendis kökenliyim, sosyal bilimci değilim. Bazıları der 7 bölüm halinde incelenir, bazıları der 3 bölüm halinde. Ben 4 önemli evre geçirdiğini düşünüyorum cumhuriyetin. Bunlardan birincisi 1923-1950 arası devletçi ekonomi evresi, kuruluş evresi. [...] İkincisi 1950-1983 evresi. Burada da çok partili rejimine geçiliyor, demokrasi evresi. Artık özel sektör de elini taşın altına koysun deniyor. İş adamlarımız olsun deniyor, karma ekonomi dönemi. Üçüncü dönem 1983 yılında Özal'la başlayan, 2002 yılına, bu hükümetimize kadar gelen dönem. Burada da karma ekonomiden serbest pazar ekonomisine geçiş sürecini başlattı rahmetli Özal. Uluslararasılaşma, dışı açılma evresini başlattı. Dördüncü dönem de 2002 yılında işbaşına gelen hükümetimizle birlikte başta ekonomi olmak üzere hukuk, demokrasi, insan haklarında evrenselleşme, küreselleşme, globalleşme dönemi. Merhum Özal uluslararasılaşma sürecini başlattı, bu hükümetimiz de bunları evrenselleştiriyor. Hatta bir 5. dönem de ilave edebilirim. Bu da geçtiğimiz yıl başlayan, kamuoyunda çözüm süreci, İmralı süreci, barış süreci olarak bilinen dönem. Geçtiğimiz aylarda sayın başbakanımızın önderliğinde Sayın Mesut Barzani ve Sayın Şivan Perwer'in katılımıyla Diyarbakır'da gerçekleşen toplantı ile süreç yeni bir isim aldı benim kanaatime göre: Yeniden kaynaşma, yeniden kucaklaşma, yeniden birleşme, yeniden bütünleşme süreci olarak tanımlıyorum.” Durmuş Boztuğ, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

reasons:” a different belief system, leftist ideology, and a distinct native language.<sup>106</sup> Boztuğ argues that because of these discrepancies, the city was not integrated into the country. It could not make use of the reforms made by these governments. Dersimlis should be integrated into the [country’s] major developments while protecting their own values. And the university has paved the way for this integration.

I always tell my [Dersimli] brethren this: I am an Alevi rector, one of you. The main reason for your displeasure is the fact that you cannot be integrated into the mainstream. Protect your Aleviness! Protect the values of your Kurmanci or Zazaki languages! Protect even your social democrat, socialist, Marxist-Leninist stances! Be integrated into the mainstream of our country while maintaining your authentic values! Take advantage of changing democracy, law, human rights, and the economy and contribute to them! Contribute to these values and benefit from them as Dersimli, Alevi, leftist, Kurmanc, or Zaza citizens! The university has done it.<sup>107</sup>

Boztuğ defines himself of “Alevi origins” and often repeats this in his speeches. He announces his Aleviness for two reasons. First, Aleviness eases communication with Dersimlis. The president at the time, Abdullah Gül, preferred an Alevi rector in Dersim so that the university would earn the sympathy of the inhabitants. In this way, a possible reaction against the state institution would be prevented. Second, by highlighting his Aleviness, Boztuğ claims that the government does not discriminate against Alevis; his own career proves this. The rector seeks to convince Dersimlis that they can be part of the new process if only they dismantle their prejudices.

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106 Ibid.

107 “Burada kardeşlerimize hep şunu söyledim: ben sizin içinizden çıkmış Alevi mezhebinden bir rektörüm. Sizlerin sıkıntılarınızın temel nedeni ana eksenle entegre olamamanız. Aleviliğinizi koruyun! Kurmanci-Zazaki dil değerlerinizi koruyun! Hatta sosyal demokrat, sosyalist, Marksist-Leninist yanınızı da koruyun. Bu özgün değerlerinizi koruyarak ülkemizin ana eksenine entegre olun ki değişen demokrasiden, hukuktan, insan haklarından ve ekonomiden nemalanın ve onlara da katkıda bulunun! Dersimli, Alevi, sol görüşlü, Kurmanc-Zaza yurttaşlarımız olarak bu değerlere katkıda bulunun ve nemalanın! Üniversite işte bunu yaptı.” Ibid.

Our brethren living here have such a resistance: “We are Dersimlis, we protect our honor, we remain unchanged.” My speeches went in one ear and out the other. The people were not trusting. They have never before been treated sincerely by any institution. I insisted that we embrace our citizens, employ them in several departments, integrate them into the system. Finally, [our goodwill] became concrete with this investment [the university]. It is the evidence. The people come visit the campus. They cannot believe their eyes. They think: “why did the AKP found such a campus here? They [the state] customarily exclude us, they customarily scorn us. This rector is the AKP’s rector. He is among the rectors who signed the petition of freedom to wear a turban. It is said that he is Alevi, but what kind of Alevi is he? They will trick us again; they will govern us from Elazığ.” However, now they see that they can also be heads of department, assistants to the rector, deans, or administrative personnel here. They see that the state invests here. The first stage, including infrastructure and superstructure, cost 70 million TL. Now the people are stumped. They ask if the state and the government have really changed, as the rector claims. They benefit from public services, so there is a question in their minds.<sup>108</sup>

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108 “Buradaki kardeşlerimizde ise şöyle bir direnç vardı: ‘Biz Dersimliyiz, biz onurumuzu koruruz, biz böyle dururuz.’ Tabi benim bu sözlerim insanların bir kulağından girdi öbür kulağından çıktı. İnsanlar samimiyet görmediler, hiçbir kurumdan görmemişler. Israrla yurttaşlarımızla, onları bağrımıza basarak, onlara üniversitemizin çeşitli kademelerinde görev vererek, onları sistemin içerisine alarak ve sonuçta da bu yatırımı yaparak... Sonuçta bu yatırımda ortaya çıktı, elle tutuldu, gözle görüldü. İnsanlar şimdi şehirden kalkıp kampusu geziyor, inanamıyorlar. Sayın başbakanımızın birinci ismini telaffuz ederek, ben şimdi burada o şekilde telaffuz etmek istemiyorum, ‘Ya bu AKP nasıl bu kampusu yapar buraya? Yapmazlar, bizi dışlarlar, bizi horlarlar. Bu rektörü göndermişler ama AKP’nin gönderdiği rektör. Türbanı da imzalamış, Alevi diyorlar ama ne biçim Alevi. Bunlar yine bizi aldatır. Burayı yine Elazığ yönetir’ [diye düşünüyorlar]. Ama baktılar ki burada kendileri de daire başkanı oluyor, rektör yardımcısı oluyor, dekan oluyor, idari personel oluyor ve devlet buraya yatırım getiriyor. Birinci etap 70 milyon TL, alt yapı ve üst yapı. Ne zaman ki üniversitemiz kurulup taşındık, insanların şu anda kafasında soru işareti var. Acaba gerçekten rektörün dediği gibi devlet ve hükümet değişmiş mi? Bize hizmet geliyor. Şu anda kafalarında böyle bir soru işareti var.” Ibid.

Consequently, the administration of the university adopts a moderate rhetoric in tandem with that of the government. This rhetoric is based on the inclusion of all Dersimlis into the economic mainstream. The AKP perceives the university as both a method of communication with the local people and as a goodwill gesture to increase its share of the vote. The university is introduced as the manifestation of the government's new approach to Dersim. In this respect, it symbolizes the transformation of the mentality of the state. As a civilian space, it reflects the discourse of the new era; however, it creates a new hierarchy in the city, as well. The new type of bureaucrat assigned to the university represents the government and reproduces the authority of the ruling party.

The ideological parallels between the government and the university can be seen in the behavior and statements of the rector and staff; however, this relationship cannot be reduced to the pro-government positions of certain bureaucrats. One must scrutinize the "knowledge" produced by the academy to understand how the university serves the Dersim policies of the government.

### 6.2.2 *The University as an Ideological Apparatus of the Government*

From the beginning of this chapter, I focus on the institutions through which the government has tried to contact with the Dersim people and reshape the city. Tunceli University plays an essential role in this process. It is both a symbolic place, as mentioned above, and an institution that produces and transmits truth and knowledge in support of power. As is well known, Foucault points out the relation between power and knowledge in *Discipline and Punish*:

We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one an-

other; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.<sup>109</sup>

The university as a space of knowledge production may be examined in this context. The school is one of the social institutions that maintain and reproduce the dominant culture and portray hegemonic ideologies as natural and universal.<sup>110</sup> Knowledge and truth produced and legitimized by universities through “scientific” research both reinforces the economic and social functions of higher education<sup>111</sup> and exercises power over the non-scientist. The impact of knowledge generated by the university exceeds its walls because it is introduced and generally perceived as the one authority capable of analyzing and solving the issues. This kind of knowledge becomes an epistemic ideology.

Although the social sciences may be regarded as “softer forms” of knowledge, they gain power by their persuasiveness, social utility or “social robustness,” and relevance to the external world.<sup>112</sup> By virtue of the public reputation that universities achieve, the research, resolutions, and maps created by the academy are respected most. Given this, I focus on the case of Tunceli University and reveal how academic knowledge is produced in tandem with the Dersim policies of the government. Two research centers founded within Tunceli University must be examined in detail to exhibit the techniques of legitimation that endear not only the institution itself but also the government to the masses, explaining how the city is reshaped according to the “official definition” of Alevism and the peace process.

The first of these research centers is the Research and Application Center of Alevism (Alevilik Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi). The center was formed soon after the university was founded. The chairman of the board of the Tunceli Association for the Dissemination and Solidarity of the Culture of

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109 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 27.

110 Terry Eagleton, *Ideology: An Introduction* (London: Verso, 1991).

111 Sarah Mann, *Study, Power and the University* (Berkshire: Open University Press, 2008), 66.

112 Maurice Kogan, “Modes of Knowledge and Patterns of Power,” *Higher Education* 49:1/2 (Jan. - Mar., 2005), 27.

Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli, who is also a *dede* in the cemevi and a public servant in the tax office, Ali Ekber Yurt, was appointed as director of the research center in spite of the fact that he has no academic career. This appointment had broad repercussions in the city; he had been criticized for the cem ceremony organized by the cemevi on the occasion of Abdullah Gül's 2009 visit and had been accused of collaborating with the AKP.<sup>113</sup>

Yurt describes the mission of the research center as follows:

Our aim is to remold Alevism at the university on a scientific basis. Because of oppressions, Alevism survived to the present only through oral tradition. Today, scrutinizing Alevism and handing it down from generation to generation through a research center founded at a public university is wonderful.<sup>114</sup>

The main objective of the center is to carry Alevism into the realm of science. On the web site of the university, the mission of the research center is presented as “determining the place of Alevism in the cultural and intellectual history of the country by means of information and documents.”<sup>115</sup> As mentioned, the government is attempting to define a universal Alevism and frame it within the context of Islam. The research center adopts this policy and contributes to Alevism's institutionalization with the cemevi whose staff is nothing but that of the research center. By claiming that the center scrutinizes Alevism scientifically, it establishes a hierarchy between the knowledge it produces and the local rituals, beliefs, and forms of worship adopted by Dersimlis. Like the cemevi, the research center acts as if it is the one authority able to reveal Alevism's “truths” and uncover the mysteries arising from heterodoxy.

The ideological overlap between the university and the government with respect to Alevism is not limited to its institutionalization. The rector declared that a joint mosque-cemevi complex would be built on the campus upon the request of the Directorate of Religious Affairs.<sup>116</sup> As mentioned before, a joint

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113 *Tunceli Emek*, 11.09.2014.

114 *Sabah*, 16.12.2011.

115 <http://www.tunceli.edu.tr>.

116 *Hürriyet*, 18.09.2014.

mosque-cemevi project proposed by Fethullah Gülen and funded by the Gülen movement was supported by both the government and the Cem Foundation, but was criticized by Alevi communities. The groundbreaking ceremony of the first such complex, the Tuzluçayır mosque-cemevi complex in Mamak, Ankara, was protested; police and inhabitants clashed for several hours.<sup>117</sup> The case was also brought to trial. After the July 15 coup attempt, all projects were cancelled on account of their relationships with Gülen.

The rector highlights that Tunceli University will be the first to host a cemevi.<sup>118</sup> Some argue that the intent of the university administration is to construct a mosque on the campus rather than cemevi; that both will be constructed as a compromise to prevent social reactions.<sup>119</sup> Another remarkable detail is that the rector announced that the construction of the mosque will be funded by the Directorate of Religious Affairs but called on philanthropic businesspeople to fund the construction of the cemevi. His statement clearly demonstrated that a cemevi is not seen as equal to a mosque even in a city comprised mostly of Alevis. By leaving the construction of cemevi to philanthropists, the rector normalized discrimination against Alevis. This approach is compatible with that of the government that refuses Alevis' demands for the official recognition and legal status of cemevis.

The second research center that supports the Dersim policies of the government is the Research and Application Center for Human and Social Problems (İnsani ve Sosyal Sorunları Araştırma ve Uygulama Merkezi). It was founded at the beginning of 2013 as the peace process gained momentum. The rector expressed that the center was formed to “explain to the people and raise awareness of the freedom, democracy, human rights, and the reforms and transformations that the government has made.”<sup>120</sup> He indicates that the establishment of the center follows up the opening that the government initiated in 2009.

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117 *Hürriyet*, 09.09.2013.

118 *Birgün*, 02.10.2014.

119 *Cumhuriyet*, 24.09.2014.

120 Durmuş Boztuğ, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

We primarily focus on the prevention of terrorism – the cease of violence and insurrection – and research how these can be achieved through dialog and peace. Our friend who manages [the center] is expert on the PKK and Abdullah Öcalan. Since July 2010, our dear director and I have submitted to statesmen that the solution depends on what is known as the peace process or İmralı process among the public.<sup>121</sup>

The rector of the university takes eager interest in the peace process. The democratic opening project of the government was unanimously supported by the university senate. In this period, the research center was envisaged as academic authority producing knowledge and molding public opinion. According to its mandate, it was founded to “conduct field research on recent events that occurred in the province and the region and to report them to related bodies.”<sup>122</sup> As mentioned, a considerable number of people do not vote for the AKP and approach the political developments with caution. However, almost all inhabitants of Dersim suffered from the state violence of the 1990s under the OHAL. Academic research into social problems related to the conflict and the Kurdish question would legitimate the government’s Dersim policies and extend support for the peace process. After 2015, the research center became functionless.

Apart from research grants for academic studies of the economic and social consequences of the conflict between the state and the PKK, the center organized a panel called “The Solution Process and Turk-Kurd Relations.” The proceedings of the event indicated that both the center and the university undertake crucial missions in the peace process and contributed to the environment of peace: “As far as the city and students are concerned, it is inevitable

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121 “Burada şu anda en üstünde durduğumuz çalışma, oranın başında bulunan arkadaşımız PKK ve Abdullah Öcalan konusunda uzman, terörün bitirilmesi, şiddetin-isyanın bitirilmesi, bunun diyalog ve barış içinde nasıl olabileceği. Temmuz 2010 yılından beri sayın müdürümüzle birlikte devlet ve hükümet büyüklerimize görüşümüzü arz ederek çözümün halk arasında barış süreci, İmralı süreci şeklinde adlandırılan süreçte olduğunu arz ettik.” Ibid.

122 <http://www.tunceli.edu.tr>.

and necessary for our university and our research center to get involved in the process.”<sup>123</sup>

Last, Tunceli University opened a Department of Zaza Language and Literature and promised to open a Department of Kurmanc Language and Literature within the faculty of literature in 2012. This may be regarded as part of the AKP’s Kurdish opening which entails state recognition of Kurdish identity and of Kurdish language.

For the first time in the history of the republic, we offered Kurmanci and Zaza lessons in the undergraduate and graduate programs. We understood that if globalization continues to develop in this manner, mother tongues will be offered in the curriculums of primary and secondary schools even if only as an elective course. We founded the Kurmanc Language and Literature and the Zaza Language and Literature departments under the umbrella of Oriental Languages and Literature. This is the second academic year for students of Zaza language and literature. I hope that the Department of Kurmanc Language and Literature will commence as soon as possible.<sup>124</sup>

In short, the university not only serves to strengthen the representation of the government in the city, but carries the AKP’s political agendas associated with Alevism and the Kurdish question. It produces academic knowledge about the crucial subjects of the city by conducting research and reporting on the outcomes. In this way, its authority derives from the claim of being “scientific.”

The university’s endeavors to address Dersim’s issues academically are also an attempt to break the ice between itself and Dersimlis. In order to eliminate prejudice, local people were employed in the research centers.

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123 Ibid.

124 “İlk defa Cumhuriyet tarihimizde ön lisans ve lisansta Kurmancca ve Zazaca dersleri koyduk. Baktık ki evrenleşme bu hızla giderse bu anadil seçmeli de olsa ilk ve orta öğretimde okutulacak. Hemen Doğu Dilleri Edebiyatı altında Kurmanc Dili ve Edebiyatı, Zaza dili ve Edebiyatı bölümlerini kurduk. Şu anda Zaza Dili ve Edebiyatında 2. Sınıf öğrencilerimiz var. İnşallah kısa zamanda Kurmanc Dili ve Edebiyatını da hayata geçireceğiz.” Durmuş Boztuğ, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

The people saw this. My beliefs have been forbidden until yesterday. Today, there is a research center concerning it in a state university, and what's more, its director is our *dede*. Our language has been forbidden. We have not even been able to listen to [Kurmanc/Kırmancki] music or to dance the halay. Today there is a department [for our language] in the public university. The people are exhausted of terror for thirty years. Today, an academic who received his doctorate in this field conducts the program [Research and Application Center for Human and Social Problems]. He says that the solution to the conflict depends on the negotiation with İmralı, dialog, and peace. Consequently, what do the people say? [They say that] the state has changed. [They say that] the government has changed. You see, in the east and in the southeast, universities tell [the people] that the state and government have changed and have fulfilled universal norms. The people have seen the concrete consequences. For example, the university has eight administrative departments. The heads of all of them are from Tunceli. Seven are Alevis. The people say that they are no longer excluded or despised. If this university did not exist, we could not explain the globalization projects of our state and government.<sup>125</sup>

The university redefines the cultural and social features and problems of Dersim in academic terms in tandem with the Dersim policies and the “opening”

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125 “Halk şunu gördü: Benim inancım Alevilik düne kadar yasaktı. Bugün devletin üniversitesinde bunun müdürlüğü var ve üstelik müdürü de bizim dedemiz. Bizim dilimiz yasaktı. Bir kaset dinleyemedik, halay çekemedik. Bugün devletin üniversitesinde bölümü var okutuluyor. Bu terörden 30 yıldır insanların canı çıkmış. Bugün üniversitemizde bu konuda doktora yapmış bir hocamız müdürlük yapıyor, bu işin başında. Diyor ki bu işin çözümü İmralı ile görüşerek barış yoluyla, diyalogla olur. İnsanlar otomatik olarak ne diyor? Bu devlet değişmiş, bu hükümet değişmiş. İşte üniversiteler, Doğu ve Güneydoğu’da hükümetin-devletin değiştiğini, evrensel normlara ulaştığını anlattı. İnsanlar sonuçlarını eliyle tuttu, gözüyle gördü. Çok basit bir örnek vereyim: Benim şu anda sekiz daire başkanlığım var. Sekiz başkanın sekizi de Tuncelili. Yedisi Alevi. İnsanlar artık diyor ki biz artık dışlanmıyoruz, horlanmıyoruz. Bu üniversite olmasaydı hükümetimizin-devletimizin evrenselleşme projelerini biz Tunceli’ye anlatamazdık.” Durmuş Boztağ, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

of the government. It collaborates with local people, especially with dedes and local, liberal academics, in order to win the support of Dersimlis. The university expects that the Dersim people will welcome the multilingual signboards of the campus, the teaching of the Kurmanc and Kırmancki languages, the presence of Alevi dedes in the university, and the academic research into the Kurdish question. However, according to a great number of Dersim people, the university is completely under the control of the government and all these reforms are for show, like the promises of the AKP.<sup>126</sup>

### 6.2.3 *The University as the Means of Economic and Demographic Transformation*

Since the arrival of the students in the city, Dersim has changed considerably. There were only 300 students in 2008. The total reached 7050 in a few years' time. The number of employees at the university is 800.<sup>127</sup> There are 250 administrators, 350 academics, and 200 security guards and maintenance workers.<sup>128</sup> Although the majority of the academic staff is not from Dersim, most of the security guards and maintenance workers are Dersimlis. From among the academic and administrative staff – whose lifestyle can be characterized as “conservative” – commute daily from Elazığ as they do not wish to live in Dersim.

Even though the numbers of students and employees of the university appear insignificant, they triggered crucial changes in Dersim given its low-population. The campus is situated in the central district; however, there are certain departments in other districts of Dersim. Which is to say, its economic and demographic effects are not limited to the central district.

The wages of the university personnel and the expenditures of newcomers have sufficed to revive the economy of the city. First off, the university accelerated the building trade due to the housing deficit. A village, TÜRÜŞMEK, was

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126 S. L. (of the DHF), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 17.07.2012.

127 *Başbakanımız Sayın Ahmet Davutoğlu Tunceli Üniversitesi'ni Ziyaret Etti*, <http://www.tunceli.edu.tr>.

128 Durmuş Boztuğ, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

annexed to the municipality. Prices of basic commodities and rents skyrocketed. The university has also induced the development of a service sector. New public transport vehicles were ordered. Many enterprises and shops, especially restaurants, supermarkets, and cafes opened.

Moreover, the city started to benefit from public bid opportunities. The prefabricated buildings established in Sihenk as well as maintenance and repair services and consumables have been put up for bid by the city, and the businesspeople of Dersim have benefited from them. Boztuğ indicates that the first bid for the university was 70 trillion TL. While 45 trillion of the total investment was funded by TOKİ, a company of Dersim won with a bid of 25 trillion.<sup>129</sup>

In short, although the Dersim people complain about the “cultural corruption” emerging with the arrival of “foreigners” in the city, some groups within Dersim society have benefited from the economic expansion that the university has brought with it. Yusuf Cengiz, the chief of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Tunceli, emphasizes that the chamber promoted the advancement of the university from the beginning of its establishment and endeavors to solve problems by focusing on university-industry collaboration. He believes that the university is the most crucial investment contributing to the economic and social development of the city.<sup>130</sup> The emergence of new job and investment opportunities helps to defuse tensions that sometimes arise when the rector makes pro-government statements.

The situation emerging with the establishment of the university demonstrates that the city has entered a normalization process, and the university is the most vital component of the new era. Its positive contribution to the economy of the city satisfies the majority of inhabitants. Considering this new atmosphere, the question of how the government reaches the Dersim people and reorganizes the city according to its policies and strategies to render it more governable gains importance.

The most outstanding regional development strategy of the AKP is the founding of at least one public university in each of the country’s eighty-one

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129 Ibid.

130 Yusuf Cengiz, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 29.07.2012.

provinces. According to data from the Council of Higher Education (YÖK), the number of Turkish public universities was fifty-three in 2003; this number reached sixty-eight in 2006, eighty-five in 2007, ninety-four in 2009, and 103 in 2011.<sup>131</sup> In other words, just between 2003 and 2011, fifty new public universities were established. The foundation of universities means rising tax revenues, productivity, consumption, skilled labor, and urbanization as well as a decline in the demand for public assistance. In a certain sense, this strategy can be considered pejoratively as populist. Such large investments generate positive externalities that arise through the spatial concentration of economic activity. The central government promotes local economies in this way in spite of rising unemployment among skilled laborers and infrastructural problems.

The foundation of Tunceli University is not independent of the AKP's aforementioned general strategy; however, the university is a crucial apparatus in the hands of the government in Dersim which is demographically homogeneous and dissimilar to the rest of the country. Students coming from different cities of the country change Dersim's demography significantly, breaking down its cultural and ethnic homogeneity. Increasing Sunni population in the city – a population more eager to vote for the AKP in comparison to Alevis – contributes to the heterogenization of the city and alters political alliances and balances. Due to the new demographic profile, the AKP can be successful in local and general elections in Dersim.

Moreover, the economic improvement that the university triggered is seen by the government as a way of integrating the city into other markets and dissolving it of its self-enclosedness. The emergence of new consumers encourages new investments and reduces unemployment. These expectations are directly related to traditional claims that attribute the escalation of “terror” to unemployment. From the perspective of the AKP, the Dersim people will abandon radical, leftist stances once they start to make the most of the economic opportunities. And then they will finally collaborate with the ruling party.<sup>132</sup> In other words, the university is perceived by the government as a

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131 Durmuş Günay and Aslı Günay, “1933'den Günümüze Türk Yükseköğretiminde Niceliksel Gelişmeler,” *Yükseköğretim ve Bilim Dergisi* 1:1 (April 2011), 6.

132 Sinan Yerlikaya (provincial chairman of the AKP in 2014), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 26.02.2014.

means of integrating the Dersim people into the mainstream. It is expected that the development of commercialism will subdue the political and ideological sharpness of the Dersim people.

#### 6.2.4 *New Places for the New Population: University and Sunni-Islamic Institutions*

Since the establishment of the university, the government has sought to control and reorganize the population that emerged with the arrival of students and university staff to the city. Because the ruling party has little influence over the majority in the city, it attempted to influence the political tendencies of newcomers through Sunni-Islamic civil society organizations, especially those run by members of the Gülen community.<sup>133</sup> In this context, the private schools, dormitories, and private teaching institutions (*dershane*) of the Gülen community, whose number increased rapidly in Dersim after the establishment of the university, need to be examined in detail. These institutions encouraged Sunnis to stay in Dersim because they offered favorable education opportunities for their children. Moreover, they provided a basis for a Sunni-Islamic lifestyle and contributed to the formation and transformation of the political stances of young people. After the July 15 coup attempt, these institutions were closed down by the government. Regardless of such changes, the government's use of Sunni Islamic organizations well exemplify the hegemonic interventions into the life of Dersim, and the methods of such intervention.

The names of the institutions of the Gülen community established in Dersim referred to sacred figures of Dersim Alevism so that they would be accepted by the local people. The Munzur Schools, Sarısaltuk Dormitory, and Erener Day Care Center were among them. The most outstanding was the Munzur Schools founded by Erkam Özel Öğretim İşletmeleri Inc., a company with sixteen partners. The schools were known as "Gülen schools" among the public. An interviewee from the schools expressed that "some of the principal

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133 The conflict between the Gülen community and the AKP is not addressed in this dissertation.

partners of the company felt an affinity for Fethullah Gülen, which is why the schools were perceived of as Gülen schools.”<sup>134</sup>

The foundation of the Munzur Schools caused a disturbance in the city. Apart from general dissatisfaction with the expansion of the Gülen movement to Dersim, irregular processes in the allocation of land prompted the reaction of Dersimlis. The dissemination of news that the Tunceli Provincial Directorate of National Education had donated ten thousand square meters of land to Erkam Inc. in 2005<sup>135</sup> reinforced the general belief that the company and schools have a close relationship with the government. Although the majority of Dersimlis refrained from enrolling their children in the Munzur Schools due to the “bad reputation” of the company and social pressure to boycott them, they clearly provided more quality education than public schools and were increasingly preferred. However, a large proportion of the students of the Munzur Schools (approximately half) were children of public officers and soldiers.<sup>136</sup>

The first school of the company was opened in 2003 and had seventeen students. The company developed over the last decade in tandem with the establishment of new institutions and the rising middle-class population. By 2012, the Munzur Schools consisted of a day care center-preschool, an elementary school, a science high school, an Anatolian high school, a dormitory, a sports club, and five study centers (*etüt merkezi*). All the students at the science high school, approximately 90 percent of those at the Anatolian high school, and of those in the elementary school and the *dershane* were on scholarship.<sup>137</sup> The director of the schools indicated that apart from scholarship opportunities, the fees were low and determined with the poverty of the city in mind. He highlighted that because the company did not profit from the schools, it transferred a great deal of money to them (between 500 and 900 thousand TL) every month.<sup>138</sup> In other words, unlike other private schools which are profit-

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134 Director of the Munzur Schools, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 14.07.2012.

135 *Cumhuriyet*, 18.08.2006.

136 Director of the Munzur Schools, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 14.07.2012.

137 Ibid.

138 Ibid.

oriented by nature, the Munzur Schools provided their facilities to serve Dersim society.

The private dormitory of Erkam Inc. and many other student houses funded by Sunni-Islamic communities emerged with the arrival of students in the city. As mentioned in previous chapters, rising demand for housing and steep rent increases left students in a difficult situation. The dormitories of YURTKUR have been unable to meet demand from students who cannot afford to rent apartments or rooms. The dormitories and houses of Sunni-Islamic communities provided free or cheap accommodations. These places offered a different lifestyle based on Sunni-Islamic traditions and rituals.<sup>139</sup> Even though the Sunni-Islamic lifestyle is strange to the Dersim people, students who come from different cities, especially those coming from Kurdish cities where religion still plays a vital role, embrace it.

The private teaching institution (*dershane*) of the Gülen community established in Dersim, Nehir Dershanesi, was also among the enterprises that contribute to the ideological struggle for power. As throughout the country, the Gülen community was organized through dershanes.<sup>140</sup> In recent years, their number increased in Kurdish provinces as well; therefore, they were perceived as a serious threat to Kurdish youth. For example, Fehman Hüseyin, one of leaders of the PKK, issued a statement on 14 March 2013 about the issue. According to him, the dershanes of the Gülen community were designed to assimilate Kurdish children and make them police or spies. He called Kurdish people to boycott these dershanes.<sup>141</sup> Like other dershanes of the Gülen community founded in the east, Nehir Dershanesi was charged with propagandizing Sunni-Islamic values. Both dormitories and dershanes served as a recruiting mechanism for the Gülen movement<sup>142</sup> and those established in Dersim acted in accordance with this purpose.

The appearance and popularization of these educational institutions and dormitories is directly related to the development of the university. First of all,

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139 Helen Rose Ebaugh, *The Gülen Movement: A Sociological Analysis of a Civic Movement Rooted in Moderate Islam* (Dordrecht and London: Springer, 2010), 96.

140 Ibid.

141 *Firat Haber Ajansı*, 14.03.2013.

142 Ebaugh, 97.

the rising young population created demand for dormitories and student houses. These places not only fulfilled accommodation needs but also integrated students into a social and political network inconsistent with the traditional social and political tendencies of Dersim. Second, the dersihane and schools of the Gülen community met the needs for high-quality education among the developing middle class of the city. The inadequacy of educational services was one of the reasons for both migration to big cities<sup>143</sup> and the unwillingness of officers to live in the city. It seems that the new educational institutions encouraged civil servants from different cities to settle in Dersim with their families. They were in demand not only from conservative officers who suffered from the ideological and religious characteristics of Dersim but also from middle-class Dersimlis.

As seen, the foundation of the university brought new sectors with it. Dersimlis have benefited from the relative increase of consumption arising from the student population; however, the enterprises of Sunni-Islamic communities also developed in the city in this period. In this respect, the schools and enterprises of the Gülen community were places of “missionary activity.” Although the schools took a loss, they were funded by the company, and only ten of 120 teachers are from Dersim.<sup>144</sup> In other words, the company invested in Dersim but insisted on maintaining its religious identity. It aimed to contact with the Dersim people (for example, via the names chosen for the enterprises) but employed non-Dersimlis in mission to convey the fundamental principles of the Gülen movement and achieve control over youths.

In addition to the institutions of the Gülen community, the provincial office of mufti contributed to the “creation” of a new population in Dersim. In the third Alevi workshop conducted by the government, the mufti of Dersim, Arslan Türk, emphasized that “the Religious Affairs Administration should protect students by building dormitories there in order to ‘stabilize’ the city.”<sup>145</sup>

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143 M. Murat Yüceşahin and E. Murat Özgür, “Türkiye’ nin Güneydoğusunda Nüfusun Zorunlu Yerinden Oluşu: Süreçler ve Mekânsal Örüntü,” *Coğrafi Bilimler Dergisi* 4:2 (2006), 15-35.

144 Director of the Munzur Schools, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 14.07.2012.

145 *Proceedings Book of the Third Alevi Workshop*, Ankara, 19.08.2009, 115.

In other words, the new, young population is perceived by the state as a potential for the Sunnification of Dersim and its politicization in favor of the government.

Last, it is a general belief that the employment at the university and in other public institutions depends on membership in the AKP or the Gülen community. The ruling party and its social networks are closely intertwined with those of the recruitment processes. A news article published on 21 March 2015 gives an idea of the Dersim people's perception of the AKP. When the Ministry of Health declared that fifteen people would be employed as ambulance drivers in the city, Dersimlis poured to the AKP building to ask for help.<sup>146</sup> On the other hand, the hiring procedures for the university's security personnel and cleaning staff are determined by lots. Because demand for continuous employment is high, the university adopted this method. This fact notwithstanding, many interviewees charge the university administration with favoritism towards members of the AKP (or the Gülen movement until December 2013 when the informal coalition between the AKP and the Gülen movement collapsed).<sup>147</sup> According to them, one must get in touch with the AKP to get a job in the public sector.<sup>148</sup>

To sum up, the university constitutes a building block of the mechanism to form a social environment where pro-government approaches can germinate. Because the AKP is unable to convince the majority in the city to vote for it, it tries to change the political tendencies of newcomers through Sunni-

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146 *Tunceli Emek Gazetesi*, 21.03.2015.

147 A. K. (academic staff), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 02.03.2013; A. Y. (university student), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 15.07.2012; Cömert Metin (minibus driver), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

148 Membership in the AKP increased everywhere. According to data from the Supreme Court of Appeals Prosecutor's Office, the AKP has 7,551,472 members around the country while total number of members of all political parties is 10,096,586. *Hürriyet*, 13.02.2013. I could not obtain information about the number of AKP members in Dersim. My requests for this information were refused. However, the Dersim provincial organization of the AKP attracts considerable attention. Although the AKP has not been able to win the votes of Dersimlis, its office is the most crowded among party offices. During my several visits, I noticed that the majority of visitors come there to look for a job or they give information about relatives looking for job and ask for help.

Islamic social networks established around educational institutions and dormitories. Officers and students from different cities that are generally prone to Sunni-Islamic culture are more interested in such institutions than Dersimlis. Moreover, economic opportunities – the rise of both consumption and employment – appear to subdue the ideological sharpness of the local people. However, the political atmosphere of the city has not changed in favor of the government.

#### 6.2.5 *Unintended Consequences of the Foundation of the University*

Although the university was founded only a few years ago, it has contributed to the reorganization of both the urbanization processes and the demography of the city. University students have become the new actors in a self-enclosed society. Different political powers having influence over the city have developed several methods to attract or reshape the students. Both the AKP and opposition parties and organizations clearly wish to win over this new and dynamic population. Nevertheless, the people who attend Tunceli University for graduate education are generally Sunni-Kurds living in eastern cities, and their ethnoreligious identities determine their political choices. Their Kurdish identity is more crystallized than it is among Dersimlis, and their religious identity allows them contact with Sunni-Islamic communities nourishing pro-Kurdish organizations and Islamic civil society.

For this part of the dissertation, I had several interviews with students of Tunceli University. They are generally from the cities in the Kurdish region such as Diyarbakır, Siirt, and Hakkari. Two are originally from Dersim but had lived in large cities before entering the university. The aim of these interviews was to reveal the profile of the students and to understand their motivations for studying in Dersim. By examining their political activities and social life, I introduce how a spatial strategy of the government created unanticipated consequences.

As mentioned before, the most common characteristic of the students of Tunceli University is their poverty. Most preferred the school because of its location. They express that their mobility depends on the financial means of

their families; therefore, they opted for universities located in the region rather than others in faraway cities.<sup>149</sup>

Most students define themselves as Kurd and speak Kurmanci, unlike the majority of Dersimlis. They are generally sympathizers of the Kurdish movement. For the students coming from eastern cities, Dersim's political features and its mythic position are crucial factors affecting their decision. Dersim has a symbolic meaning for the Kurdish movement as mentioned in detail in the third chapter. It stirs up the resistance of the young generation which takes an eager interest in struggling against authority.

Last, for the majority of students who come from eastern cities, Dersim is the "city of freedom." It is perceived of as a "modern" city where young people are encouraged to act on their own behalf. In this respect, it is different from Kurdistan where everyday life is largely regulated by the norms of Sunni Islam. An interviewee among the academic staff argues that students are generally surprised by and sometimes find the libertarian climate odd; however, they easily fit into this social pattern and make use of it.<sup>150</sup>

In short, young Kurdish people are eager to come to Dersim for more than just university education. The university – which was supposed to create a more heterogeneous population and political atmosphere – has contributed to not only the development and massification of the pro-Kurdish party but also the rise and expansion of a non-local culture.

The cultural conflict between newcomers and Dersimlis is the most apparent consequence of the university. Some Dersimlis, especially supporters of the CHP and/or people who define themselves as Zaza or Alevi rather than Kurd, regard the demographic change with unfavorably and worry about the "Kurdification" of the city.<sup>151</sup> Indeed, the university has triggered a conflict between generations that is intermingled with a cultural and political conflict. Inhabitants tend to formulate these tensions as the "corruption of Dersim by newcomers." They are annoyed by the behavioral patterns of the students and

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149 A. Y. (university student), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 15.07.2012; E. G. (university student), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 03.03.2014; Eylem Külâhçı (university student), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 01.03.2014.

150 K. G., interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 10.10.2011.

151 Ç. T. (a Zazaist), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 09.10.2011.

their perception of Dersim. A Dersim-originated student summarizes the viewpoints of Dersimlis as follows:

Dersimlis witness the misbehavior and corruption of the students. For example, some female students become pregnant. Some students cause a disturbance. Dersimlis are not happy with this situation. Things seem dire. There is no connection between the newcomers and the inhabitants. The students have limited social circles; they generally spend time together. Sometimes male students and youth of the neighborhood begin quarreling with each other. They drink and fight. For example, a youth from Dersim honks at the female students; therefore, youth from Diyarbakır get angry. They attempt to show Dersimlis their force. Our elders complain about the dormitories. For them, these newcomers are “Kurds.” They criticize their behaviors. They say that *Apocus*<sup>152</sup> do not deserve these youth.<sup>153</sup>

It is clear that the mostly Sunni newcomers have different cultural and social values or that they are trained in the dormitories according to Sunni Islamic norms. There are many students who wear headscarfs. Because local women do not cover their heads, these scarfed students are more noticeable in the city. The local people complain about institutions directed by Islamic communities that support the blossoming of Sunni Islam. Although those of the Gülen community were closed, the institutions of other Islamic communities still

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152 Supporters of Abdullah Öcalan.

153 “Dersimliler, öğrencilerin uygunsuz davranışlarına ve yozluklarına tanık oluyorlar. Örneğin, hamile kalan öğrenciler oldu. Bazı öğrenciler kavga çıkartıyor. Dersimliler bu durumdan hoşnut değil. Gidişat vahim görünüyor. Gelenlerle burahlılar arasında temas yok. Öğrencilerin sınırlı bir sosyal çevresi var, genelde birlikte takılıyorlar. Bazen erkek öğrencilerle mahalle gençleri birbirine giriyor. İçip içip kavgaya tutuşuyorlar. Örneğin Dersimli bir genç, kız öğrencilere korna çalıyor. Öyle olunca Diyarbakırlı gençler sinirleniyor, vay efendim sen nasıl bizim bacılarımıza korna çalarsın. Dersimlilere gövde gösterisi yapmaya kalkışıyorlar. [...] Büyüklerimiz öğrenci yurtlarından çok şikâyetçi. Onlar için bu gelenler “Kürt”tür. Davranışlarını tasvip etmiyorlar. “Bunlar bir de Apocu olacaklar” diyorlar.” A. Y. (university student), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 15.07.2012.

play a vital role in everyday life of the students. In other words, the composition of the city population has tended to change in terms of religion, as well. The “clash of religions” between the local people and students – that is, the threat of Sunnification – is seen more crucial by Dersimlis than the threat of Kurdification.

Other conflicts occur among students. Speaking different languages and belonging to different religions have engendered infighting. For example, at a university festival some students danced the halay accompanied by a *deyiş*, a kind of song sung during Alevi worship. Alevi students became angry. According to the Alevi students, all students must learn the culture of Dersim and act according to its values.<sup>154</sup> On the other hand, the university management sought to justify the mosque-cemevi planned to build on the campus with the “huge demand of students.” The fact that the majority of students are Sunni legitimizes the construction of a mosque or *mescit*.

Apart from religious distinctiveness, polarization based on distinct mother tongues also needs to be highlighted. Dersim-originated students point out that the students from Diyarbakır speak amongst themselves in Kurmanc in the dormitory even though they know that Dersimlis cannot understand Kurmanc. A Dersim-originated interviewee argued that they do this for two reasons. First, they wish to prove that they are not assimilated; second, they wish to create a distinct group isolated from Dersimlis. She emphasizes that Dersim-originated students do not speak amongst themselves in the Zaza language where Kurmanc-speaking are present, and she charges the students from Diyarbakır with nationalism.<sup>155</sup>

To sum up, the city has encountered a new cultural and social trend strong enough to change the political environment. The university has led to the emergence of a young population unlike the general population structure of the city which is homogeneous and engaged in politics. Due to this homogeneity and their relations with the Kurdish region, students have the power to change local balances of power. The result of the local elections of 2014 is concrete evidence of the transformation of the population structure of Dersim.

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154 <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Tunceli-Üniversitesi-Itirat/447339948681680>.

155 A. Y. (university student), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 15.07.2012.

### § 6.3 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter, I introduce two institutions established in parallel with the developmentalist approach of the AKP government. I show their contributions to urban development and to urban reorganization by the state. The most significant finding to emerge from this chapter is that the state is restructuring the urbanization process of Dersim not only with security concerns in mind but also the need for new resources and investment opportunities. In other words, unlike prior hegemony, the AKP supports businesspeople to invest in eastern cities in tandem with its developmentalist perspective based on tourism, education, and building trade.

It is clear that Dersim's economy is insignificant in explaining the interest of businesspeople in the region. Indeed, entrepreneurs seem to invest in the sixth region rather than Dersim; therefore, Dersim cannot be cited as a center of attraction in order that capital resolve over-accumulation crises. However, it is part of the region that was reinvented with the early 2000s. Especially during the peace process, the businesspeople were encouraged to invest in the region – characterized by cheap labor and defined as a new market – with institutional and legal regulations. As far as the statements of businesspeople eager to become involved in investment processes in Dersim are concerned, it is clear that these regulations are welcomed and supported by them; however, it would be exaggerated to attribute a specific value to the city in terms of capital accumulation. What is interesting is the fact that the economic role attributed to the city is different from the rest of the region. Instead of industries that require a large amount of labor to produce its goods and services, Dersim's economic potential is framed by tourism based on the commodification of natural spaces and the development of a service sector that depends on the university. In this sense, I argue that Dersim, like other cities which had been governed under the OHAL regime for many years, emerged as an untouched site for exploitation for capital in the 2000s; nevertheless, limited economic activities and potential in the city demonstrate that the city is far from being a dynamic space of capital accumulation formulated by Harvey.

First, I scrutinize the FKA as an agent acting in the name of the state to rescale territorialities of governance, as well as a medium between the local

and the center. Although not only representatives of the central government but also those of local government take part in the governing body, it is part of the regional development policy of the state. How it influences the urban economy by leading the economic activities of the city is examined with the help of the FKA's reports and brochures. The results of this investigation show that – relying on the new incentive system – the institution recommends businesspeople invest in Dersim's nature tourism rather than other, labor-intensive sectors. Both the FKA and the incentive system reformulate Dersim as a tourism paradise, commodifying its physical spaces rather than its work-force. This is perhaps because of the demographic structure and social and cultural features of the employable population, which is too qualified and organized. This prevents Dersim's participation in "Turkey's China."

The FKA has become a crucial actor since the AKP brought about a radical change in both politics and the economy by restricting the influence of the military in the city. The rise of local and regional scales as well as legal and institutional changes that offer local powers certain opportunities coincide with the limited role of the military. In this way, eastern businessmen were able to do so on account of the more peaceful atmosphere established by the ruling party. The parallels between the investment projects proposed by the FKA and the investment preferences of Dersim-born employers reveal that local and central actors work cooperatively when it comes to economic activities.

Second, the chapter examines Tunceli (Munzur) University as another institution that transforms urban development, social composition, and the economy. As part of the AKP's developmentalism based on the policy of establishing at least one public university in every city, it was founded in a village near the city center. Several aspects of the university are discussed to show the intermingled situation that emerged with its establishment.

First of all, the campus of the university was built by TOKİ. This reflects the spirit of the AKP government given the role of TOKİ in the development of the construction sector in the 2000s. I argue that the campus as a public space can be interpreted as the embodiment of the financial means of the central authority and as concrete evidence of future investment. It is also the symbol of the new era as a "civilian space."

Second, it functions as the ideological apparatus of government through knowledge produced by two research centers established within the university: the Research and Application Center of Alevism and the Research and Application Center for Human and Social Problems. With “scientific” claims, these centers attempt to reshape the city in accordance with the “official definition” of Alevism and the peace process led by the government. The university provides an academic redefinition of the cultural and social features and the problems of Dersim in tandem with the Dersim policies and the “opening” of the government.

Finally, this chapter investigated the university as a means of economic and demographic transformation. The economic improvement that the university triggered has influenced other sectors, especially building trades. The village where the campus was built has become a “neighborhood” and is zoned for housing. However, urban demography has transformed more significantly than the urban economy. Dersim’s relative homogeneity and dissimilarity to the rest of the country made the university a crucial tool in the hands of the government. Students coming from different provinces of the country significantly changed Dersim’s demography and started to break down its ethnocultural homogeneity.

With the arrival of students and staff, Sunni-Islamic civil society institutions – widely referred to as “Gülen schools” – were established in the city. The names of these schools and dormitories originated from the sacred figures of Dersim Alevism: Munzur Schools, Sarısaltuk Dormitory, and Erener Day Care Center. I assert that these names were selected in order that the institutions be adopted by the local people. The appearance and popularization of these educational institutions and dormitories were directly related to development stemming from the university. These institutions satisfied young population in need of dormitories and the developing middle class in need of high-quality education for their children.

Although the university seems to serve the AKP, helping it to take root in Dersim, the majority of students come from provinces whose populations sympathize with the Kurdish movement. This resulted in unintended conse-

quences: the pro-Kurdish party gained power in Dersim. As the city encountered a new cultural and social group in its everyday life, its political environment also drastically changed.

In this chapter, I discuss the mechanisms through which urban demography and the economy have changed in tandem with the Dersim policies of the government. However, the new social and political milieu that emerged along with these institutions is open to the contributions, negotiations, and manipulations of the inhabitants of Dersim. The university campus, for example, has been reinterpreted and reconfigured by students to the extent of their power. In the following chapter, I examine resistance spatially performed by non-state actors.

## Spatial Strategies of Other Political Actors: Counter-spaces

### § 7.1 From Military Hegemony to Resistance: First Steps to Change Space and Time

...we might oppose, for example, dominant and dominated *lieux de mémoire*. The first, spectacular and triumphant, imposing and, generally, imposed - either by a national authority or by an established interest, but always from above - characteristically have the coldness and solemnity of official ceremonies. One attends them rather than visits them. The second are places of refuge, sanctuaries of spontaneous devotion and silent pilgrimage, where one finds the living heart of memory.<sup>1</sup>

From the end of the 1930s to present, Dersim has always been under direct control of the Turkish military. Not only the inhabitants but also the spaces

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1 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations* 26 (Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory) (Spring 1989), 23.

have been surveilled in the name of security. In addition to numerous police stations, extensive military zones, garrisons, and prohibited areas, there is also widespread mined terrain in rural areas.<sup>2</sup> All these places have been created to accommodate and protect security personnel; however, they also serve to represent and strengthen the power of the authority. As claimed, the symbols, institutions, and maps of the prior hegemony have been replaced by those of the new one.

The pressure applied on the city and the undue restrictions on everyday life changed form in the beginning of the 2000s. For example –until the end of the peace process – the visibility of the military was less in the city center in spite of the fact that new police checkpoints (*kalekol*) equipped with the latest technology have been established in rural areas. Identification control at the city's entrance and exit points was no longer as tight as it once had been. On the main streets, the frequency of patrols of the armored military vehicles (*akrep*) with heavy weapons mounted on their roofs diminished. In other words, the use of traditional methods relying on external control and techniques of force to maintain social order weakened while new institutions that contribute to spatial, economic, and demographic transformations appeared.

On the other hand, the architecture of cities around the world is now being ordered strategically in accordance with new technologies. As Stanley Cohen points out, instead of traditional control methods, the power tends to apply preventive control systems based on “visibility (you know about the TV screens and data banks); unverifiability (you do not know when you are being watched or checked); anonymity (it does not matter who is operating the system – it could be a computer); and the absence of force (you should want to be good).”<sup>3</sup> As throughout the country, surveillance cameras were installed in

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- 2 For example, the newest neighborhood of the central district, Türişmek, where the university campus was built, had been threatened by mines that had contaminated the land and endangered the safety of inhabitants. The terrain being mined was enclosed only a few years ago. *Radikal*, 07.05.2013.
  - 3 Stanley Cohen, *Visions of Social Control: Crime, Punishment and Classification* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 1985), 221.

Dersim's public spaces, as well. In this way, with the electronic self that functions as well as the one who patrols an area to be protected, new modes of domination have arisen.<sup>4</sup>

As I argue in the previous chapter, state control over the timing and spacing of human activities is implemented through civil institutions, unlike during the OHAL period. Huge military establishments, giant Turkish flags painted on the sides of mountains, quotes of Mustafa Kemal which emphasize the power of Turkishness, caved into the countryside and other symbols that challenge non-Turkish identities are still existing; however, the new hegemony has constitutively preferred to win Dersimlis' consent while incorporating them into the capital accumulation process instead of the use of forcible methods.

Both the OHAL period and the post-OHAL period witnessed spatial designs conceived to reflect the capacities of their respective hegemonies and prove their access to the space. Nevertheless, one may also observe that over the past decades, local people have managed against all the odds to produce spaces through less formal, more local forms of knowledge. In this chapter, I discuss spatial strategies of other political actors in the city. How communities attempt to create counter-spaces, spatial expressions of counterhegemony, and how they resist the bureaucratic management of space in this way are scrutinized.

Lefebvre defines counter-space as follows:

When a community fights the construction of urban motorways or housing-developments, when it demands 'amenities' or empty spaces for play and encounter, we can see how a counter-space can insert itself into spatial reality: against the Eye and the Gaze, against quantity and homogeneity, against power and the arrogance of power, against the endless expansion of the 'private' and of industrial profitability; and against specialized spaces and a narrow localization of function. [...] [The] state defends class interests while simultaneously setting itself

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4 Mark Poster, *Critical Theory and Poststructuralism: in Search of a Context* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989), 123.

above society as a whole, and its ability to intervene in space can and must be turned back against it, by grass-roots opposition, in the form of counter-plans and counter-projects designed to thwart strategies, plans and programmes imposed from above.<sup>5</sup>

Counter-space may overthrow existing space to the extent of the powers of the groups able to transform spatial dynamics in accordance with their own needs. As Castells points out, people unfailingly stand up against state control over space and create values, ideas, projects, and demands that conflict with dominant social interests.<sup>6</sup> While power relations involve several motives that aim to create or reveal space in order to conquer, govern, and regulate it by, for example, imposing the colonial values of the nation-state or by leaving it to the fate of global markets, they also involve dynamics that reterritorialize space in order to transform its meanings and functions.<sup>7</sup> In the following parts, I focus on the attempts to challenge the extension of dominated space. These experiences not only uncover the will of people to get involved in the processes of producing space but also introduce the “out-of-the-ordinary” as an art of resistance.

#### 7.1.1 *The Munzur Culture and Nature Festival*

Since the deportations of 1938, Dersimlis living far from their motherland have organized through hemşehri associations. Dersim-born university students set up the first association in 1952 in Ankara. Thereafter, in 1957, the Istanbul Association of Natives of Tunceli (İstanbul Tuncelililer Derneği) was officially established by Kurukahveci Mehmet Efendi, a famous Turkish coffee producer. In 1974, the association was reestablished but was closed due to political reasons.<sup>8</sup> In the 1990s, on account of the development of civil rights and NGOs

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5 Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 381-383.

6 Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots: A Cross-Cultural Theory of Urban Social Movements* (London: Edward Arnold, 1983), 70.

7 Steve Pile, “Introduction: Opposition, Political Identities and Spaces of Resistance,” 30.

8 Özkan Tacar (president of DEDEF), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 9 October 2010. Its name became the Federation of Dersim Associations in 2010.

and due to forced migration to large cities, Tunceli associations have mushroomed in both Turkey and Europe.<sup>9</sup> Many Dersimlis from twenty-six Tunceli Associations founded in various cities and districts merged in 1999 under the umbrella of the Tunceli Associations Solidarity Committee (Tunceli Dernekleri Dayanışma Kurulu), which was transformed into the Federation of Tunceli Associations (Tunceli Dernekleri Federasyonu, TUDEF) in 2004.<sup>10</sup>

With reference to John Agnew, Ayça Kurtoğlu indicates that the identities associated with a certain place are based not only on its micro-sociology but also on macro processes. A sense of place need not be bounded by the scale of the locality. Place is influenced and determined by macro processes; therefore, neither the sense of homeland nor the identities of or organizations about hemşehrilik can be understood apart from regional and national dynamics and the macro-political order.<sup>11</sup> The administrative structure of the Turkish state is based on the assumption that every citizen has a hometown. People are registered according to administrative units hierarchically defined as city, district, and village;<sup>12</sup> therefore, one's hometown is not only a physical space to which people feel a sense of belonging but also a rational category that serves to identify different groups of people.

While the concept of hometown provides the state the opportunity to classify and map its subjects, it also enables the development of dynamics of resistance by reproducing a sense of the local in the places other than migrants' province of origin. An emotional construct grounded on loyalty towards the

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- 9 Ulaş Bayraktar argues that the number of hemşehri associations has significantly increased since 1989. However, the number of Eastern Anatolia associations decreased 5 percent from 1989 to 2000, while that of Southeastern Anatolia remained unchanged. Ulaş Bayraktar, "Formelleşen Hemşehri Dayanışma Ağları: İstanbul'daki Hemşehri Dernekleri," *Toplumbilim* 17 (2003): 107-118. In consideration of these rates, the spread of Dersim associations is an exception.
- 10 Ibid.
- 11 Ayça Kurtoğlu, "Siyasal Örgütler ve Sivil Toplum Örgütleri Bağlamında Hemşehrilik ve Kollamacılık," *Ankara Üniversitesi SBF Dergisi* 67:1 (2012), 149-150.
- 12 Ayça Kurtoğlu, "Mekânsal Bir Olgu Olarak Hemşehrilik ve Bir Hemşehrilik Mekânı Olarak Dernekler," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 2 (2005) <http://www.ejts.org/document375.html>.

hometown strengthens links among members of the community. Actual or potential threats to the physical space and to the identities constructed around it trigger and contribute to social movements against the spatial policies of the state. The institutionalization of hemşehri ties and the legal recognition of the associations have both fed the idea of hometown and legitimized resistance practices carried out to preserve it.

As Elise Massicard argues, some hemşehri associations have always been political channels.<sup>13</sup> Especially after the coup d'état of 12 September 1980 when all political organizations were banned, people who had been members of political parties or movements turned to hemşehri associations.<sup>14</sup> Yet these organizations did not generate ostensible spaces to replace political organizations. Rather, with the participation of prominent political figures, their political projects and ideological approaches started to be visible in the hemşehri associations.<sup>15</sup>

The rise and spread of Tunceli associations in the 1990s and 2000s reflect the aforementioned pattern. However, given the forced migration and the embargo imposed on the city by the OHAL regime, the solidarity networks developed by migrants coming from Dersim arguably arose from political motivations more so than other hemşehri organizations. The president of the Federation of Dersim Associations, Özkan Tacar, specifies that the 1937-38 massacres, human rights abuses against inhabitants (especially during the military coups) based on their Alevi and non-Turkish identities, and the everlasting, strict control over the city that interrupts everyday life prompted Dersimlis to organize on the basis of being Dersimli.<sup>16</sup> In other words, unlike most other hemşehri associations, the solidarity networks among Dersimlis are

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- 13 Elise Massicard, "Politiser La Provenance : Les Organisations d'Originaires de Sivas à Istanbul et Ankara," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 2 (2005), <http://www.ejts.org/document375.html>.
- 14 Jeanne Hersant and Alexandre Toumarkine, "Hometown Organisations in Turkey: an Overview," *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 2 (2005), <http://www.ejts.org/document375.html>.
- 15 Kurtoğlu, "Mekânsal Bir Olgu Olarak Hemşehrilik ve Bir Hemşehrilik Mekânı Olarak Dernekler."
- 16 Özkan Tacar, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 09.10.2010. Its name was TUDEF before 2010.

constructed primarily against the state interventions in the local rather than to deal with integration problems in large cities.

The idea of organizing a festival in the hometown coincided with the PKK's declaration of a ceasefire. In 1999, a "return campaign" was organized by the Tunceli Associations. Migrants were invited to the city to protect its nature and culture and to protest the OHAL conditions, the evacuation of villages, the food embargo imposed on the city, and the depopulation policy of the state.<sup>17</sup> The Munzur Culture and Nature Festival is the means and product of the attempt to "claim" the local. Murat Kur, the candidate for DHF (DDHD) in the 2009 local elections, described the process as follows:

Within the scope of the Munzur Culture and Nature Festival organized under the leadership of the Tunceli Associations, some crucial slogans were developed: "Return to your land," "Claim Munzur," "People look like the place they live," [and] "We are going to Dersim to drink a glass of water from the Munzur." One of the main reasons for the rise of ecological consciousness is the fact that tens of thousands of people flocked to Dersim and the festival became the means of it. It was an activity embracing the land and culture and putting [the issue of] dams at the center.<sup>18</sup>

The first festival was banned by the OHAL governorship; however, it achieved its objective. The blockade applied on the city was revealed and a crucial step was taken toward the development of a sense of the local. Although the number of people who have permanently returned is limited, the number who

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17 Fevzi Konak (one of organizers of the first festival), interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 01.07.2012.

18 "Tunceli Dernekleri öncülüğünde gerçekleştirilen Munzur Kültür ve Doğa Festivali kapsamında Toprağına Geri Dön, Munzur'a Sahip Çık, İnsan Yaşadığı Yere Benzer, Munzur'dan Bir Tas Su İçmek İçin Dersim'e Gidiyoruz gibi önemli şiarları var. Dersim'deki baraj karşıtı çevre bilincinin yükselmesinde ana nedenlerden bir tanesi içteki baskılanmanın Mutu köprüsünde, Seyitli köprüsünde, Pertek barajının olduğu yerlerde kitlesel biçimde on binlerce insanın yeniden Dersim'e akın etmesi ve festivallerin de bu konuda bir araç olması, barajları da merkeze koyan, toprağını-kültürünü sahiplenen bir çalışma var orada." Murat Kur, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 10.10.2010.

spends their vacations in Dersim and builds houses (especially in the villages) has increased significantly.

The Munzur Culture and Nature Festival still plays a fundamental role in the cultural, social, political, and economic life of the city. The most buoyant period of the city in terms of tourism and leisure industries is during the festival. Indeed, the festival, which lasts only a few days, is not only an arena where very political actors find the opportunity to express themselves through panels, symposiums, and meetings but also an important platform for the reproduction of the identity of the place.

Primarily organized by and for Dersim people – not only those living abroad but also current inhabitants – the festival can be interpreted as an “initiative to recuperate the production of locality.”<sup>19</sup> The emotional attachment to the physical landscape from which they were forcibly separated, memories of a communal history, and local cultural values that had been suppressed until recently encourage individuals to come together in the place for spontaneous and organized interactions like festivals and other events that “re-appropriate” the natural and cultural heritage.<sup>20</sup> In so doing, festivals transform the landscape from an everyday setting into special environments concentrated in time and space.<sup>21</sup>

Like all festivals, the Munzur festival contributes to the sense of community in addition to the sense of place. As Karen de Bres and James Davis point out, the role of festivals in the perception of local identity is considerable, and they engender positive self-identification for the local community.<sup>22</sup> On the

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- 19 Marie Le Ray, “Associations de Pays et Production de Locality: la ‘Campagne Munzur’ Contre les Barrages,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 2 (2005), <http://www.ejts.org/document375.html>.
- 20 Ros Derrett, “Making Sense of How Festivals Demonstrate a Community’s Sense of Place,” *Event Management* 8:1 (2003): 49-58.
- 21 Stanley Waterman, “Carnivals for Elites? The Cultural Politics of Arts Festivals,” *Progress in Human Geography* 22:1 (1998): 54-74.
- 22 Karen de Bres and James Davis, “Celebrating Group and Place Identity: A Case Study of a New Regional Festival,” *Tourism Geographies* 3:3 (2001): 326-337.

other hand, they are political instruments and promotional products at the same time.<sup>23</sup> In this respect, G. Henderson defines festivals as follows:

They can be seen as arenas in which politically and socially marginalized groups can express discontent and challenge the established order through symbolic revolutionary acts; thus, they can be seen as mechanisms of resistance to the dominant social order. Therefore, festivals are typically not spontaneous events; they are serious fun.<sup>24</sup>

There is a broad literature on the functions of festivals in the (re)construction of identities, cultural politics, mechanisms of social control, and commodification processes.<sup>25</sup> In addition, certain authors examine their impact as mechanisms of resistance to the dominant ideology and social control of the state.

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23 Sunny Seonhee Jeong and Carla Almeida Santos, "Cultural Politics and Contested Place Identity," *Annals of Tourism Research* 31:3 (2004): 640-656.

24 *Ibid.*, 641.

25 For anthropological and historical perspectives, see, for example, Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973); Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009); *Celebration: Studies in Festivity and Ritual*, (ed.) Victor Turner (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982); for case studies emphasizing community power, see Sallie A. Marston, "Public Rituals and Community Power: St. Patrick's Day Parades in Lowell, Massachusetts, 1841-1874," *Political Geography Quarterly* 8 (1989): 255-269; Rachel Rinaldo, "Space of Resistance: the Puerto Rican Cultural Center and Humboldt Park," *Cultural Critique* 50 (2002): 135-174; for studies on the economic aspects of festivals, see, for example, F. Manning, "Carnival in Antigua: An Indigenous Festival in a Tourist Economy," *Anthropos* 73 (1978): 191-204; Donald Getz, "Assessing the Economic Impacts of Festivals and Events: Research Issues," *Journal of Applied Recreation Research* 16:1 (1991): 61-77; for studies of festivals in terms of tourism and sustainable local economic development, see Diane O'Sullivan and Marion J. Jackson, "Festival tourism: A contributor to sustainable local economic development?" *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 10:4 (2002): 325-342; Gianna Moscardo, "Analyzing the Role of Festivals and Events in Regional Development," *Event Management* 11:1-2 (2007): 23-32; Bernadette Quinn, "Problematising 'Festival Tourism': Arts Festivals and Sustainable Development in Ireland," *Journal of Sustainable Tourism* 14:3 (2006): 288-306; for studies of the political significance of festivals, see Abner Cohen, "A Polyethnic London Carnival as a Contested Cultural Performance," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 5:1 (1982): 23-41; Peter Jackson, "Street Life: the Politics of Carnival," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 6:2 (1988): 213-227. For a detailed analysis of the literature see Donald

As Abner Cohen points out, every festival<sup>26</sup> contains both the affirmation and validation of the established order as well as its rejection. On one hand, festival represents chaos and disorder; on the other hand, it implies the importance of the return to order.<sup>27</sup>

Regimes have always seemed to orient carnival towards these integrative, ideologically hegemonous, authority-validating functions. But as history shows, carnival's potentialities for fostering criticism, protest, resistance, opposition and violence are equally great; and at the best of times carnival is uneasily poised between compliance and subversion.<sup>28</sup>

Similarly, Peter Jackson argues that festivals offer a test case for discovering the intersection of culture and politics in the creation of spaces of resistance.<sup>29</sup> On account of festivals, “existing forms of coercive social relations are temporarily suspended and this temporal ‘world apart’ is reflected spatially in the marketplace or on the streets.”<sup>30</sup> The Munzur Culture and Nature Festival can be interpreted within this framework.

In his study on Rabelais and the folk culture of the middle ages described by the French novelist, Mikhail Bakhtin emphasizes that a carnival is revolution itself because it is not organized at the request of a government. The sanction for it derives from a force that preexists all authorities.<sup>31</sup> It corresponds to a certain extraterritoriality in the official order and official ideology.<sup>32</sup> A carnival has its own territory and this territory is a “peculiar second world”

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Getz, “The Nature and Scope of Festival Studies,” *International Journal of Event Management Research* 5:1 (2010): 1-47.

26 Cohen uses the concept “carnival.” According to him, a carnival is a socially contested event the political significance of which is inscribed in the landscape.

27 Ibid., 34-35.

28 Ibid., 35.

29 Jackson, 224.

30 Ibid., 225.

31 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), xviii.

32 Ibid., p. 154.

within the official one. Bakhtin indicates that carnivals occur in the marketplace or streets; in other words, on the outside of hierarchical institutions: “The festive marketplace combined many genres and forms, all filled with the same unofficial spirit.”<sup>33</sup>

The Munzur festival is also a temporal “world apart” like all popular festive forms other than those fostered by governments. Moreover, due to the ethnic distinctiveness and contrarian ideological positions of Dersimlis, the Munzur festival is a clear challenge that weakens and “suspends” the temporal and spatial order of the dominant culture. As far as this purpose (of resisting the Dersim policies of the state), the slogans (“return to your land”), the content (performances by socialist, leftist, and mostly Zaza or Kurdish artists), the sphere of influence (considerable interest especially by the Eastern citizens), and the political significance of different landscape forms (concerts, open-air meetings, symposiums, theaters etc.) of the event are concerned, the Munzur festival is as a counter-space – a spatial expression of protest and resistance.

As mentioned, both the streets and the people of Dersim are under the tight control of the state. The festival transforms public spaces into a realm of freedom for a time. For example, during the festival one of the most well-travelled streets is devoted to the stands of political organizations and associations. They propagandize, get in contact with people, and undertake income-generating activities. Military vehicles that usually patrol the city center are concealed in this period. The appearance of the city completely changes for some days. In parallel with the rise of the population due to the festival, all the city’s streets, squares, and parks are occupied by the inhabitants and visitors.

The content of the festival is unusual. The common feature of the artistic performances is their clear leftist, socialist, or revolutionary stance. The concerts constitute the main program of the festival. In general, artists who make ethnic and protest music are invited, and concerts usually take place in the stadium because of the high level of participation of the inhabitants. Many musicians and groups take the stage until late at night. Most of the musicians

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33 Ibid.

give enthusiastic speeches that move the crowd. Some give support to revolutionists and guerrillas on the stage.<sup>34</sup>

As far as the audience is concerned, the Dersim people, especially the younger population, are clearly pleased with the concerts. The stadium is full of participants who dance the *halay*. Red and Kurdish flags in hand, they shout slogans against the state. Placards of Öcalan, Kaypakkaya, Mao, and fighters who died in the Dersim mountains are carried. In 2013, the organization committee projected Öcalan's sayings on the walls of buildings surrounding the stadium. The concert venue becomes a "nonstate space" for a while.

Apart from concerts, a full schedule of panels is a crucial part of the festival. The sophistication of the program and the broad participation demonstrate the extent of Dersimlis' concern about their culture and values. The subjects and themes of the panels have remained almost unchanged over the years. Every year, several panels on Dersim Alevism, the language or dialect of the Dersim people, the Kurdish question, gender issues, and the ecological problems of the city are organized. Both the speakers and the program are determined in long discussions among the members of the festival committee.

The preparation process for the festival is an arena where prominent actors compete with each other. Each political organization or party seeks to add artists or intellectuals to the festival program whose political approach corresponds to their own. The festival committee consists of the municipality and all the political organizations and NGOs active in the local arena, and they hold many meetings that last for months. As a result of hard bargaining, the program is shaped in accordance with the respective power of the actors.<sup>35</sup>

Because the main theme and aim of the organization is to protect Dersim and to call Dersimlis to return, the emphasis on "place" is stronger in the case of the Munzur festival. To "claim" Munzur means to show that the city, while blockaded by both law enforcement and high-modernist projects, does not belong to the government or the dam companies; it belongs to Dersimlis wherever they live. In other words, in addition to the natural character of a

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34 Some singers were put on trial on the charge of "propaganda for a terrorist organization" because of songs sung and speeches given at the Munzur festival. *Cumhuriyet*, 10.05.2012.

35 Mahmut Nizam Özlütaş, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014; Uğur Yeşiltepe, tape-recorded interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 01.07.2014.

carnival – celebrating, enhancing, and challenging the perception of local, place, and group identities – the *raison-d’être* of the Munzur festival is spatiality. For that reason, the festival has expanded beyond the limits of the central district and spread towards Hozat, Mazgirt, Ovacık, and Pertek in the course of time.

The expansion of the festival is not only in terms of scale. The festival was started to transform everyday encounters with space and reshape it while overthrowing a hierarchical order. Albeit for a short time, it re-appropriates urban space. For example, the courtyard of the old barracks has started to be used as an exhibition area. Panels and symposiums that formally took place in conference halls started to be held in tea gardens and on streets closed to traffic. Street theater and folk dancing have been scheduled in outdoor public spaces. Many press statements, meetings, and protest demonstrations take place with the participation of the inhabitants and visitors.

In recent years, certain activities in rural areas for commemorating the 1937-38 massacres and the evacuation of the 1990s have been included in the scope of the festival. For example, a memorial ceremony dedicated to the memory of all people killed in the massacre was organized in the village of Seyid Rıza (Ağdat). Moreover, several events are held at important *ziyarets* to highlight the Alevism of Dersim. Visitors attend worship services and distribute *lokma* as a part of the ritual. A breakfast organized in a former Armenian village with the participation of guests from Armenia was added to the program as a goodwill gesture to Dersim’s Armenians. Some rural areas threatened by the dams and HPPs are also visited in the context of the festival to publicize the deterioration of Dersim’s nature to the public.

In short, even the mountains and rivers have become part of the festival and are visited by thousands of people. This can be perceived as an attempt to reinterpret Dersim’s past and create a new collective memory. As Simon Schama expresses, “cultural habits of humanity have always made room for the sacredness of nature. All our landscapes, from the city park to the mountain hike, are imprinted with our tenacious, inescapable obsessions.”<sup>36</sup> Because

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36 Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: A.A. Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1995), 18.

the reconstruction of collective memory in Dersim is directly related to natural spaces, the festival committee attaches importance to visits to rural areas. In this way, the rural population also benefits from the activities.

Consequently, the festival as a “temporal world apart” gives inhabitants and visitors the opportunity to travel freely in Dersim. Due to the increase of population and spatial expansion of the festival, troublesome security checks and surveillance by the Turkish military are reduced during the festival. The governorship abstains from creating tensions; therefore, security forces keep a low profile. The roads and villages whose entrances and exits are routinely controlled, are left alone in this period.

Local people know that both the PKK and the MKP block the roads in this period to propagandize and motivate their guerillas. A considerable number of fighters living in the region are from Dersim and have relatives in the city. As mentioned, they are by-and-large respected by the local people. The majority of Dersimlis are not terrified of these armed men and women and do not inform on them. These kinds of “encounters,” the frequency of which increases in summer especially during the festival period, blur the lines between legal and illegal. Guerillas are more visible in this relatively “secure” atmosphere, indicating that coercive relations existing between citizens and the state are suspended during the festival.

According to Roger Caillois, “in traditional societies, people live in remembrance of one festival and in expectation of the next.”<sup>37</sup> This is also true for Dersim. The festival is tolerated by the state even though the activities obviously criticize and protest state policies. It may be that it is perceived as a harmless release of energy. However, along with the creation of a powerful sense of place, the vessel contributes to the challenge to spatial prohibitions in Dersim. In this context, the Munzur festival is an attempt to create a counter-hegemonic space in terms of both appropriating natural and cultural heritage and abolishing spatial hierarchies. By including all the urban and rural areas of the city and embracing all the people living there, the festival corresponds to a new scale larger than the city.

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37 Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2009), 256.

Edward Soja and Barbara Hooper recall a quote by British filmmaker Pretibha Parmar: “The appropriation and use of space are political acts.”<sup>38</sup> Given the “temporal world apart” that emerges during the festival, the city has the impression of being a “nonstate space” for a while. Like medieval carnivals that subvert and ridicule the social order, the Munzur festival engenders a landscape purified of the direct control of the state. It enables the crowd to reappropriate the city’s streets, squares, and natural spaces and reproduce them through their conflicts, alliances, compromises, and dominations.

## § 7.2 Municipal Initiatives in the 1990s

From the end of the 1990s, the Kurdish movement has concentrated on local elections in eastern cities and sought to reconstruct these cities according to Kurdish cultural values, national desires, and spatial projections. In Dersim, the first pro-Kurdish municipality came to power in 2004. However, even in the 1990s under the OHAL regime, significant steps are taken by social democrat mayors to create counter-spaces.

In this section, I focus on the spatial arrangements of the municipal governments of the 1990s. Although the local governments of the period were not affiliated with pro-Kurdish parties, they made modest attempts to create urban spaces that would reflect the cultural and social patterns and the collective memory of Dersimlis. Highly-repressive policies of the OHAL regime prohibited the declaration and representation of opposing viewpoints and non-hegemonic cultural forms, so the only way to produce counter-space was to erect public sculptures and monuments that referred to universal values and “apolitical” figures. In other words, Dersimlis’ everyday life in this decade was framed by artistic productions with implicit expressions. The Dersim people attributed different meanings and significance to them and incorporated them into their collective identity and memory.

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38 Edward Soja and Barbara Hooper, “The Spaces That Difference Makes: Some Notes on the Geographical Margins of the New Cultural Politics,” in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, (eds.) Michael Keith and Steve Pile (London: Routledge, 2005), 187.

There are a few statues in Dersim. Two were erected in the middle of the 1990s: a statue of Sey Uşên – a madman perceived as *seyid* (holy figure) by Dersimlis – and the Statue of Human Rights. By examining their histories, I discuss how urban space became a space of resistance against the OHAL regime.

### 7.2.1 *The Statue of Sey Uşên (Şewuşen)*

In general, people with long-term mental health problems are among the most excluded in any society. They often face poverty and homelessness and experience discrimination. Dersim is among a few cities where mad people are respected:<sup>39</sup> its inhabitants tend to embrace them. Maybe due to the principles of Dersim Alevism or due to the sympathy towards people suffering from the trauma of the 1937-38 events, Dersimlis are nice to them, and they act sensitively and tolerantly.

The mentally ill are highly visible in everyday life. For example, a madman may suddenly appear at an official ceremony and no one feels the need to stop him. Indeed, they have largely been included in Dersim society though their housing and health problems persist. What I want to emphasize here are Dersim's cultural and social codes, the percepts that enable the tolerance towards mad people, and the use of the image of a madman in the formation of counter-spaces.

The discourse based on the prestigious position of madmen in Dersim's social and cultural life is remarkable. Almost all interviewees for this dissertation touched on the respect shown to them. Not only Dersim society but also Dersim's madmen are eulogized in this discourse. According to it, Dersim's madmen – known as *budela* – never beg; they take only what they need. They do not use money. They do not have a house; Dersim is their home. They are honest and outspoken; indeed, they are the only ones free to say what they think. They are honorable. They do not like the state and its institutions. They never give information to the state. They are at peace with nature and with

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39 There are a few cities where mad people are respected. Ayten, a mad woman living in Bursa, is another example whose statue was erected.

animals. These assessments are frequently used to show the profound esteem and reverence towards madmen.

The aforementioned descriptions coincide with those of wise men. Indeed, the term “budela” indicates the ambiguity between insanity and wisdom. Some regard Dersim’s madmen as holy figures and reconstruct their histories in accordance with Alevism. Some depict them as legendary characters with supernatural powers or compare them with *evliyas*. On the other hand, the narratives about Dersim’s madmen also evoke the image of revolutionaries. The madman does not consume more than he needs, does not hesitate to express his thoughts, and resists the state like revolutionaries do. The qualities adopted by Dersim society and the cultural values exalted in the legends of Dersim Alevism are attributed to them. Moreover, Dersimlis accustomed to “taking the side of the oppressed” embrace madmen as a part of their own identity.

Many madmen have become legends in the city.<sup>40</sup> Most stories are about their stands against soldiers and police during the OHAL regime and the miracles surrounding them. For example, according to one legend, one of Dersim’s popular madmen named Baba Bertal (who died in 2012) once defied the curfew and disobeyed an order to stop. Soldiers fired at him but he was unharmed. In another, Deli Haydar was so brave that he took the liberty of swearing at a government officer who had come to his village to seize the weapons of the peasants.<sup>41</sup> The most famous madman – on which I focus – is Sey Uşên who lost his mind during the 1938 massacre. The coup of 12 September exacerbated his disease. When he encountered the empty streets that morning, he confused the coup d’état with the 1938 massacre. He rose up against the police and threw stones at police headquarters.

The courage and holiness of these men is frequently described by the local people. The erection of the statue of Sey Uşên in 1995 can be understood by

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40 For their stories, see Nurettin Aslan, *Dersim’in Divane Delileri* (Istanbul, İletişim: 2015). For a research about Sey Uşên see also Çiçek İlgiz, *Monumentalizing Madness: A Depiction of the Rise and Demise of Dersim as a Center for the Left*, MA Thesis, Central European University, 2014.

41 Murat Kahraman, “Dersim Delileri ve 8 Mart,” *Radikal*, 10.03.2015.

examining the relationship established between madmen and the values adopted by Dersim society. When Sey Uşên died in 1994 more than ten thousand people attended his funeral.<sup>42</sup> The mayor at the time, Mazlum Arslan, proposed that the municipal council “immortalize” him with a statue considering Dersimlis’ deep sympathy for him. Sculptor Metin Yurdanur carved the statue which was placed near of the largest street of the city (Cumhuriyet Avenue, better known as Palavra Square).<sup>43</sup>

Both the statue and grave of Sey Uşên have become a kind of *ziyaret* since 1994. People visit his grave every Thursday, light candles, kiss the tombstone and pray. Sey Uşên was a member of the Kureyşan aşiret which is hierarchically superior to others in terms of its holiness; therefore, narratives about his mystical powers are numerous.<sup>44</sup> These legends reinforce his reputation and make him resemble Munzur or Düzgün Baba.

The statue was erected in a state ceremony in which crucial public officials participated. A poem written by Diren Solmaz, “You did not die Seyit Hüseyin,” was engraved on a plaque situated at its base. In the poem, Sey Uşên is depicted “looking from the top of mountains / from the place where the sun rises.” He is “surrounded by ruined god sculptures but still standing.” “His own light instead of that of the moon reflects on the face of the poet.” The poet feels desperate in the absence of Sey Uşên. In the end, Solmaz asks: “Are you going to that city we do not know?”<sup>45</sup>

42 Ersin Kalkan, “Kim Delidir Kim Velidir Hiç Belli Olmaz,” *Hürriyet*, 13.04.2008.

43 Mazlum Arslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.

44 The most known is as follows: On a snowy day, Dersimlis invited Sey Uşên to their home, but he refused. He slept on the street as usual. In the morning, the Dersimlis saw that the floor where Sey Uşên had lain down was dry.

45 Ölmedin Seyit Hüseyin / Değil ölüm değil dünyanın bittiği yer / Sende anladım bunu sende çözdüm / O insanlık denen toy çocuğu / Ben sende gördüm / Hiç bilmediğim bir şehrin göbeğindeymişim gibi / Sokaklarımı dolaşıyorum yıkık şehrimin / Ve sen karşımda dağların yücesinde / Güneşin doğduğu yerde öyle bakmaktasın / Etrafında yıkık tanrı heykelleri / Aralarında bir tek sen dimdik ayaktasın / Uyumaktasın günahsız bir çocuk gibi / Ve Munzur akmakta ayaklarının önünde / Ellerinle suya dokunup bir şeyler çiziyorsun / Kim bilir Seyit Hüseyin neleri düşünüyorsun / Belirsiz çizgilerle çizili yüzün / Paha biçilmez tablo gibi karşımda durur / Ay aydınlatırken bu şehri / Ayın ışığı değil / Senin nurun vurur yüzüme / Ve ben / Ve biz zavallı çaresiz / Başımız öne eğik öylece duruyoruz / Gittiğin yerlerden bir

The image created around Sey Uşên transcends the sense of reality. The poem engraved on the statue delineates him as a hero who discovered the secret of life. His death-defying heroism that incites others to think about the idea of death and the continuity of life is constructed in company with philosophical themes. A life with dignity won out over the “gods.” At the same time, he is represented as innocent as a child.

Nevertheless, everybody agrees he was lonely in his lifetime and was perceived more so as a mascot of the city rather than a holy figure while he was alive. Indeed, these exaggerated lines, expressions, and narratives reflect an ideal character that Dersimlis people need to embrace. In other words, Sey Uşên can be interpreted as the embodiment of the socially and culturally approved values, knowledge, and socialization practices and behaviors of the Dersim community.

The erection of the statue was welcomed by locals. However, the mainstream media considered the notion of erecting a statue of a madman as aberrant on its own. It was published as an anomalous occurrence in an abnormal city. Mazlum Arslan indicated that many journalists asked why he had erected a statue of a sick rather than a wise man. He responded as follows: “There is a statue of a rooster in Denizli and those of Koroğlu or Dadaloğlu in other cities. What are their meanings? So this is what we did.”<sup>46</sup> The statue reinforces the perception of Dersim as extraordinary and deviant. It implied that Dersimlis persisted in taking a “something unusual” stance.

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haber bekliyoruz / Ve sen telaşlı adımlarınla / Bir yere yetişmeye çalışırcasına / Önümüzden geçip gidiyorsun / Nasırlaşmış yüreğimize buz tutmuş yüzümüze / Bakıp gülümsüyorsun / Söyle Seyit Hüseyin bu acele niye / Yoksa bilmediğimiz o şehre mi gidiyorsun?

46 “O zaman basında haberler çıktı. Herkes Türkiye’de akıllı insanların heykelini yaparken Tunceli’de deli insanın heykeli yapılıyor, bunun anlamı ne? Beni aradılar bazı basın mensupları. Denizli’de de horoz heykeli var. Onun anlamı neyse, Koroğlu heykeli var, Dadaloğlu heykeli var... Biz de bunu yaptık.” Mazlum Arslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.



Figure 7.1 Statue of Sey Uşen (Photo: Yavuz Çobanoğlu)

Sey Uşen was only a madman; therefore, the statue was no apparent danger to the state. Nonetheless, the city again became an “exception” in the eyes of outsiders. The erection of the statue, which was the result of public demand for the immortalization of Sey Uşen rather than the near countenance of a mayor, constitutes an implicit resistance against established cultural and social norms imposed upon the local people. It contributes to the production of counter-space because, on one hand, it symbolizes the power of the local that had been substantially blocked by national values and symbols, and on the other, it draws attention to an oppressed identity like those of Dersimlis.

The overwhelming insistence on its construction and its time-varying functions enable us to interpret the statue as an attempt to produce a counter-space. In a period when almost all local cultural and social values were ignored, choosing and embracing a local figure in a public space was a crucial challenge and a kind of hidden resistance. The statue represents not only a local person but also the norms, beliefs, styles, and attitudes specific to Dersim that were interdicted under the pretext of a state of war.

Second, the representation of madness can be appraised as a criticism of the hegemonic ethos of the modern state. The marginality of the madman highlights the dissimilarity and authenticity of the city. Dersim, the history of which has been defined by resistance to modernism, extols insanity – a state of human existence that rejects all the benefits of modernism. The statue implies that Dersimlis, like madmen, are uninterested in the inherent rationality of the modern state and the hierarchy of logical principles that govern the city.

Lastly, the transformation of the statue from a public sculpture into a kind of sacred or ritual space is related to the restrictions on Alevism. The inhabitants converted it into a *ziyaret* in everyday life. They changed its meaning and opened up a new space for worship. Unlike other *ziyarets*, the statue is at the center of the city; hereby, the worship and rituals of Dersimlis have become more visible.

To conclude, given the OHAL conditions, the monumentalizing of an ordinary figure instead of other, more “political” ones is understandable. However, the image of Sey Uşên was so strong that Dersimlis ascribed his statue new meanings, especially with qualities identified with Dersim. The statue of a madman (perhaps the most oppressed of the oppressed) embodies Dersimlis who feel oppressed and desire to resist, reject, and mock the state.

### 7.2.2 *The Statue of Human Rights*

The statue of Human Rights was designed in 1995 and erected on Cumhuriyet Avenue in 1996 under mayor Mazlum Arslan (1994-1999). The idea of erecting such a statue emerged during the visit of Minister of State Algan Hacaloğlu. He promised to support the statue financially at the request of the mayor. Arslan tells the story of the statue as follows:

It was constructed with the thought that a universal statue pertinent to the viewpoints and lifestyle of Tunceli, which evokes universal ideas. In the other provinces to which we travelled, there were other statues apart from those of Atatürk: of Pir Sultan, Yavuz Sultan Selim, the figure of horse, a booster, etc. I appealed to a sculptor, Metin Yurdanur. He is a good sculptor. When I said “Tunceli” he showed great interest. He said that he was modern like Tuncelilis. I told him that I wanted to erect a statue of Pir Sultan because one person died in 1969 during events that occurred after the play *Pir Sultan* was banned. He said: “This idea is passé. Everybody has it. Let’s develop another idea. Tunceli bears witness to everyday disturbances and deaths. There is no peace in Tunceli. We must give a message to establish peace. Give me some time, I will think about it and call you.” After a while, he called me to Ankara. “I have just made the figure.” He had carved a woman with her arms spread wide. There was a circle around her and a pigeon in her hand. He said that this statue was befitting of the dignity of Tunceli. I asked its meaning. “The woman entreats the world. Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli comes to Anatolia in the form of a pigeon in order to bring peace. Let peace be brought to the region and to Tunceli. The woman is the Anatolian mother. She is everything. Because the woman terminates blood feuds, destroys hostilities and hate, and earns the respect of everybody, I preferred this figure.” I had nothing else to say. I was very happy. We agreed.<sup>47</sup>

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47 “Tunceli’nin düşüncesine uygun, yaşam biçimine uygun, evrensel, bir şeyler hatırlatabilen bir yapının-heykelin olması uygun olması düşüncesiyle yapıldı. Gezdiğimiz diğer illerde Atatürk’ün dışında başka heykeller de var. Pir Sultan var, Yavuz Sultan Selim var, at figürü var, horoz figürü var. Ben de bir heykeltıraşa gittim. Metin Yurdanur. Ziyaret ettim. İyi bir heykeltıraş. Tunceli deyince daha bir ilgi gösterdi. ‘Tuncelililer gibi çağdaş düşünüyorum’ dedi. ‘1969 yılında Pir Sultan gecesi düzenlenirken olaylar olmuş, bir kişi ölmüş. Ondan dolayı bir Pir Sultan heykeli yapmak istiyorum’ dedim. ‘Başkan’ dedi, ‘Pir Sultan heykeli yaparım ama bu biraz demode oldu, herkes yapıyor. Başka bir düşünce geliştirelim. Tunceli’de her gün olaylar var, ölümler var. Tunceli’de huzur yok. Bu olayları, huzuru sağlamak için bir mesaj vermemiz lazım.’ Bana dedi ‘sen müsaade et, ben düşünüp seni arayayım.’ Aradan bir zaman

Certain articles from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights would be written on the statue; therefore, it would be called the Statue of Human Rights. It was expected to be completed on 10 December 1995, Human Rights Day. When Zeynep Kınacı (Zilan), the first PKK female suicide bomber, blew herself up in the city center, the fate of both the ceremony area and the statue drastically changed.

On 30 June 1996, during a flag raising ceremony, 24-year-old Kınacı killed eight Turkish soldiers and wounded twenty-nine others. In her open letter to Öcalan, she expresses the aim of her act: “We want to live in freedom in our own land like human beings... We do not want to cause war, to die or to kill. But there is no other way of gaining our freedom.”<sup>48</sup> This bloody attack turned Zilan into a leading female figure of the Kurdish resistance in the eyes of the Kurdish people.

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geçti, dedi ‘başkan buldum.’ ‘Sen Ankara’ya gel’ dedi. ‘Figürünü yaptım, gel tartışalım.’ Gittim, bir kadın resmi yapmış, çember yapmış, elleri açık. Bir de güvercin. ‘Bu Tunceli’ye yakışır’ dedi. ‘Anlamı ne?’ dedim bunların. Dedi ki ‘bu bir bayan, çember bir dünya. Bayan dünyaya yalvarıyor. Bu yalvarmanın içerisinde Hacı Bektaş-ı Veli Anadolu’ya bir güvercin kılığında gelmiş. Barış sağlamak için güvercin kılığında gelmiş. Tunceli’de artık bölgedeki barışı sağlayalım. Anadolu’da kadın bir anadır, kadın her şeyimizdir. Kadının kan davasını birleştiren, düşmanlığı yok edeni kini yok eden, herkesin saygı duyduğu bir figür olması nedeniyle böyle düşündüm’ dedi. Benim söyleyecek bir şeyim kalmadı. Çok mutlu oldum, anlaştık.” Mazlum Arslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.

48 Tanya Narozhna, “Between Shadows and Hopes: Discursive Representations of Female Suicide Bombings and the Global Order,” in *Order and Disorder in the International System*, (eds.) Sai Felicia and Krishna-Hensel (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), 156.



Figure 7.2 Statue of Human Rights

From the perspective of the PKK, the act was a sacrifice of one's own life for Kurdish liberation.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, the role of women in the movement increased significantly in the 1990s. Scores of women participated in the PKK as fighters; one-third of the organization's mountain cadre was comprised of women in 1993.<sup>50</sup> Women's political mobilization transformed the image of the Kurdish woman: she was no longer the "miserable person waiting for her emancipation

day” as before. She became an agent who “will emancipate society while she emancipates herself.”<sup>51</sup> After the act, Kınacı was proclaimed a “goddess of freedom” with reference to the sacrifices of goddesses in Ancient Mesopotamia. “They blaze with the light of those ‘goddesses of freedom’ who sacrificed themselves for humanity, and they are, therefore, immortal symbols of the liberation of humankind.”<sup>52</sup>

The suicide attack by Kınacı influenced both the everyday life of inhabitants and the organization of urban space. In the following years, spatial segregation based on security concerns became more apparent. Almost all state agencies and the majority of police stations and military establishments were moved out of the historical center, Moğultay. Official ceremonies, welcome ceremonies, and official visits began to be held in new public buildings and the areas founded in Sihenk, a new and more secure neighborhood of Dersim. The war was no longer limited to rural geography; it became an urban fact.

On the other hand, it is clear that both the PKK, its armed struggle, and the self-immolations had clearly become legitimate in the eyes of the majority of Dersimlis in the 1990s. This is why Kınacı was regarded as a heroine and martyr rather than as a terrorist. As the local people were not able to commemorate Kınacı who was declared a traitor by the state, they reinterpreted existing spatial forms and discovered a “hidden resistance.”

Six months after the attack, the statue of Human Rights was finally completed. It was revealed at a state ceremony at which the governor, the regiment commander, the chief of police, and citizens were present. The mayor made a speech about the meaning of the work of art. According to the mayor, everybody liked it. After a while, the mayor learned that the Ministry of the Interior

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49 Necla Açıık, “Re-defining the Role of Women Within the Kurdish National Movement in Turkey in the 1990s,” in *The Kurdish Question in Turkey: New Perspectives on Violence, Representation, and Reconciliation*, (eds.) Cengiz Günes and Welat Zeydanlıoğlu (New York: Routledge, 2014), 120.

50 Ali Nahit Özcan, *PKK (Kürdistan İşçi Partisi) Tarihi, İdeolojisi, Yöntemi* (Ankara: ASAM, 1999), 160.

51 Handan Çağlayan, *Analar, Yoldaşlar, Tanrıçalar: Kürt Hareketinde Kadınlar ve Kadın Kimliğinin Oluşumu* (İstanbul: İletişim, 2007), 101, 107, 109.

52 Açıık, 121.

had brought a lawsuit against the municipality for erecting a statue of Zeynep Kınacı. The woman figure holding a peace dove while stretching out her arms to the world was interpreted as Kınacı. When it was proved that the mayor and council had decided to build the statue before the attack, they were cleared of blame.<sup>53</sup>

Soon after, the statue was damaged in a traffic accident; therefore, the municipality relocated it to a safer place which was close to the area where the attack had happened. The rumor that the statue represented Kınacı immediately spread once again.<sup>54</sup> Although everybody was aware that the mayor had no connection whatsoever with the Kurdish movement and that the meaning of the statue was irrelevant to the act of self-sacrifice, the curious coincidence made the work of art a means of expressing affection and respect for Kınacı.

The Statue of Human Rights is important for three reasons. First, it is a spatial expression of the will to break the iron discipline established by the OHAL regime. By recalling human rights and peace, the statue subverts the atmosphere of streets oppressed under the strict control of the military and police. The statue was defiant enough on its own because the moral principles and norms approved via some standards of human behavior and the fundamental rights to which people are inherently entitled were threatened in the city. In this sense, because it symbolizes that all people are free and equal with respect to dignity and rights without the distinctions of race, language, religion, political or other opinions, and national or social origin, the statue reveals the “state of exception” in Dersim. The city has never been free and equal to western cities. The statue evokes this reality in everyday life; therefore, it helps to erode the “spatial framework” of power founded on violence directed towards the inhabitants of the space.

Second, the lawsuit brought against the mayor demonstrates the extent to which space was considered a sphere of conflict by the state. Even the slightest attempt of the local to create a space or develop a spatial project against homogeneity, power, and the arrogance of power was adequate cause for the central authority to respond. The main question was not whether the statue was

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53 Mazlum Arslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.

54 Ibid.

constructed in the memory of Kınacı; the problem was the visibility of a figure that had the potential to transform into a Kurdish national monument in the public sphere.

Lastly, the statue is crucial because its users have changed the meaning attributed to it by its creators. The statue is called the “Zilan statue” rather than the “Statue of Human Rights” by the majority of inhabitants in everyday life. Four years after the attack, an article was published in the national daily *Hürriyet* titled “The Statue That Causes a Disturbance in Tunceli.”<sup>55</sup> It argues that many people, especially relatives of the martyrs, thought that the statue was erected maliciously. The article also includes a statement from the military: “Military officials of Tunceli express that everyone has different view about the statue. According to them, everybody approaches it how they wish to see it.”<sup>56</sup>

The statement of military officials reflects the current situation. Inhabitants suppressed by alien rule have attempted to regain their self-confidence and self-respect and the strength to win back their freedom through hidden forms of resistance in addition to their active struggle. The re-appropriation of the statue is a stance against existing spatial order (knowledge, signs, and codes) the limits of which have been defined to the extent the authority tolerates. As a result of the dialectical relation between the imposed spatial order and creative spatial practices that connect places and people, the use of space or spatial forms and sense-making by inhabitants have changed. This is a direct challenge to the coercive, cultural-spatial dominance of the state.

### § 7.3 The Spatial Designs of Pro-Kurdish Municipalities

*La géographie, ça sert d'abord à faire la guerre.*<sup>57</sup>

Since 2004 when the local elections in Dersim were won by the Democratic Union of Forces (Demokratik Güçbirliği), a coalition that consists of social democratic, socialist, and pro-Kurdish parties, a new era has emerged in the

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55 *Hürriyet*, 05.07.2000.

56 Ibid.

57 “Geography serves, first and foremost, to wage war.” Yves Lacoste

city. Two consecutive mayors of pro-Kurdish parties – Songül Erol Abdil (2004-2009) and Edibe Şahin (2009 and 2014) –governed the city in tandem with the basic principles of the Kurdish movement. With the claim of establishing democratic and autonomous local governments, they sought to include everyone in decision-making and executive mechanisms, laying the foundations of a local government approach based on ecology and pro-woman policies.

On the other hand, the Kurdish movement finally had the opportunity to reconfigure physical and cultural landscapes and to produce spatial symbols. It was not, of course, possible to annihilate the hegemonic spatial order in place since the beginning of the republic and strengthened in the 1990s. However, the increasing self-confident Kurdish party attempted to erase certain elements of the nation-state from urban space and reframed the city by producing new public spaces and monuments or renaming them according to Dersim’s cultural, political, and social life.

“Each new form of state, each new form of political power, introduces its own particular way of partitioning space, its own particular administrative classification of discourses about space and about things and people in space [and] each such form commands space, as it were, to serve its purposes.”<sup>58</sup> The pro-Kurdish parties also produced counter-spaces and reorganized existing spaces to form discourses counter to those of hegemonic ones. As Nuala C. Johnson points out, remembering the past by constructing a single coherent narrative is crucial for the emergence of a popular nationalist identity.<sup>59</sup> From this perspective, I argue that through the everyday practices of city residents or the everyday experience of urban space, cultural and national values associated with Kurdishness were restored and reconstructed from the beginning of the 2000s until 2015.

Efforts to create counter-spaces are generally discussed with reference to postcolonial studies. The making of postcolonial cultural geographies does not simply mean deconstructing cultural representations of colonial power; it also

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58 Lefebvre, *Production of Space*, 281.

59 Nuala C. Johnson, “Public Memory,” in *A Companion to Cultural Geography*, (eds.) James D. Duncan, Nuala C. Johnson and Richard H. Schein (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 318.

means exploring the everyday cultural contexts of colonial and postcolonial subjects and describing the resistance and negotiations that form the contact zones.<sup>60</sup> Postcolonial subjects contest the given territoriality of the political system by producing new forms or reconstructing indigenous forms that express the political spatially. This strategy can be viewed as a kind of “decolonizing” the geographic imagination and breaking the blockade established by the state authority through the discourses and practices of domination.

Leaving aside the discussion of whether the Kurdish region can be considered as a colony, semi-colony, or internal-colony of the Turkish state;<sup>61</sup> in short time a significant literature has accumulated about the Kurdish struggle to [re]appropriate urban space and oppose their erasure from public space. For example, the studies of Joost Jongerden and Zeynep Gambetti demonstrate the new discourse that pro-Kurdish local governments established through place-making.<sup>62</sup> These studies examine pro-Kurdish municipalities as the locomotives of change, transforming spaces for new political publics.<sup>63</sup> However, further studies are needed to discuss how local governments and the users of

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60 James R. Ryan, “Postcolonial Geographies,” in *A Companion to Cultural Geography*, (eds.) James D. Duncan, Nuala C. Johnson and Richard H. Schein (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004), 479.

61 For a detailed analysis see Joost Jongerden and Ahmet Hamdi Akkaya, “The Kurdistan Workers Party and a New Left in Turkey: Analysis of the Revolutionary Movement in Turkey through the PKK’s Memorial Text on Haki Karer,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 14 (2012), <http://ejts.revues.org/4613>.

62 See, for example, Joost Jongerden, “Crafting Space, Making People: The Spatial Design of Nation in Modern Turkey,” *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 10 (2009), <http://ejts.revues.org/index4014.html>; Zeynep Gambetti and Joost Jongerden, “The Spatial (Re)production of the Kurdish Issue: Multiple and Contradicting Trajectories-Introduction,” *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 13:4 (2011): 375-388; Zeynep Gambetti, “Politics of Place/Space: The Spatial Dynamics of the Kurdish and Zapatista Movements,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 41 (Fall 2009): 43-87; Zeynep Gambetti, “The Conflictual (Trans)formation of the Public Sphere in Urban Space: The Case of Diyarbakır,” *New Perspectives on Turkey* 32 (2005): 43-71; Zeynep Gambetti, “Decolonizing Diyarbakır: Culture, Identity and the Struggle to Appropriate Urban Space,” in *Comparing Cities: The Middle East and South Asia*, (eds.) Kamran Asdar Ali and Martina Rieker (Karachi, Oxford University Press: 2010), 95-127.

63 Gambetti, “The Conflictual (Trans)formation of the Public Sphere in Urban Space: The Case of Diyarbakır,” 53.

urban space cope with spatial signs of assimilation, through which mechanisms decolonization and the reappropriation of urban space manifest themselves and how a new historiography and culture are constructed through space.

In this part of the dissertation, I focus on the establishment of Seyid Rıza Square, the Dersim 1938 wall, and decisions of the municipal assembly concerning the change of place names. Choices by pro-Kurdish municipalities while designing urban space give information about Kurdish historiography, identity politics, and their approach to Dersim. How urban space functions as a means of constructing Kurdish identity is the main question of this section.

The examples I discuss in this context purport that the pro-Kurdish municipality has two interrelated spatial intentions. On one hand, it challenges Turkish nationalism and the nation state by removing the elements of Turkification policies from urban spaces as far as possible. The most obvious example is the change of place names. On the other hand, it seeks to reconstruct the city in a way that strengthens Kurdish identity. For example, increasing interest in Seyid Rıza in Kurdish historiography corresponds with the erection of a statue of him in the heart of Dersim. However, I argue that this process has been furthered by the distinctiveness of the city. The common, traumatic history of Dersim is monumentalized in order to persuade all segments of the Dersim community.

### 7.3.1 *A New Public Square: From Palavra to Seyid Rıza*

The most famous and largest street of the city is Cumhuriyet Avenue. The city center was formed around this street at the end of the 1930s. “Cumhuriyet Avenue” (Republic Avenue) is its formal name; however, nobody uses it. Everybody knows it as “Palavra.” Rumor has it that because men of Dersim, most of whom were interested in politics, were walking there while prattling on how they would save the world, the name of the street became “Palavra Square” in the 1970s. This ironic epithet demonstrates the extent to which Dersimlis identify everyday life with politics.

“Palavra” means “empty talk” in Turkish. Political conversations while walking along the street have long been a significant part of everyday life in Dersim; however, the sophisticated analyses of the street’s habitués make little

sense to others. In this respect, the satirical renaming can be interpreted as a critique or joke directed at leftists who were unable to meet the expectations of Dersimlis.

On the other hand, Palavra square is also remembered as an area where Dersimlis can come together to freely discuss and influence political action. According to an interviewee who teaches painting at the Provincial Directorate of Youth and Sports, young people in the 1970s, especially highschool students, became acquainted with literature, culture, and arts due to the milieu around the square. He emphasizes that the square enabled the young Dersimlis to free themselves of the hegemonies of the aşirets and learn universal values instead of local ones.<sup>64</sup>

In the 2000s when the pro-Kurdish party took precedence over leftist movements, a new public space replaced Palavra Square. "Seyid Rıza Square" was constructed on Kışla Street/Square, the name of which comes from the historical barracks. In 2014, the name of the square was changed by a decision of the municipal council even though the governorship twice refused the decision. The new public sphere developed around the statue of Seyid Rıza erected upon the initiative of the pro-Kurdish municipality.

The square consists of a semicircular park. The statue is at the center. Its position creates an impression that Seyid Rıza sees and embraces all Dersimlis. Because the statue is on the edge of a cliff, the circumference of the semicircle is surrounded by handrails. At the rear of the statue, views of the Munzur River and mountains leap to the eye.

Previously, there was old, bedraggled commercial complex, owned by the municipality at this location. This two-tiered office block was constructed in 1986-1987. Under mayor Songül Erol Abdil, the building was demolished and replaced by the park.<sup>65</sup> Since the erection of the statue of Seyid Rıza on 29 July 2010, the park has become both a meeting place and a common place for socializing.

The statue was erected during the Munzur Culture and Nature Festival with the participation of the Dersim deputies. Soon afterwards, it triggered

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64 Müslüm Bey, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 10.07.2012.

65 Mazlum Arslan, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 24.02.2014.

discussions about Kurdish nationalism. Not only representatives of the central government who are still criminalizing Seyid Rıza but also some local powers concerned about the Kurdification of Dersim were dissatisfied with the statue.



Figure 7.3 Seyid Rıza Square (Photo: Dersim Municipality)

The Provincial Directorate of Security and the governor at the time, Mustafa Taşkesen, filed a criminal complaint against the municipality shortly after the unveiling of the statue;<sup>66</sup> however, in 2013, the public prosecutor of Tunceli ruled that it did not constitute a crime.<sup>67</sup> The case interestingly reflects the ambiguity of the “opening process.” On one hand, the state claimed to face up to the Dersim massacre and to rehabilitate Seyid Rıza and other tribal figures; on the other, it tended to behave according to the norms and principles of the previous hegemony.

After the court decision, mayor Edibe Şahin announced that they had anticipated that the statue would be removed; therefore, the statue had been made from rigid plastic instead of bronze<sup>68</sup>:

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66 *Radikal*, 30.07.2010.

67 *Cumhuriyet*, 26.11.2013.

68 *Radikal*, 26.11.2013.

In 2010 when we erected this statue there were many problems in Turkey in terms of democratization and these were being seriously discussed. While erecting this monument, our aim was to understand at which phase the democratization was and to test how the statue would be received. In short, we wanted to see the threshold of democracy Turkey had reached.<sup>69</sup>

The statement by Şahin reveals how the production and reorganization of public spaces create tensions between local and central governments. Moreover, it seems that the local government was doubtful that the state would tolerate the representation of a local leader in the public sphere. In spite of the openings of the AKP, pro-Kurdish powers approached the new hegemony with caution.

Apart from the central state, some Dersimlis were worried about the statue. First of all, it was not the municipal council that had decided to erect the statue. According to the procedure for erecting new statues and monuments, the initiative is subject to majority decision by the municipal council and the authorization of the governorship. These procedures were not carried out. The municipality declared that the statue was erected “at the request of the people.”<sup>70</sup>

The monumentalizing of Seyid Rıza is directly related with the Dersim policy of the Kurdish movement. Not only the official historiography but also certain unofficial historiographies describe the Dersim events as a Kurdish national rebellion and Seyid Rıza as a national leader. The famous book by Nuri Dersimi, *Dersim in the History of Kurdistan*, first published in 1952 in Halep and prohibited by a decision of the council of ministers of Turkey, is a crucial source that exalts Seyid Rıza and presents him as the “president of Dersim.”

The book was republished in Istanbul in 1979. The subsequent edition published in 1994 coincided with the peak of the Kurdish movement and reached

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69 “2010 yılında biz bu heykeli diktiğimiz zaman demokratikleşme anlamında Türkiye’de birçok sıkıntı vardı ve bu konuda ciddi tartışmalar yaşanıyordu. Biz bu anıtı dikerken Türkiye’de demokratikleşmenin hangi aşamada olduğunu, nasıl kabul göreceğini de ölçmek istedik. Kısacası Türkiye’nin geldiği demokrasi eşliğini ölçmek istemiştik.” *Cumhuriyet*, 26.11.2013.

70 *Radikal*, 26.11.2013.

a wider audience. In this way, both Seyid Rıza and Nuri Dersimi were reinvented by Kurdish nationalists, and the history of Dersim was reconstructed in tandem with the rise of the Kurdish movement and its strategy to include Dersim within the Kurdish homeland.

Dersim has never been governed by a single local leader. Seyid Rıza was responsible only for his own aşiret; however, he was a respected and influential figure for all. The religious importance of his ancestry reinforced his political power. Moreover, due to the strength of his armed powers, he burst into prominence. Because of these qualities, Nuri Dersimi selected him as a Kurdish national hero.<sup>71</sup>

The pro-Kurdish municipality justified the monumentalizing of Seyid Rıza with reference to this narrative. By erecting the statue of Seyid Rıza in front of the historical barracks, it sought to demonstrate to the central state the spatial superiority of the local government and the strength of the Kurdish movement.

Everybody knows that the location of the graves of Seyid Rıza and his colleagues was kept secret when they were executed in 1937. It is still unknown. Even their tombs have been hidden from the people. A city was exposed to massacre and Seyid Rıza was the leader at the time. He became the symbol. For us, the erection of this monument is very important and we made the decision to erect it as a municipality. We erected the statue right in front of the old barracks from which the 1938 operations were led. We, Dersimlis, have always said that a massacre and genocide was carried out in Dersim in 1938. By erecting this statue, we encourage the state to confront this. Everybody knows that the names of the murderers were given to the streets and roads of Dersim. The name of the place where the statue of Seyid Rıza was erected was the Kışla (Barracks) Square. The 1938 massacre was planned here. The soldiers were lodged here and participated in the massacre. This establishment was built at that time. We consciously erected this statue here. After erecting it, we changed the name of the square to Seyid Rıza

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71 Dilek Kızıldağ Soileau, "Belgelerdeki mi, Belleklerdeki mi: Hangi Seyid Rız?" *Kebikeç* 36 (2013), 15.

Square upon the decision of the municipal council and gave the names of the victims of the 1938 massacre to certain streets and roads. However, the governorship refused twice without reason. In any case, the people call this place Seyid Rıza Square now. Dersimlis no longer call it Kışla Square.<sup>72</sup>

On the other hand, the monumentalizing of Seyid Rıza reinforces the construction of modern national consciousness while challenging orthodox socialist perspectives that defined aşirets as traditional authorities derived from long-established customs, habits, and social structures that dominate the province. Especially in the 1970s, socialists severely criticize the aşiret system prevalent in the eastern provinces. According to them, the leaders of aşirets are nothing but exploiters who appropriate the surplus labor of peasants and control political and social relations.<sup>73</sup> Although the aşiret system of Dersim is significantly different from that of other eastern provinces – as mentioned in previous chapters – some socialist groups criticized the idolization of an aşiret leader.

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72 “Bütün kamuoyu biliyor Seyit Rıza ve arkadaşları 1937 yılında idam edildiklerinde mezar yerleri gizli tutulmuş ve hala mezar yerleri bilinmemekte. Düşünün idam edildikten sonra mezarları bile halktan saklandı. Bir kent katliamından geçti ve Seyit Rıza o dönemin lideriydi ve sembol olmuştu. Bizler için de bu anıtın dikilmesi çok önemliydi ve belediye olarak bu anıtı dikmek için karar aldık ve 1938 hareketinin yönetildiği Kışla Binası'nın tam karşısındaki Kışla Meydanı'na bu anıtı diktik. Biz Dersimliler olarak 1938'de Dersim'de bir katlim ve soykırım gerçekleştirildiğini hep söylüyorduk ve biz bu anıtı dikerken devletin de bu sorunla yüzleşmesini istedik. Bütün kamuoyu biliyor ki Dersim katliamını gerçekleştiren birçok kişinin ismi Dersim'de birçok cadde ve sokağa verilmişti. Seyit Rıza'nın heykelinin dikildiği yer Kışla Meydanı'ydı. 1938 katliamı burada planlanmış ve askerler burada kalmış ve katliama katılmıştı ve o dönem inşa edilen bir mekan. Biz bu heykeli özellikle buraya diktik. Bu heykeli buraya diktikten sonra belediye meclisimizin kararıyla meydanın ismini Seyit Rıza Meydanı yaptık ve bazı cadde ve sokaklara da 1938 katliamında öldürülen insanlarımızın ismini verdik. Ancak valilik bunları gerekçe göstermeden iki kez reddetti. Ama halk artık burayı Seyit Rıza Meydanı olarak biliyor, öyle konuşuyor ve hiçbir Dersimli buraya Kışla Meydanı demiyor. Seyit Rıza Meydanı diye söylüyor.” *Cumhuriyet*, 26.11.2013.

73 See, for example, İbrahim Kaypakkaya, *Seçme Yazılar* (Istanbul: Umut Yayıncılık, 2004).

I do not consider Seyid Rıza as leader. The aşiret leaders ruled the society narrow-mindedly. I think that these figures should not be considered as leaders by socialists. Even the 1938 events are kept on the agenda by political organizations. In fact, the 1938 events are not typically related to contemporary life. Political organizations generally use the 1938 events as leverage.<sup>74</sup>

Some socialists wish the monument had been designed in line with the wishes of all Dersimlis.<sup>75</sup> For example, some think that the statue does not sufficiently symbolize the 1938 events and does not reflect the social trauma of the massacre. A figure revealing the pain and victimization of Dersimlis would be better according to them. Some argue that this statue grants privilege to Seyid Rıza and trivializes the efforts of other aşiret leaders who resisted, a dissatisfaction that stems from competition among aşirets.

The organization of spaces is a crucial issue for all political agents. Every actor seeks to design urban space in tandem with its own identity construction processes. In this respect, the erection of the statue of Seyid Rıza enhances the Dersim policies of the Kurdish movement. Nevertheless, the reorganization of the square around the statue of Seyid Rıza has been accepted by the majority, the abovementioned critics notwithstanding. It has become the city's most popular public space in a short span of time.

The fact that the park and the square are accessible to everyone and are "greener" in comparison to other open spaces in the city made the new public space appeal to people of all ages and social strata. People often come there to watch the river and socialize. It is occupied at all hours of the day and night. It has been a "rendezvous point" for both the political activities and social life of Dersimlis. Adjacent the square are cafés where both men and women gather, chat, drink tea, and play backgammon. The small wicker stools (traditionally known as *kürsü*) and tables of the cafés overflow into the park.

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74 "Seyid Rıza'yı önder olarak görmüyorum. Aşiret liderleri geri anlayışlarla toplumu yönetmiştir. Sosyalistler için bu tür figürlerin önder olamaması gerektiğini düşünüyorum. 1938 bile siyasal örgütler tarafından gündemde tutuluyor. Aslında güncellikle çok bir bağı yok. Buradaki politik yapılar çoğunlukla 38'i bir kaldıraç olarak kullanıyorlar." Mehmet Faysal Azamlı (representative of the TKP), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 04.03.2014.

75 Müslüm Bey, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 10.07.2012.

The square also serves as a realm of social life where individuals and the members or activists in different political organizations come together and talk about current issues. One can easily meet and communicate with others in the square. After the establishment of the university, the square became a stomping ground for students, too. Spending time with friends there is free; therefore, it is teeming with students. What's more, the heart of the city beats here. Because crucial current (and sometimes historical) events occurring in the province, the ideological arguments and theoretical principles of Kurdish and leftist organizations, unconfirmed information about guerilla groups, and "political gossip" are discussed at the tables, young people disposed to engage in politics prefer to hang out there.

The square also hosts many political and cultural activities. Both the pro-Kurdish party and the CHP hold mass meetings in Seyid Rıza Square. During the Munzur Culture and Nature Festival, the square is allocated for movie screenings. Some concerts, shows, and art exhibitions also take place there. It is the starting or endpoint for almost all public demonstrations: Dersimlis often walk out from or up to this point in protests. Almost all press statements are made in front of the statue of Seyid Rıza. Due to the holiness attributed to Seyid Rıza, the statue has also become a sacred place in a short span of time. Especially on the anniversaries of Alevi massacres, Dersimlis light candles on the statue in memorial.

In short, the square is a spatial form that reflects social conditions at a particular point in history, revealing that political struggle is embedded in the everyday life of the city. The spatial and functional configurations of the square and the cultural, sentimental climate that stem from the presence of the statue of a Kurdish national and religious figure overlap the social requirements of the inhabitants. This harmonic relationship between the form and function of the square contributes to Kurdish nationalist discourse and feeds the increasing support for a local government that plans and designs urban space in parallel with this discourse.

While emphasizing Kurdishness, the local government takes care to win over all inhabitants, especially those who do not identify as Kurd. In tandem with the transformation of the Dersim policy of the Kurdish movement, the municipality has taken considerable steps to reconcile disagreements among

the Kurdish movement and other perspectives. To defuse tensions that emerged with the erection of the statue of Seyid Rıza, Selahattin Demirtaş, the leader of the pro-Kurdish party, promised in a meeting hold on 27 March 2014, the eve of the local elections, to erect additional statues in the park. “In the forthcoming period, one thing is left to do: to erect the statues of Mazlum Doğan and İbrahim Kaypakkaya next to the statue of Seyid Rıza. I hope our friends will realize them as soon as possible.”<sup>76</sup>

In conclusion, Seyid Rıza Square spatially represents all the tensions, conflicts, and reconciliations of the new era. On one hand, it is an urban area the design and function of which are not determined by the central authority. Unlike public spaces constructed under the OHAL regime, it was reconfigured as a counter-space. In accordance with the Kurdish opening policy, the central authority remained indifferent to this new public space that challenges hegemonic spatiality, though surveillance cameras were positioned around the square.

On the other hand, the square can be interpreted as a scene of struggle for all local powers. The pro-Kurdish municipality reproduces the founding myths of Kurdish nationalism in public space and instills them in the everyday life. The promise to erect the statue of Dersim-born Mazlum Doğan, one of the founders of the PKK and a crucial figure of Diyarbakır Prison, completes the physical and cultural reconfiguration of the landscape in line with Kurdish national historiography. Nevertheless, the project of monumentalizing Kaypakkaya in the same square demonstrates that the Kurdish movement wishes to please and earn the support of socialists, too, and to represent not only Kurds but also leftist and socialist groups.

### 7.3.2 *A Lieu de Mémoire: The Wall of Dersim* '38

Memory is constantly on our lips because it no longer exists.<sup>77</sup>

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76 Dersim meeting of Selahattin Demirtaş, Dersim, 27.03.2014.

77 Pierre Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” in *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, (ed.) Pierre Nora (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 1.

The 1937-38 massacres are significant for all Dersimlis. It was a crucial rupture in many ways; therefore, the 1930s still linger strongly in their memories. On one hand, it is a severe social trauma due to the deaths and exile of many members of the community. Even the rising generations suffer greatly from the symptoms of surviving trauma. On the other hand, the massacre is a principal milestone for survivors. With the elimination of local powers, not only the political life but also sociocultural life of Dersim changed drastically.

The massacre is the most well-remembered event among Dersimlis. Although one target of the military operations was to erase the history of the city and its inhabitants, it has become the most crucial point of reference in Dersim's collective memory. It addresses the sense of justice and the power of civil resistance, and it evokes nostalgia for the past. By remembering the massacre Dersimlis both challenge the assimilation policies of the state and reproduce their collective identity in spite of the fact that members of the community have been spread to the four corners of the world.

As noted, according to the Kurdish movement the Dersim massacre is part of organized state violence against the Kurdish people. It is introduced as the historical frame that reveals the "common fate" of the entire province. By including the Dersim massacre in Kurdish historiography, the Kurdish movement consolidates its power in the city. For this reason, the pro-Kurdish municipality seeks to keep the 1937-38 massacres on the agenda, not only through sociocultural activities but also spatial designs.

In 2013, a monumental wall was constructed by the municipality next to Seyid Rıza Square, across the narrow opening at the foot of the Munzur valley. It looks like a retaining wall between Cumhuriyet Avenue on the upper side and Ovacık Road on the lower side. It is a simple, low-budget construction consisting of a stone wall into which historical photos regarding the 1938 events are embedded. Most of the photos exhibited were provided by Hasan Saltık, a Dersim-born collector, producer, and owner of Kalan Music.

In her opening speech, Edibe Şahin defined the wall as the "continuation of the '38 project, the first step of which was the erection of the statue of Seyid Rıza." She highlighted the fact that they are intended to form a historical memory that these events not happen again. The best way to prevent the re-

currence of administrative mass brutality is “to cultivate a shared and enduring memory of its horrors.”<sup>78</sup> The municipality’s effort to create such a *lieu de mémoire* can be understood with reference to Nora:

For if we accept that the most fundamental purpose of the *lieu de mémoire* is to stop time, to block the work of forgetting, to establish a state of things, to immortalize death, to materialize the immaterial—just as if gold were the only memory of money—all of this in order to capture a maximum of meaning in the fewest of signs, it is also clear that *lieux de mémoire* only exist because of their capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramification.<sup>79</sup>

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78 Mark J. Osiel, “Ever Again: Legal Remembrance of Administrative Massacre,” *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 144:2 (December 1995), 466.

79 *Ibid.*, 19.



Figure 7.4 The Wall of Dersim '38

The municipality, aware of the Dersim people's sensibilities, seeks to "stop time" with the help of a monumental memory site immortalizing the victims of the massacre. Because memory is alive and an actual phenomenon, it is plural and open to change. Every political actor or group attempts to mobilize the collective historical imagination in the service of its own vision of national and local identity and its vision for the city. To remember is to put a certain part of the past at the disposal of the present.<sup>80</sup>

Until the beginning of the 2000s, the Dersim massacre was a "an open secret known by everyone" in the words of Şükrü Aslan. It was something to be forgotten and was not to be talked about. In spite of decades of silence, it has never been forgotten. The political climate emerging with the removal of military tutelage enabled people to discuss and to criticize the policies of the republican era; thus, the narratives have finally returned. Researchers who

80 Barry Schwartz, "The Social Context of Commemoration: A Study in Collective Memory," *Social Forces* 61:2 (December 1982), 374.

visit the city for oral history projects, documentaries, and other cultural studies also contribute to this revitalization. A considerable number of publications based on oral narratives have been produced in the last decade. Almost all sections of the Dersim community now tend toward establishing a “true” memory, enlarging the basis for collective memory.

As Nora points out, memory attaches itself to sites.<sup>81</sup> Many places in Dersim (for example, Kutudere, Laç, Aliboğazı, and Halvori) witnessed the massacre; however, they are infrequently visited in commemoration of the events. The places where the massacre occurred are many in number, difficult to reach, and only local people have full knowledge of their locations. Because of physical obstacles, they remain in the background. However, the indifference of Dersimlis to these places (as *lieux de mémoires*)<sup>82</sup> also demonstrates that until recently they have not perceived their collective memory to be under threat. The construction of the Wall of Dersim '38 can be interpreted in this context: “If what they defended were not threatened, there would be no need to build them.”<sup>83</sup>

To conclude, both Dersimlis and the pro-Kurdish municipality seek to balance the demands of its inhabitants. The Dersim policies of the Kurdish movement define the massacre as the most symbolic interval in the course of Dersim’s history and defend (or reconstruct) memories in order that history not deform or transform what they remember. The Wall of Dersim '38 reflects this concern as well as concern for the reconciliation of the Kurdish movement with the Dersim people.

Even if its location is arbitrary, a statue or monument to the dead has a certain meaning in itself. As far as the Wall of Dersim '38 is concerned, the decision of dedicating the wall to the massacre was made after the construction of the retaining wall which was necessary as safety precaution. In other words, a simple wall built in accordance with the requirements of the city was

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81 Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 22.

82 Dersimlis visit many mountainous locations as places of worship. What I am emphasizing is that visits of commemoration are recent inventions.

83 Nora, “General Introduction: Between Memory and History,” 12.

transformed into a monumental memory site with photos and a sign reading the “Wall of Dersim ’38.”<sup>84</sup>

The wall is not deemed to have any artistic value. Moreover, a public toilet built at the center of the wall was heavily criticized. Some think that the municipality undertook it hastily and carelessly without bothering with aesthetics; nevertheless, the monumentalizing of their common pain seems to be appreciated by Dersimlis. The pro-Kurdish municipality insists on commemorating the massacre in tandem with their recent approach of recognizing of the distinctiveness of the city. By expressing its stance on space, the Kurdish movement both reconciles with the inhabitants and shows its influence to the central state. The “open secret known by everyone” is no longer secret and is exhibited in the urban context.

### 7.3.3 *The Renaming of Places*

Violence appears only at the moment when the intimacy of proper names can be opened to forced entry. And that is possible only at the moment when the space is shaped and reoriented by the glance of the foreigner. The eye of the other calls out the proper names, spells them out, and removes the prohibition that covered them.<sup>85</sup>

One of the most apparent forms and everyday aspects of nationalism in the Eastern regions is Turkified place names. Kerem Öktem points out that to determine the name of a place means to exert power over this place.<sup>86</sup> Indeed,

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84 The wall of Dersim ’38 is similar to the arrangement of Dolmabahçe Avenue in Istanbul. The external walls of Dolmabahçe Palace as seen from Dolmabahçe Avenue were adorned with more than 100 photos of Mustafa Kemal in 2004.

85 Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), 113.

86 Kerem Öktem, “Creating the Turk’s Homeland: Modernization, Nationalism and Geography in Southeast Turkey in the late 19th and 20th Centuries,” Paper for the *Socrates Kokkalis Graduate Workshop, The City: Urban Culture, 176 Architecture and Society*, 2003. <http://www.hks.harvard.edu/kokkalis/GSW5/oktem.pdf>.

the dynamics of nationalism and the production of space are two intermingled processes. Attempts to change place names, which began in 1915 with the deportation of non-Muslim communities, were systematized and institutionalized with the establishment of the Special Commission for Name Change (*Ad Değiştirme İhtisas Komisyonu*) in 1956.<sup>87</sup> In this way, non-Turkish village and topographical names were replaced with Turkish ones throughout the country.

In the Symposium on Turkish Place Names organized on 11-13 September 1984 by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, a speech was delivered about the place names of Elazığ, Bingöl, and Dersim. According to the speech, tribes living in these cities are “genuinely Turkish” and the place names have their Turkish origins.<sup>88</sup> Although the speaker and the commission had no doubt about the Turkishness of the provinces, the list published in the symposium proceedings show that the commission had already started to change “foreign” names in eastern cities. In brief, the names of numerous places have been changed by this institution from 1957 to 1978, and the majority of those changes occurred in the Black Sea region, Eastern Anatolia, and Southeastern Anatolia.<sup>89</sup>

Many countries that won independence from colonial rule began to rename places that bore colonialist names,<sup>90</sup> in an attempt to correct past injustices, restore the honor of their ancestry, and record and protect indigenous

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87 Ibid.

88 Tuncer Gülensoy, “Elazığ, Bingöl ve Tunceli İlleri Yer Adlarına Bir Bakış,” *Türk Yer Adları Sempozyumu Bildirileri* (Ankara, 1984), 151-152.

89 Harun Tunçel, “Türkiye’de İsmi Değiştirilen Köyler,” *Fırat Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi* 10:2 (2000), 23-34.

90 See, for example, Sylvain Guyot and Cecil Seethal, “Identity of Place, Places of Identities, Change of Place Names in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” *The South African Geographical Journal* 89:1 (2007): 55-63; Magudu Snodia, Muguti Tasara and Mutami Nicholas, “Deconstructing the Colonial Legacy through the Naming Process in Independent Zimbabwe,” *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences* 6:1 (2014): 71-85; Mcebisi Ndletyana, “Changing Place Names in Post-Apartheid South Africa: Accounting for the Unevenness,” *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African Studies* 38:1 (2012): 87-103; Nna O. Uluocha, “Decolonizing Place-Names: Strategic Imperative for Preserving Indigenous Cartography in Post-Colonial Africa,” *African Journal of History and Culture* 7:9 (September 2015): 180-192; Catherine Nash, “Irish Placenames: Post-

values through space. Moreover, renaming is an expression of power. It signifies the change of power relations and proves the influence of the new authority. Like municipal authorities and the commissions of post-colonial states that rename places according to indigenous, national values after independence is one, pro-Kurdish local governments have been inclined to reverse the Turkish legacy and reconstruct Kurdish identity in the region by rendering their culture visible.

Since the end of the 1990s when the pro-Kurdish party started to win local elections in eastern cities, replacing Turkified place names or restoring previous names is one of the most considerable cultural struggles of non-Turkish people. Pro-Kurdish municipalities not only proposed names commemorating crucial events and people in Kurdish culture and political history, but also the names of certain figures with other oppressed identities and those who refer to shared universal values of humanity.<sup>91</sup> Joost Jongerden, who provides a detailed list of street and park names in the municipalities of Batman and Diyarbakır, reveals that “through commemorative naming a past is brought into the present and versions of history into a setting of everyday life.”<sup>92</sup> Jongerden suggests that pro-Kurdish municipalities seek to create “new memory space” through renaming places.<sup>93</sup>

The transformation of “Dersim” to “Tunceli,” on its own, was one of the most significant symbolic name changes by the Turkish Republic. The restoration of the original name was articulated by not only leftist groups, Kurdish movement, and the CHP<sup>94</sup> but also the AKP government.<sup>95</sup> Because almost all

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Colonial Locations,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 24:4 (1999): 457-480; Adrian Koopman, “The Post-Colonial Identity of Durban,” in *Oslo Studies in Language: Names and Identities* 4:2, (eds.) B. Helleland, C. E. Ore and S. Wikstrom (2012): 133-159.

91 For a thesis on the issue, see İbrahim Kuran, *The Practice of Renaming Places in Turkey: An Anthropological Perspective on Spatio-Temporal Politics*, MA Thesis, Boğaziçi University, 2010.

92 Jongerden, “Crafting Space, Making People: The Spatial Design of Nation in Modern Turkey.”

93 Ibid.

94 The CHP submitted a legislative proposal for the restoration of the original name of Tunceli. *Hürriyet*, 21.09.2013.

95 President Erdoğan prepared a “Democratization Package” and announced it to the public on 30 September 2013. Before the declaration, the provincial head of the AKP, Sinan Yerlikaya,

political groups were in agreement, the pro-Kurdish municipality did not wait for legislative action and changed the sign reading “Tunceli Municipality” to “Dersim Municipality.” At the opening ceremony of the new sign, the provincial head of the pro-Kurdish party, Ergin Doğru, said,

we make a *de facto* change at the request of our people, not by courtesy of someone. We symbolically present this sign – a manifestation of the reality accepted by everyone – to our people. For us, this place has always been the Dersim Municipality, not the Tunceli Municipality; therefore, we are taking a first step at this point. We launched a campaign that every place be called by its historical a name or by name in native language.<sup>96</sup>

The Dersim Municipality, like other local governments run by the pro-Kurdish party, began to make proposals to change or restore place names or to name new places. First, multilingual information about local service provisions was provided. Signs were designed in the scope of a “multilingual life project.” Thus, the original names of neighborhoods such as Gome Dewreş (Esentepe), Taxa Newiye (Yenimahalle), Harçik (İnönü), Sihenk (Atatürk), Gazik (Cumhuriyet) and Turişmek (Aktuluk) were inscribed on the respective signs and started to be articulated more explicitly in everyday life. Although these names were not approved by the governorship because of the non-Turkish characters “x” and “w,” local people prefer them to their Turkish versions.

Second, the names of the newly-built places, especially those of recently established parks, were named exclusively in Kırmancki. *Verroz* (south), *Asme* (moon), *Suka Qane* (old bazaar), *Jara Gola Çetu* (intersection of two rivers), *Haştı* (peace), and *Domane Gazik* (the children of Gazik) are some of these

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claimed that the package would involve the restoration of the original name of Tunceli. *Radikal*, 19.09.2013. In the end, however, the package did not include the restoration.

96 Ergin Doğru, opening speech, 18.12.2013, Dersim. “Halkımızın talep ve istemleri doğrultusunda birilerinin lütfuyla değil halkımızın taleplerini hayata geçirmek için fiili bir eylemlilik yapıyoruz. Herkesin kabul ettiği bir gerçekliği tabela üzerinden sembolik olarak halkımıza armağan ediyoruz. Bizler için burası Tunceli Belediyesi değil Dersim Belediyesi idi. İlk adımı o yüzden Dersim Belediyesi'nden atıyoruz. Yavaş yavaş Dersim'deki her yeri kendi tarihsel kimliği ve anadilindeki adıyla anılması noktasında kampanya başlattık.

Kırmancki names.<sup>97</sup> Uğur Kılıç, the Director of Municipal Parks and Gardens, indicates that some names were determined according to the locations of the parks. “For example, the location of *Verroz* Park is famous for its sunrise. *Asme* Park is a place where moonlight streams down.”<sup>98</sup> Given the importance of nature in the Dersim belief system, such names also refer to local religious values. On the other hand, some names provide information about the history of the city (*Suka Qane*), commemorate sacred spaces (*Jara Gola Çetu*), and highlight the current political stance of the Kurdish movement (*Haşti*).

Lastly, the municipality has attempted to replace some Turkish names with the names of certain political people or historical events. According to the annual report 2009-2010, these names changes proposed by the municipality were thrown out by the governorship.<sup>99</sup> In 2014, the names of fifteen streets and parks were changed by the municipal council. The list below reveals that the names the council removed mostly refer to political and military figures of the Turkish republic, some of whom are thought to have participated in the massacre. Some of the new names of streets and parks belong to *seyids* slaughtered or arrested in 1937. The governorship approved the new names.

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97 I learned the definitions of the words from philologist Serkan Oğur. Serkan Oğur, interview by the author, Istanbul, Turkey, 05.11.2014.

98 Uğur Kılıç, interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 02.07.2012.

99 2009-2010 *Tunceli Belediyesi Faaliyet Raporu*, 104.

Table 7.1 List of Place Names Changed by the Dersim Municipality

Previous Name	New Name
Cemal Gürsel Street	Fındıq Agha Street [a <i>seyid</i> executed in 1937]
Fevzi Çakmak Street	Wuşene Seydi Street [a <i>seyid</i> executed in 1937]
Cengiz Topel Street	Aliyê Mırze Street [a <i>seyid</i> executed in 1937]
237. Street	Hesene İvrayimi Street [a <i>seyid</i> executed in 1937]
23. Street	Hesene Cıvrayıl [a <i>seyid</i> sentenced to life imprisonment by the government in 1937]
236. Street	Wuşene Resik [a <i>seyid</i> executed in 1937]
Elaziğ Street	Dersim Street
Schools Street	Dr. Nuri Dersimi Street [a Kurdish intellectual who participated in the Koçgiri and Dersim resistances]
İsmet İnönü Park	Zarife Xanım Park [a female fighter who participated in the Dersim resistance]
Ovacık Street	Alişer Street [one of the leaders of the Koçgiri and Dersim rebellions and the husband of Zarife Xanım]
Kışla Square	Seyit Rıza Square
Kümeevleri Street	Bese Street [a female fighter who participated in the Dersim resistance and wife of Seyit Rıza]
Merdiven Street (Stairs Street)	Sahan Agha Street [one of the leaders of the Dersim resistance]
Ata Street	Adv. Ali Demir Street [a Dersim deputy candidate of the pro-Kurdish party in 1995]
Liberty Street	Musa Anter Street [a Kurdish author and activist who was murdered by an unknown assailant in 1992]

Not only the names of important people but those of local people are among the street names in Dersim. For example, the name of Hasan Beyaz, an activist who protested dams, was given to the street on which his house is located after

he died in the Van earthquake of 2011.<sup>100</sup> The name of Dilek Serin, three-year-old baby who "disappeared" with her family in 1994, was inscribed on the sign of the municipal education center.

Name changes were also considerable during the municipalities of the SHP and CHP from 1994 to 2003. The names of Bahriye Üçok (an academic and politician assassinated in 1990), Sivas Martyrs (victims, mostly Alevi intellectuals, murdered in the Sivas massacre in 1993), Muhlis Akarsu (a poet murdered in the same massacre), Behice Boran (a chair of the Workers' Party of Turkey), Olof Palme (a Swedish politician assassinated in 1986), Nelson Mandela (a South African, anti-apartheid revolutionary), Nazım Hikmet (a Turkish communist poet), Muammer Aksoy (an academic and intellectual assassinated in 1990), Yaşar Kemal (a "Turkish writer of Kurdish origin" in his own words), Arif Sağ (an Alevi musician), and Çetin Emeç (a journalist assassinated in 1990) were given to streets in these years.

All in all, the political act of giving names is clearly not peculiar to the pro-Kurdish municipality. However, unlike the SHP and CHP municipalities, the renaming strategy of pro-Kurdish municipalities not only embraces leftist, libertarian, and universal values but also directly challenges previous initiatives to remove Kurdish and other oppressed identities from urban space. This new strategy is about more than commemorating events or individuals related to the Kurdish movement and its history; from a broader perspective, it can be considered as an attempt to develop a new discursive social space.<sup>101</sup>

#### 7.3.4 *The University Campus as a Counter-Space*

As mentioned in previous chapters, students have brought dynamism to Dersim's political life. Because of their numerical superiority, students supporting pro-Kurdish organizations lead all the student groups at the university.<sup>102</sup> The legitimacy of the pro-Kurdish political approach is therefore incontestable among students. They are organized under the Student Council of Tunceli

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100 *Tunceli Belediyesi 2011 Faaliyet Raporu*, 23.

101 Jongerden, "Crafting Space, Making People: The Spatial Design of Nation in Modern Turkey."

102 E. G. (university student), interview by the author, Dersim, Turkey, 03.03.2014.

University.<sup>103</sup> In harmony with the peace process, almost all the political and cultural demands of the council were satisfied by the university to maintain a dialogue with the students and prevent their radicalization.

The spatial organization of the university campus can be considered in the framework of this negotiation process. The student council not only contributed to the discourse of peace but also sought to strengthen the position of the Kurdish movement at the university and in the city. In this respect, the space of the campus was produced in accordance with the power relations between the university administration and its “users.”

The students try to shape the campus by several codes. Space is *lived* through the symbols and the concepts of the ideology of the people who experience it. Lefebvre argues that the producers of space have always acted according to a representation while the “users” have adapted themselves to whatever was imposed upon them.<sup>104</sup> In our case, users (students) were able to get involved in the process under favor of the power relations. They did not experience it passively because they try to transform and appropriate it by imagination. Notably, what the students did in Dersim was not a “re-appropriation” of space and it does not resemble the example of May 1968 cited by

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103 Indeed, student councils at Turkish universities have limited functions directly defined by a regulation of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK). According to the regulation, the student councils share student wishes and requests with university administrations and work for the satisfaction of students in the fields of education, health, sports, and culture. See *Yükseköğretim Kurumları Öğrenci Konseyleri ve Yükseköğretim Kurumları Ulusal Öğrenci Konseyi Yönetmeliği*, 20.09.2005, <http://www.yok.gov.tr>. They generally play a minuscule and insignificant role consisting of mediation between the university and students. However, at Tunceli University, the student council had influence over decision-making processes until the end of the peace process. The rector defines the president of the student council as follows: “We have a student council at the university. This is legal. The president of the student council is an important legal entity for the university. He is our important partner. We receive him every week at the senate meeting. He also participates in the meetings of the provincial coordination committee. The aim is to familiarize youth with democracy in their school years and teach them practically the benefits, methods, targets, and scope of democracy. He does not have right to vote; he expresses his opinion and gives suggestions.” Durmuş Boztağ, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

104 Lefebvre, 43.

Lefebvre (when students occupied and took charge of their own space). The case of Tunceli University was rather the organization of the space by users due to the recognition of their legitimacy by the university and state.

Students proposed that several locations on the campus be designed by them and be named according to the political and cultural values of Dersim. In this way, a square was constructed and named the “Square of Social Peace.” The rector explains that

[the peace process] began with Öcalan’s *Nevruz* speech on 21 March 2013 in Diyarbakır. We, as the Tunceli rectorship, support it wholeheartedly. The students hung a sign in this place. They wrote the name of the square in five languages: in Turkish, Kurmanc, Kirmancki, Arabic, and English. We will landscape it and submit it for tender. The students will enhance it by working.<sup>105</sup>

The square, consisting of only a signboard, became a meeting place in a short span of time. For example, the festival of Newroz was celebrated there.<sup>106</sup> All protests and public statements at the university occur there. In other words, although architects, urban planners, or simply TOKİ built the campus, students possessed a representational space “lived through its associated images and symbols.”<sup>107</sup>

Second, in 2014, at the request of the student council, one of the streets on the campus was named Seyit Rıza Street by the university senate. An opening ceremony was organized for the erection of the street sign. Both students and the university administration participated. Third, the student council demanded a recreation area into the campus. The name students proposed (Free Student Park) was accepted in a vote. The president of the student council,

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105 “21 Mart 2013’te Öcalan’ın Diyarbakır Nevruz açıklamasıyla başladı ve biz Tunceli Üniversitesi rektörlüğü olarak kalb-i derinden destekliyoruz, taraftarıyız. O meydana çocuklar bir tabela koydular, beş dilde. Türkçe, Kurmanc (Kürtçe), Kirmancki (Zazaca), Arapça ve İngilizce. Biz peyzaj projesini, ihalesini yapacağız. Çocuklar da çalışarak orayı daha da geliştirecekler.” Durmuş Boztuğ, interview by the author, tape recording, Dersim, Turkey, 25.02.2014.

106 *Tuncelinin Sesi*, 19.03.2014.

107 Lefebvre, 39.

Ferhat Güven, expressed that they were creating places reflecting their culture and collective memory in order to form a multilingual, multicultural, and multi-faith university and establish a democratic environment.<sup>108</sup>

Lastly, in the following months, the student council demanded the university council name the culture and art room of the campus “Ferik Dede” after Dersim’s folk poet. The proposal was unanimously accepted. In the press conference, Güven indicated that they attach importance to the names of the streets, squares, and parks of the campus because they think that spatial relations keep memory alive.<sup>109</sup>

In short, placemaking does not only mean producing a physical location with symbolic references; rather, it is the embodiment of the influence of a movement. Paralleling the influence of the Kurdish movement, students were able to appropriate space and reshape it according to shared memories, images, and cultural values. Considering Gambetti’s argument that the appropriation of a physical place also triggers the reconstruction of a movement,<sup>110</sup> one can predict that the reconfiguration of the campus as a counter-space and the political climate nourished by spatial expressions of othered cultures will change political balances in Dersim.

## § 7.4 Concluding Remarks

Resistance does not consist of only heroic struggles; rather, it appears in the shape of struggles for life and the commonplace in everyday life and enables the occupation of new spaces, the creation of new geographies, and the making one’s space on the map.<sup>111</sup> The state attempts to intervene in space can be reversed by non-state actors and grassroots opposition in the form of counter-projects invented to manipulate projects imposed from above. In this chapter,

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108 “Tunceli’de Özgür Öğrenci Parkı’nın Yapımı Tamamlandı,” *Çıla Gazetesi*, 06.08.2014. <http://www.cilagazetesi.com/tuncelide-ozgur-ogrenci-parkinin-yapimi-tamamlandi/>

109 *Tunceli Emek*, 18.07.2014.

110 Gambetti, “Politics of Place/Space: The Spatial Dynamics of the Kurdish and Zapatista Movements,” 62

111 *Geographies of Resistance*, (eds.) Steve Pile and Michael Keith (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 1.

I scrutinize how counter-spaces have been produced and how counterhegemonic politics have been articulated through space. In this respect, I examine social spaces of Dersim to understand the reciprocal relationships among placemaking, identity formation, and political power.

Although Dersim has always been under strict control of the central state, inhabitants and their local representatives have attempted to break the spatial restrictions and the norms of the hegemonic power and to create counter-spaces. Even before 2004, timid steps were taken by social democratic local governments: the erection of statues reflecting universal and local values and place name changes were among them. Because the OHAL regime prevented the declaration and representation of any opposing views or cultural forms embraced by the local people, urban space was designed with “apolitical” figures. Some artistic productions with implicit expressions were erected in these years, and their interaction with everyday people gave them certain characteristics. When people were confronted by these public sculptures in their everyday lives, the sculptures were opened up to different interpretations. Various meanings and significance were attributed to them, and they were incorporated into the collective identity and memory.

However, the pro-Kurdish municipality considers space as a struggle in its own right instead of just a scene of struggle. In this way, the history and language of the other are incorporated into urban space while those of the nationalist, hegemonic power are erased. The pro-Kurdish municipality has sought to remove Turkish nationalist spatial designs from urban space and to reconfigure the urban landscape by producing new public squares and monuments or renaming them according to Dersim’s cultural, political, and social life. In other words, it forms counter-discourses to the hegemonic ones. In this scope, I focus on the establishment of the Seyid Rıza Square, the Wall of Dersim ’38, and the decisions of the municipal assembly concerning changes of place names. The choices of pro-Kurdish municipalities while designing urban space inform about Kurdish historiography, identity politics, and their approach to Dersim. I argue that urban space functions as a means for constructing Kurdish identity in the city.

The festival, on the other hand, can be evaluated in a broader sense of space. This “temporal world apart” contributes to the creation of a sense of

community in addition to a sense of place. I claim that it weakens and “suspends” the temporal and spatial order of the dominant culture.

The examples investigated in this chapter spatially display time-varying power relations. The tolerance of the central government towards counter-spaces at the local scale is related to political developments occurring at the national and international scales. However, the electoral victories of the pro-Kurdish party at local level in the second half of the 2000s clearly provided them many opportunities: counter-spaces became “legitimized” and resistance became “institutionalized.”

## Conclusion

This dissertation is motivated by the increasing fragmentation of two interpretations of critical space theory. The first, led by Harvey, prioritizes economic dynamics, while the second, led by Soja, focuses on agency, cultural patterns, and differences among different actors. I argue that urban development and urban design are the outcome of the multiple dynamics of many actors whose strategies are derived from a variety of sources, belongings, and global trends. In the last decade, a considerable amount of research on Turkish and Kurdish cities has been conducted within the scope of urban studies. I contribute to this literature by taking both economic and cultural dynamics into account. Given the multicultural and political features of Dersim, it constitutes a particularly fertile case study that reveals the interrelated character of economic and cultural dynamics in producing space.

This research scrutinizes the urban development and transformation of Dersim whose history is interwoven with that of the republican Turkey. First, it demonstrates how the city has developed throughout the history of modern Turkey by examining the plans of the city. Second, it discusses how national, regional, and local actors intervene in space in harmony with their sociopolitical, economic, and ideological stances and identities that they have constructed and embraced. In this way, it shows the extent to which spatial strategies of the state and state institutions influence urban development and promote its discursive hegemony, and it compares these with those of non-

state actors. It scrutinizes urban development and urban design synchronously in order to highlight the complexity and multifacetedness of demographic, economic, and political dynamics that generate the urban space of Dersim.

This dissertation is organized around an interdisciplinary socio-spatial perspective. Because the social and the spatial are inseparable and imbued with each other's presence, the examination of identity construction in urban space and the role of the geographic environment in cultural and social processes necessitate a scalar approach that focuses on shifting the locus of central-local relations. The administrative structure of the province has transformed in tandem with the increasing capacity of modern state to penetrate localities. Urban development and urban design clearly reflect this conflict between the center and the local. I have argued that the physical and social spaces were produced or re-appropriated on the basis of identities attributed to the Dersim people by the central government or adopted by local actors themselves; therefore, the geographic and spatial codes, symbols, myths, and meanings that contribute to the reconstruction of these identities are illustrated in detail.

As far as identities attributed by the state are concerned, the state has expectedly tended not to recognize non-Turkish identities since the beginning of the republic. In sources about Dersim written in line with the official historiography of the Turkish republic, the geographic features of the province are often described as an obstacle to its modernization and urbanization. I argue that the republican regime made a general analogy between the physical space of Dersim and its inhabitants as evidence of the primitive "state of nature" of non-Turkish identities.

The state has always attempted to "know" both Dersim's territory and Dersim's people *geographically*. The new city, Tunceli, represents not only the definitive rule of the Turkish state but also a new spatial order "planned" in accordance with modernist objectives. The reorganization of Dersim's urban space within the framework of a formal plan corresponds to the Turkish republic's policy of denial of non-Turkish identities in Dersim. Mountainous and inaccessible, Dersim embodied the feudal aşiret system and its authentic linguistic, religious, and local features. Tunceli, on the other hand, was born

out of the ashes of Dersim and purified of everything adopted by the Dersim people.

The urban history of Dersim is directly related to the creation of a new city center and the massive deportations due to the Dersim policies of the 1930s. After the 1937-38 events, the city was reorganized in line with the modern state's security requirements. On one hand, the former city center, Hozat, was replaced by Kalan (Mameki), a district the state could more access and control; on the other hand, the urban space was designed to subjugate the population and privilege law-enforcement officers.

Since the 1990s when armed conflict between the PKK and the Turkish state intensified and village evacuations were officially sanctioned and systematized, migration from the country to town increased the pressure for urban growth. New neighborhoods were built towards the foothills of the mountains by which the city center is physically limited. Meanwhile, the urban space of Dersim was reshaped by an increasing number of military installations, prohibited zones, and other restricted areas. Until the 2000s, both the economic and social life of the city developed slowly.

Since the beginning of the 2000s, the speed of the geographic expansion of capital has increased everywhere, and the economic potential of the Eastern Anatolia has been reinvented. The conflict between the PKK and the Turkish government was a crucial obstacle for the circulation of capital towards Kurdish provinces. The rescission of the state of emergency and the AKP's democratic opening policies related to obligations vis-à-vis European Union membership and in parallel with the government's Middle East policies triggered the development of the city and encouraged the establishment of new institutions at the local scale. In other words, global demand for the assessment of the potentials of localities, especially those of "untouched" areas, coincided with the developmentalist perspective of the AKP government. The AKP's template for reducing inequalities among regions – which included the target of establishing at least one university in every city, the commercialization of natural resources, and investment in tourism and the building trades – have been adapted to Dersim.

In the 2000s, institutions founded in tandem with the Dersim policies of the government (or whose control was seized by the government) contributed

to the normalization of social, economic, and everyday life and to the appearance of a new population in the city center. Although the establishment of these institutions led to unintended consequences, they serve both as state agencies producing knowledge as ideology (for example, the knowledge produced at Tunceli University or at the Tunceli Cemevi about Alevism) and as public spaces that, on their own, transform the spatial landscape of the city and alter the social fabric and dynamics of everyday life.

This research delineated spatial and economic strategies consisting of recently-founded institutions and high-modernist projects through which the government has attempted to intervene in Dersim and to transform the province into a more controllable and profitable urban space. Unlike in other decades, the motivation of the AKP government to intervene in space is not limited to security concerns; the government also pays attention to economic benefits. On one hand, the foundation or functionalization of these institutions can be seen as a part of new governance methods developed after the power of the army relatively diminished; on the other hand, the state's spatial surveillance purpose is intertwined with an attempt to commodify natural resources and physical space. In this respect, this study scrutinizes the Tunceli Cemevi, Tunceli University, the Firat Development Agency, and dam and HPP projects established in Dersim. All of them function as a means to convert Dersim's political climate into that of the rest of the country. The transformation of natural and social spaces not only reflects state policies; new spatial designs constitute the sum of social relations that enable the new hegemony and generate the logic, forms of knowledge, and ideological content of production relations.

The examination of the aforementioned institutions shows that spatial interventions in Dersim in the 2000s contain multiple aspects that, contingently or intentionally, perpetuate the power of the state and promote the expansion of capitalism. The Tunceli Cemevi, for example, attempts to act as the religious authority of the Alevis living in Dersim, seeking to reconstruct the belief system by defining it within Islam and in a specific space. It not only enables control of Dersimlis who practice their own rituals while incorporating them into an acceptable Alevism, but trivializes natural places of worship which cause trouble for the state when they are submerged by the construction of dams.

When the Cemevi is presented as the essential place of worship, the commodification and deterioration of natural spaces due to dams and HPPs become “negligible” in the eyes of the state.

The strategy of establishing high-modernist projects such as dams and HPPs in the province is discussed as another spatial intervention of the state with multiple, clear and implicit intentions and outcomes. These vast engineering projects constructed through the medium of privatization and the subcontracting system have been introduced by the state as a kind of investment to would improve the business environment and employment opportunities of the city. On the other hand, it entails a significant spatial reconfiguration through which many villages, districts, and hamlets have disappeared underwater and many inhabitants have been obliged to leave their homes. The dams and HPPs that have displaced populations have also become a counter-insurgency strategy: blocking the paths and sanctuaries used by illegal organizations and preventing inhabitants from aiding fighters.

Third, the dissertation examines the Fırat Development Agency, a mediator between the central government and local people since the end of the 2000s, as an initiative to transform Dersim through local projects. It found that the state seeks to reach local people who were not previously prone to cooperating with government institutions and involves itself in the transformation of the city through economic activities led by the FKA. By incorporating local actors into projects approved by the central authority, the state can control and shape local economy, politics, and space. As far as investment advice given by the FKA is concerned, the role attributed to Dersim in the rescaling process consists of tourism instead of development on labor-intensive industries. The research showed that both the FKA and the new incentive system to reconstruct the city as a part of a new scale and as a space of capital seek to redesign Dersim as a space of tourism and to commodify its natural resources rather than its workforce. On the other hand, regional and local economic actors have increasingly accommodated themselves to new regional policies determined by international conjuncture, approaches that promote the economic-political revival of localities, and the new balance of forces at the national scale originating from the rescission of the OHAL and the AKP’s rise

into power. Regional development agencies whose flourishing is directly related to both national and global trends have contributed to the structuring of investment choices.

Finally, Tunceli University is examined as a state institution that contributes to urban transformation and the ideological apparatus of the government in the city via research centers that carry the political principles of the AKP vis-à-vis Alevism and the Kurdish question and claim to produce scientific, academic knowledge about these crucial topics on the agenda of the city. Apart from its ideological function deriving from education, it has had the considerable effect of changing the ethnic composition of the inhabitants and spaces. It not only influenced social and electoral processes when students of the university became registered voters, but it also transformed urban space with new residential and commercial areas, public and social spaces. It improved social interactions and reinforced an explicit socio-spatial differentiation. The dissertation broadly explains the emergence of new neighborhoods and urban designs emerging with the establishment of the university and emphasizes the new spatial segregation based on social hierarchies and economic status.

Like other institutions investigated within the scope of the spatial interventions of the government, the university is both an agent acting in the name of the AKP and the spatial embodiment of the central authority in the local sphere. The campus, which was built by TOKİ – one of the most crucial institutions of the AKP era, directly linked to the prime ministry, which was restructured in tandem with a developmentalist perspective based on the construction sector – has become the manifestation of the AKP regime in Dersim. It symbolizes the new era characterized by a (relative) normalization process. Unlike military establishments of the OHAL era, it is a “civil” and accessible place.

The results of this examination show that the institutions and projects cited above contribute to the heterogenization of the population of Dersim by transforming the physical and social spaces of the province and enabling the spatial mobility of capital. The principal implication of this study is that the spatial strategies and institutions of the state serve the purpose of “integrating” Dersim – which is considered anomalistic in terms of religion, political life, cultural features, and economics – into the hegemonic system of values of the

country and global capitalism. Unlike the coercive measures of the OHAL regime, the new hegemony controls the timing and spacing of human activities through civil institutions and incorporates local people into spaces framed by and for the hegemony.

However, communities will always attempt to stand up against state control over space and create counter-spaces – spatial expressions of counterhegemony – to challenge the bureaucratic management of space, time, knowledge, and identity. Non-state actors, the pro-Kurdish party, socialists, and the main opposition party, the CHP, have taken steps to generate values, ideas, projects, and demands that conflict with the dominant social order. The dissertation focuses on these attempts and investigates the spatial (re)configurations and policies that interrupt or overthrow existing space. I argue that counter-spaces are produced through the performance of the identities adopted by the inhabitants of the city, especially leftism, Kurdishness, and Allevism. Considering that these identities and counter-spaces are mutually constituted, spatial forms of resistance were introduced as an essential part of the construction and reproduction of identities ignored or manipulated by the Turkish state.

First, the Munzur Culture and Nature Festival is discussed as a counter-space where criticism, protest, resistance, and opposition are performed. Given its aim, content, and relationship with inhabitants, it is a temporal “world apart” and an obvious challenge to the temporal and spatial order of the dominant culture. Moreover, because the main theme of the organization is to protect the hometown and to call Dersimlis to return, the emphasis on “place” is stronger compared to other local festivals. It enhances and transforms the perceptions of local, place, and group identities while temporarily re-appropriating urban space and introducing a “world apart” as an alternative to the hegemonic one.

Second, urban creations produced by the non-state actors are investigated. The construction of new statues, public squares, and monuments as socio-spatial forms that address shared urban experience and collectively attribute common values and meanings to the inhabitants of the city are described in this context.

This dissertation examines from a historical perspective the plans, completed projects and other spatial arrangements fulfilled by selected municipalities. With respect to the spatial practices of the local governments, municipalities run by the social democratic parties of the 1990s also attempted to create urban spaces that reflected the cultural and social patterns and collective memory of Dersimlis. Even under the OHAL regime, when the government was carrying out repressive policies and prohibited the declaration and representation of any opposing view or non-hegemonic cultural form, considerable steps were taken to create spaces of resistance. Interestingly, the designs mostly consisted of public sculptures and monuments that referred to universal values or famous local figures, but these were reinterpreted and incorporated into the collective identity and memory by the Dersim people.

Since the end of the 1990s, the Kurdish movement has concentrated on local elections in eastern cities. In this way, cities whose populations were mostly comprised of Kurds and which suffered under the homogenizing policies of the Turkish nation-building project began to be governed by pro-Kurdish municipalities. This not only provided the opportunity for the Kurdish movement to gain momentum and expand its sphere of influence but also enabled the re-appropriation of urban space, the reordering of spaces, and the production of counter-spaces inspired by Kurdish cultural values, national desires, and spatial projections.

The first pro-Kurdish mayor came to power in Dersim in 2004. Since then, the Dersim municipality has created new public spaces and *lieux de memoires* to obliterate the traces of the OHAL regime and spatially reveal the Kurdish nationalist discourse with respect to Dersim that stands in opposition to the neoliberal-Sunni Islamic one that diffuses throughout the country. The dissertation argues that struggles over space and the politicization of the sense of belonging have been one of the most crucial forms of resistance and a means for the construction of identity for the Kurdish movement. The foundation of the Seyid Rıza Square and the Wall of Dersim '38 are examined in detail within this framework.

The research demonstrated that these counter-spaces have been created from the intertwining of the sociocultural demands of the inhabitants, the po-

litical agenda of the Kurdish movement, and urban needs. Moreover, on account of the negotiation process with the Kurdish movement, the Turkish state tolerated the monumentalization of an “illegal” figure and an unacknowledged massacre. Seyid Rıza Square, established around a statue of Seyid Rıza – one of the most crucial Kurdish national and religious leaders – satisfied the requirement for both “place-making” and the re-appropriation of local and regional values. The pro-Kurdish municipality reproduces the founding myths of Kurdish nationalism in public space and instills them in the everyday life. The Wall of Dersim ’38, on the other hand, was designed by the municipality to defend (or reconstruct) the memories of Dersimlis and sympathize with them. It highlights a massacre that is the most commemorated interval in the course of Dersim’s history. In this way, the massacre, which was until recently retained like a secret, was exhibited in urban space.

As another spatial strategy of non-state actors that the dissertation examines is the policy of renaming places. Given that to determine the name of a place is to dominate that place, the attempts by various Dersim municipalities to change place names were evaluated as part of the struggle for the (re)appropriation of urban space. First, the research shows that renaming practices go back to the 1990s when Dersim was run by social democratic local governments. In these years, the names of socialist intellectuals and victims of the Sivas massacre were given to streets. However, the pro-Kurdish municipality developed a new discursive social space unlike previous initiatives. By providing multilingual information about local service provisions (the multilingual life project), giving Kirmancki names to newly built places (naming new places), and replacing some Turkish names with the names of political people or historical events (changing or restoring place names), it sought to reverse the official spatial ordering and recreate public space according to its own discourse.

Finally, the dissertation demonstrated that a space produced by hegemonic authorities can be filled with the symbols and concepts of the ideology of the people who experience it and thus be transformed into a counter-space created through shared memories, images, and cultural values. As mentioned, the university campus was built as the embodiment of the AKP’s and TOKİ’s

power; however, students have been able to participate in the spatial organization of the campus to the extent that they succeed in negotiating with the rector. Although it was the government that established the university in Dersim, the campus is produced with respect to power relations between the university administration and the “users” of the campus; the dissertation highlights that the hegemonic spatial order and the spatial strategies of the state can be manipulated by the everyday spatial practices of non-state actors.

All in all, when Dersim’s natural and urban spaces are considered as a realm of encounter and conflict between the central state and local powers, it is apparent that the spatial strategies and institutions of the AKP government have strong institutional ties, a legal infrastructure, and economic motivations. Rationally ordered and well organized, they control and regulate the socio-spatial transformation of Dersim while facilitating spatial movement and the temporal dynamics of capital accumulation. As mentioned, they are both state agencies that attempt to fix the local according to the Dersim policies of the government and projects per se that serve the ideology of the state. In this sense, this dissertation demonstrates how the spatial strategies and urban policies of the AKP era differ from those of the OHAL regime.

Second, much of the current literature on space pays particular attention to the relations of production and property in a locality. Indeed, what we know about Turkey’s provinces is largely based upon empirical studies that investigate how they industrialize and integrate to capitalism and how new classes appear and crystallize. There are relatively few studies in the subject area describing the role of the state and other actors in the production of space. The case of Dersim provides an opportunity to discuss how different actors produce and re-appropriate urban space.

On one hand, unlike in Anatolian cities, the state has always needed to survey and transform Dersim – not only for the sake of capital but also for the doctrinal manifestation of its hegemony. This research concludes that the spatial strategies and institutions of the AKP government in Dersim aim to expand its political domination and establish its ideological perspective although economic, political, social and ideological dimensions of these strategies and institutions are intertwined. On the other hand, unlike other

cities in the territory called Kurdistan, the Kurdish movement is not the monopolistic non-state actor in Dersim. Because the CHP and some socialist groups have considerable influence over the city, the urban space exhibits a richer spectrum of power relations and negotiations occurring in the city.

This dissertation compares the spatial strategies and institutions of the AKP with those of non-state actors. It appears that the latter is reactive, symbolic, and nostalgic. In these ways, non-state actors both challenge the assimilation policies of the state and reproduce their collective identity. Although those invented by the state are more consolidated and have even improved during the peace process, the “users” of places succeed – to some extent – in reversing the meanings, codes, and symbols characterized by dominant spaces.

When the peace process effectively ended in June 2015, the state returned to spatial policies based on security concerns instead of those developed for economic benefit. Like other eastern cities, many areas in Dersim have been transformed to “special security zones” since 2016, due to the operations launched as part of the fight against terror. Indeed, the government declared a state of emergency on 22 July 2016, only days after the coup d’état attempt. What followed the declaration of the state of emergency have been a massive purge of civil servants and the detention of persons from various backgrounds including politicians and mayors.

With a legal implementation, trustees (*kayyum*) were assigned by the central government to local governments whose mayors were under suspicion for being in collaboration with terrorist organizations. In other words, the AKP’s Dersim policies on which this dissertation focuses – open to contributions and negotiations of local actors, relying on civil-society-based governance practices and civil institutions, regarding economic development, and encouraging the creation of a peaceful atmosphere for investment – dramatically changed. This sudden transformation started to redesign the city. The governorate banned the seventeenth Munzur Culture and Nature Festival. Then, the Kayyum Tuncay Sonel changed the sign reading “Dersim Municipality” to “Tunceli Municipality.” These spatial interventions can be interpreted as revanchist and punitive political responses intended to rediscipline the inhabitants through traditional methods of the previous regime. It seems that rather

than a spatially grounded social process in which public and private sectors with various objectives and agendas interact, spatial practices as counterinsurgency strategies will be main patterns of this new era.

All in all, one may argue that spatial projects based on security and spatial projects based on capital expansion sometimes compete with each other and sometimes cooperate. Especially during ceasefire periods, spatial projects based on capital expansion come into prominence but it is clear that the state does not abandon those based on security even in these periods. From 2002 to 2015, the construction of high-security police checkpoints (*kalekol*) continued in Dersim, like in other eastern cities. On the other hand, the case of Sur, the ancient heart of Diyarbakır, is an example of the cooperation of these two motivations of the state. After the breakdown of the ceasefire, Sur became the site of battles in 2015-2016 between the PKK and the Turkey's military and it was completely destroyed. After the military operations terminated, projects to rebuild the district by TOKİ were launched on January 2017. It seems that the government's military operations and gentrification process, security and capital expansion motivations can exist together.

This research does not include the period after 2015. It is obvious that both Dersim and the region have witnessed a new conjuncture with the end of the peace process. For example, the Tunceli University that this research discusses in detail has been reorganized since the beginning of 2017 when many academics were dismissed from their jobs. The regional economy, as a whole, has worsened. The non-state actors have been suppressed. In short, the sociopolitical climate of the city has drastically transformed in two years. Further research should be undertaken to investigate the spatial impacts of the end of the peace process in the city. But more importantly, the experience of *kayyum* as local government instead of elected municipality will need to be discussed. A further study with more focus on the relationships between *kayyum* regime –the local government led by the central government – and non-state actors is therefore suggested.

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