'UNESCO World Heritage: Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape Area Current Status, Issues and Recommendations



DİTAM-2025

'UNESCO World Heritage: Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape Area; Current Status, Issues and Recommendations'

28 June 2025/Diyarbakir

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ABBREVIATIONS

USA	United States of America
DAAD	German Academic Exchange Service
DİTAM	Dicle Social Research Center
WHL	World Heritage List
DOCOMOMO	International Working Party for Documentation and Conservation of Buildings, Sites and Neighborhoods of the Modern Movement
DSİ	State Hydraulic Works
HIA	Heritage Impact Assessments
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
İTÜ	Istanbul Technical University
KAİP	Conservation-Oriented Zoning Plan
KHK	Decree with the Force of Law
KORDER	Association of Conservation and Restoration Experts
KUDEB	Conservation Implementation and Supervision Offices
ODTÜ	Middle East Technical University
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value
STK	Non-Governmental Organizations
STÖ	Civil Society Organizations
TMMOB	Turkish Chamber of Engineers and Architects
TOKİ	Housing Development Administration
TÜBİTAK	Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
OUV	Outstanding Universal Value

About the Publication

This publication contains the discussions from the meeting titled UNESCO World Heritage, Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape Area: Current Status, Problems, Recommendations, held on June 28, 2025, with the support of the European Endowment for Democracy. The content of this publication is entirely the responsibility of the Dicle Social Research Center Association (DİTAM) and does not reflect the views of the European Endowment for Democracy.

From DİTAM

The Dicle Center for Social Research (DİTAM) has been conducting its work since its establishment in 2010, involving civil society organizations and experts in the field. In this context, on June 25, 2025, we organized a meeting in Diyarbakır titled "UNESCO World Heritage: Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape Area: Current Situation, Problems, Recommendations." The following topics were discussed at the meeting:

- ✓ *'Applications and Proposed Solutions in Suriçi'—Ferit Kahraman*
- ✓ *'Dicle Valley and Hevsel Gardens: Current Problems, Proposed Solutions, and Participation in Area Management'—Samet Uçaman*
- ✓ *'Questioning Cultural Value Production in Diyarbakır/Suriçi'—Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gül Köksal*
- ✓ *'Diyarbakır World Heritage Site: Revised Area Management Plan and Participation' – Sermed Azizoğlu*
- ✓ *'Diyarbakır World Heritage Site: Management and Authority Issues' – Serra Bucak*
- ✓ *'Post-Conflict Period Practices in the Diyarbakır World Heritage Site from an International Protection Perspective' – Yıldız Salman*
- ✓ *'Protection-Management Rules in World Heritage Sites and Their Implementation in Turkey' – Ertuğrul Günay*

This publication includes presentations on the meeting topic and contributions from participants.

The purpose of the report is to contribute to discussions on the UNESCO World Heritage Site: Diyarbakır and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape, to influence public opinion, and to inform the public.

The report covers the problems, impacts, and proposed solutions facing the world heritage site in Diyarbakır. It also emphasizes that it is possible to preserve the city's history and memory through collective efforts.

As DİTAM, we would like to thank our speakers, meeting participants, and stakeholders for their support and contributions. We hope this report will serve as a resource for NGOs, activists, decision-makers, politicians, and the public in understanding the developments of the period.

With our best regards

DİTAM Board of Directors

Opening Speech

Mesut Azizoğlu-DITAM Chairman of the Board of Directors

Distinguished guests,

Honorable Minister, Honorable Members of Parliament,

Co-Mayors of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality,

District Co-Mayors,

Distinguished presidents and managers of civil society organizations,

Distinguished members of the press,

Welcome to our meeting, titled 'UNESCO World Heritage: Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape Area: Current Status, Issues and Recommendations'. This meeting is being organised by the Diyarbakır Local Services Monitoring Network, which was established by DİTAM in 2024.

First, I would like to talk about the establishment and purpose of the "Diyarbakır Local Services Monitoring Network."

In 2024, DİTAM launched a study titled 'What Diyarbakır Is Losing in Local Services'. Our aim was to highlight Diyarbakır's state of loss and regression through the work and knowledge of civil society. In collaboration with around 80 institutions and individuals in Diyarbakır, we organised focus group meetings under the title 'Identifying Diyarbakır's Problems and Proposed Solutions', categorised into four distinct areas. The results of the study were reported under the title 'What Diyarbakır is Losing in Local Services'.

We subsequently requested support from the European Endowment for Democracy to transform the project, carried out in collaboration with civil society organisations, into a sustainable structure under the name 'Local Services Monitoring Network'. Our request was accepted. In July 2024, we announced the establishment of the Diyarbakır Local Services Network.

The objectives of the local services monitoring network are:

1. The development of cooperation between municipalities and CSOs and contributing to a sustainable urban policy through collective wisdom,
2. CSOs conducting monitoring and evaluation studies on municipal services,
3. Increasing the role of civil society organizations in local decision-making mechanisms,
4. Communicating problems to the relevant institutions and individuals at the local and national levels and creating pressure to demand that the relevant individuals and institutions develop solutions to the problems
5. Increasing the capacity and experience of civil society in terms of participation in solving urban problems,

In 1972, UNESCO drafted a convention in Paris concerning the protection of cultural and natural heritage sites around the world. According to this convention, UNESCO created a 'World Heritage List' of sites that require protection. Turkey joined the convention in 1983. In 2015, Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens were added to the World Heritage List as a 'World Heritage Site' under this convention. Since 2015, the Sur and Hevsel Gardens have been recognised as a heritage site belonging not only to Turkey, but to the whole world. Turkey has 21 sites on the World Heritage List. Worldwide, there are 1,223 sites on the list.

The purpose of this agreement is to establish international assistance and cooperation between the signatory states to protect these areas. However, following the events in Sur in 2015, the conditions for

international cooperation required by this agreement no longer exist. Following the appointment of trustees to municipalities, local actors have become less involved, and authority over the area has been transferred to the centre. These practices all create serious problems for the protection of the site on the World Heritage List.

So, after this ten-year period, what is the current situation here? What needs to be done from now on? How can the local community participate in these processes again? What should be done to create the conditions for international cooperation, as specified in the UNESCO convention? These issues will be discussed.

Our meeting consists of two sessions.

First Session will host;

- Former President of the Chamber of Architects-Ferit Kahraman
- Former President of the Chamber of Agricultural Engineers-Samet Uçaman
- Academic Dr. Gül Köksal
- Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality KUDEB Sermed Azizoğlu

Second Session will host;

- Former Minister of Culture and Tourism Ertuğrul Günay
- Co-Mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality Serra Bucak
- Cultural Heritage Conservation Specialist Yıldız Salman from ICOMOS-Turkey

Nevin Soyukaya, Member of the DİTAM Board of Directors, will moderate both sessions.

I would like to thank all the speakers for participating and contributing.

The Area Manager, who was previously appointed by local municipalities, now works as a bureaucrat at the Ministry of Culture in Ankara. We invited him to this meeting, but unfortunately he was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry for providing this venue for today's meeting. Thank you all for your participation, and please accept my best regards.

'UNESCO World Heritage: Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape Area; Current Status, Issues and Recommendations'

SESSION I

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

Thank you. First of all, we would like to welcome everyone. As Mr Mesut mentioned, DİTAM is holding a series of meetings in Diyarbakır as part of the 'Civil Society Participation in Solving Urban Problems' project. Each meeting will address different issues facing the city. Today, we will be discussing the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Diyarbakır Castle and the Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape Area. This is a two-session meeting. During the first session, experts and academics who have contributed to the world heritage process in various ways since its inception will discuss the current situation. The second session will assess the situation from national and international perspectives, with a specific focus on Diyarbakır.

As you know, the Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape area was inscribed as a World Heritage Site in 2015. The Old City, at the heart of the World Heritage Site, was designated a buffer zone. Unfortunately, clashes and destruction began in the area just two months later, marking a first in the world. Within two months of being inscribed as a World Heritage Site, the area had been transformed by significant damage and destruction. The clashes started in October 2015 and continued until March 2016. Immediately afterwards, demolition and reconstruction began. But that was not all. Ownership changed hands, people migrated and the area was depopulated. Therefore, Professor Gül will certainly mention this. All these acts of destruction are known as urbicide, or urban genocide. We encountered a series of planned and systematic actions that were clearly well-planned in advance, and after all these actions, we lost our social memory. The city lost its smell and its sound. It lost its cultural fabric. We will consider this from this perspective as well. We have lost both our tangible and intangible cultural values. In this meeting, we will discuss precisely these issues.

We have arranged for four speakers to participate in the first session. Three of our speakers are ready, but one is at a different meeting this morning. He will leave that meeting and join us here shortly. Therefore, he will arrive a little late. I would like to ask all speakers to please limit their speeches to 15 minutes. I will give the first speech to Architect Ferit Kahraman, who will present on the current situation in Suriçi. He will talk about the applications and proposed solutions in Suriçi. But before Ferit Kahraman begins speaking, I would like to introduce him to you. He graduated from the Faculty of Architecture at Dicle University. Between 2012 and 2016, he worked on various domestic and international projects. Since 2017, he has been implementing architectural projects at his own firm. He has also served as site manager for different phases of restoration projects on cultural heritage sites, including the Diyarbakır walls and other structures. From 2020 to 2024, he served as co-chair of the Diyarbakır Branch of the Chamber of Architects. He contributes to the fight against urban crime, particularly through his efforts to preserve cultural heritage. He is currently pursuing a Master's degree in Architecture and Architectural Conservation and Restoration. Now, let's give the floor to Mr Ferit.

Practices and Solution Proposals in Suriçi-Ferit Kahraman

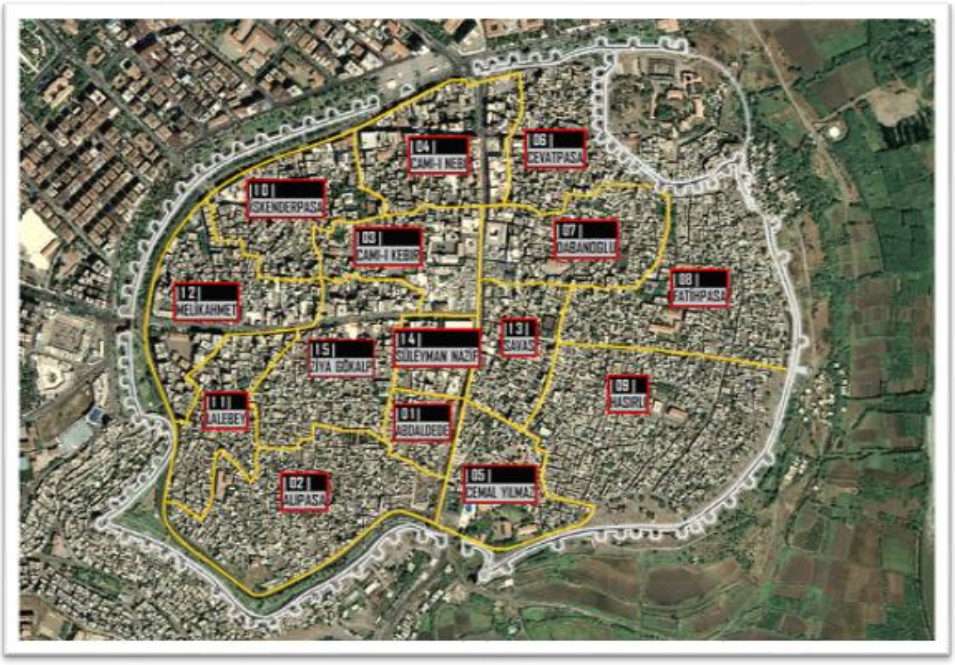
-Former Co-Chair of the Diyarbakır Branch of the Chamber of Architects

Hello, I would like to greet you all respectfully. The topic we will be discussing is Applications and Solution Proposals in Suriçi.

The Diyarbakır Suriçi Urban Conservation Area, registered in 1988, is one of Turkey's most important historical urban areas, with a multi-layered cultural structure and unique street layout. However, recent interventions in the area threaten the holistic preservation of this heritage. Although some parts of the area have retained their organic street patterns and traditional structures, large-scale demolitions and interventions such as street widening are evident in clusters, particularly on the eastern side facing the Hevsel Gardens and in the southern sections. Alongside this, reinforced concrete replicas were produced to replace the demolished structures, with basalt — the original building material — used only for cladding the façades. However, there are numerous errors in terms of method, technique and typology in even this application.

The majority of applications violate both the Conservation-Oriented Zoning Plan, which was prepared in 2012 to protect the area, and national laws and policy decisions. Furthermore, these interventions clearly contradict international conservation principles and are damaging the historical urban fabric, which was shaped by climatic influences and local materials. This erodes the area's unique identity.

However, the 1964 Venice Charter stipulates that historical structures should be restored using original materials and techniques, rather than being replaced with contemporary replicas; the focus is on preserving authenticity. In contrast, the Valletta Principles of 2011 emphasise that conservation should address not only physical elements such as street fabric, parcel structure, architectural qualities, landscape values, silhouettes and archaeological remains, but also traditional living practices, cultural memory, symbolic meanings, social rituals and identity.

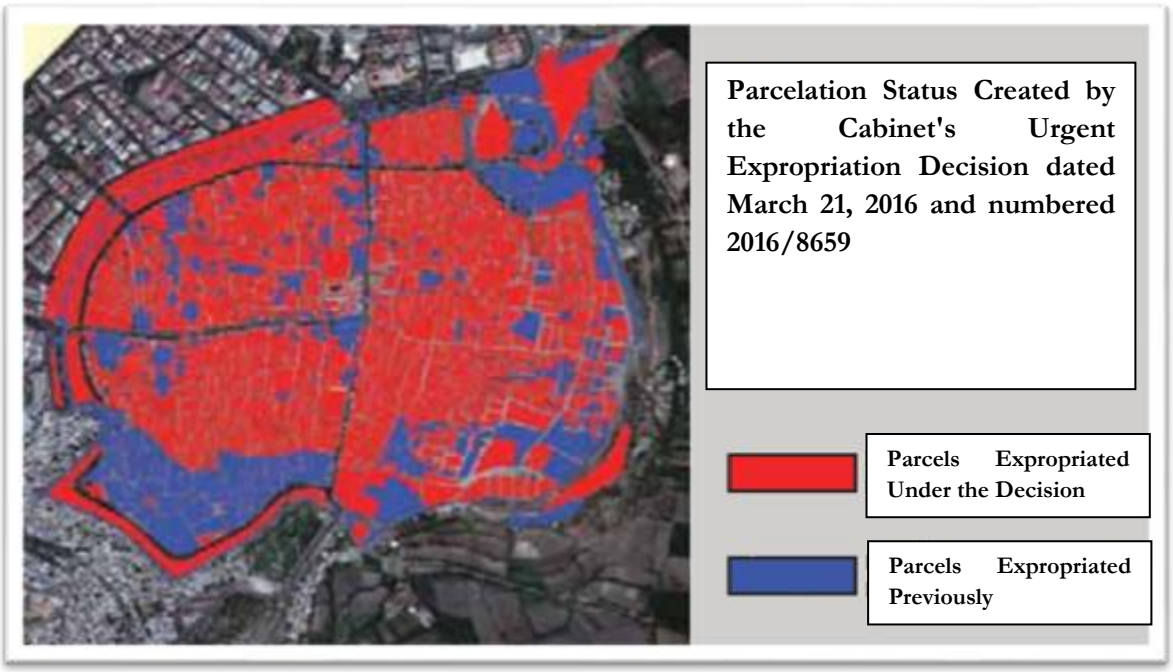


Looking at the map of Suriçi, we can see the boundaries of the 15 neighbourhoods. The conflicts that began towards the end of 2015 intensified in the area covering the six neighbourhoods on the right of the

map. Therefore, we can describe these areas as places where urban integrity has generally been disrupted. At the same time, we can see that a risk area declaration was made in the Ali Paşa and Lale Bey neighbourhoods before the conflict, after which certain applications began under the name of urban transformation. Consequently, the Conservation-Oriented Zoning Plan for the Suriçi area, prepared earlier, was comprehensively revised and approved by the Conservation Board as the 2012 Suriçi Conservation-Oriented Zoning Plan by the Metropolitan Municipality, and was subsequently announced.

This detailed protective zoning plan emphasises how to approach the preservation of existing traditional and historical structures in the area. It provides reference points for construction processes and highlights how to ensure the integrity of structures within the urban fabric during reconstruction. Of course, factors such as growing awareness and technological advances are crucial in improving and developing existing plans. As awareness and consciousness grow, so does sensitivity towards protecting the area.

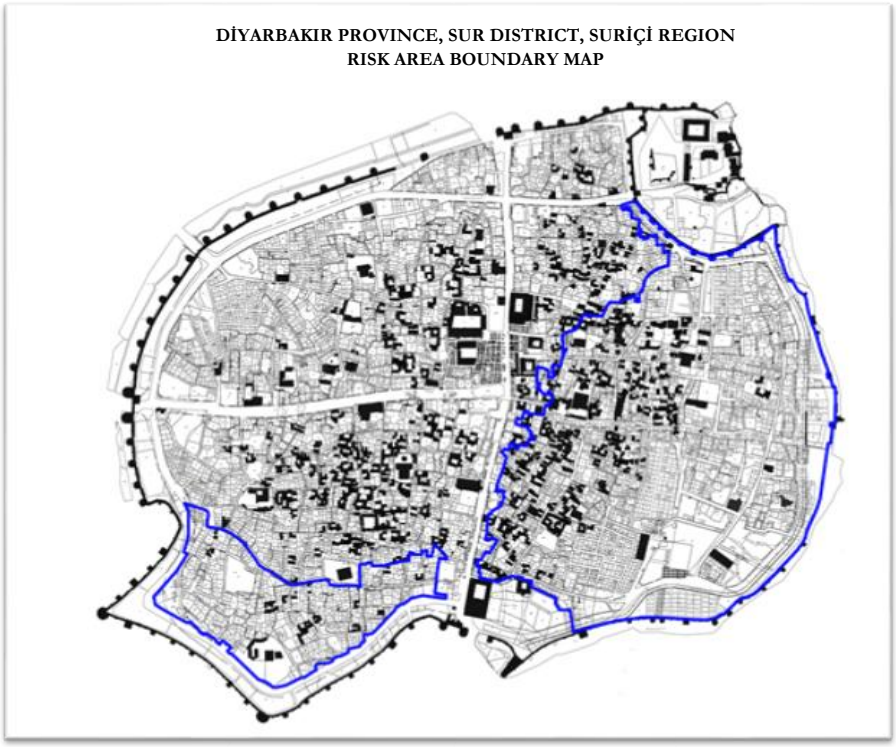
However, when we consider Suriçi, which was designated an Urban Conservation Area prior to 2012 to protect the area, or even when we consider its role as a buffer zone for the Diyarbakır Walls and Hevsel Gardens before they became a World Heritage Site, it is clear that, while sensitivities were different back then, we must maintain a higher level of sensitivity today. This area is, of course, multi-layered, but multi-layered problems have also arisen over time for many reasons. Therefore, I would like to briefly present a few visuals and touch on the fundamental problems in terms of topic headings only. Frankly, each topic is important enough to warrant its own presentation, or at least its own agenda.



As mentioned, the blue areas were expropriated before 2016. The densely blue areas in the bottom left of the map show the TOKİ urban transformation projects in the Ali Paşa and Lale Bey districts. Conversely, the work areas that began under the guise of urban transformation in the region known as İçkale are visible on the other side. Following the conflicts that ended in 2016, the Council of Ministers declared the entire area within the red zones a risk area through an urgent expropriation decision dated 21/03/2016 and numbered 2016/8659.

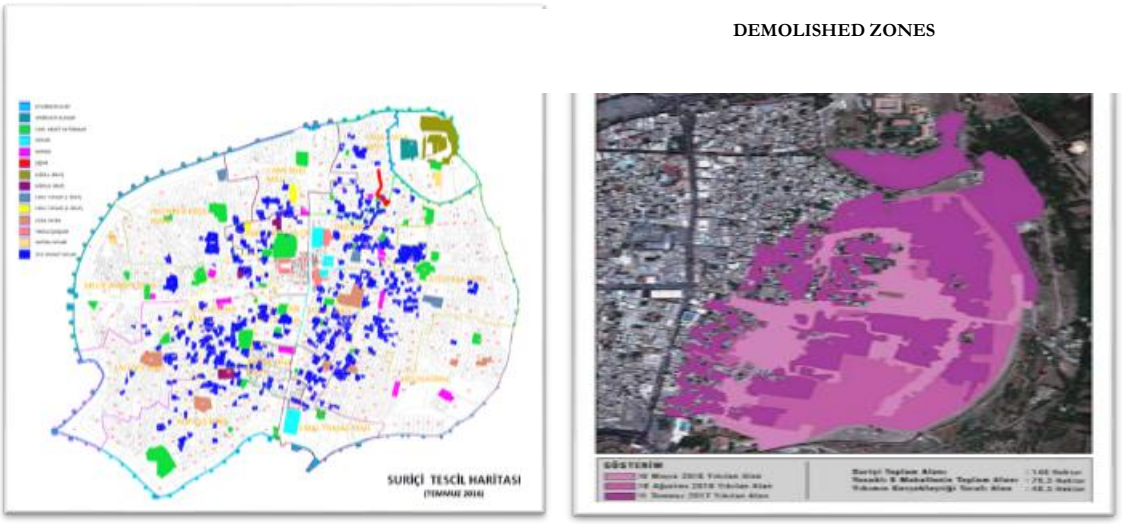
There are many issues that need to be addressed. Currently, the protection of the area is under growing threat. This is because the area is becoming increasingly tourism-oriented and depopulated. The situation is viewed solely from the perspective of tourism and attractions. One of the fundamental problems with the area is the issue of authority. As can be seen below, the areas marked with blue lines are currently under the authority of the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change. The municipality's

only role in these areas is to provide services such as garbage collection, as many powers, such as licensing and supervision, have been transferred from the local level to the ministry. Granting such extensive authority to the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization, and Climate Change in Ankara in an urban, historic site area brings with it destruction and disregards sensitivities.



The area known as Suriçi, located in the Sur district of Diyarbakır province and surrounded by the historic Diyarbakır Walls, was first declared a "Risk Area" by the Council of Ministers' decision No. 3900 dated 22/10/2012. Subsequently, Article 58 of Law No. 6745 dated 20/8/2016 on Supporting Investments on a Project Basis and Amending Certain Laws and Decree Laws added a temporary Article 6 to Law No. 5233 on the Compensation of Damages Arising from Terrorism and the Fight Against Terrorism. The article states: *"Applications may be conducted in these areas in accordance with Law No. 6306, the provisions of this Law that do not conflict with Law No. 6306, and the following provisions in Areas declared as high-risk zones pursuant to Article 1(a) of the Additional Article 1 of the Law on the Transformation of Areas at Risk of Disaster, dated May 16, 2012, and numbered 6306 and in Risk areas declared by the Council of Ministers' decisions dated October 22, 2012, numbered 2012/3900, and February 16, 2016, numbered 2016/8538, and reserve construction areas to be used for the transformation of these areas. In these areas, all tasks and procedures, including zoning plans, zoning implementation, infrastructure and superstructure projects, permits, and construction, are carried out, commissioned, and approved by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. In these areas, all duties and authorities, including the submission of opinions to the relevant authorities in all types and scales of valid zoning plans, plan notes, and plan explanation reports, are transferred to the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization."* As you can see here, the legislative amendment made in 2016 transferred all authority to the Ministry for areas designated as high-risk zones in 2012 and 2016 (shown in blue on the map).

As we will see shortly from the application examples, the exclusion of the Ministry of Culture from these protection and restoration efforts has turned into a disaster.



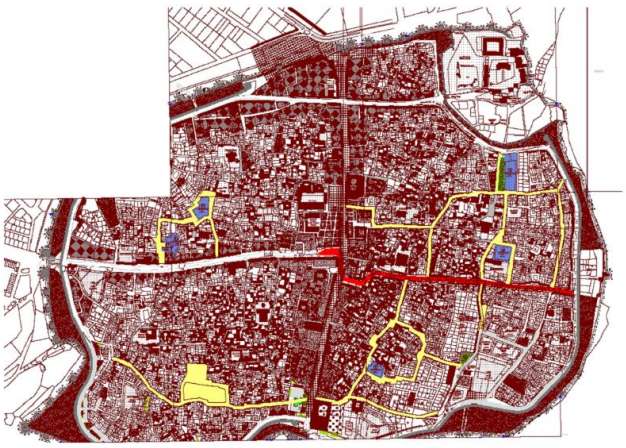
The purple areas scanned in the 2017 satellite images show evidence of multi-layered destruction processes. I will demonstrate this with photos shortly. The map on the left shows the locations of registered civil and other structures, which are marked in blue. Overlaying these two maps reveals that the number of registered parcels in the affected area is concentrated only around the main artery. However, it is also possible to argue that there are dozens, even hundreds, of structures in the area that should be registered. Of course, as they are identified and applications are submitted, the registration process is ongoing. Multiple applications related to registration are submitted to the conservation board every month, and structures are registered as they acquire qualities worthy of protection.

We call it a conflictual process. What we see here is, in fact, intense destruction and displacement; the erasure of historical and cultural fabric and social memory; the declaration of risk zones; emergency expropriation; and all the socio-economic and demographic changes that accompany these transformations. There is a term that encompasses all these aspects of an area that has been destroyed and devastated: urban genocide. Unfortunately, all interventions in this area clearly fit this definition.





Examining satellite images of the Old City in sequence on Google Earth, we can see what the area looked like before the conflicts in 2015. By January 2016, the work is almost complete and there are almost no signs of destruction in the area. By 2017, the scale of the destruction gradually increases. By 2018, the scale of the destruction had increased dramatically. By 2019, the area has been almost completely destroyed, with only a few multi-unit buildings remaining. Shortly thereafter, in 2020, demolition work began alongside construction processes. On top of these devastating scenes of destruction, something new began: reconstruction! Unfortunately, participation was not a priority in the reconstruction process. The conservation-oriented zoning plan was revised many times. Not only was the conservation-oriented zoning plan adopted in 2012 not adhered to in practice, but this plan was also revised in 2016, particularly for the purpose of widening roads and establishing police stations in certain areas. The Conservation-Oriented Zoning Plan was revised in 2016 as requested. Nevertheless, the applications made in the area in 2019, 2020, and 2021 were also in violation of this conservation-oriented zoning plan. (because construction was carried out without complying with the provisions of the conservation zoning plan in planning and implementation) For this reason, the conservation zoning plan was revised in accordance with the notes on the structure and adjusted to comply with the implemented violations, and the revised conservation zoning plan was approved. In other words, instead of a construction process that complies with the approved plan, a zoning plan was drawn up for protection purposes that was adapted to what was actually built. And unfortunately, despite seeing and knowing all this, the protection committees accepted and approved the processes in this manner.



Revised Suriçi Cadastral Map

The yellow lines on the map above indicate added and extended roads, while the blue dots represent the new police station locations we mentioned. The red-shaded area is very significant because it is Yenikapı Street, which is actually a beautiful example of organic street texture. Here, too, the boundaries of registered parcels were changed along with the expansion works. Although some buildings were registered, half or all of them were demolished because they encroached on the expanded road. For example, after half of a registered building was demolished, the remaining half stood. The projects were then revised according to this current situation. Unfortunately, these were also approved by the Conservation Board. We have witnessed such experiences.

We then see the reconstruction projects. It is mentioned everywhere. We classify these as prison typologies. Actually, one of the fundamental issues here is the failure to comply with the protective zoning plan and the failure to refer to the examples at hand. This is because the projects were managed from Ankara with a centralized approach by people who did not know or see the area. It was during the election period; in fact, we see an example of a city sacrificed to election propaganda. We are talking about an area with very high-quality buildings, shaped by local life, where the concept of privacy is at the forefront. We are talking about an area with narrow streets, shaped according to the climate and temperature data. In these newly constructed buildings in an area shaped by many experiences, including climate, over the years, people tried to find new solutions to their problems by following in the footsteps of the past, because past experiences were not taken into account and the implementations contained many inconsistencies.



In traditional buildings, courtyards face inwards and privacy is prioritised. However, as can be seen in the lower right corner of the image, new buildings have courtyards that face each other, or windows that face each other. Green awnings, fences and barrier-like walls have been erected in an attempt to provide privacy. The photo below shows Yenikapı Street (marked in red), which is the area on the top left. When the street was widened without taking climatic data into account, it became very hot and the façades absorbed too much heat. So what can we do? The answer was to make the street green and plant trees. These trees were not solely planted to make the streets greener. Tree planting and greening efforts were also carried out in many other areas that needed to be rebuilt, both registered and unregistered. Most of these trees are perennial root plants. However, no one considered the damage these trees would cause to archaeological layers when reconstruction work is carried out in these areas in the future.



We can see restoration work being carried out in the area. Frankly, there are many inconsistencies in this work. I will mention a few of the main ones. For example, the original building material was porous, or what the locals call 'female stone', but the material being used now is more solid, or what the locals call 'male stone'. Therefore, this integrated texture cannot be restored over time. It is also worth mentioning that all the rubble from this demolition was removed from the site by construction machinery and dumped near the River Dicle and Dicle University campus. In fact, stones were left over from the demolition within the structures of these buildings, but these were not separated or used either. This is because the work was contracted out and the contracts were awarded through negotiations. No one from the local community participated in these processes. The construction process was carried out without using any of the original materials belonging to the structure. There are also errors in the construction methods. For instance, the stones are factory-cut, resulting in shiny, smooth back and side surfaces. These surfaces do not bond well with the mortar and filler, which will cause structural problems over time.



Above, we can see an example of a bay window. On the right are more examples of bay windows. In fact, on opposite façades, one is blind and solid, while the other has a window facing the other side. However, when there is also a window on the opposite side, a building typology has developed that provides complete privacy when opening onto the side street. This was ultimately formed through experience. However, as can be seen in the copies produced on the right above, these sensitivities were disregarded. The Conservation-Oriented Zoning Plan was revised to address such errors.

We are also witnessing the demolition of registered buildings. There are also practices that we would call procedural errors, but these are emboldened by impunity policies. Many registered structures remained standing, yet they too were demolished during the subsequent process. This is because, when the conservation board and other inspectors visited the site, they reported that the structure had been present during the previous inspection, but was no longer there. This significant error was later dismissed with a brief note stating that the authorities did not know who had demolished the structure or how. No action was taken against the authorities.





I would now like to present another significant example of a policy of impunity. The image in the top left is actually a street photograph from 2014. Just below that is a scene depicting the creation of a new history, marketed as the "Avni Bey Mansion", also known as "Kemikli Evi". This Avni Bey mansion contains stones bearing human silhouettes. These stones actually belong to another registered building and were stolen from there. They were used in the construction of the Avni Bey Mansion, also known as Kemikli Evi, which was built illegally, without permission or a licence, at a time when access to the area was controlled by the police. Despite writing to the conservation board and the museum about this issue, no action was taken. Even after we filed a complaint and initiated legal proceedings, the case was dismissed on the grounds that a building registration certificate had been issued. We documented that the demolitions occurred after 2017 using satellite images and submitted this evidence to the court file, but the case was still dismissed. We are seeing this happening.

I will also, of course, mention the allocations in the area. These allocations are actually indicative of how property rights have been violated. None of the newly constructed buildings, particularly those on Yenikapı Street, were given to the rightful owners. Instead, they were leased to other people by the Ministry of Environment, Urbanisation and Climate Change. Consequently, the area has been completely transformed into a commercial hub. As you can see here, certain structures have also been allocated to various associations and foundations. Unfortunately, the only people not operating in this area are the rightful owners.





Although the subject is Suriçi, it is worth mentioning the historic walls. Work on restoring the walls is ongoing, and some sections have been completed. Recently, the issue of leasing the completed sections has become a topic of discussion. If there is profit to be made, someone will inevitably try to exploit the situation.



Restoration work has been completed on certain structures within the inner castle walls, including the 33rd Ulu Beden, the 41st Yedi Kardeş Burcu, and the 21-22nd Urfa Kapı towers. These towers are available for lease by revolving capital enterprises. Recently, a tender was held for the lease of 21 of them for purposes such as cafes, restaurants, traditional handicrafts, and similar activities. The Dağkapı towers you see on the upper left will be turned into restaurants. Of course, despite the tender being held and the use of the towers being granted to certain individuals, there is still disagreement on this matter. The lease term in the tender was limited to 5–7 years, but the intention was to extend it to 19–20 years. Legal proceedings have begun between the bidders and the relevant ministry regarding this issue. I know that the TMMOB Diyarbakır Provincial Coordination Committee has written to the ministry regarding the lease, but has not yet received an official response.

In essence, there is much to say about the proposed solutions, but the most important point here is the spirit of the place. The concrete, abstract, physical and spiritual elements that give a place its unique identity, meaning, atmosphere and sense of mystery are what define its spirit. It is said that the spirit

creates the space, and the space in turn shapes and defines this spirit. When you visit the area, the loss of its spirit is what you actually see.

What can be done? Ideally, I would outline solution proposals and discuss each one at length, but due to time constraints, I will only touch on a few points. Firstly, participation must be involved. Existing structures must be accepted as examples and references. As mentioned in many UNESCO reports, the revised conservation zoning plans must be cancelled and calls to revert to the 2012 Conservation Zoning Plan must be heeded.

If these important issues are addressed in the reconstruction and restoration process, even if not sufficiently, we will ensure that the existing parts are preserved. We also consider what will happen to the current negative examples and sometimes discuss them. Will these negative examples remain as wrong practices, or will they also be demolished one day? Demolition would not be a solution either because we must consider the secondary damage it would cause to the archaeological layer and the surrounding area. These issues all require lengthy discussion and debate, raising many questions about determining the most appropriate path and methods. Thank you all.

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

Thank you very much, Mr Ferit. These are truly profound and multifaceted issues. Mr Ferit did his best to address them. As Mr Ferit said, the minaret was stolen and the cover was made afterwards. However, the spear did not fit into the cover either, piercing right through it. Everything is clear. First, they implemented it; then, they created the Conservation Oriented Zoning Plan. Even UNESCO does not recognise this plan as it was not presented to them. Therefore, all applications made by the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation were illegal. It fell into an illegal position. But let me finish Ferit Bey's sentence: 'Who is following the law?'

I will now give the floor to Mr. Samet, Samet Uçaman. He is an agricultural engineer. But I would like to briefly introduce him again. Mr. Samet worked in various positions at the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality for many years. Most recently, he was the Director of the Environmental Protection Department when he was dismissed from his position in 2016 under a decree law. He served as the President of the Diyarbakır Chamber of Agricultural Engineers under the Turkish Chamber of Engineers and Architects (TMMOB). Currently, he serves as a member of the General Management Board of the Chamber of Agricultural Engineers. However, as an agricultural engineer representing civil society organisations, he has a professional responsibility to take a special interest in the Dicle Valley and Hevsel Gardens, and he continues to work actively in this field. Now, let's hear from him about the current situation in the Hevsel Gardens and Dicle Valley. The floor is yours.

Dicle Valley and Hevsel Gardens: Current Problems, Solution Proposals and Participation in Site Management-Samet Uçaman

-Former President of the Chamber of Agricultural Engineers

Firstly, I believe it is important for us to hold this meeting. I would like to thank the relevant colleagues. We need to assess the issue from where Ferit Karaman left off. As TMMOB, we have experienced first-hand over the past eight years the process of an area being vacated and the six vacated neighbourhoods being assessed, as well as the serious problems encountered with the existing geological layers, archaeological layers, architectural memory and Hevsel gardens.

Here's the situation: The forced displacement of the population from demolished and evacuated neighbourhoods is also causing the demise of our existing agricultural system in the Hevsel Gardens. We now need to address the current situation in Hevsel. The Hevsel Gardens had problems even before this happened. Irrigation cooperatives had previously been established for the gardens. However, there were serious problems with these cooperatives. When the State Hydraulic Works (DSİ), the university, the governor's office and the metropolitan municipality stopped providing infrastructure for the cooperatives, irrigation ceased in the area. At that time, the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality was unable to manage the irrigation cooperatives independently. Agricultural production in the Hevsel area was in serious trouble during those years.

I would like to assess the current situation here. As is well known, when we evaluate the beginning of agricultural activities in Hevsel, or the historical origins of the product, we can trace them back to the first instance of plant improvement and cultivation. The ancient agricultural system in Hevsel has been in place for thousands of years. During this time, the ecosystem and ecological areas were gradually identified and then reproduced. In other words, the Hevsel Gardens provided all the city's food and by-products. Accounts of this can also be found at different times. For example, there is an excerpt from an Assyrian king stating, "I destroyed the gardens."

However, the city is located right next to a river called the Dicle, which is not officially recognised as such until it reaches the Bismil bridge. This matter requires further discussion.

Before the trusteeship process began, serious studies were underway to determine the agricultural activities that would be carried out in the Hevsel Gardens by small family units, peasants and small family farmers, and how they would be supported. However, there is currently a problem. Alongside serious issues relating to agricultural production areas, the existing ecological area has also been seriously damaged. The flora and fauna in the area are under negative pressure, which is unfortunately causing problems for the creatures living there.

In June 2025, we conducted some studies in the Hevsel Gardens in line with the dynamics of the city. Over the course of eight years, we collaborated with TBMOB, relevant institutions, the Ecology Association and other organisations dedicated to safeguarding Diyarbakır. However, our studies revealed the following. Following the evacuation of houses and people from eight neighbourhoods in Suriçi, the nature, extent and variety of agricultural activities in the Hevsel Gardens began to change. There is now more industrial agriculture in the cultivated areas, and unfortunately, some areas have been planted with narcotics (cannabis). The Hevsel Gardens are being destroyed. Some areas are not being cultivated, the infrastructure of some areas is changing, and the boundaries of cultivated areas are shifting. Farmers or families may find themselves unable to continue cultivating in Hevsel.

All of these demonstrate the extent of the current damage to the Hevsel Gardens. We have repeatedly raised this issue with the site management and UNESCO, both jointly and individually, as well as through

press releases and statements delivered by WHW on behalf of Diyarbakır NGOs at UNESCO meetings in Riyadh and Delhi.

We asked to be included in the area management and this was partly accepted because we put pressure on them. The Ministry of Environment included us in the area management because they thought we talked too much. "Include them under the name of democratic culture, and they might stop talking." First, it was said that the Chamber of Agricultural Engineers and the Chamber of Architects should be included. We said that people who plan cities, people who work on the environment, and all the right organisations in the city should be included. We made sure to include the DKVD and the Ecology Association in the area management. We were told that the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization only looks at certain groups on this issue. When we insisted, we included other institutions as well, even though they were not officially part of it.

However, we are worried about the lack of a project to revise the field management plan. There are still people trying to destroy eight thousand years of cultural memory. It will be difficult to reverse the current damage and change agricultural activity in Hevsel. Even though the local management teams and our colleagues in supervision asked for more money, only a small amount was given to buy things directly. This led to a plan for the farming activities in the area. What will this plan achieve? Maybe one or two of the farm buildings could be rebuilt.

We wanted to be at a point where we could both come up with different solutions and challenge the local management on this. So, we tried to come up with some ideas for solutions. For example, if a tender is to be held, we thought that the Metropolitan Municipality could do the water analysis, and the Provincial Directorate of Agriculture could do the soil analysis. If these items are removed, the tender for agricultural activities will cost a little less. The project's details are being finalised. Then, as CSOs, we will present what we can do.

For about a month, we have been working with our institutions on a study in Hevsel Gardens. We are using a system called "Cur jimar" to count the different types of animal and plant life. This will help us to plan where to grow crops and see how the local environment affects plants and animals. It will also help us to identify which types of animal and plant already exist. We have made two plans for the different areas of the Hevsel Gardens. One of these plans is about the types of birds that visit, or the animals that live in the water. The other plan is about the types of plants that grow there, including plants that are only found in this area. We checked the plants in the area one by one.

One might ask why an NGO in Turkey is conducting scientific research in this field. However, we should also consider why Dicle University has not conducted this research until now and why Turkish academics have not evaluated it. For this study, we are revisiting Evliya Çelebi's diaries and extracting relevant passages. There are some original studies on the living creatures and biodiversity in the Hevsel Gardens. Unfortunately, however, there has not yet been an evaluation in the form of a scientific article. There could also have been evaluations of neoliberal policies, approaches, styles and methods, as well as the destruction of the basin. Nevertheless, we are forced to evaluate the current 'lesser evil' in this way.

We are determined to get to the bottom of this issue. It's not academic work, but we do this kind of work in Hevsel together with academic professors. We had agreed on one issue with ODTÜ, but the professors there weren't fully on board. They wanted us to be protected. Because it didn't work out with the professors at ODTÜ, we did this work with our local academic professors, some of whom were under decrees. That's how we're managing the process.

Another narcotics operation was recently carried out in the Hevsel Gardens. This operation was carried out out of necessity due to the dynamics in the city..

The current land management dynamics are causing serious problems. We haven't made any progress at all. This applies to the Dicle River, its status, the city's architectural fabric and future development, efforts

to preserve cultural memory, the historical depth of the Hevsel Gardens, and plans to perpetuate wise agricultural practices. The fact that the area is managed by Ankara or the ministry poses a serious challenge for us. Issues are discussed at advisory board meetings, notes are taken and suggestions are made. These are kept under signature in the coordination oversight. Ultimately, all of this goes to the Ministry.

However, for some reason, the ministry has adopted an approach that ignores this issue and fails to give it proper consideration. For instance, in order for the Dicle to be granted river status, certain applications must first be submitted and evaluated within the governorate. Urban planners, agriculturalists, cartographers and other city experts agree that this work must be carried out as soon as possible. Despite our assessment that this work is necessary, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation wrote to the MTA Mining Technical Research Institute based on this recommendation regarding area management. While the response letter did not explicitly state a lack of interest in this matter, we are still encountering such issues even though the governor's office is the responsible party.

Therefore, we cannot resolve this issue through deductive reasoning alone. However, we may be able to identify certain urban dynamics at specific points in the city. However, unless we collaborate with the producers in Hevsel and consider all living beings that produce and live in the Hevsel Gardens, our work will be top-down. It is therefore important that our approach is comprehensive, with those involved in production in the Hevsel Gardens also having a say in the area's management. All stakeholders must have a say in decision-making. Thank you.

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

Thank you very much, Mr Samet, for raising some very important issues. Yes, I know the topic is broad and complex, but we are also under time constraints. First, I would like to apologise to Mr Ferit for raising a delayed topic. In his presentation, Mr Ferit paid tribute to his father on the last slide. Sadly, his father passed away a few days ago. We pray for his soul. We offer our condolences to Mr Ferit once again. Despite this painful time, Mr Ferit did not let us down; he came and shared his topic with us. This was valuable.

The issue that Samet Bey mentioned regarding the Dicle River gaining river status is indeed important. Specifically, one of the river's branches originates from the Bırkleyn Caves near Lice, within the borders of Diyarbakır. For some reason, however, the river only gains official status after the Bismil Bridge. From its source to the Bismil Bridge, however, it has no status. Consequently, the area is unprotected and not covered by any legal protection legislation. This is a serious issue. This legal gap affects not only the Tigris Valley and the Hevsel Gardens, but also the local ecosystem. There is no protection. We have no legal basis on which to enforce it. This is very important. We worked hard on this issue during the World Heritage process, but our efforts were not successful. However, if the Tigris River obtains river status, coastal protection laws will come into play and the riverbank will be protected under this legal framework. Therefore, the area will be more strictly protected. This is crucial from this perspective. That is why I wanted to emphasise it again.

Another issue is the introduction of industrial agriculture to the Hevsel Gardens. Following the dehumanisation of Suriçi during the conflict, it became impossible to find people willing to work in the gardens, prompting some landowners to merge plots and start industrial agriculture, citing this as a reason. They mainly grow corn. What impact does this have? It reduces the area's production diversity. The use of chemical pesticides causes chemical poisoning. At the same time, it has a very negative impact on our traditional agricultural production and garden culture. In other words, the Hevsel Gardens are losing their World Heritage status.

We have repeatedly drawn the attention of the authorities to this issue. This was also mentioned in UNESCO's latest reports. As you know, this site was proposed for inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger. This risk still exists today, and when the site was nominated, the situation in Hevsel was again identified as a key issue. I wanted to emphasise this point.

Now I will give the floor to Professor Gül Köksal. Professor Gül is an architect but also an expert in the preservation of cultural heritage. She is very involved with Diyarbakır. She is particularly involved in the world heritage process, but also in the subsequent processes of destruction and urban decay. She is a professor who has frequently visited the city and closely supported civil society organizations in their conservation efforts. We can describe Professor Gül as a worker in urban social movements. She works on cultural value production and urban rights. After completing her bachelor's degree in architecture at Yıldız Technical University, she completed her master's and doctorate at Istanbul Technical University's Department of Restoration. She received her associate professorship in the field of architectural conservation. She received scholarships from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), TÜBİTAK, and the College de France Poz, and worked as a researcher in Germany, the USA, and France. Between 1996 and 2016, she served as an academic at Istanbul Technical University, Bahçeşehir University, Bilgi University, and Kocaeli University. However, between 2007 and 2010, she served as a founding member of the Kocaeli Regional Board for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage. In 2010, she received the National Architecture Building Conservation and Preservation Achievement Award. However, in 2016, she was expelled from Kocaeli University for signing a peace petition. Our professor continues her work at another workshop. Let's invite Professor Gül to the podium to give her talk, as she will also be presenting with visuals. She will speak on the topic of problematizing cultural value production within the walls of Diyarbakır. Please come up, Professor.

Problematizing the Production of Cultural Value in Diyarbakır / Suriçi- Assoc. Prof. Gül Köksal

-Academician

First of all, thank you very much for your invitation, and I would also like to thank everyone who worked hard to organize this meeting. It is very pleasant and exciting to see friends in the hall. I hope I can explain everything coherently in this short time, but I am lucky that Mr. Ferit, Mr. Samet, and Ms. Nevin have made my job much easier with their presentations before me.

I would like to share with you some thoughts on the creation of cultural values. I will start by mentioning that I last visited Diyarbakır in February 2025. Bağlar Municipality was due to hold a workshop focusing on Bağlar, with a particular focus on earthquakes, disasters, migration and cultural issues, as well as the effects of destruction. However, it was postponed. I will return to this topic later, as today we will mainly be discussing Sur and its cultural policy. However, the transformation of Sur is part of urbanisation policy and, at the same time, a process of value production. Therefore, we will need to discuss how settlements on the outskirts of Sur and in its surrounding area were also affected by these processes. During my last visit, I had the

opportunity to observe Sur firsthand and see how the state apparatus and central government approached rebuilding cultural value. At the same time, I also witnessed the biopolitical aspect of producing systemic representation spaces through financial transactions such as rentals and sales.

In fact, a geography of desire is emerging here. We saw Sur again this morning. We observed how the process of commodification is reflected on the ground, with many tourists arriving, and how this transformation through tourism is somehow legitimised. Essentially, this is a multidimensional political issue.

When discussing the title 'Questioning Cultural Value Production in Diyarbakır's Old City', it is first necessary to examine the emergence of the issue of value. It is also useful to consider how we conceptualise value production processes. Within this general framework, I will adopt a critical approach to cultural value and memory-space production.

This is because knowledge, value, memory and space are all forms of production. Each one is produced within political, economic and social contexts. Over time, they gain social acceptance. Take the issue of social memory, for example. From Halbwachs to Nora, it has gained widespread acceptance regarding how memory functions in space. In this context, the continuity of space is seen as being equivalent to the continuity of memory.

Heritageization, museumification, nostalgification, commodification, and touristification of cultural values within political, economic, and social contexts are also processes of production. Each can lead to the gain or loss of power, enabling or disempowering societies.

We can already observe this in terms of central administration in the field. This can itself be a gain or loss of power, accompanied by the sorrow it creates. It can either empower or pacify societies. In this presentation, I will touch upon critical approaches that question our preconceptions regarding the production of knowledge, value, memory and space, including the specific case of Diyarbakır/Sur. I would also like to discuss with you what methods could be inherent to the creation of a free and just society.

"A perspective of critical heritage studies" instead of "mainstream/official-authoritative-heritage discourse"

Firstly, I will critique the mainstream official discourse on heritage. In particular, critical heritage studies offer us this perspective. Like urban and spatial production, heritage production is a political act, and we must ask serious questions about the power relations that are often invoked to ensure its 'preservation'.

The progress of 21st-century capitalism, neoliberalism, nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, cultural elitism, Western triumphalism, social exclusion based on class and ethnic origin, and the fetishisation of expert knowledge have a powerful impact on how heritage is used, defined and managed.

Currently, heritage studies remain fragmented and segmented within the mainstream, authoritative discourse on heritage. This discourse is historically Western and European in origin, and is divided into specialisations such as archaeology, history, architecture and art history. These values are applied to various segments of society through a transcendent method of assigning value, with ancient values being applied in particular. Like truth production, knowledge production is based on a power relationship.

As an activist in urban social movements, despite having received training in this field, I question how social values and shared concepts can be approached in a resistant and transformative way. In other words, how can we be revolutionary? Recently, I have been paying even more attention to this issue in light of the loss of cultural values in the country.

Tangible (1972) and intangible (2003) cultural heritage in the context of the World Heritage List (WHL)

Melancholy is created through the production of space over time, colonisation (the creation of a representational plane), the inheritance of middle values, the commodification of nostalgia, and so on. In response to these phenomena, let us discuss counter-memory and critical heritage studies.

We know that the World Heritage List has been overseen by the United Nations since 1972. Physical environments, beginning with monuments, were initially included on the list. Then, in the early 2000s, a value system that considered intangible elements was introduced. This is itself a practice of creating a representation system that operates between states and governments. While we naturally interpret this as a means of protecting shared values, we must also consider it as a policy of drawing attention to a representative platform.

It is important at this point to mention counter-memory and critical heritage studies, as well as decolonisation efforts against colonial practices created by the representational plane. Initially, decolonisation studies referred to the process by which former colonies freed themselves from colonial supremacy. Today, however, the term has come to signify much more: it is a philosophical, moral, social, spiritual and activist call to attention to the fact that we are still subject to colonial ideology.

If we want to look at this colonialist value production system from a perspective that transforms it, we must also question the institutions that produce it. In order to ensure the existence of these institutions, we must also point out the cases where these institutions are ignored, their actions are covered up, legitimized, or silenced, or where the people who run these institutions themselves are not questioned. How knowledge is produced in the practice of colonization, how it is categorized, how collections are selected... these are all problematic.

Decolonisation involves identifying and challenging colonial systems, structures and relationships. It is not merely the tokenistic inclusion of the intellectual achievements of non-white cultures, nor is its "integration".

Decolonization involves questioning our institutions: how and why are certain forms of knowledge prioritized and given authority over others? How do we organize and categorize knowledge? Who determines the selection and quality criteria for collections? Who decides what will be presented and represented? We must follow paths that ask these and similar questions and challenge them.

Since February 2004, I have been writing about urban rights and participation for Evrensel Newspaper, focusing on issues from the field. Since the late 18th century, the capitalist modernity project has been opening up and shaping the natural environment — the countryside, rivers, forests and all common areas — for development through a destructive, creative process.

Workers who migrated to cities in the late 18th century with the dissolution of the feudal system and agricultural production were the class affected by the transformation of cities reshaped by capitalist production relations.

The capitalist modernisation project continuously opens up common natural resources, such as the natural environment, rural areas, rivers, forests and pastures, for development, shaping them through a destructive-creative process. *(Creative destruction or the destructive-creative expression is used to mean the elimination of the old for the design and construction of the new.)*

Today, we are witnessing the 21st-century manifestation of capitalist urbanisation. The process of creative destruction continues on a larger scale. The transformation of Paris's urban fabric continues, as does the opening of wide roads and the demolition of barricades (in a manner that would have destroyed the Paris Commune). The planning approach continues to provide control and surveillance. The wide roads or ramparts passing through the suburbs are an extension of this planning approach. When we look at Paris today, we should not just consider the magical Paris presented to us, but also recognise that the city's conflicting aspects must be problematised, including its heritage production practices. From a Marxist perspective, value production encompasses both use value and exchange value. However, in the 19th century, alongside all the destruction, various value attributions began to emerge. Alongside use and exchange value, there are also artistic, historical, novelty, relative artistic, antiquity and industrial development values. These values can also create conflicts among themselves. There is a lot of literature on this subject.

Attribution of cultural value to the built environment since the 19th century:

- single building conservation, monumental conservation,

- conservation of examples of civil architecture,

- historical environment conservation, fabric conservation,

- reconstruction (world wars),

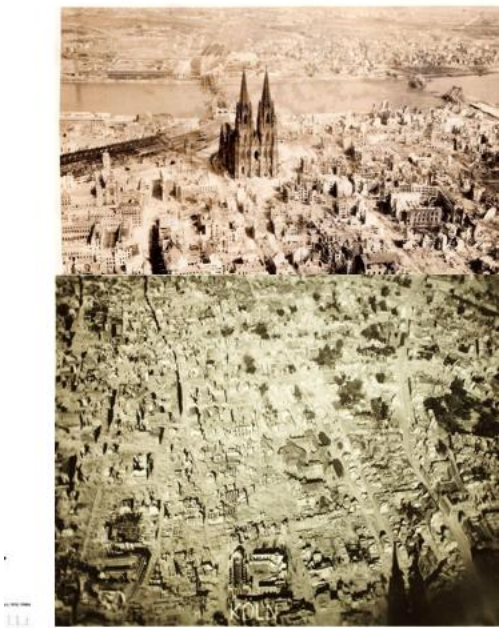
- technical-technological transfer,

industrial heritage, industrial archaeology,

- modern heritage, 20th-century heritage (Republican heritage in Turkey)

- intangible heritage,

- cultural landscape conservation...



Since the 19th century, when cultural value was first attributed, the approach has been to start with a single structure, beginning with monumental preservation, then moving on to civil architecture and finally the historical environment. Then the world wars and partition wars began. With these wars, another process began. With postmodernism, the process of designing a monument as a monument begins. When discussing industry, archaeology, modernity, and so on, this practice of encompassing is produced as a form of drawing into the representational plane. That is why we are addressing this contradiction. We say that these institutions recommend these things in order to protect common values in the eyes of states. But why are these recommendations not being implemented? Why are these plans not being followed? It is because we are speaking from a plane of representation. This is part of an urbanisation and cultural value production policy.

Given this approach, transforming it naturally requires much more effort and consideration. The reconstruction of the area after the wars of division in the 1940s also shows us the construction process in Sur, as does the revival that came to the fore. The audacity to rebuild such large areas and demolish them to make way for something new is remarkable. Similarly, when we move from Amed to Hatay, we see the same thing in the earthquake zone. In Hatay, we see multi-layered cultural values that can be turned into tourism and heritage, but we also see that the processes of reconstruction and value creation after the destruction have progressed in parallel. The practices themselves move between geographies.



The spatiality of value creation in the reconstruction process from Amed to Hatay

From the 1950s to the 21st century …

Let's look at how urbanization has changed; we are beginning to see these expressions more often

-the renewal of city centers destroyed after the war,

-rapid industrialization-population growth

-expressions such as slum areas/vacant lots/green spaces in modernist planning,

-the expansion and "rebuilding" of established urban areas,

-the development of new suburbs on the city periphery,

-Collective housing projects,

-Opening up space for real estate and public policies,

-Globalization, neoliberal policies,

-Opening up space for the construction, energy, and mining sectors,

-Culture, art, greenwashing, flagship projects, the Guggenheim effect

-Competitive cities, mass tourism industry, heritage industry ….

While in the urban area, mainstream terminology finds its articulation as:

1950-1960 Urban Reconstruction

1960-1970 Urban Redevelopment)/ Urban Rehabilitation

1970-1980 Urban Renewal/ Urban Revitalization

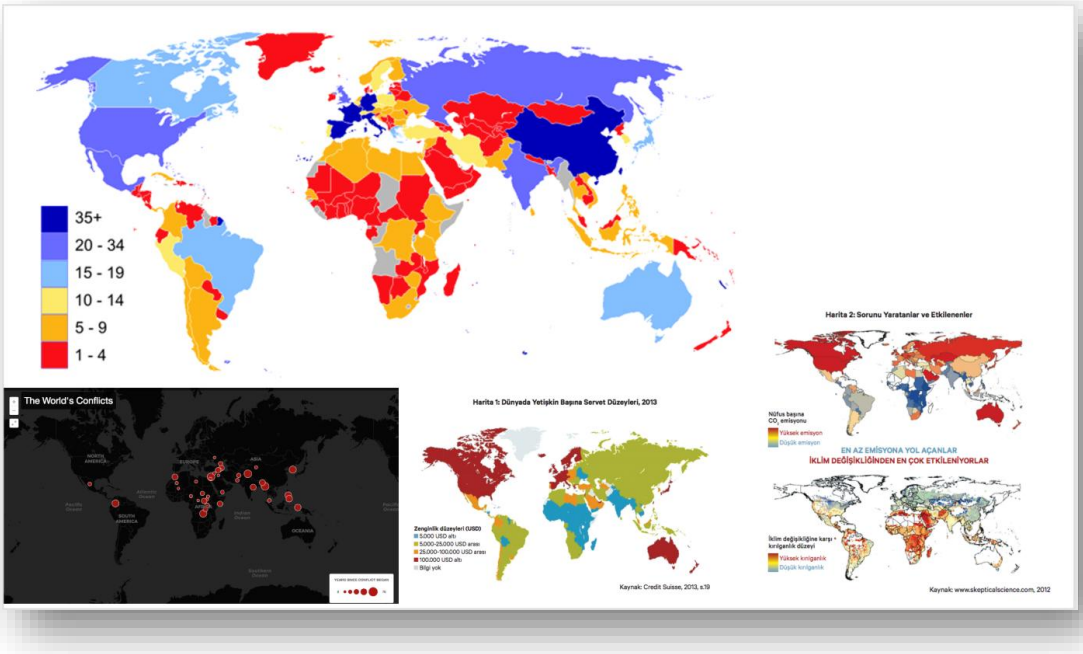
1980-1990 Urban Redevelopment/ Urban Revitalization

2000'ler Urban Regeneration/ /Redevelopment/Urban Renewal = Urban Transformation/Resilient Cities

From the 1950s to the present day, mass housing projects, TOKİ developments, the concept of competitive cities, and the mass tourism and industrial agriculture industries have influenced mainstream terminology. Today, when we use the term 'urban transformation', we are actually referring to various forms of intervention in the city.

Now, because of natural events like earthquakes, people are talking about resilient cities. But what will they be resilient against? What will this transform? And is the root problem being addressed? Does this discussion deal with the underlying issues that cause it, or the political and biological aspects? We need to look at these questions in more detail.

An analysis of the World Heritage List reveals a tendency for the inclusion of colonised lands that were settled very late, such as certain regions of America, into the list. In contrast, regions where human history, production and agriculture originated, such as the Middle East and Africa, are less likely to be accepted. Moreover, evidence suggests that these regions are also characterised by a prevalence of conflict and war, as well as economic crises. Furthermore, an analysis of the disparity between the northern and southern hemispheres with regard to the disruption to ecological equilibrium reveals the political nature of the heritage production process at UNESCO.



Indeed, the geography we inhabit, the fertile crescent, the spread of agriculture from there, the place where humanity produced a multitude of social values, is today beset by millions of problems. The fact that Liverpool, one of the major industrial port cities of early capitalist England, has reached the point of being removed from the World Heritage List due to excessive development shows us how the heritage industry has affected the World Heritage List. This even shows us how its own value system has decayed at some point.





In the context of Sur, it has been posited by associates that the values of this ancient way of life, while possessing a multi-layered nature, are nevertheless in a state of tension with the urbanisation policy that was initiated through forced migration.

This region of conflicts is a geography defined as the fertile crescent, the birthplace of civilizations, where agriculture first began, where the first staple crops such as wheat, barley, chickpeas, and lentils were cultivated, where animals like sheep, goats, and cows were first domesticated, where the first village-like settlements were established, and where countless firsts occurred, such as the first trade and the first tool production. In other words, the roots of civilization sprouted here. All these firsts, from agriculture to tool production, spread from here to every corner of the world. For this reason, Mesopotamia is defined as the cradle of civilizations.

The Dicle and Fırat Rivers remain, as they have for centuries, the bountiful sources of life. These precious resources have been the reason for people to settle here continuously for centuries. In Diyarbakır alone, it is possible to trace the history of over 30 civilizations spanning 7,000 years, from the Roman period to the present day. From the Roman, Ottoman, and Republican periods, citizens speaking their native languages—Kurdish, Turkish, Arabic, Romani, Armenian, Syriac—continue to live a multilingual, multicultural, and multi-layered existence.

Architectural spaces are a reflection of both the richness of everyday life and social and economic inequalities. Within the same visual 'landscape', the poor and the rich, the weak and the powerful, can be seen in all their detail. Just as houses are built in close proximity to each other due to the influence of climate and geography, so too do lives intertwine. Streets, houses and lives form a single entity. Life continues in all its colours in courtyards, eyvan and on rooftops. The Hevsel Gardens, nourished by the waters of the Tigris River, are a special and powerful example of the relationship humans have with nature.

The bearers of this tangible and intangible heritage, namely more than 20,000 people in Diyarbakır, have been forced to migrate. These people, who are the living bearers of social memory, have been forced to leave their memories behind in the place where they were born. Seven thousand years of cultural continuity has suffered a heavy blow.

If we address the issue of property losses during and after the destruction, according to the numerical data kept by the Van Branch of the Chamber of Civil Engineers of the Turkish Chamber of Engineers and Architects (TMMOB), the number of structures damaged during the clashes in Yüksekova is higher than

that of the Van Earthquake. In other words, man-made violence has caused much more damage than the earthquake.

In addition to the issue of demolitions, urgent expropriations are another problem. Those in positions of authority and influence have implemented measures to delineate and restrict access to land. The transfer of publicly owned land to private ownership has been facilitated by TOKİ, an institution established with the primary objective of producing housing for low-income individuals. However, the execution of large-scale projects has been observed, despite their apparent superfluity. The majority of the land in the region has been developed, with the aim of increasing the size of existing settlements by a factor of several. Agricultural areas have been particularly devastated.

TOKİ style mass housing in newly developed areas is also worthy of note, given its role in the imposition of a uniform lifestyle and the homogenisation of the culture of the region.



For this reason, we, 68 institutions advocating for peace and life, decided to come together. Together, we organized the UNESCO Counter-Forum on July 19, 2016. At that time, there was a question. UNESCO was coming, and Istanbul was in a precarious situation. Sulukule had already been destroyed. Haydarpaşa was still facing the same problems. At the end of the forum, we stated that this destruction of natural and cultural assets could only be prevented by communities organized through social solidarity, and that life and the values that carry us together into the future could only be preserved by the people who produce them joining hands to protect them.

UNESCO KARŞI FORUM



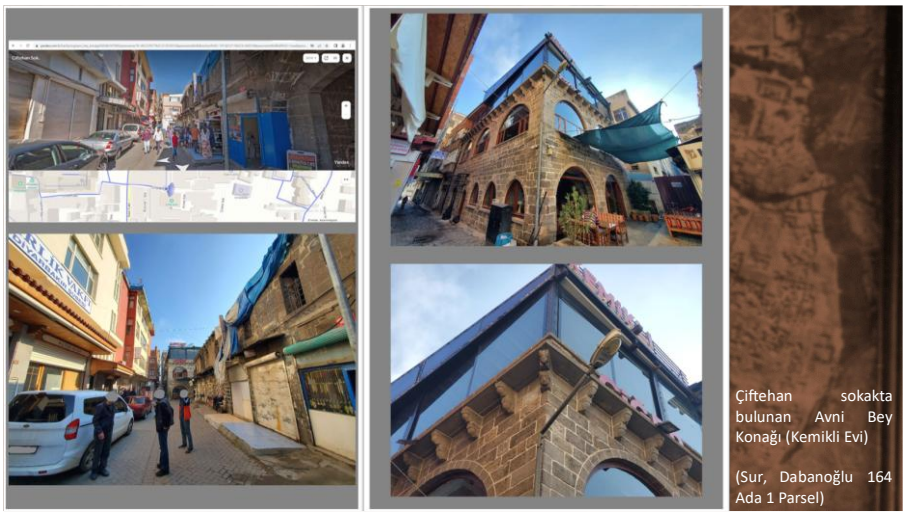
Returning to Sur, the TMMOB has produced a very detailed report on the demolition of cities. The plan includes street widening. It is reminiscent of Paris, with streets being widened and security checkpoints and control points being added. At the time, there was talk of Sur becoming Toledo. These so-called Toledo practices continue in areas that were hastily expropriated.



The problems from that time are still ongoing. In fact, they have worsened since the 6 February earthquakes. I heard this first-hand from Mehmet Kalyoncu, the president of the Turkish Design Foundation, at a public meeting in Antakya in November 2024. *"We said Sur and Cizre would be like Toledo. We did a great job there. Now we're going to do the same for Hatay and Antakya, and Toledo will learn from us. We're already continuing to do this in Palestine, and if we're given the task, we'll do it in Istanbul too.* In fact, these statements demonstrate how permeable and fluid central construction practices, mainstream practices and urbanisation policies are, regardless of geography. This fluidity is even carried out by certain professionals and planning groups. At this point, I question how the practice of opposition will transform and strengthen itself due to this practice circulating in this way.

In summary, the issues of destruction and reconstruction can be described as follows: displacement, occupation, conquest, confinement, cleansing, spatial genocide, urban genocide, ecological genocide and the destruction of memory. What we are seeing in Sur right now, for example, is culture washing and art washing.

Similar things are happening in Istanbul. Clearly, this type of urbanisation closes off, monitors, occupies and re-represents space, transforming memory and establishing a new one under the guise of development and urban renewal. Something else has emerged. A different culture of consumption is emerging and the social fabric is changing, but there is also a counterpart to this on the biopolitical plane — a Foucauldian counterpart, if you will.



The approach to Hevsel in Diyarbakır involves more than just paving over the area; it also involves turning it into a spectacle. Hevsel is essentially being stripped of its role as a production area and transformed into something that destroys all its inherent values. This practice is therefore extremely crude and destructive in the process of turning the area into a tourist attraction — in other words, a process of destruction is occurring alongside a process of new creation.

Critical heritage practices view the entire colonial Western approach through the lens of the use value of heritage. Unlike the top-down value assignment that operates like a pyramid, this approach is transformative, taking into account the value produced by those at the base: indigenous peoples and indigenous life itself. The aim is to understand the construction of active heritage as an action.

So, how is this achieved? The distinction between local, voluntary, mobile and alternative forms of heritage and their official national versions is itself a subject of debate in the international literature, particularly when this distinction is made from a place that liberates it completely, from the bottom up. This is precisely what I am trying to write and draw. At the center of this production of memory lies another vision of life, another world, another spatialization, another vision of value production internalizing the present, establishing a conceptual grounding not appropriating memory, remembrance rather than transforming power relations, space within a paradigm that constructs rights against the apparatus of capitalist modernization At this point, I would like to refer to various thinkers.

Counter-memory studies

Against the instruments of capitalist modernization, a vision of another world, another urbanization, another spatialization within a paradigm that builds rights...

Transforming power relations, embedding memory/remembrance in the present rather than making it specific to a place...

From a Spinozist perspective, Potestas refers to the use of power in the realm of power and representation for the sake of representation. In contrast, potentia is the concept of power as something common, which we can use for the benefit of our values. At this point, we should also question our own power relations, positions and states of protection.

Within the scope of his vision of urban revolution, Lefebvre creates a triad of perceived, understood and lived space/place. This coincides with the discourse of isotopy, heterotopy and utopia. This leads us to the idea of constructing a right to the city that incorporates everyday revolutionary praxis.

Foucault; the discourse of heterotopia… other spatialities…

Deleuze-Guattari: The discourse of becoming as counter-memory... rhizome, short memory (revolutionary memory on the scale of a minute), long memory (family-state reminders / institutional).

“Replace memory loss with forgetting, replace interpretation with experimentation. Find your own body without organs. Learn to do it.”

The issue of memory itself is also controversial. It is said that long memory is institutionalised through family and state reminders. This creates sad feelings in us. In contrast, what is joyful and revolutionary is perhaps 'revolutionary forgetting'. In other words, we need to reconsider the issue of memory production. This is because memory production is a form of interpretation and appropriation. This is what academia does: it interprets and defines. On the other hand, experimentation and production offer different approaches to creating value.

In the dominant Western tradition of thought, memory is a political practice that is used to immobilise space by halting or homogenising movement. What purpose does memory serve? What function does it fulfil?

These concepts, approaches, questions, and questionings, when further explored and deepened, can also transform our actions.

In October 2024, a workshop was held with the co-chairs of local administrations to discuss urbanisation policy. Following a detailed discussion of urbanisation policies during the workshop, we discussed the region's urbanisation and cultural policies with the regional co-chairs and participants. Afterwards, emerged a proposal. In an area where the central government has drawn boundaries, the capacity of local government is also restricted, or the practices of those who envision this area differently are also restricted. We conducted a collective text production process to explore how we could produce this with the resources at our disposal.

Another public space design, another value production process, from Rojava to Africa and Europe. These designs transform space into a field of experience in different parts of the world, transforming value systems and us in the process. They make us more capable and produce policy itself through spatial policy and everyday life practices. We have prepared a file containing various examples and publications. We hope it will be a useful resource for relevant institutions, local governments and grassroots movements. Thank you.

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

Thank you, Professor. So, Professor Gül, of course, has once again emphasized that what you have experienced in this final process is certainly not free from politics or a political perspective. Of course, she also reminded us that the struggles of the people for their rights are also political. And, of course, she reminded us that we can overcome this by growing stronger and fighting together.

Now, after Professor Gül, we will return to a local topic, but from a different perspective. We will examine the area through the lens of local governance and the area management plan. To help us with this, we will be joined by architect Veysel Sermet Azizoğlu. Mr Azizoğlu graduated from the Faculty of Architecture at Dicle University in Diyarbakır. From his student days to the present, he has worked in various roles within the Cultural Heritage Preservation sector. He was also involved in the Diyarbakır Inner Castle Museum Complex project. He started working at Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality in 2012, where he was one of my most valuable colleagues during the UNESCO nomination process. Between 2019 and 2022, he worked on the restoration of the walls of Diyarbakır. He currently works at the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality KUDEB (the Department of Protection, Implementation and Supervision). He will give us a presentation on the revised area management plan for the Sermet World Heritage Site in Diyarbakır.

Diyarbakır World Heritage Site: Revised Area Management Plan and Participation-Sermed Azizoğlu

-Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality KUDEB

I would like to extend my warmest greetings to you all: the distinguished Minister, the honorable Deputy, our esteemed Mayor, and the valued attendees. I would also like to express my gratitude to DİTAM for drawing attention to this matter.

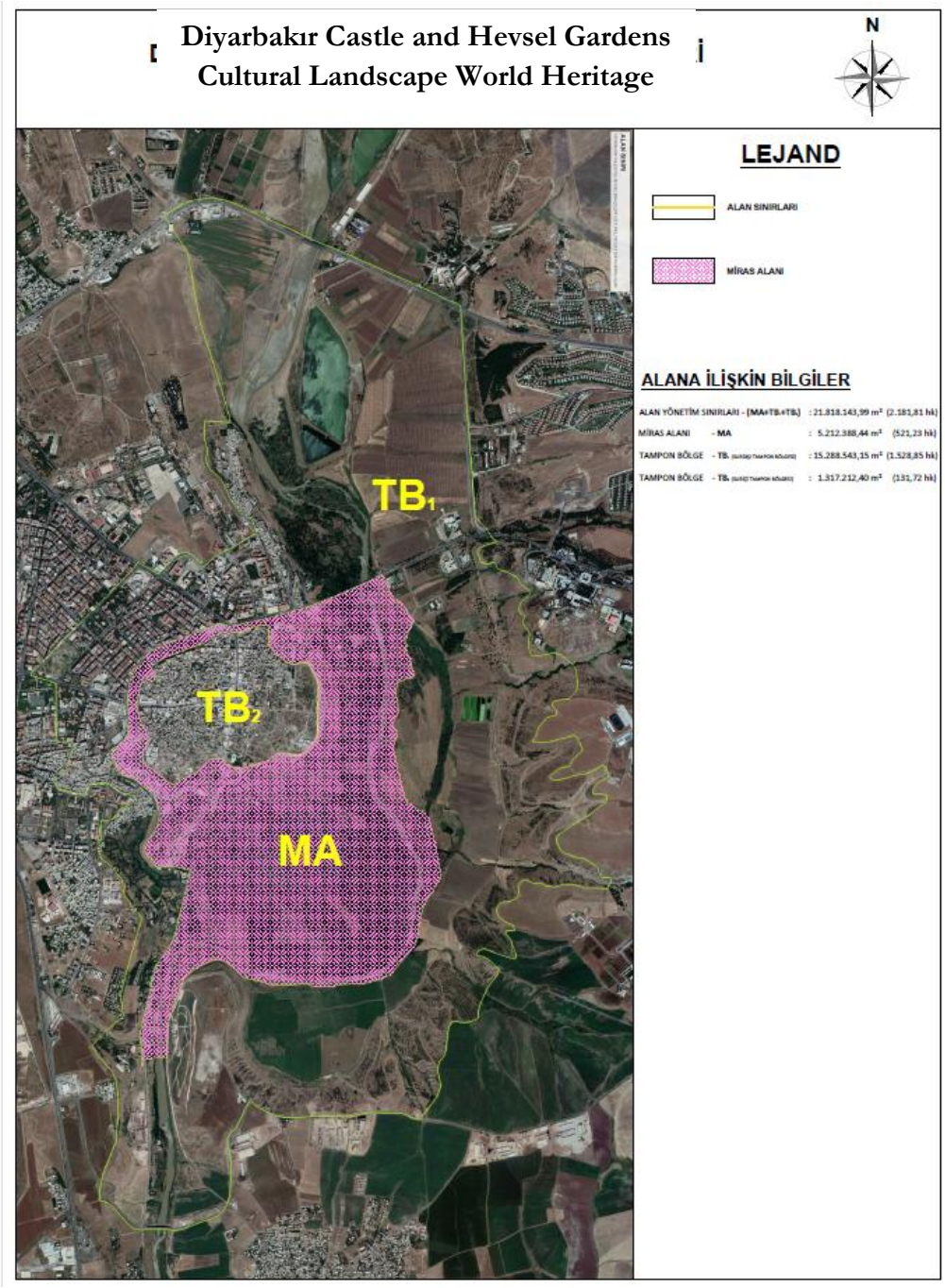
I will explain how the discussions can be corrected and the first step taken. How can this be organised with the area management team or the revision of the management area plan? I will emphasise this point. I will elaborate on what happened, what the results were, and what did or did not happen in terms of participation. I will support this with technical details.

Firstly, what are the management plan and area management? We are doing everything we have discussed in accordance with the relevant legislation. There is a 'Regulation on Area Management and the Procedures and Principles Regarding the Establishment and Duties of the Monument Works Board and the Determination of Management Areas'. This regulation is very important. Minor changes to this regulation determine whether we are included in or excluded from this issue. What exactly are the management area, the area management plan, the advisory committees and the coordination oversight that we are discussing?

Management areas are places established to ensure coordination between authorized planning and conservation centers, local authorities, and civil society organizations, with the aim of effectively protecting, evaluating, and developing the natural integrity of site areas, archaeological sites, registered immovable cultural assets, and their interaction zones within a specific vision and framework, and to meet the cultural and educational needs of society whose boundaries are determined by the Ministry after consulting with the relevant authorities.

The management plan describes the annual and five-year implementation phases and budget of the conservation and development project, which is created by taking into account the operational project, excavation plan, and environmental design projects or conservation-oriented zoning plan, with the aim of ensuring the protection, preservation, and evaluation of the management area. This plan is reviewed every five years.

In theory, everything seems perfectly correct and ideal, but the problem in our country is always implementation. Nothing is done as it should be or as it is written. That's where the problems arise. As you can see below, we have a 2,181-hectare heritage site of outstanding universal value. This site now belongs not only to us Diyarbakır residents, but to all of humanity. Therefore, we have a duty to protect this heritage for future generations. Management areas are designated to organise this protection, and management plans are the most important guide during the implementation of these processes.



Area management plans are a type of strategic plan which also incorporates spatial decisions. They comprise a series of activities and policies designed to ensure a balance between sustainable protection and use. These plans are developed with the input of all relevant stakeholders and consider current and potential issues. The competent and responsible institutions implement them and civil society monitors them.

We currently have many problems regarding the Heritage Site. There are many things that UNESCO has identified, which they are not yet aware of, but we are aware of. All of these problems can only be solved with proper planning.

When we refer to such a large area, we are talking about a place with many different features. The Dicle River, which feeds Mesopotamia, also flows through this area. The Hevsel Gardens, which have sustained Suriçi for thousands of years, are also within this area's boundaries. We also have the multi-layered cultural heritage area of Suriçi, which has been inhabited for at least 7,000 years. Beyond that, there is a city, part

of which is home to a university. Such a large area can only be protected by proper coordination and correct planning. Otherwise, it is not possible to protect the area, its inhabitants and its needs in a sustainable way. This is why area management plans are so important.

2016 was a significant year for our heritage site. How did we manage before? How did we get to this stage? I'd like to explain a little. The legislation I mentioned above granted local authorities the power to manage areas designated as urban sites. Between 2011 and 2016, the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality was responsible for this task. All procedures were carried out jointly with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. As someone from Diyarbakır, I would now like to thank Mr Ertuğrul Günay. We achieved a great deal together with the ministry during that period. Afterwards, however, some things changed. During this time, we defined the area's boundaries and how the file should be written. We submitted the area management plan to the heritage centre for the first time in Turkey, along with the file. Throughout these processes, meetings were held many times with civil society organisations, citizens and association representatives, whether or not they were covered by legislation. I am sure that many of the people who participated in those meetings are here today.

In such a field, you need the input, knowledge and experience of everyone. Civil society organisations are run on a voluntary basis. If you don't recognise the value of the contributions of volunteers, this work won't be worth much. For example, our previous Advisory Board consisted of around 40 people. It was formed through a very broad participatory process that included members of the Chamber of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB), other civil society organisations working in the field, neighbourhood wardens and citizens. Unfortunately, participation is not really an issue today. At that time, we even had a scientific committee made up of professors to utilise local dynamics. There were four separate committees: one related to the walls, one related to Hevsel, one related to press and communication, and one related to information.

Why am I emphasising these commissions? The employees of these commissions were local representatives and participants. It is not possible for us to do all this work alone. When I say 'local', I am not just referring to NGOs. We also worked closely with public institutions. At that time, it was much easier to coordinate activities and develop collaborative practices. Unfortunately, this is not possible now. All work was carried out through the Metropolitan Municipality's secretariat. We established the link between UNESCO and the heritage sites. We conducted all inspections and reporting. This was also the beginning of the legislative changes that took place after 2016. During that period, after the conflict, we tried to draw UNESCO's attention with the help of civil society. At that time, we also realised what UNESCO protects and what it does not. We worked very hard to raise awareness. These efforts yielded the following result. In 2016, the legislation changed and, as the Metropolitan Municipality, we were completely excluded from the process.

Following the regulatory changes made in August 2016, all 16 or 17 district heads in Turkey were dismissed overnight. Within a week or two, all district heads had been reinstated, even those appointed by municipalities. However, this did not apply to Diyarbakır. Instead, a ministry employee working locally at the time was appointed as the Diyarbakır area management chairperson. Not a single coordination or advisory board meeting was held in the eight years leading up to 2024. The last meeting we had was in spring 2016. Without these meetings, no one has any information about the work being carried out in the area.

We were acting on incomplete, incorrect, or misleading information we heard from various sources. Since there are no coordination oversight meetings for institutions working internally, you don't know what they are doing, you cannot make suggestions, and you cannot establish contact. NGOs are already being pushed completely out of the process. When this happens, there is no opportunity to benefit from accumulated knowledge and information. Not only local institutions and organizations that are kept outside, but also the Ministry of Culture has been pushed out of the process.

As a result, a whole host of other problems arose. During that period, TOKİ and the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation took control of the entire process, acting unilaterally and without consulting anyone. No NGO or local entity was given the opportunity to contribute. Despite repeated attempts to involve them in the process in various ways, all local dynamics were clearly excluded. No routine conservation processes were implemented. Expecting this would have been unrealistic anyway. This is the natural outcome of work carried out by an institution (the Ministry of Environment and Urbanisation) that lacks knowledge of conservation, the necessary legislation, and core principles. During this period, a field director was appointed, but they were not given any additional budget or authority. They were expected to carry out the work alone. This was not possible. At the time, we were a large team. Even running the secretariat of such a field and carrying out the related work requires people from many different fields and disciplines. One person alone cannot monitor, examine and evaluate this area.

The current structure of the boards is serving as a mediator. An attempt is being made to strike a balance between local and central government. As far as I understand, there is a fear of local involvement. I believe the local authorities are being kept at arm's length so they do not become overly involved.

Let me explain the importance of the ancient knowledge of NGOs or local dynamics. Internally, TOKI has been assigned the restoration work of local civil architecture examples. Since TOKI does not have the expertise for this work, it delegates it to a consulting firm. Technically, you would expect the consulting firm to have experience in this area. However, the consulting firm has no such experience. The personnel hired by the consulting firm also had no such experience. One of these personnel contacted us. I remember him asking the following question: Is there a book you can recommend that we can read to learn about Diyarbakır's civil architecture? "There's no such book," I said. If there is one, please tell us so that we can read it, too." This isn't something that will happen overnight. What you're talking about takes years. You need to live here; you need to be here. I can suggest this. Many local actors, teachers, NGOs and institutions know about this issue. If you communicate with them, you won't have this problem. But then you realise that this is already unwanted and being pushed aside. The sentence that sums up the situation is this: 'You cannot talk about real democracy where there is no participation.' This also summarises the process.

But what will happen after today? These problems are as apparent to UNESCO as they are to us. The decision taken in Riyadh in 2023 emphasises the following: Article 9 contains a statement regarding a complete review of the management system. This means that the management structure you have established here is unable to manage this area properly. This is actually a very painful statement. Many public institutions and two or three ministries are involved, yet the result is a fiasco. UNESCO therefore makes the following recommendation: The management plan should be revised to ensure the participation of local governments, organisations and communities, including scientists and agricultural groups, in management and decision-making processes. This is already stipulated in the legislation. There are also processes in which this emphasis needs to be implemented. However, as this has never been implemented before, UNESCO is reminding us.

What was the result? Without consulting the relevant parties, the Ministry signed a protocol with the Metropolitan Municipality to ensure that the area management plan could be revised under the Metropolitan Municipality's supervision. In accordance with this protocol, we started work on the plan over the last month or two. Hopefully, everything will turn out as expected. Our goal in taking on this task — which we also discussed with our mayors — is to play an active role again. Even when taking an active role, our fundamental goal remains to prioritise participation. We must not forget this: When people and institutions are involved in a process, they take ownership of the issue, topic or matter in question. If you don't include people and involve them in the work, you cannot expect them to commit fully. Knowledge and experience only grow in value when contributions are made. This is our fundamental goal. We plan to revise the plan in two stages over a period of 18 months. As before, there will be many meetings during

this period. We will ensure that all local dynamics contribute to the process. Every word and idea has value.

We face many challenges. In addition, a reactive mission visit took place in 2022. Essentially, a Reactive Mission Visit means there is a problem. The visit should have taken place much earlier, but it was deemed unsafe due to security concerns. Then the pandemic hit. This is why the visit was postponed until 2022. However, in 2022, the truth came to light. In 2023, the World Heritage Committee's first draft decision was to include the site on the list of endangered heritage sites.

In addition to the 24 fundamental issues outlined in the report prepared following the visit of the mission, we intend to maintain the framework of the area management plan based on the ideas gathered from our upcoming meetings.

I would like to briefly mention the following: The Valletta Principles, adopted at the 17th ICOMOS General Assembly in Paris on 28 November 2020, concern the regulation for the conservation of historic cities and urban areas. The third article of the Valletta Principles relates to intervention measures. Section H of the article states the following: *"Good governance ensures the establishment of a broad communication network among all stakeholders, elected officials, municipal employees, public administrators, experts, professional organizations, voluntary organizations, universities, and residents. This is essential for the successful preservation, revitalization, and sustainable development of historic cities and urban areas. The participation of residents can be facilitated by ensuring the flow of information and promoting awareness and education. Traditional urban management systems must be examined in all aspects of cultural and social diversity in order to create democratic institutions appropriate to the new reality. During the planning and conservation processes of Historic Cities, the necessary information and time must be provided to ensure that local residents are well-informed and can respond appropriately to the issues. Initiatives to protect the historic environment should be encouraged to facilitate the participation of entrepreneurs from the private sector in the repair and restoration of the built environment. "* der. The article again emphasizes the local and the contribution of the local. Finally, I conclude my speech by saying that we should not be afraid of diversity, stating that "a voice not included is a voice silenced." Thank you.

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

Thank you very much. I will briefly mention one thing and then we will take a break. Of course, in August 2016, the Ministry of Culture passed a omnibus bill that included a provision stating that the chairpersons of World Heritage Sites would be appointed by the Ministry of Culture. With this law, the terms of all chairpersons had ended, but the Ministry of Culture reappointed all chairpersons except for Diyarbakır. The reason for this was to sever the link between UNESCO and the local community, to prevent us from sending reports to UNESCO as site management boards. However, that link was not severed. As local civil society organizations, we continued to monitor the site closely every year without interruption, reporting on it and submitting our reports to UNESCO. UNESCO monitored the entire process in the area through our reports, adding to its own documentation and continuing to ask the Ministry of Culture questions on behalf of the state party. Unfortunately, the situation in the area became so dire that it eventually resulted in a recommendation for inclusion on the List of World Heritage in Danger.

SESSION II

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

We are starting our second session. First, since we started with local governments, and also in connection with Mr. Sermed's speech, we would like our Co-Mayor to touch upon the problems in the city and the problems in the world heritage area, and whether there are any authority issues, from the perspective of local governments. Of course, you all know our Co-Mayor, but I would like to briefly introduce her. Ayşe Serra Bucak. She is a politician and activist. She was born in Diyarbakır. However, she is originally from Siverek and completed high school at Cağaloğlu Anadolu High School in Istanbul. She then studied German Language and Literature and Pedagogy at the University of Cologne in Germany. From 2006 to 2011, she worked as a coordinator at the Bağlar Municipality education support center. From 2014 to 2016, she served as an advisor to the co-mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality and as a council member. Between 2016 and 2022, she worked in the fields of children and women in civil society. In 2018, she was again among the founders of the Children's Studies Association ÇocukÇa and served as its chairperson. Most recently, she was a member of the Diyarbakır provincial administration of the Green Left Party in 2022-2023. And in the 2024 local elections, she was elected as Co-Mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality alongside Doğan Hatun. Now, I would like to ask our esteemed president to speak. She will focus more on the management and authority issues of the Diyarbakır World Heritage Site. Please, your Honor.

Diyarbakır World Heritage Site: Management and Authority Issues- Serra Bucak

-Co-Mayor of Metropolitan Municipality

Thank you very much. It is my great pleasure to welcome all our valued guests. Welcome everyone! First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to DİTAM for understanding the importance of the Local Services Monitoring Network. Monitoring the local area together with the locals, taking into account all its dynamics, professional associations and civil society, and communicating what we observe is very valuable and important. From this perspective, I would like to congratulate them on their work. I would also like to thank them for including it in their presentations today.

The city is in a state of constant change. This is good for us, but we are struggling to keep up. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ms Nevin. Her presence here today and her moderation are extremely valuable to us. The issue she and her teams have raised concerns the city, and is a matter of cultural heritage and memory.

Dear participants, Diyarbakır (also known as Amed) is an ancient city, and protecting its cultural heritage is the primary responsibility of society, as well as one of the most important responsibilities of all cities, civil dynamics, institutions, chambers and local government. There are many areas of conflict in this region. You are all well aware of this. There are struggles for identity, cultural struggles and human rights struggles, to name but a few. However, protecting our cultural heritage and Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens is actually the convergence of all these areas of struggle. For this reason, since we were elected, we local administrations have been discussing what we can do in this difficult period, and as a result of these discussions, we have initiated some projects to remind people of the authority and responsibilities of the local level, and encourage them to take a more active role.

Diyarbakır Castle has withstood attacks, invasions and wars for thousands of years. Not only has it withstood the test of time, it is also a living cultural asset that is of great importance to us, the people of Diyarbakır, and to all those who love this city. The reliefs on the walls bear traces of the city's past, present and perhaps even future, making the castle a living cultural asset. All we need to do is read them. So, what kind of important cultural asset are we talking about? It is both local and deeply rooted, as well as being part of humanity's shared heritage. It is not only the heritage of the local area, but also of Mesopotamia. It is not only Turkey's heritage, but also universal. This is very important. In terms of raising awareness, enlightening society and encouraging ownership, it is important to recognise this universal cultural asset and ensure it is passed on to future generations, not only in relation to Diyarbakır Castle, but all cultural assets worldwide.

I want to go back to the past. How did we go from somewhat hopeful to 'hopeless' ones? Not hopeless about today, of course, but how did we end up with such a poorly managed issue? In 2005, a regulation regarding 'The Establishment and Duties of the Monument Management Board and the Procedures and Principles for Determining Management Areas' was published in the official gazette. It states that municipalities and local administrations remain authorised in urban areas. The year 2005 was a valuable and necessary period during which administrations had greater authority and responsibility than they do today. Then, in 2011, the UNESCO process began. Work on the Diyarbakır Walls, which are on the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List, is progressing within the framework of these legal provisions.

The Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality is determining the boundaries of the area in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Many institutions are involved in this process. The area management boundary is being determined on a pluralistic basis, involving everyone from civil society to the governor's office, Dicle University, the provincial directorate of culture and tourism, our municipalities, museum

directorates and chambers. The next steps are preparing the nomination file and the area management plan. This process is important to emphasise. The fact that civil society, municipalities and all urban stakeholders are involved in the nomination process and have a say is empowering for those managing the area. This participation leads to success and fosters confidence. This part of the process is therefore very important.

This subsequently enabled the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) meeting to be held in Diyarbakır, Turkey, for the first time. UNESCO's technical subcommittee and experts made significant contributions by offering their opinions and recommendations on Diyarbakır's nomination file. The above examples demonstrate that local government involvement in the process fosters trust with international institutions and is implemented locally. It is truly a very important characteristic that the local community wants it and is involved in every stage of its construction. All of these factors are extremely valuable. After 2016, we learned the hard way that it is impossible to implement policies without local involvement. Unfortunately, this continues to this day. The processes mentioned above demonstrate the vital role of local governments and local participation and pluralism. At the same time, participation, pluralism and local development can be observed in the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

That is precisely our concern. For years, politicians have pointed out why there are reservations about certain articles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. We have now given up on mentioning some of those articles. Unfortunately, at this stage, we have lost a great deal in terms of democracy and the issue of how we have established local construction and local governance.

Good governance requires the involvement of stakeholders, elected officials, municipalities, municipal councils, city institutions and professional associations. Only in this way can governance be culturally and socially diverse. Similarly, historic cities should be planned and preserved with the participation of the local population. How can the public participate in this process? Because, since 2016, we have seen a very brutal approach when we say 'the public'. We must accept this. However, the most important factor in raising public awareness of the issue of occupation in public and protected areas is the ability of local authorities and institutions to carry out awareness-raising activities.

Following a highly successful presentation in Bonn, Germany in 2015, it was added to the UNESCO World Heritage List. Once again, we must express our gratitude to all our colleagues and staff who contributed their efforts, as well as to our elected representatives, who worked so hard during that period. The result is there for all to see. 2015 was an important year for Bonn, but also a painful one. Shortly thereafter, in October 2015, unfortunately, we were faced with the reality of the start of the clashes in Sur.



Suriçi 1939



Heritage site-September 2013



Suriçi-June 2015



Suriçi-May 2016



Suriçi-July 2016



Suriçi-November 2016



Suriçi-July 2017



Suriçi-July 2018



Suriçi-July 2019



Suriçi-February 2021



Suriçi-June 2022



Suriçi-May 2024



Suriçi-January 2025

The photos above show what Sur looked like up until 2016, as well as the destruction that occurred afterwards. Of course, that wasn't the end of it. The aforementioned security policies, the state's survival issue and the realisation that the local voice could be silenced overnight were quickly implemented through decrees and additional articles, suddenly ending the responsibility and authority of local administrations and the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality in this area. As if that weren't enough, we have unfortunately been confronted with the reality of a Ministry of Environment and Urbanization that, as we all know, has been operating in a complex manner up to now, unaware of what it is doing, in all archaeological sites where the Ministry of Culture and Tourism previously held authority and responsibility for cultural heritage monuments and archaeological sites, and where it carried out this responsibility in collaboration with local administrations.

The city of Diyarbakır, its people and citizens, and the cultural landscape of Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens were subjected to a very crude and brutal approach. We are living witnesses to that period. We have many painful memories from that time. In the midst of all this political and social turmoil and conflict, we lost people. We lost our people. People were lost on both sides of the conflict in this region. During that period, our Bar Association President, Tahir Elçi, who stood up for our city, our Sur district and our historical heritage, was murdered at the Four-Legged Minaret.

It's not just our cultural heritage, Hevsel and Diyarbakır Castle that we've lost; it's our people and loved ones too. The destruction didn't happen before our eyes. Unfortunately, it was impossible to enter those

areas for a very long time after that. Despite the absence of local administrations because trustees had been appointed, there were institutions and individuals who wanted to enter the areas and conduct assessments.

During this period, the government implemented many programmes. One of these was the destruction and demolition of existing memories and cultural heritage, the elimination of the cultural fabric, and the creation of what they called 'Toledo', all under the guise of the war. We call what happened a monstrosity, but we don't know what to do with monstrosities today.

At that time, it was a significant achievement that everyone who embraced civil society and the cultural heritage of this city, the city's dynamics and individuals, tried to get involved whenever they had the opportunity, attempted to report on these matters, and worked with UNESCO at least in line with the reports, even if the reactive mission may have come too late. This also sheds light on what comes next, providing a very valid reason, a memory, and an experience for the struggle ahead.

After that period, the following became apparent: To this day, work is being carried out in Suriçi, but the responsible party remains unknown. Certain matters have come to light where it is unclear who made the decisions. The summary of the heritage area and Suriçi over the past eight years reveals a state of confusion regarding authority, with no clarity on who is responsible. When a poor job is done, everyone withdraws from the area and no one takes responsibility for it. In terms of architecture, the site area and restoration work, no one takes responsibility for anything, despite huge budgets being spent. When poor work emerges, however, no one is on site or in the area. This is the process we are faced with. This is a truly troubling situation. This is also a very challenging situation for local governments. Why? Because, in this city, the power, authority and responsibility of the local government do not reside solely within the municipal building; they reside with all the citizens of the city. Citizens exercise this responsibility and authority through the municipality and local governments. We have been through a difficult process in which this right was taken away from us, and we are now struggling to find the right way to restore it.

Since our election, our goal has been to find a way to become part of the local administration again. Unfortunately, the head of the local administration in Diyarbakır does not reside there. He is a public official appointed by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. We have also met with him. He visited our municipality. Throughout this process, we have held a series of meetings and discussions with the co-mayors, the administration and the relevant urban planning department, as well as KUDEB, in order to revert to our previous codes and the truth we knew.

We are patient. We learned patience from Diyarbakır Castle and its reliefs. This city has demonstrated patience for a century. The city has stood for a century, as have the community and its resilience, and the struggle for democratisation and freedom. Now that the threat of trusteeship is no longer present, our entire motivation at the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality is to see the authority and responsibilities of this area transferred back, at least gradually. We know that this cannot be done suddenly, with an overnight decision. We also know that this will happen with the support of the local community and its extraordinary efforts. We are committed to this. It must happen. As the people of Amed (Diyarbakır), we are here with our NGOs and associations that want to play an active role in the city. Unfortunately, we are facing another issue of cultural hegemony in Diyarbakır that has been distanced from consciousness, and we are ready to address it with the people of Diyarbakır. This is also our duty. Because not only was the old city destroyed and replaced with something monstrous, but a hegemony was also discharged into people's memories, culture and identity — a hegemony that is neither local nor universal.

By looking beyond the effects created under the responsibility and execution of local governments where these efforts are being made, local governments are being reintegrated into the process. A roadmap is being developed to resolve the confusion of authority and responsibility. While continuing and maintaining the protocol established with the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, I would like to pledge that

we will work to restart the process led by the Metropolitan Municipality to re-establish our area management plan, and that we will be part of this important journey.

I consider joining UNESCO to be both a positive and a negative milestone. Right now, however, we are in the midst of a historic process and turning point. We have reached a stage where we can transform this into an era in which people can achieve their own social construction in peace and democracy. With this liberal and social perspective, they can take ownership of their cultural heritage, memory and history. We must continue, work together and come together.

Thank you very much for giving me the floor. Thank you to everyone involved.

Nevin Soyukaya: Moderator

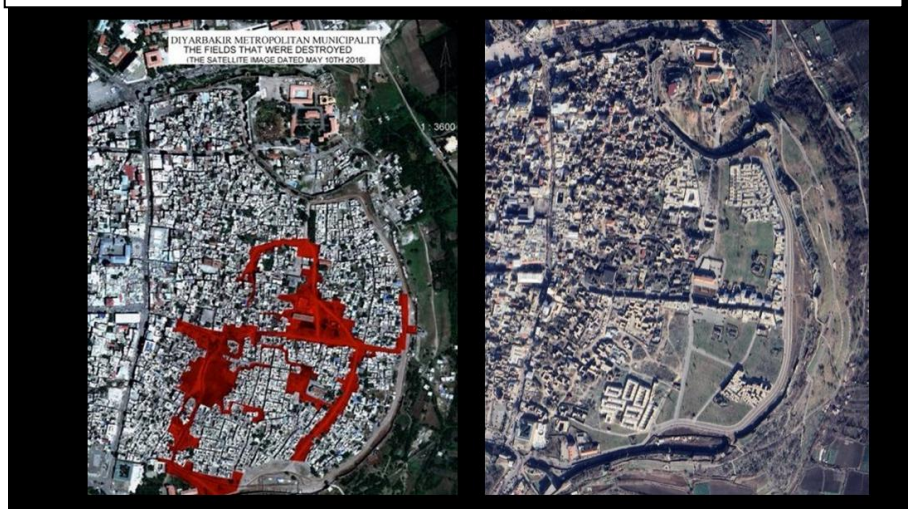
We are very grateful to the Chair. It was extremely important. Of course, I could not disagree. If the protection of the city's cultural heritage is at stake, the participation of local stakeholders is essential. As we have seen and experienced for a long time, it is impossible to protect it without involving the local community. If the goal is protection, the local community must be involved one way or another. Even if they don't, from what I understand, the municipality will carry out this work by creating its own local structures and institutions alongside the existing ones, in collaboration with local NGOs, academics, city activists and other stakeholders. I think this is the right way. There seems to be no other option.

I will now turn to another speaker. This issue is not just local. The Diyarbakır World Heritage Site is subject to both local and international protection legislation. Professor Yıldız Salman will focus more on the international protection aspect. She will discuss applications at the site from an international protection perspective in the post-conflict period. But before she begins, I would like to introduce her. She is also an architect and conservation expert. She teaches at the Faculty of Architecture at Istanbul Technical University. She completed her Bachelor's degree in Architecture, as well as her Master's and Doctoral degrees in Restoration, all at ITU. After conducting doctoral research entitled 'Possibilities for the Protection of the Bosphorus Urban Conservation Area', she worked as a researcher at the Polytechnic University of Turin in Italy and Columbia University in the United States. His research focuses on environmental-scale conservation, conservation theory and the preservation of modern architectural heritage. He publishes and lectures on these topics. From 2007 to 2012, he served as a member of the Diyarbakır Conservation Regional Board. As well as working on the nationally and internationally award-winning Hasan Paşa Gazhanesi Conservation and Reuse Project, he supports the work of various civil society organisations active in the field of conservation. He is also a member of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) Turkey National Committee. He sits on the ICOMOS Scientific Committee for the Conservation of 20th Century Heritage and is a member of professional organisations such as KORDER. He is also Co-Chair of the Turkey Working Group of DOCOMOMO, an international organisation dedicated to documenting and preserving buildings, areas and neighbourhoods of the modern movement. Welcome, Professor.

Applications in the Diyarbakır World Heritage Site in the Post-Conflict Period from an International Protection Perspective-Yıldız Salman

ICOMOS-Türkiye – Architect, Conservation Specialist

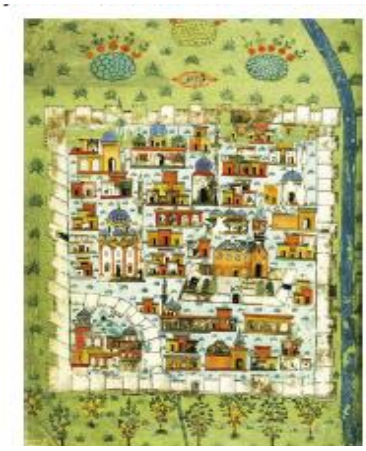
Applications in the Diyarbakır World Heritage Site in the Post-Conflict Period from an International Protection Perspective



First of all, thank you very much for your invitation. I was involved in every stage of the process until my membership of the conservation board was terminated by a decree-law in 2011. Work on the 2012 Conservation-Oriented Urban Plan, which UNESCO is now requesting be reinstated, began while I was a board member. Although we were not present at the end, I can confirm that we were heavily involved in the process. Subsequently, we collaborated with the Site Management Office on various projects during and after its acceptance onto the World Heritage List.

In 2019, a symposium was held in Diyarbakır in memory of Tahir Elçi. I was unable to speak comfortably that day as it was my first time there since the demolitions, and I was unable to get close to the affected area. Seeing it for the first time made me feel very, very bad. I would like to start with the last two slides of the presentation I gave that day. At that time, reports were being sent to UNESCO by civil society, who were insisting on a response and action from the state. However, no response was forthcoming. They said, 'As soon as the security situation allows, submit a report to the Reaction Committee. What kind of damage has occurred, to what extent, and how is it progressing?' They had requested a report on the situation in Diyarbakır before 2017.

UNESCO has expressed concern about the situation in Diyarbakır, emphasising the importance of preventing further damage to the heritage site following the State Party's interventions in the World Heritage Site and buffer zone. UNESCO has requested that the State Party document the state of conservation of the heritage site as soon as the security situation allows, and submit an updated report to the World Heritage Centre and Advisory Bodies for review by 1 February 2017.



Preliminary Report on Cultural Heritage Impact Assessment

From this UNESCO resolution, adopted in 2017, we are aware that;

- The State Party has encouraged the rehabilitation/improvement of the buffer zone, Suriçi, in order to implement its previous decisions and protect the heritage area and buffer zone.
- They acknowledge the efforts made and emphasize the importance of preventing further damage to the heritage area.
- They have requested the State Party to develop a master plan that includes information on the techniques and materials to be used for restoration and rehabilitation practices for the heritage site.
- A heritage impact assessment should be carried out in accordance with the ICOMOS guidelines for urban design projects such as Cevatpaşa Neighborhood and İç Kale Valley, which could threaten the outstanding universal value.
- They request the State Party to invite the World Heritage Centre and the ICOMOS Reactive Monitoring Committee to conduct a joint review and provide recommendations against threats when the security situation permits.
- They request the State Party to submit a report by December 2018 for discussion in 2019 regarding the above-mentioned situations and the state of conservation.

What will the rehabilitation and recovery process look like after this period of conflict? He requested an explanation of the general outlook on this matter. He emphasised that developing a master plan was one of the most important aspects of this process. Diyarbakır Castle and the Hevsel Gardens are one of the few examples in the world, especially as a World Heritage Site. The walls that protect a city and the agricultural land that feeds it are recognised as a cultural landscape. At the time, the committee asked why the Inner City was not included in the Site Management, stating that this was possible.

At that time, the main argument for designating Suriçi as a buffer zone was essentially as follows: We had great confidence in the Conservation-Oriented Urban Plan. The plan divided the process into meaningful timeframes: short-term actions, medium-term interventions and long-term measures. This approach sought to minimise disruption to the population living in the area by taking such sensitivities into account. Demolitions were also anticipated within the scope of the plan, but the intention was for them to be accompanied by a very different social policy. We had great confidence in the plan and believe that the area should remain a buffer zone for now because the walls and the Hevsel Gardens lack integrity and authenticity. We stated that, if we implement this plan and follow the monitoring and reporting processes

over the next decade, we could perhaps apply for this area to be included in the Heritage Site after two reporting cycles. This suggestion was particularly well received.

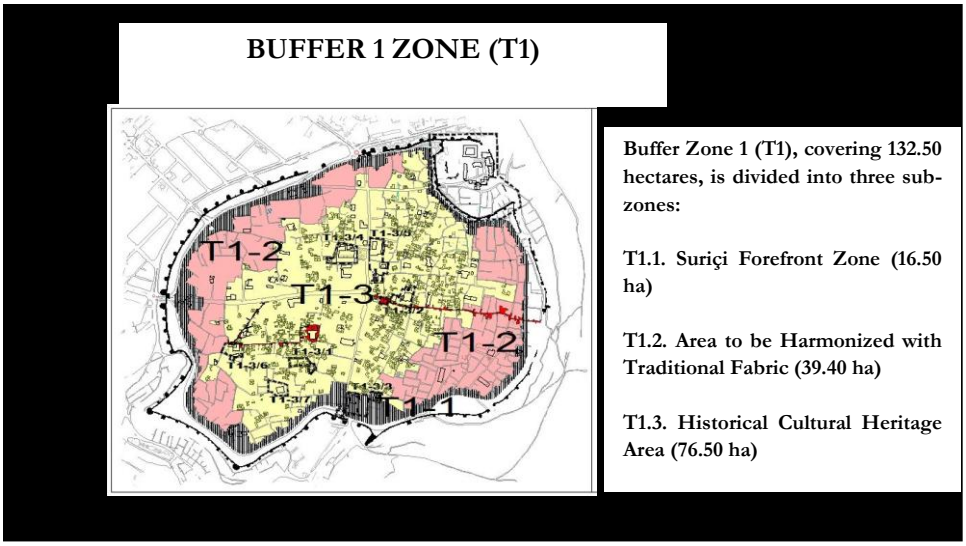
I want to emphasise this point because it is very easy, and not everyone feels comfortable being critical. We certainly don't encounter this approach in Turkey. In fact, this was the only example I saw there. Several other projects carried out by the Alan Presidency during that period also had unique value. We also conducted a research project in support of the Conservation-Oriented Zoning Plan. This project focused not only on the physical space, but also on the social relationships within it. It considered the functionality of the walls, how they could be reused, and how they could contribute to the city and establish healthy relationships with the different communities living in those neighbourhoods. This project was even supported by the Karacadağ Development Agency.

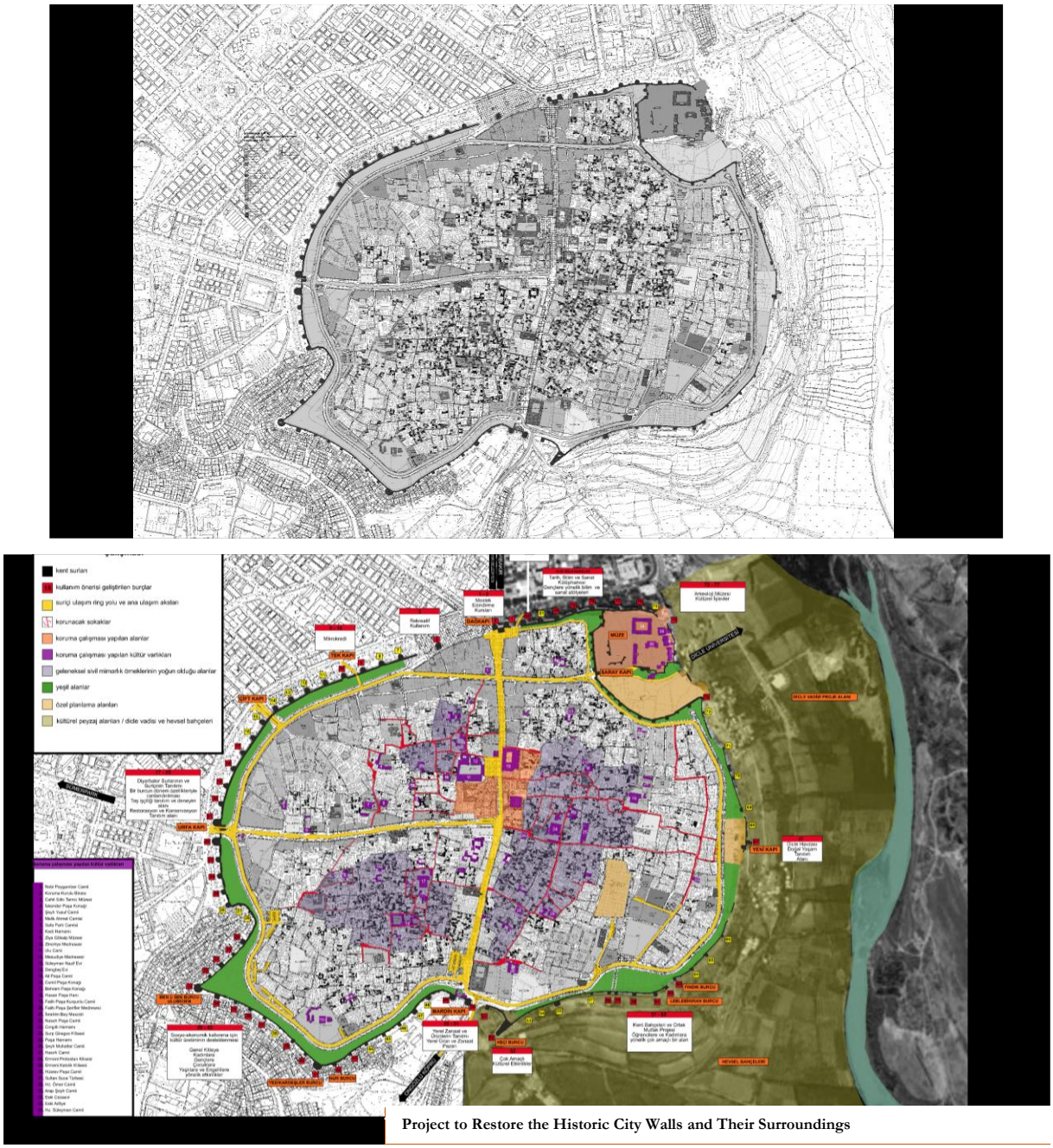
In 2015, looking back, it wasn't the area where the conflicts later occurred, but as a committee member, I witnessed TOKİ's attempts to enter Suriçi through the urban renewal area or renewal law at the time in the Mardin Gate, Cevat Paşa, Ali Paşa, and Lale Bey areas, and we were able to halt the process there to some extent. Sadly, after 2015, they started using other events as an excuse to restart the process. But this time, they did it in a completely different way. Very quickly, almost 49-50% of Suriçi was demolished and replaced with new buildings. This was against the Conservation-Oriented Zoning Plan. Some of these treatments don't seem to be reversible, at least not very quickly. But we knew that would happen because of the expropriations carried out during the process.

We have this problem in Turkey. Everyone should look at themselves first, but at least as academics involved in this field, we know this isn't the first time this has happened. Perhaps we need to explain it better, explain it more. We experienced a very similar process in Sulukule, Istanbul, without any conflict. It was done entirely by law. The target was not the physical space. The concern was with the population living there. We are experiencing very similar processes on very different scales and in different contexts.

Indeed, Antakya faced the same situation after the earthquake. Therefore, it would be beneficial to look at it from slightly different perspectives and explore ways of negotiation and struggle—a subject we are not very familiar with, but which we will discover.

In summary, we have lost a very large portion of this buffer zone. The 2012 Conservation-Oriented Zoning Plan was an excellent plan. The conservation zoning plan was based on the earliest aerial photograph from 1939, and the typology envisaged there—which bears little resemblance to what is being done now—was a typology that prioritized genuine traditional residential spatial relationships. Here, we see one of the main sections of the project, which involves the functionalization of the city walls and their surroundings.





Project to Restore the Historic City Walls and Their Surroundings

One of the key issues here was a project that examined how ancient agricultural knowledge and practices in the Hevsel Gardens could be reintegrated into the life of the city by linking them to physical data, and discussed how various functional extensions could relate to the city's physical space. This was one of the best examples to be described as a participatory model during this process. This is because everyone in the city was gathered together, spending one day with the nut sellers and one day with the tourism operators.

After all these events, and following the most recent Reaction Mission Committee meeting in 2022, the World Heritage Committee has insisted that the current construction must be stopped immediately and that the 2012 plan must be reinstated. If we think about whether this is possible, it actually could be. Freezing the implementation, not moving forward from this point, but reversing what has already been built could be a step to be left for a much longer-term process later on. But if we can make progress and follow the ideas in the 2012 Conservation-Oriented Zoning Plan, we can bring back the people who have left Sur. I don't know how realistic this is, but we can still make progress with this approach.



One of the most important issues is the Tigris Valley, particularly the Tigris River and the Hevsel Gardens. This is because infrastructure-related interventions are of critical importance here. Looking at the photo above, it is clear that significant losses have been suffered both outside and inside the city walls surrounding the World Heritage Site. What remains is the vast agricultural area. This area is almost as large as the city itself and is home to traditional agricultural knowledge and practices.

Today, global projects and policies are a bit hypocritical, especially when it comes to climate issues. Even so, many people around the world are still interested in traditional farming methods and the knowledge associated with them, which are at risk of being lost. There are also very interesting and important international programmes related to areas that are particularly vulnerable to climate change and pressures, yet somehow manage to resist and continue to exist. I can say that they get a lot of attention. So, if we want to start making improvements in this area, which can be more easily understood by people outside of the built environment, it could be very meaningful and make this area much more visible. It may be easier to make yourself more visible at that level than to get Ankara to listen to you. Sometimes it can be more effective. Sometimes, things like this can work. There are good budgets for these projects. They don't give the budgets to construction, but to research into seeds.

The losses don't look very significant in the photo, but the report highlights the smaller areas, which are surrounded by fruit trees. The agricultural landscape is changing. The introduction of industrial agriculture and its complete transformation of the area is a serious issue. This problematic form of tourism, particularly in heritage areas, unfortunately creates uncontrollable problems, especially for cultures like ours that do not favour planning. For example, the Ali Paşa neighbourhood has no direct connection to the conflict. How did this situation arise here? There is a Conservation-Oriented Zoning Plan. Why isn't this plan being implemented when something else is suddenly being put forward?

I can say that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism is a ministry that doesn't really do anything for our culture. In these difficult times, it has been quite generous in sharing its power; Diyarbakır wasn't the first, it had already shared its power in Ataköy on the Istanbul coast. The motels had been knocked down, and we were finding it hard at the time. It was very special. Istanbul may seem like a huge city to everyone, but its history as a summer resort was a very important part of the city's local history. That presence was very

important there. The Ministry of Culture immediately transferred its authority, but it often acts without restraint.

Such demands, an increase in good practices and, in particular, the reporting of impact assessments are important matters. I believe that Diyarbakır's civil society is quite resilient. Therefore, both individual and area-specific applications can easily be handled today. For example, how could such a disaster happen? You are already making a very bad plan. You are doing it badly. There is a registered plot of land where you left it on the road. You demolish it and rebuild it a little further away. These are terrible, nonsensical practices. What do you expect to achieve by doing this?

Can this place be saved? It is possible. However, it is a very difficult and delicate process that requires careful work. It can be done, but it requires a different approach. Review the entire system as recommended. We are aware of the existing problems. The field manager is elsewhere. They say to make a plan, but half the authority is there and half is not. However, I believe that a middle ground can be found here. It might make sense to start with effective projects that can be completed and managed with the available authority, paving the way for future projects.

I would like to conclude my speech with the Declaration on the Protection of Architectural Heritage published by ICOMOS Turkey in 2013, almost 12 years ago.

ICOMOS TURKEY ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE PROTECTION DECLARATION 2013

Cultural heritage symbolises and proves the existence, identity and continuity of humankind, societies and the cultural groups that comprise them. Both tangible and intangible cultural heritage encompasses historical, aesthetic, artistic, symbolic, social, economic, religious, spiritual and political values. As a non-renewable resource, cultural heritage is associated with the concept of 'trust', an important value in our society. Passing on all these values to future generations is a social responsibility.

Policies;

- ✓ The preservation of architectural heritage is a dynamic process that serves the public interest. Therefore, legal regulations concerning the preservation of architectural heritage should be updated to incorporate new concepts and approaches without compromising universal principles in the field of preservation.
- ✓ Legal regulations should include an approach that encourages and supports property owners. In this regard, the state should take new measures that support and encourage investments in preservation by individuals and institutions.
- ✓ It should not be forgotten that these measures are in the interest of all citizens within the framework of a common understanding of cultural heritage. Policies should be developed to preserve cultural assets by maintaining their original functions as much as possible and keeping the people who live in them in their places.
- ✓ Within the current legal and administrative framework, authority and responsibilities are scattered and contain contradictions. These problems should be resolved through regulations, and consistency in language and action should be ensured.
- ✓ Architectural heritage is a non-renewable resource, and its preservation is in the public interest. Therefore, when it comes to architectural heritage, contradictions between different legislation should be resolved in favor of architectural heritage.
- ✓ Public institutions and organizations directly or indirectly responsible for the protection of architectural heritage should share the theoretical and practical strategies and principles they

develop in this regard with experts, academic institutions, civil society organizations, and representatives of the public.

- ✓ Conservation decisions should be made in an environment that ensures the broadest possible participation and consensus. The public should have the right to participate in and be informed about the processes and decisions related to conservation without having to make a special request.

We particularly emphasised one point here. At this stage, we expected something like this to be printed and distributed. After all, a national scientific committee writes something and no one pays attention. The policies section describes the general problems we experience. First and foremost, it is important to remember that heritage preservation, including architectural heritage, is a dynamic process that serves the public interest.

World Heritage Committee Recommendations

The State Party expresses its deep concern that it has not halted all projects that could affect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property and has not returned to the 2012 Conservation Plan, as repeatedly requested by the Committee. It also reiterates the following requests to the State Party:

a) Suspend all projects that could affect the property's OUV, including demolition and development activities in the buffer zone;
b) Cease implementation of the 2016 Conservation Plan and revert to the 2012 Conservation Plan;

Furthermore, it expresses deep concern that the changes caused by projects implemented in the heritage and buffer zone since the inscription of the heritage have seriously eroded its OUV, particularly:

a) The functioning and morphology of the Hevsel Gardens, an integral part of the heritage and a fundamental feature supporting the OUV of the heritage,
b) The implementation of construction, landscaping, and infrastructure projects within the property and buffer zone, in close proximity to the On Gözlü Bridge and the banks of the Tigris River,





c) The large-scale demolition and reconstruction or conversion of urban neighborhoods within the property and buffer zone has led to the near-complete disappearance of the social relationships between traditional local communities and the Hevsel Gardens, despite these relationships being a fundamental contribution to the WHL during the registration process.
d) The construction of the Vehicle Road and Tourist Tour Route around the inner perimeter of the city walls,
e) Inappropriate and damaging restorations occasionally carried out on monuments



Recurring demands:

a) In accordance with the Guidelines and Toolkit for Impact Assessments in the context of World Heritage, conducting independent Heritage Impact Assessments (HIA) for urban design, landscape, and infrastructure projects, as well as construction and restoration projects that may affect the OUV of the property and its surroundings,
b) Ensuring that all projects are guided by appropriate professional archaeological and conservation supervision, which must be fully integrated into all work to ensure good practices and effective results,

c) Submitting the details of such projects and the related HIAs to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies before any implementation decisions are taken that may be difficult to reverse;



Notes with great concern that the Asset Management Plan has not yet been fully implemented and has led to a series of different projects, some of which have damaged and continue to damage the Asset's IES, and strongly recommends that the State Party:

a) Conduct a comprehensive review of the management system for the site,

b) Examine whether existing legislation and management regulations effectively protect the property and its buffer zone,

c) Revise the Management Plan and extend the role of the site manager beyond coordination, while ensuring the participation of local authorities, institutions, and communities, including scientists and farming groups, in management and decision-making processes,

d) Submit the revised Management Plan to the World Heritage Centre for review by the Advisory Bodies prior to its adoption;



The significant loss of the site's integrity and cultural significance, the serious deterioration of the supporting historical urban fabric, and a management system that has failed to preserve the features

reflecting its Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) suggest that it is significantly compromised and faces potential threats.

It must be said that all arguments that begin with "although other approaches we frequently encounter are in the public interest" are actually problematic. Also, the law can be confusing because it's often contradictory. The Disaster Law is in conflict with the Protection Law, the other is the Renovation Law, then comes Expropriation, and it conflicts with all of them. Here, it was made very clear that any disagreements between different laws, which could put the people living in the area at risk, must definitely be sorted out in a way that protects the area's architecture. To be honest, I don't think these texts have been given out enough. You can find them on the ICOMOS Turkey website, but I wanted to mention this here too. This is because, in these situations, protection is a political issue. But on the other hand, it should be considered a social value above all politics, something that would benefit everyone. Your outlook on life and your political beliefs might be different, but when it comes to heritage, especially world heritage, we should be able to come together.

In answer to the question of what UNESCO does besides give recommendations, I would like to say this: UNESCO does not do anything, nor can it. The real question is whether UNESCO should be expected to take action. If you don't value something, how can anyone else protect it? If you don't value yourself, what can happen? At most, it issues warnings. How terrible. It's shameful to feel ashamed of something you should be proud of. Despite all this negativity, I still believe the situation can improve. Even with the current powers available, I believe that a very bright future can be created. This can be achieved if the scope of the initial plans is kept a little more realistic. Diyarbakır has achieved this before, and I believe it can do so again. Thank you very much.

Nevin Soyukaya: Moderator

We would like to thank Professor Yıldız for her excellent presentation. Of course, all applications are political and cannot be separated from politics in any way. The authority issues and legal conflicts experienced in the field, the marginalisation of the local community and the attempts to marginalise them are all within the scope of what Professor Gül mentioned in the first session. But, of course, the struggle is also political. Seeking rights is also political. Diyarbakır has always been determined in this regard. I also believe that we will definitely find a way out of this situation. I am not pessimistic. Initially, I was very pessimistic. During the demolition process and in the aftermath, when the trauma was still fresh, I truly was very pessimistic. But now, with a calmer mind and a more balanced perspective, I have started to feel hopeful.

Now, you all know who our final speaker is. Of course, Diyarbakır knows him in a different and special way. Ertuğrul Günay is not only a politician, but also a lawyer and the former Minister of Culture and Tourism. You are probably familiar with him, but I would like to say a few words about his relationship with Diyarbakır, if our minister allows. He served as Minister of Culture and Tourism from 2007 to 2013. During this period, he showed a particular interest in Diyarbakır projects. I am his closest witness. I also worked at the museum during that period, first as an archaeologist, then as museum director and finally as assistant director, so I witnessed it firsthand. He closely followed the Inner Castle Museum project, ensuring its completion despite all obstacles. Another significant achievement of his is the publication of Ehmedê Xanî's Mem û Zîn in its original Kurdish form. He is also the minister who published Ehmedê Xanî's Mem û Zîn in its original Kurdish form. Mr Minister, you will evaluate the issue from the perspective of the Ministry of Culture on a national scale. The floor is yours.

Conservation-Management Rules in World Heritage Sites and Practices in Turkey-Ertuğrul Günay

-Former Minister of Culture and Tourism

Thank you. Distinguished Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality, Distinguished President of DİTAM, esteemed chair of the meeting, distinguished speakers, esteemed participants, I greet you all with love and respect.

This is the second time DİTAM has invited me to Diyarbakır. The first was years ago. I came running to both. Because those who know, know, and I want those who don't know to know: I have a special love for the poet Ahmet Arif and the city of Amed.

I remember coming to Diyarbakır—as Nevin Hanım said with such kindness—ten or fifteen times over the course of five and a half years. We explored all the cellars and galleries of the Inner Castle together, and we didn't stop there. We were able to build an Ahmet Arif Literature Museum Library next to the homes of Ziya Gökalp and Cahit Sıtkı. We ensured the completion of the Cahit Sıtkı Cultural Center. We added a 'Manuscript Library' to the Ulu Mosque.

At that time, we enjoyed a very harmonious working relationship with both the municipality and the conservation board. I was saddened to hear that this harmony has been somewhat damaged. After all, we are in a period where we need solidarity and cooperation. Unfortunately, these disconnections mean that what needs to be done is not done sufficiently, is done late, or is done incorrectly in some cases.

Towards the end of his speech, our esteemed Mayor said, "We stand like the Walls of Diyarbakır, for a hundred years." What is a hundred years? A thousand years. As Ahmet Arif says, "Mother Eve is like a child of yesterday." Since that time, since history began, the Walls of Istanbul and the Walls of Diyarbakır have stood.

After listening to what you said, I felt the need to quote from an article I wrote in 2017. I said: *"There are certain cities. When you visit them, you learn new things. It's not just about seeing historical buildings or eating delicious food. Your emotional world changes. Your ears, tongue, mind and heart become richer. Wisdom descends upon you. Even if your material possessions don't increase, you feel that you have changed and become richer. Diyarbakır is such a city. It doesn't cry out its sorrows. It keeps them in dignified silence. "It has a mouth, but no tongue. Like the castle of Diyarbakır." Throughout history, it has suffered and been oppressed beyond what it deserves for what it has given, yet it remains as proud and resilient as its great history demands. Its castles, towers, bastions, domes and minarets overlook all the surrounding cities and all of Mesopotamia. With their abundance and pain, they always remind me of Andalusia. They stand tall like the walls of this ancient land, weathered by thousands of years of history. As Ahmet Arif said, 'I care neither for Alexander nor Sultan Murat.'…"*

Diyarbakır has overcome many difficulties, and it will overcome these too..

Dear friends, first of all, I would like to thank DİTAM. You are organizing a wonderful event. The Walls of Diyarbakır and Hevsel Gardens were added to the World Heritage List in 2015. Today is 2025.

Ten years later, you are holding a comprehensive evaluation meeting.

We have 21 sites, 19 of which are historical and two are natural. This year, I witnessed Divriği holding such an evaluation meeting on its 30th anniversary. (I think I am the only Minister who has visited Divriği since it became a World Heritage site).

You are conducting this assessment in Diyarbakır in its 10th year. I recommend doing it every five years. There is a great need for such on-site assessments, observations, reports, and publications.

I would like to highlight a shortcoming that I have noticed. It would have been much better if the District Chair had been present at this meeting. There is no excuse for their absence. Is the Director of Culture and Tourism here? Or the Director of Environment and Urban Planning? Is the Chair or Director of the Conservation Board here? I would have liked to see them, too. The Mayor of the Metropolitan Municipality is here, having taken time out of their schedule to speak.

What are they saying? What are they talking about? These colleagues need to take notes on what assessments they are making. If the ministers do not say, 'You will monitor these types of meetings and bring us a report on the outcome,' then they are not doing their job either. I would like to express my regret that they are not here.

Distinguished friends;

Our relationship with World Heritage Sites is quite recent. Interest in them is also relatively new worldwide. The world has been through two world wars. Here we saw a photo of Warsaw. Old Warsaw—like many places in the world—was completely destroyed. They rebuilt it based on paintings, preserving the entire historical fabric. They didn't invent new parks or new streets. They tried to recreate everything as faithfully as possible to the original.

That's what restoration is all about! You can't just say, "I don't like these old streets. I'll open a new avenue here.' I'll build a square here.' Where will we find these stones? I'll build a concrete building. I'll cover it with stone.' 'You can't do that. That's not possible. It's imitation. Imitation is one thing; restoration is another. Reviving history is yet another thing entirely. Imitating history is yet another thing entirely. You can't recreate Toledo. A mindset that says, 'I'm going to create Toledo' knows nothing about history. Toledo is an area that has evolved over time, through many sorrows and joys. Anywhere else in the world, you can only imitate Toledo. That is imitation and has no universal value.

There are certain criteria that an area must meet to be included in the UNESCO list. In Turkish, this is referred to as 'outstanding universal value'. It must have a distinctive, outstanding feature. You cannot simply say that your building or village is beautiful and expect it to be included. It must have outstanding worldwide value, either in terms of its historical or natural uniqueness. You cannot consider it in isolation; you must view it in the context of its surroundings, history, inhabitants, flora and fauna, and strive to protect it as a whole.

We have a particular point of view. First, we nominate a place to UNESCO. It's a bit easier now. It used to be more difficult. There are other political reasons for this change. I won't discuss those here. Once you have added the site to the UNESCO list, You can't just say, 'We're on the UNESCO list! The world has recognised our value," and then sit back and relax. We have this superficial understanding.

However, being included on the UNESCO list is an honour. For those who live in the area, though, it is a responsibility. The area is no longer just yours. It becomes part of humanity's shared heritage.

I began my role at the Ministry in September 2007. From 1998 onwards, the UNESCO issue seemed to have been forgotten until 2008. Could we get a place listed by UNESCO? They said, "Sir, it's very difficult. They won't accept it." Why wouldn't they accept it? Then I went to the site and realized. I went to Hattuşaş. Hattuşaş is one of the first places to be included on the UNESCO list, located in Boğazköy, Çorum. There is the famous Yazılı Kaya (Written Rock) there, with twelve human figures; they call them 'underground gods'. Take a knife out of your pocket and write your name on those four thousand-year-old works of art. These works are within touching distance. There are no protective measures. There is no visitor route. The Germans, so to speak, are not digging. They took what they wanted over a hundred years ago, they took it away, and we were left with what remained. You know what we went through to bring back the sphinx that was taken from there..

The Divriği Ulu Mosque and Hospital is one of the most unique examples of Anatolian culture and was one of the first sites to be included on the UNESCO list. The mosque and hospital are located on a

hillside in Divriği. A shantytown has been built behind the hospital and mosque on the hillside. How does this protect world heritage? It was added to the World Heritage List in 1985. In the years that followed, a shantytown was built behind it. All the neighbourhood's wastewater is putting pressure on the foundations of the mosque and hospital. You might not believe it, but three or four years before I started my job, three million lira was allocated for environmental protection, restoration and similar work. That was equivalent to $1.5 million at the time. However, the money is sitting there unused. The governor's office invested the money, and it's still sitting there. Why? Because they didn't know what to do with it. Believe me, we later spent more than five times that amount removing the neighbourhoods behind it and reducing the structural pressure on the surrounding area. They are only just starting to try to restore it now.

Istanbul's historic areas were the first to be included in the World Heritage Site. You enter the courtyard of Topkapı Palace through the Bab-ı Hümayun, built by Sultan Ahmet. There is now a building called the Karakol Restaurant. The historic Karakol building has been converted into an annex where the servants working in the museum-palace lived. They couldn't fit in, so they built five shacks behind the garden walls.

We are saddened when we talk about the walls of Diyarbakır.

The state of historical sites in Turkey that need protection is appalling, especially those that are part of the World Heritage List. In such an environment, who could possibly agree to a new site being added to the UNESCO list?

First, we removed the shanties from the Topkapı courtyard. We tried to demolish the structures in Divriği that were damaging the historical landscape. We took protective measures in Hattuşaş. Another forgotten site is Xanthos-Letoon in western Antalya. The French supposedly excavated there, and because UNESCO's headquarters are in Paris, they easily got it added to the DMA list. Then they forgot about it. Two-thousand-year-old sarcophagus lids were simply discarded by the roadside. The negligence I witnessed is endless.

Just because we joined UNESCO and were added to the list, we cannot lie back, remain indifferent and close our eyes. A heritage site requires responsibility. You must strive to protect its supreme value and qualities. You must protect it in its entirety.

Now the Diyarbakır Walls are our heritage site. Suriçi is its soul. The heritage site is not just stones; the issue is not just protecting the stones. A people connected to those stones live there. That people has a story with the walls. By ignoring that story, by turning those places into commercial commodities, you do not preserve their authenticity.

I walked around the old city. If I didn't know Diyarbakır's history, I would say, "Ah, what a beautiful street, a modern street." Restaurants and cafes have reopened. But this isn't Diyarbakır. This isn't the Old City we know. Those narrow streets are a feature of all of Italy's historic towns. Why do we care about these narrow streets? UNESCO says, "Keep those streets clean, maintain the outside of buildings, but make sure the buildings themselves are kept in the way they were when they were first built." UNESCO says, "You will protect the area's outstanding value, you will take a general approach, you will protect its authenticity." You bring in new materials, you make new plans, you make the new materials look like the old ones, you create something completely new.

What kind of World Heritage Site protection is this? You're displacing the people from there. In other words, you're gentrifying it, enriching it. People who have no connection to this history are coming and settling there. This isn't protecting World Heritage. You're creating a new area according to your own preferences.

Let's just say a high-ranking government official had it in his head to demolish a building in Istanbul. He was thinking of building a historic opera house there. Look at that sentence! In the 2010s, we're going to build a 'historic opera house'! How can a building we construct today be a 'historic' work?

I've been listening to and learning about Diyarbakır since this morning, and I'm delighted. Thank you very much.

I am saddened, and the reason for this is the exclusion of the local community. In this day and age, I believe democracy is based on two new concepts. We talk about elections, honest elections, fair elections. This is certainly necessary, but it is not enough. There is a concept called participation. You are elected, but when making a decision, you need to sit down with the community affected by that decision, consult with them, talk to them, discuss it with them. This is not enough either. This process also needs to be known, and this is called transparency.

Without these two rules, there can be no democracy. But in Turkey, they have been excluded; participation is increasingly being excluded. Authority is being completely centralized. So is transparency. In Ottoman times, there was a concept called "hikmet-i hükumet" (wisdom of government). Now, there is no such concept. If you are making a decision that affects me, I need to know so that I can criticize it, participate, and debate whether it is right or wrong. When things are not done according to these concepts, problems like this arise.

In 2012, we worked together with Nevin Hanım and Yıldız Hanım. Yıldız Hanım was a member of our Protection Committee. Nevin Hanım was the museum director. I truly love Diyarbakır, but she is a sister and friend who has made a special contribution to promoting and endearing Diyarbakır to me. I believe we worked harmoniously. We had no problems with the municipality either. Back then, things were going more smoothly—at least compared to today.

How many years have passed since the 2012 plan? Thirteen years, right? Diyarbakır Castle and Hevsel Gardens were added to the World Heritage Site in 2015. After that, a disaster struck here. God forbid it happens again. Then this plan needs to be revised, but with whom? Certainly not by sitting in Ankara.

Another significant and negative development has emerged. It seems that the Ministry of Culture and Tourism has largely ceded its initiative in these historic areas to the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning. The Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning is a different entity altogether. As its name suggests, its remit is urban planning and creating new settlement areas. They have added environmental considerations to this remit. When planning new residential areas, they aim to bypass environmental obstacles and maintain control of these areas. I say this with regret. I have not witnessed any sensitivity on the part of the Ministry towards protecting the environment.

Therefore, you cannot leave all the initiative for the regulation of Sur and Suriçi to the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization. You have no such right. This is a cultural area.

Beyond that, there is also the issue of the Hevsel Gardens.

I have just learned that the section of the Dicle River in Diyarbakır does not have river status, which I was not aware of. This is unacceptable. Having river status would provide the Dicle with certain protections. Unfortunately, it has been deprived of this status. This issue needs to be carefully monitored, and the demand for river status must be raised. There is also a danger there. The Hevsel Gardens are a unique area, home to flora and fauna that has existed for eight to ten thousand years. Switching to organised industrial agriculture there would reduce product and flora and fauna diversity, and soon create an area that would be on the danger list.

I don't think the changes made in Suriçi can be undone. If these plans are put in place in areas where they haven't been yet, we can make a difference. But we need to tell more people about the Hevsel Gardens. There is still a lot of work to be done there.

I'll say it again. Being included in the World Heritage List is a true honour. We have something worthy of global protection. This is a treasure for any city, settlement or town. But it's not just that. It is also a

responsibility. We are now taking on a responsibility towards humanity. This means making a commitment to preserve this supreme value in all its originality and strive to carry it into the future.

On this matter, I regret to say that we have had many shortcomings over the years.

Since 2016, these problems and difficulties appear to have been experienced particularly in Diyarbakır. However, it is important to hold this meeting in the 10th year to raise awareness, with the participation of the local government, civil society and academics, and to collaborate with subject experts. I hope that the central government will also share these concerns in future. Such an approach could help to avoid making new mistakes. This is why I believe it is worth working together.

I began by mentioning Ahmet Arif, and I would now like to conclude with a few of his lines:

'Who would not sacrifice themselves for this heavenly homeland?' (as Akif said).

Heroism is accepting sacrifice, even if it makes you hell, to make you a paradise.

For the poor and honourable people, this is the story, this is the deep love.'

Greetings to those who have fallen in love with this passion!

I greet you all with love and respect.

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

Thank you, Your Honour. You have summarised all the speeches. Distinguished guests, I would now like to open the floor for a brief discussion. We would like to take your questions. We did not do this in the first session. I would like to evaluate both sessions together. We can now take your questions. If you have any, we can take questions directed at the speakers from both sessions.

Questions and Contributions

Participant-1

Greetings to all. Samet Uçaman mentioned something that has actually been overlooked. The issue of hemp cultivation areas, particularly on the university side of the Dicle Valley, has been overlooked for years. In my scans of the press this year, I found that in 2003 there were 198,000 plants, in 2016 there were 1 million plants, in 2017 there were 88,000 plants, in 2018 there were 3,000 plants, 500 plants in 2021, 10,000 plants in 2024, and 30,000 plants in 2025. In 2024, hemp was seized in 42 separate operations. Unfortunately, despite all these operations, it continues every year. I submitted a file to the Rectorate of Dicle University. I submitted it to our representative Sezgin Tanrıkulu. Similarly, this file was also sent to the Ministry of Culture. But what is interesting is that operations are carried out every year, but this issue cannot be resolved. I wanted to draw attention to this matter.

Apart from that, a study I conducted on the transition to industrial agriculture in Hevsel found that 40 per cent of the area's main gardens were converted for cotton and corn production by cutting down the surrounding trees. Soon, we will no longer be able to say that 40 per cent of the Hevsel Gardens are actually gardens. As normal industrial field farming is now being practised, they are now Hevsel fields. The Hevsel gardens are slipping away from us before our very eyes. I wanted to draw attention to this issue. Thank you all.

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

Thank you. The issue you raised is important. Yes, hemp may have been grown in Hevsel in the past. But we had never heard of it being so intense, or on such a large scale. Now, more and more hemp is being grown on a large scale. Where are the security forces when hemp is being cultivated on such a large scale? It's not clear at all. But recently, it has been reported in the press. The things that happened in Sur make me think of very bad things. UNESCO stopped the practices in the Tigris Valley, but this criminalisation in Hevsel, just like in Sur, can first criminalise and then create the right to intervene, the justification for intervention, and then intervene and change and transform the area. I don't think this is very innocent or a very individual initiative. We need to draw attention to the situation in Hevsel, especially in Diyarbakır. I really think it's very important.

Participant-2

First of all, I would like to thank everyone who organised and took part in the meeting. I would like to add a few things to make people pay attention. As you said about the walls, a path for walking has been created on top of them, like the Hevsel Gardens. The Hevsel Gardens and Walls are on the World Heritage List. The walls are already in a very bad state. However, as Professor Yıldız Salman said, I think we should start with local solutions. People are worried about the Hevsel Gardens. Railings have been put next to the stairs at the exits of the walls. People climb up using the railings. There, they are trying to make sure people can get through safely with railings. But I think this group of people is damaging the walls a lot, and that in a few years, the walls will be in really bad shape because of this. I wanted to draw attention to this issue. Thank you.

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

I'd like to add something. I completely agree with you. You have made a valuable contribution by addressing an important issue. Unfortunately, we have recently started to view the mass influx of people as just another form of tourism. People are pouring into cities like a swarm of locusts. In reality, they don't contribute much. In fact, the dense, dry crowds have a destructive effect, limiting the ability of local people to live in their own cities. Mardin has been affected in this way. Now, the same approach is being applied to Diyarbakır. It is believed that the city will be promoted by encouraging crowds to climb up the walls and walk around them. Of course, the installation of railings and guardrails caused a lot of physical damage. However, the installation of these guardrails has enabled more people to climb up. This is also damaging. Thank you very much.

Participant-3

Mr Ertuğrul also mentioned Culture and Environment Urbanization, but isn't the Ministry of Agriculture involved in this? Hevsel Gardens are a heritage site, but shouldn't the Ministry of Agriculture also be involved in looking after it? What are the provincial directorates doing? Is there no one in charge of checking these things? Of course, being sensitive or sharing can lead to many things here, but there is also the issue of institutions not doing their jobs properly. What does industrialism mean? It's all about the drugs there. These things are all very clear. Just as they brought drugs to the neighbourhoods, if they bring other things, one day there will be big operations, assimilation and genocide in that area. This is clear.

We also learnt a few things from Professor Zeki Kanay's presentations. We wish we hadn't joined UNESCO. Why do we say that? Because occupation and destruction began after we joined. Our culture

of preservation is weak. We can turn a blind eye to everything. However, as a society, we are aware of this. What kind of control mechanism can we have regarding profit and destruction? Thank you.

Participant-4

I would like to thank DİTAM and all the participants. I am from Sur and I love it, so I want to thank everyone who organised, went to and spoke at the meeting. I have been in Sur for a long time. I am involved with the houses in Suriçi. I bought a house, did it up, and registered it. While registering people, they would come to me and ask, "How did you do it? I want to do it too." People in Sur are confused. People who want to repair their homes don't know where to go. It costs a lot of money. So, we need to set up ways to help people in an official way. We need to set up a way for people to talk to each other easily.

Most of the discussions in the morning were about problems. It is true that there is a cultural genocide. We are not looking after our cultural heritage. What are the citizens, the public, merchants and civil society supposed to do to help solve the problem? These need to be explained very clearly and written down. We are having problem-focused discussions, and when we raise issues, we have so many questions. All of them were very important issues. I think this meeting should have lasted two, three or four days.

This mission is very important. The metropolitan municipality and civil society organisations need to increase their visibility in Suriçi. Unfortunately, we are not currently present there. I do not accept the void that has emerged, especially in recent times. We see radical Islamic groups that used to roam at night now roaming in groups during the day and interfering with places and people, especially those that play music. There is a very serious security issue. People and families cannot walk around Sur. Investment is drying up. This issue must be resolved. It's not just about having police or security cameras on every corner; people need to feel safe. There is also a tourist police force.

We're talking about people who live within the city walls but know nothing about tourism. There is a great need for people and institutions that understand and can explain cultural heritage, as well as maps and signposts. In Diyarbakır and Mardin, people are interested in folklore and photography. Consequently, there is an unconscious circulation of information regarding who owns these houses, who created this culture, and how it will be passed on to future generations. How can we provide guidance? How can the Metropolitan Municipality and other institutions welcome visitors with a more accurate cultural policy and provide better guidance? For example, tour guides often give incorrect information. People believe more in legends and stories, so we need to provide them with more realistic information and stories.

There are also serious issues regarding accommodation in Diyarbakır. For instance, tourists cannot stay overnight when they visit. They go straight on to Urfa or Mardin. I feel there is a lack of coordination. When people mention tourism, Diyarbakır's history and culture, and the names of the Armenians, Syrians and other peoples who have lived here, they come and go without knowing who these people are or understanding the religious and ethnic backgrounds. How can the Metropolitan Municipality, the Governor's Office and cultural institutions address this issue? I would like to make a suggestion on this matter. Thank you.

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

We thank you. Tourism has indeed become a problem. The city has undergone significant changes since 2016. Therefore, a new master plan for tourism is actually needed. A master plan is needed that will address the city as a whole and take into account the latest changes.

Sedat Aydın-Sur Resident

I greet you all with respect. I am a citizen who was born and raised in Sur. I had to leave during the conflict, but today I went to this meeting because I heard about it. Many of the other people taking part have already said everything. As citizens, we are still suffering from the tragedy that has been going on for ten years. Unfortunately, our homes are still being restored after ten years. I know that there are no community organisations here, so a civilian has no one to address their concerns. Maybe this issue will be discussed and the authorities will hear about it. Our homes have been undergoing restoration for ten years, and we have visited the Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanization many times. We cannot find anyone to address. Who is the addressee? We know that too. . We can't say anything either. In this regard, our mass organisations, civil society organisations, and of course our Metropolitan Municipality—even though its powers have been taken away—need to take a step forward. Today, I might be here on my own, but the homes of over a hundred families have been left in limbo for over ten years while we wait to see what's going to happen to them. We don't know what will happen to them. What will happen in another ten years? I am 55 years old. I don't know if I'll still be here in ten years. We are having problems with the people renting our house. I ask our mass organisations to be aware of this issue. I want action to be taken and this issue to be discussed. Thank you.

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

We thank you. Finding ways to resettle the people who were forcibly displaced from Sur is truly a very important issue, as they lived there and were the bearers of that culture. After all, everything starts with people. Yes, the physical fabric has largely been destroyed. Even if we cannot change or transform it, if we can re-establish life there, we can begin to revive Sur's traditional way of life and ancient culture. Diyarbakır Sur has been destroyed many times by wars and conflicts, with Governor Ibrahim Pasha even placing his cannon on top of it. He bombarded the neighbourhoods of those who opposed him with artillery fire, destroying part of the city. However, as those people continued to live there, Sur was rebuilt and life went on. We are talking about a city that is twelve thousand years old. The Amida Mound is at the heart of Sur, and excavations there revealed that the city's history dates back twelve thousand years. Life in such an ancient city had continued uninterrupted until 2015, when this changed. Eight neighbourhoods were removed from residential areas and converted into commercial zones. Unfortunately, it functioned like an open-air shopping mall. Disrupting that way of life means disrupting culture and production in every sense. Diyarbakır Suriçi is currently experiencing disruption to its social and economic life. I agree with you on that point. We need to find solutions to these problems as soon as possible. Of course, our president would also like to add something.

Serra Bucak-Co-Mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality

What Nevin Hanım said is very important. It actually intersects with the issue that Muharrem Erbey just mentioned, asked about or suggested. I wanted to speak while you were talking just now, but our friend behind us asked to speak first. The issue in Sur is the migration of the local population after 2015–16 and the area being designated a commercial zone. The strange thing is that we call it a commercial zone or a commercial centre, but nothing of the sort is actually happening there. There is a bottleneck. Our institutions and local administrations are present, but it's as if you are subsidising something and life does not continue afterwards. The problem is that life during the day and evening does not continue as it did before 2015. Just as our friends who were forced to leave Sur have said, there is a confusion of authority. As local administrators, we are powerless to act, and we are ashamed of a process in which we have no part. We have neither the budget nor the responsibility. But I admit this. Let this be an act of self-

criticism. We have our plans and our words. We can establish contact and build relationships. Until now, this did not seem possible, but it is from now on. A new period begins now, in which we can work together to achieve this. I agree. If we cannot ensure a return to Sur, neither trade nor life will be able to function there. Trade can only proceed within certain limits. Nothing will progress in these new areas. Be careful. Those areas are dead zones. The city is truly on its way to becoming dead. The only solution is to ensure a return. It's too late to return to the villages. I hope we can implement a policy here before it's too late. Thank you.

Sedat Yurtdaş-DITAM Vice President

First of all, I would like to thank all the speakers for their valuable contributions. As DİTAM, we talked about this topic in many different ways while preparing the program, and we are very grateful to Ms. Nevin for her help. It was clear to everyone that this topic was important. Before, as DİTAM, we also did a project called Access to Fundamental Rights and Public Services for Displaced Families in the Sur District of Diyarbakır Province. Psychologists spoke to 500 families. We decided that displacement is a big problem for the city and for the families themselves. We only had the chance to deal with a small part of it.

What can be understood from this is that, even if it is unauthorised, it is visible. Even if a regulation has been introduced through a rent window and history has been destroyed and realised in this sense, it is valuable that a framework has emerged regarding what can be done from now on. From this perspective, it is clear that all municipalities, especially the metropolitan municipality, as well as civil society organisations and all institutions and organisations related to the issue, need to draw up a common roadmap. As the honourable minister pointed out, addressing an issue once every ten years is not enough. Instead, the relevant institutions must work within a shorter timeframe and push for solutions at central government level. Efforts must be made to reinstate and implement UNESCO's heritage protection rules, which have been violated under the pretext of security concerns, and to remove the obstacles that have been created. In this regard, I believe that this study has paved the way for such an endeavour. I was going to ask what can be done in terms of creating a roadmap for this issue. The chairman has already partially answered my question. Thank you again for your participation, as well as to all the other participants and speakers.

Nevin Soyukaya-Moderator

Thank you very much. We will now end our meeting. To do this, I would like to invite DİTAM President Mesut Azizoğlu to give the closing remarks. I would also like to thank all the people who took part and our speakers for coming and for what they said. Thank you for coming and listening.

Mesut Azizoğlu-DITAM Chairman of the Board of Directors

Firstly, I would like to thank you all. I would like to mention two things. As I mentioned in my speech, I personally called the head of area management and spoke to him on the phone three times. However, he said he could not attend as it clashed with another meeting. He also said, though, that they are working on new area management plans. We will approach the municipality again. Since Sur was added to the World Heritage List in 2015, it has been taken out of our hands. It belongs to the World Heritage List. We need to consider this. Another point is that there are shortcomings, but let's put it this way: From this point on, we are also partly responsible for these shortcomings, just like the Ministry of Culture and UNESCO. We need to take these into account as well. Once again, I would like to thank all the participants and speakers for their contributions. I would also like to thank you all. I extend my regards.



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