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The Agency of Words and Images in the Transformation of Istanbul:

The Case of Ayazma

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction

of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts

in Architecture

by

Meltem Al

2015

ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Agency of Words and Images in the Transformation of Istanbul:

The Case of Ayazma

by

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Master of Arts in Architecture

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor Dana Cuff, Chair

This thesis investigates the discourse production of the media in Turkey; the role of the mainstream media in legitimizing urban transformation policies of the Turkish government and the social agency of alternative media in raising public awareness about the concept of urban transformation, through the case of Ayazma Urban Transformation Project in Istanbul. The Ayazma case demonstrates that, during the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project while the mainstream media developed a supportive discourse that fosters the dominance of the government in the production of urban space in Turkey, the alternative media developed an oppositional discourse with the aim of stopping the actions of the government in urban space—although it has no immediate practical implications for the urban transformation projects that are underway. However, this thesis argues that the accumulated role of the

alternative media's presentation of urban transformation projects has shaped an understanding of the contemporary urbanization processes in Turkey. Although the mainstream media is apparently more dominant than the alternative media in terms of having influence upon the implementation of governmental projects in cities, the oppositional and resistive discourse of the alternative media paves the way for ruptures in history that may fire future urban revolutions.

The thesis of John Meltem Al is approved.

Sylvia Lavin

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2015

“yokuş yol’a”

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Introduction

There are numerous cities all over the world, which have been subjected to different modes of urbanization with the rise of neoliberalism since the second half of the 20th century.

Among these cities, Istanbul is a significant example that illustrates the concept of neoliberal urbanization—due to a visible of an urban coalition between the Turkish state, construction sector, private investors, and the newly rising conservative bourgeoisie in the contemporary urbanization process of Istanbul. In Turkey, especially since the beginning of the 2000s, the political actors have dominated the production of space according to their own desires, and they have promoted “urban transformation” as the main tool of upgrading low-income and informal housing areas to “modern” living, working, shopping and entertainment areas.¹ In Istanbul—with urban transformation projects—state-subsidized housing projects led by private investors have been constructed in old and underprivileged neighborhoods, and these projects have been declared by the government as projects to upgrade the large cities of Turkey to “world city” status. In this process, the mainstream media institutions have supported the urban transformation discourse of the government agents, and private investors and have played a significant role in molding the public opinion according to the desires of these groups.² These communication networks have utilized a new language for imposing the

¹ In this research, I use the term “transformation” because Turkish scholars writing in English about large-scale

² For the scope of this thesis, mainstream media is limited to the published mainstream media newspapers in Turkey. I have selected four popular newspapers for investigation: *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah*, and *Zaman*. It is not easy to determine these newspaper’s ideological stances between the years of 2004 and 2010, from today’s perspective—because of the changing social and ideological dynamics in Turkey’s political atmosphere in recent years. Among these four newspapers, *Zaman* has changed its position and although it was one of the closest allies of the JDP during the period that this thesis covers, after the JDP started a war against a very powerful religious group that *Zaman* is related, the newspaper has become a conservative but an opponent newspaper. *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* were relatively left oriented newspapers before the JDP government period, but the JDP government has limited the freedom of these alternative media networks. Because of the changing power relationships between the owners of these newspapers, the private investors and the government, these newspapers have supported the urban transformation projects—like the government’s many other projects. *Sabah* is another mainstream newspaper that has always been one of the most important advocates of the

necessity and urgency of the urban transformation projects in Istanbul and some other large cities. On the other hand—although they don't have the power of reaching as many people as the mainstream media institutions reach—some leftist organizations, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, and leftist newspapers have constituted an alternative media with their oppositional approaches to urban politics in Turkey.³ They started to use their own web sites or the websites of leftist media to mold the public opinion about the existing or foreseen outcomes of the urban transformation projects and to develop a collective resistance against them. The alternative media has emphasized the legal arrangements in the existing legal system, announced the rights of the people who have been affected by the urban transformation projects, and announced various events such as panels, symposiums and public demonstrations about the issue of urban transformation in Turkey. In this vein, the Internet has provided an important sphere for the radical and alternative voices to be heard.

In this thesis, the role of mainstream media institutions in legitimizing the urban transformation policies of the government and the social agency of alternative media networks in raising public awareness about the urban transformation projects will be

JDP—not only because of the ideological reasons but also because of the personal relationships between the owners of the newspaper and the people in the JDP.

³ In his book *Why Study the Media?*, Roger Silverstone interprets the meaning and function of alternative media generally and states that alternative media “have created new spaces for alternative voices that provide the focus both for specific community interests as well as for the contrary and subversive.” Please see, Richard Silverstone, *Why Study the Media?*, (London: Sage, 1999,)103.

Alternative media consists of various media networks such as newspapers, websites, TV channels, and social media that produce discourse against or in contradiction with mainstream media. In short, the aim of alternative media can be described as producing counter arguments against powerful/ruling groups in society. Considering the fact that powerful/ruling groups always have their own communication channels such as mainstream media to impose their ideologies on society, alternative media networks attempt to produce and spread new discourses that struggle with the arguments of mainstream media. In this thesis, the alternative media is limited to the websites managed by some leftist organizations, non-governmental organizations, professional associations, and leftist newspapers. The websites mentioned in this thesis are: www.atilim.org, www.bianet.org, www.sendika.org, www.toplumunsehircilikhareketi.org, www.evrensel.net, and www.mimdap.org.

investigated through the case of Ayazma Urban Transformation Project, the largest urban transformation project in Istanbul by then that was started in 2004 and completed in 2010. This case demonstrates that, while the mainstream media has developed a supportive discourse that fosters the dominance of the government in the production of urban space in Turkey, the alternative media has developed a discourse with the aim of stopping the actions of the government in urban space, which has no immediate practical implications for the urban transformation projects that are underway. However, this thesis argues that the accumulated role of the alternative media's presentation of urban transformation projects has shaped an understanding of the contemporary urbanization processes in Turkey. Although the mainstream media is apparently more dominant than the alternative media in terms of having influence upon the implementation of governmental projects in cities, the critical discourse of the alternative media paves the way for ruptures in history that may fire future urban revolutions.

In order to explore the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project and the discursive productions of the mainstream and the alternative media in this transformation process, it is important to comprehend the political and economic conditions that brought about the Ayazma project and other urban transformation projects in Turkey. For that reason, the first part of this thesis will investigate the rise of neoliberal urbanism and its effects on the housing and construction sector in Turkey, and Turkish government's urban transformation and housing policies. In the second part, the case of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project will be introduced and the conditions of the inhabitants of Ayazma before and after this project will be explained. In the third part, according to the timeline of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project, the event-oriented responsive discourses of mainstream and alternative media institutions will be investigated. And finally, in the fourth part of this thesis, the ruins of Ayazma will be

introduced as the locus of urban revolutions and the role of the alternative media in immortalizing these ruins will be discussed.

1. The Rise of Neoliberalism and Its Effects on the Production of Space

In Turkey the problem of housing has been one of the most controversial issues since the second half of the 20th century due to the rapid urbanization in large cities. In the beginning of the 1950s, Istanbul—the most important industrial node of Turkey—exploded with immigrants that moved from the eastern regions of the country to find jobs and achieve better living conditions. Unable to afford the existing housing areas in the city and due to the state's inadequate social housing policies, these immigrants adopted squatting as a principal strategy and built their squatter housing neighborhoods in Istanbul.

In the beginning of the 1980s, as global economic conditions started to change, neoliberalism gained power and started to transform the existing social and spatial organizations in large cities in Turkey—like in many other developing countries—according to the ideological and economic desires of the political actors. This condition changed the role of the state from an “urban manager” to an “urban entrepreneur” in the issue of controlling the production of urban space.⁴ This change became more visible in Turkish context after 2002, when the conservative Justice and Development Party (JDP) came to power and started to encourage neoliberal spatial practices in large cities like Istanbul.

In the JDP period, the political actors of urban governance have dominated the production of urban space by altering planning regulations and equipping local governments with extensive power and finance. The new urban coalition between the state, the construction sector and the

⁴ David Harvey, "From managerialism to entrepreneurialism: the transformation in urban governance in late capitalism," *Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography*, (1989): 3-17.

Islamist bourgeoisie, who has ideological connections with the conservative JDP and whose social networks have been mobilized in developing the urban policies of the government, started to rebuild the city according to these actors' understanding of urban transformation.⁵ As stated by Louis Althusser, ideology has the power of determining the behaviors, beliefs, thoughts and acts of society according to the goals of the actors who develop the dominant ideologies of any context. An ideology can serve as "a form of social cement," organizing individuals and social groups with a set of defined aims.⁶ And according to Henry Lefebvre, "the study of space offers a question, according to which the social relations of production have a social existence to the extent that they have a spatial existence; they project themselves into a space, and in the process producing that space itself."⁷ In this sense, ideologies produce their own spaces to legitimize themselves and perpetuate their existence by ascribing certain characteristics to the built environment.⁸ In the case of the JDP and the Islamists in Turkey, the common ideologies of these groups served as social cement for bringing the religious and political groups together; as a manifestation of this alliance, the state and the newly emerging Islamist bourgeoisie started to intervene in the production of built environment.

In the context of early 2000s, Istanbul has become a showcase for Turkey's integration into the global neoliberal urbanization, and the housing sector in Istanbul has become the state's, the new Islamist bourgeoisie's, and investors' major field of interest. The new residential

⁵ Islamists supported the emergence of the conservative JDP as a powerful entity in the political arena of Turkey in the beginning of 2000s. This coalition provided benefits to the both sides. Please see: Çağlar Keyder, "Istanbul into the Twenty-first Century," In *Orienteering Istanbul: Cultural Capital of Europe*, edited by Deniz Göktürk, Levent Soysal and Ipek Türeli, (London: Routledge, 2010.)

⁶ Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971.)

⁷ Henry Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, (Oxford: Basic Blackwell, 1991,) 129.

⁸ Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, 11.

buildings constructed in Istanbul were thought to be liquidated more easily than any other investment, because of the housing sector's capacity to address a wide audience in large cities. In this economic, political and social transformation process, the concept of "urban transformation" has been utilized as a tool to demolish old squatter housing neighborhoods, evicting the people living in these neighborhoods and transforming these neighborhoods into "sterilized" environments—with high-income inhabitants—and consequently achieving "accumulation by dispossession".⁹

1.1 The JDP's Housing Politics in Early 2000s

In the 2002 general elections in Turkey, the JDP came to power with the support of the majority of the electors. Because of the fact that the greatest majority of the parliament was comprised of JDP deputies, the JDP government was able to change or rearrange existing laws without forming a coalition with other political parties.¹⁰ Shortly after coming to power, the government started to use its authority to transform existing urban policies and make legal arrangements to manifest its political power and ideology via production of space. In the scope of these transformations, the government altered the function and responsibilities of the Mass Housing Administration, a government entity that had been founded by the state in 1984 to provide affordable housing to low-income people living in cities. With the extended authorities and financial sources provided by the government, the administration became the most powerful authority in the construction sector, and it started to function as a construction company rather than a social housing foundation.¹¹ With the enactment of the new laws about urban transformation projects in 2004, the administration had the authority to designate underdeveloped areas of cities as urban transformation zones. Moreover, with the enactment

⁹ David Harvey, *The New Imperialism*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ Asuman Türkün, "Urban regeneration and hegemonic power relationships," *International planning studies* 16, no. 1 (2011): 66.

¹¹ Koca, "Remapping Contemporary Housing Production in Turkey," 9.

of the laws that authorized city municipalities to carry out these projects, the administration started to implement urban transformation projects in collaboration with city municipalities, demolish existing housing areas, transfer the inhabitants of these areas to social housing projects and re-identify the demolished areas as spaces of capital accumulation.¹² In this sense, squatter housing neighborhoods in large cities—being ideal “transformation” areas due to these neighborhoods’ poor conditions and because of the social and political identity of the social groups live in these neighborhoods—became the Mass Housing Administration’s major field of interest.¹³

After completing all the necessary legal rearrangements and setting the stage for urban transformation projects in Istanbul, the JDP government focused on the urban transformation zones in Istanbul that could be turned into new and profitable urban lands. In this process, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, a local municipality in Istanbul named Küçükçekmece Municipality and the Mass Housing Administration chose the Ayazma and Tepeüstü neighborhoods in Küçükçekmece district as urban transformation areas and started there one of the biggest and earliest urban transformations of the contemporary Istanbul. By cleaning the Ayazma and Tepeüstü neighborhoods from poor communities and transforming the neighborhood into an upper-class residential area under the guise of creating a “modern” city, the urban transformation project changed the lives of 1730 families—about 7800 people—mostly from Ayazma.¹⁴

¹² Tuna Kuyucu, “Law, Property and Ambiguity: The Uses and Abuses of Legal Ambiguity in Remaking Istanbul’s Informal Settlements,” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, no. 2 (2014): 615.

¹³ Tuna Kuyucu, and Özlem Ünsal, “Urban Transformation as State-led Property Transfer: An Analysis of Two Cases of Urban Transformation in Istanbul,” *Urban Studies* (2010): 6-7.

¹⁴ Baysal, “Civilizing the Kurdish Population of Ayazma,” 83.

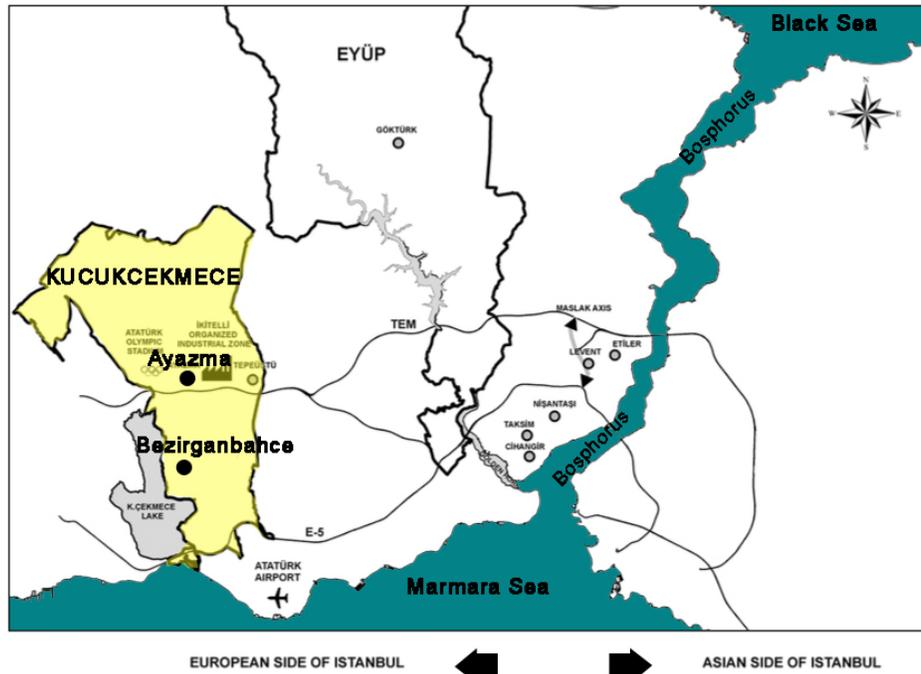


Figure 1: The location of Küçükçekmece and Ayazma in Istanbul

2. The Case of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project

Between the 1980s and the early 2000s, Ayazma—a neighborhood in Küçükçekmece, on the European side of Istanbul—was populated by a community of Kurdish migrants who moved to the city from the eastern regions of Turkey to find jobs and better living conditions.¹⁵ The district had always been ignored by the state; neither the governments nor the city municipality provided basic public services to the area when it was a squatter housing neighborhood. After the construction of the new Olympic Stadium near the squatter housing neighborhood there in 2002 and after the construction of the new highways around the

¹⁵ Ayca Zayim, "Differentiated Urban Citizenship and Housing Rights: Analyzing the Social Impacts of Urban Redevelopment in Globalizing İstanbul," *International Planning Studies* ahead-of-print (2014): 11.

district, which made Ayazma easily accessible from various workplaces in the city, the land value of the neighborhood increased rapidly.¹⁶ Consequently in 2004, the Ayazma neighborhood was designated as an urban transformation area and, according to a protocol signed by the Küçükçekmece Municipality, the Mass Housing Administration, and the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, the Küçükçekmece Municipality was charged with the duty of “cleaning” the squatter houses in Ayazma.¹⁷ The squatter development district in Ayazma was completed in 2007 and then, the Mass Housing Administration sold the cleaned area to a very famous construction company, Ağaoğlu Construction Company, that would build a new deluxe housing project in Ayazma.

Before the start of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project, it was announced that the rightful house owners living in Ayazma would be relocated to a new housing development built by the Mass Housing Administration in another neighborhood, Bezirganbahçe, and they could own new apartments there by paying an amount like a rent every month for a predetermined time period. However, the squatters did not receive the same treatment—they would have to pay the monthly installments to become the legal owners of the apartments in Bezirganbahçe—rather than receiving their new apartments at no cost.¹⁸ These squatters had no regular jobs or regular income, so it was very difficult for most of the people who moved to Bezirganbahçe to afford these monthly installments. Eventually, many of the people who had moved to Bezirganbahçe sold their apartments with the debt and moved to other squatter neighborhoods. Besides this, the people living in the squatter houses in Ayazma as tenants were not offered houses in Bezirganbahçe and they were left homeless after the demolition of

¹⁶ Zayim, "Differentiated Urban Citizenship and Housing Rights," 11.

¹⁷ John Lovering and Hade Türkmen, "Bulldozer neo-liberalism in İstanbul: The state-led construction of property markets, and the displacement of the urban poor," *International Planning Studies* 16, no. 1 (2011): 82.

¹⁸ Zayim, "Differentiated Urban Citizenship and Housing Rights," 3.

the squatter houses.¹⁹ Due to economic difficulties, some of these tenant families could not find a cheap house to move into, so they set up tents around the ruins of their old houses and continued living there until the land was completely cleared. Finally, the Mass Housing Administration sold the land to Ağaoğlu Construction Company, to build a deluxe housing project, “My World Europe,” the apartments of which were put up for sale in 2010 and completed in 2013.

As in the case of Ayazma—like many other urban transformation cases in Turkey—the urban planning policies were changed and legal arrangements were made in order to transfer the urban space for the benefit of powerful groups without regard to the public good. Because of these projects, Istanbul has turned into a huge construction site, where underdeveloped neighborhoods were removed from the land, the inhabitants of these neighborhoods were relocated, and the empty land delivered to the hands of private investors for developing new profitable projects.

3. The Discourse Production of Mainstream and Alternative Media in the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project

In the process of developing new urban transformation projects in Istanbul and other large cities, the political actors adopted a new discourse to legitimize their urban transformation undertakings in the eyes of the public. In the mainstream media, the concept of urban transformation and the fundamental modifications in the legal framework have been wrapped in an illusory language, which has pointed out the significance and urgency of urban transformation for large cities.²⁰ This language has been strengthened with colorful and eye-

¹⁹ Zayim, “Differentiated Urban Citizenship and Housing Rights,” 12.

²⁰ On the advertisement pages of daily newspapers, billboards, urban walls and building facades, the newly erected luxury housing developments in transformation areas have been presented with attractive images that signify the construction of a “modern” life style for the middle and upper classes. This colorful presentation of the future offered by the government has influenced public opinion about the creation of new Istanbul.

catching architectural/urban images and used by mainstream newspapers to promote the government's and private construction companies' projects in the transformation areas and to depict the so-called "utopian" outcomes of new urban projects. In this sense, the mainstream media in Turkey has played an important role in creating a positive public opinion about the transformation of the housing neighborhoods in cities.

On the other hand, the alternative media networks in Turkey, supported by leftist organizations, NGOs, public welfare organizations, and professional associations like chambers of architects and urban planners, have made an effort to challenge the promotional discourse of the mainstream media. Emphasizing the fundamental changes in the legal framework, these changes' effects on urban transformation projects, illegalities in the ongoing and completed projects, and the rights of the people affected by these urban transformation projects, alternative media networks have developed an oppositional discourse about urban transformation in Turkey in the existing conditions. Despite the small size of their audiences—when compared with the audience of the mainstream media—the alternative media networks have played a very significant role in highlighting the ignored or overlooked issues of urban transformation in Turkey.

In the case of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project, the mainstream media in Turkey enabled the legitimization of the demolition of Ayazma, the eviction of the inhabitants of the neighborhood and construction of the projects on the land cleared from the squatter houses. For this thesis, the archives of the four popular mainstream newspapers in Turkey—*Hürriyet*, *Milliyet*, *Sabah*, and *Zaman*—were searched, and the news about the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project was examined between the years of 2004, when the Ayazma neighborhood was designated as a urban transformation zone, and 2010, when the new deluxe housing development in Ayazma was put up for sale. Moreover, the archives of the

websites of some popular alternative media networks—www.atilim.org, www.bianet.org, www.sendika.org, www.toplumunsehicilikhareketi.org, www.evrensel.net, and www.mimdap.org—and their discourse about the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project will be scrutinized by looking at the same time period. Comparing these two archives will show the difference between the words and images utilized by different media agents during the processes of demolition and re-production of urban space.

When the discourse of the media agents between the years of 2004 and 2010 is analyzed, it can be seen that these agents changed the direction of their arguments according to the activities of the political actors and private investors operating at that time. In order to see these changes in this thesis, the process has been divided into three main parts which are determined according to major the changes in the discourses of the mainstream and alternative media. The first part spans the period between the enactment of the Mass Housing Administration law, which authorizes the administration to determine urban transformation zones in cities and was passed in April 2004, and the start of the relocation of the inhabitants of Ayazma to the social housing development in Bezirganbahçe in February 2007. The second part covers the period after the start of the relocations to Bezirganbahçe and ends with the demolition of all the squatter houses in Ayazma, which signals the start of the “My World Europe” project by Ağaoğlu in November 2009. Finally, the third part covers a short period, the period between the start of the “My World Europe” project and the date it was put up on sale in September 2010.

When the news in the mainstream media about the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project during the first period is analyzed, the dominant discourse can be described as the promotion of the concept of urban transformation in general and the promotion of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project in particular. During the second period, the achievements of the

government in the Ayazma project and the pleasure of the previous inhabitants of Ayazma with their new houses in Bezirganbahçe are the focus points of the news reported by the mainstream newspapers, so the dominant discourse of the second period can be defined as a “success story” discourse. In the third period, the newspapers focused on advertising the “My World Europe” project, so the discourse of the mainstream newspapers can be defined as a marketing discourse.

In contrast with the promotion, success story and marketing discourses developed by the mainstream media during the urban transformation process in Ayazma, many alternative media agents used their websites to report the news about the project from their perspectives. Besides this, some leftist organizations, neighborhood organizations, non-governmental organizations, and professional associations used their websites to foster public consciousness about the Ayazma project as well as other urban transformation projects in Turkey. The alternative media networks could not report the news about the Ayazma project and reach an audience as frequently as the mainstream media did, due to their non-institutional character, limited information sources and limited number of employees.²¹

However, these alternative media networks produced an oppositional discourse about the concept of urban transformation in general and the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project in

²¹ The alternative media agents mentioned in this thesis prepare and report news according to their resources and capacities. For example *bianet.org* has its own news center. It has a group of employees for gathering news, capturing images, writing news, editing texts, writing critical essays on selected topics, etc. *Sendika.org* also has its own personnel for preparing and reporting the news, but it also posts the news from other leftist media agents like *bianet.org* and gives them credit. *Mimdap.org* is a news portal developed and managed by a group of architects and urban planners to report news about architecture and urban planning in Turkey by using various media sources. Besides reporting architectural and urban news, the website also publishes many critical essays from various authors. *Evrensel.net* is the media agent of a leftist political party named EMEP that supports the working class movement in Turkey. Different from other websites, *evrensel.net* depends on a daily newspaper with the same name belonging to the same political party. The structure of *toplumunsehicilikhareketi.org* is very similar to *mimdap.org*. The website is designed and managed by a group of activist who are organized against the inequitable urban politics of the ruling groups. The website reports news about urban transformation projects, neighborhood organizations, public demonstrations, academic evaluations about the urbanization processes of cities in Turkey, etc. Among these media networks, *bianet.org*, *sendika.org* and *evrensel.net* are updated daily, while the other websites are updated less frequently.

particular during the first period of the project. In the second period, the alternative media produced a resistive discourse, supporting and in solidarity with the resistance of the Ayazma people. In the last period of the project, the alternative media networks revisited the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project and analyzed the whole process with a retrospective discourse.

3.1 The Promotion Discourse of Mainstream Media vs. The Oppositional Discourse of Alternative Media

After the enactment of the law that authorizes the Mass Housing Administration to prepare development plans for cities and expropriate urban lands in 2004, the mainstream newspapers started to report the news about the future projects of the administration. The newspapers described these projects as “cleansing projects” that would “clean” the urban land of squatter houses, enhance the appearance of the cities and solve existing infrastructure problems.²² By emphasizing the infrastructural problems in the squatter housing neighborhoods and pointing out the potentially tragic results of floods and earthquakes in the future, the mainstream newspapers portrayed the demolition of squatter housing neighborhoods as survival projects.²³ In addition to being introduced as the only way of rebuilding cities, these urban projects were described as an opportunity to vitalize the construction sector and stimulate the national economy.²⁴ Moreover, these urban transformation projects were also considered the keys that would open the doors of the European Union to Turkey.²⁵ Besides emphasizing the benefits of urban transformation projects for security, environmental, infrastructural,

²² Rahim Ak, “Kondu devrimi,” *Sabah*, May 15, 2004, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2004/05/15/eko101.html>.

²³ Ahmet Dönmez, “Belediye başkanları bu kez kararlı: İstanbulu yıkıp yeniden yapacağız,” *Zaman*, August 19, 2004, accessed May 2, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_bele-diye-baskanlari-bu-kez-kararli-istanbul-u-yikip-yeniden-yapacagiz_82514.html.

²⁴ Ak, “Kondu devrimi.” and Dönmez, “Belediye başkanları bu kez kararlı.”

²⁵ Habibe Demircan, “Şehircilik uzmanları dünya şehri İstanbula yeni çehre hazırlıyor,” *Zaman*, November 26, 2004, accessed May 1, 2015, http://mobil.zaman.com.tr/sehir_sehircilik-uzmanlari-dunya-sehri-istanbul-a-yeni-cehre-hazirliyor_116342.html.

economic and political considerations, the political actors and the mainstream media also pictured the squatter housing neighborhoods as places of criminal organizations that threaten the welfare of society.²⁶ The portrayal of the squatter housing neighborhoods as extremely dangerous places was then utilized to legitimize the destruction of these areas.²⁷

After the designation of the Ayazma neighborhood as an urban transformation zone with the protocol signed by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Küçükçekmece Municipality, and the Mass Housing Administration in June 2004, the Ayazma neighborhood started to appear in the mainstream newspapers. Besides the district's poor and unhealthy living conditions, the solutions that the new transformation project would provide were highlighted in the news sections.²⁸ The mainstream newspapers continuously emphasized that all the illegal, dangerous and risky buildings in Ayazma would be demolished by the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project. According to the news, while the Ayazma neighborhood would be cleared of the old squatter houses, the squatters would move to the new social housing development constructed by the Mass Housing Administration in Bezirganbahçe. By paying the monthly installments for a determined period, the squatters who had title deeds in Ayazma would end up being owners of the new houses in Bezirganbahçe.²⁹ Besides all the squatter house owners that would be offered an apartment in Bezirganbahçe, the tenants

²⁶ The Economies of Urban Diversity: Ruhr Area and İstanbul edited by Darja Reuschke, Monika Salzbrunn, Korinna Schönhärl, P.223

²⁷ For instance see the news from different dates: "Apartmana taşınanlar iş sahibi oldu," *Zaman*, November 28, 2007, accessed April 30, 2015, http://mobil.zaman.com.tr/ekonomi_apartmana-tasinanlar-is-sahibi-oldu_618850.html. and Sadi Özdemir "Başbakan TOKİ'ye her gün gecekonduları soruyor," *Hürriyet*, October 15, 2006, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://hursiv.hurriyet.com.tr/goster/haber.aspx?id=5259631&tarih=2006-10-15>.

²⁸ "Olimpiyat Parkı ve Çevresi," *Sabah*, November 29, 2004, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2004/11/29/gnd109.html>.

²⁹ Muharrem Aydın, "Gecekonducuya, kira öder gibi çağdaş konut," *Hürriyet*, June 14, 2004, accessed April 28, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/index/ArsivNews.aspx?id=233405>. and Dönmez, "Belediye başkanları bu kez kararlı."

would also have the chance of buying these inexpensive apartments.³⁰ In these newspaper reports it was strongly emphasized that a higher level of living standards would be provided to the people in Ayazma in the scope of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project.³¹ This “win-win” narrative was excessively exaggerated in an article published in the *Sabah* newspaper on May 15th, 2004. According to the news, after the relocation of the people living in Ayazma to Bezirganbahçe, another social housing project with the capacity of 5000 apartment units would be constructed in Ayazma, in the place of the old squatter houses, to provide shelter to the squatters from the other parts of the city.³² However, neither the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project nor the protocol signed by Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Küçükçekmece Municipality and the Mass Housing Administration involved such a plan.

In this period, a symposium organized by the Küçükçekmece Municipality about urban transformation was reported several times by the mainstream media. As stated in the newspapers, some urban transformation specialists, urban planners and academicians from different countries attended this symposium and raised issues about urban transformation in the contemporary world, and at the end of the symposium, they visited both the Ayazma neighborhood and the Bezirganbahçe housing development.³³ In this news, it was emphasized that those urban planners found the physical and social conditions of the Ayazma neighborhood worse than they had expected. Moreover, as reported in the newspapers, they started research about the new social housing in Bezirganbahçe and inspected the quality of

³⁰ Ak, “KONU devrimi.”

³¹ Demircan, “Şehircilik uzmanları dünya şehri İstanbula yeni çehre hazırlıyor.”

³² Ak, “KONU devrimi.”

³³ Demircan, “Şehircilik uzmanları dünya şehri İstanbula yeni çehre hazırlıyor.”

the construction there.³⁴ This narrative of scientific and academic justification of urban transformation emphasized the significance of the Ayazma project for Istanbul and the important role the Küçükçekmece Municipality played in carrying out this project. At the very beginning of the project, the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project had been declared as a model for future urban transformation projects in Turkey, so this narrative about the rationality and credibility of the project was very important, and it was supported by the these events organized by the municipality.

Another important component of the promotional discourse of the mainstream media was the issue of “civilizing” the squatters of Ayazma.³⁵ The newspapers reported that before the start of the relocations to Bezirganbahçe, Küçükçekmece Municipality announced a plan to hire a group of psychologists, sociologists and lawyers who would visit the people living in Ayazma to provide them information about the ongoing transformation project, give them psychological support, persuade them to leave their squatter houses and encourage them to move to the social housing development in Bezirganbahçe. These specialists would also teach the rules of apartment living to them. Moreover, according to this plan, at least one person from each Ayazma family would take a professional and occupational training course provided by Küçükçekmece Municipality, and at the end of this course, these people would have a profession to find a job.³⁶ This narrative of the mainstream media emphasizing the promises of Küçükçekmece Municipality supported the idea that there would not be any

³⁴ Şenol Baştakar, “Hayırlı uğurlu olsun,” *Sabah*, November 30, 2004. accessed May 1, 2015, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2004/11/30/gnd114.html>.

³⁵ For a critical analysis of this “civilization” issue, please see Baysal, “Civilizing the Kurdish Population of Ayazma.”

³⁶ Habibe Demircan, “Küçükçekmeceli gecekondü sakinlerine apartman terapisi,” *Zaman*, February 25, 2005, accessed April 30, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/sehir_kucukcekmece-gecekondü-sakinlerine-apartman-terapisi_146755.html and Habibe Demircan, “K.Çekmecedede dönüşüm başlıyor konducular apartmana taşınacak,” *Zaman*, May 7, 2006, accessed April 28, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/sehir_kcekmece-de-donusum-basliyor-konducular-apartmana-tasinacak_282886.html.

aggrieved people at the end of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project.

During this period, the alternative media responded to the promotional discourse of the mainstream media with a judgmental approach. Criticism of urban transformation in Turkey was a familiar discourse for the alternative media in Turkey, but, after the JDP government started to modify the existing legal framework to carry out urban transformation projects in shantytowns of cities, the alternative media developed a more oppositional discourse. With the enactment of the Mass Housing Administration law in 2004, the alternative media started to report on the changes in the legal system and these changes' possible effects on the production of urban space in Turkey. In contrast to the mainstream media that reported these legal changes as a way of creating "modern looking" cities, the alternative media started to talk about the problematic aspects of the modified urban policies. Criticizing the government for utilizing the concept of urban transformation to transfer urban land from low-income groups to high-income groups, the alternative media constructed a discourse for challenging the announced urban transformation projects. The chambers of architects and urban planners demanded the withdrawal of the new urban laws about the transformation of cities, and their declarations and criticism were supported by the alternative media agents.³⁷ The critical voice of these urban professionals was adopted by the mainstream media agents and became a component of their oppositional discourse. Besides reporting on the public declarations of chambers and professional groups, alternative media networks also gave a place to the declarations of other activist groups that came together to protest the urban transformation projects in Ayazma and in other parts of Istanbul.³⁸

³⁷ "Yıkımlara Karşı Kurultay Yapıldı," *Sendika.org*, June 27, 2005, accessed April 30, 2015, <http://www.sendika.org/2005/06/yikimlara-karsi-kurultay-yapildi/>.

³⁸ "Kentsel Dönüşüm Değil, Barınma Hakkı," *Bianet*, August 29, 2005, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/toplum/65929-kentsel-donusum-degil-barinma-hakki>.

In this process, the news about the forced evictions and the demolition of the squatter housing in Ayazma was documented on the websites of the alternative media networks. Blaming the capitalist system for being both the creator and demolisher of poor squatter housing neighborhoods in cities, the alternative media stated that the squatter housing neighborhoods needed to be upgraded with public services rather than being transformed into upper class residential neighborhoods.³⁹ The alternative media networks made The Küçükçekmece Municipality's demolition plan in Ayazma a current issue, especially on specific dates such as March 8th, International Women's Day, when a group of women from Ayazma—whose houses were to be demolished—joined the celebrations of Women's Day in Istanbul and made a public demonstration.⁴⁰ These women's complains about the destruction of their houses and neighborhood took place in the news that focuses on the discontent of the Ayazma people about the urban transformation project.

The alternative media networks interpreted the demolitions in Ayazma as the razing of a poor neighborhood in Istanbul under the guise of creating a “modern” city and put the demolition process on their agenda until the last ruins of Ayazma were completely removed from the land.⁴¹ The alternative media also emphasized the predicament of the tenants of Ayazma, who were left homeless after the demolitions, by underlining Küçükçekmece Municipality's forgotten promise to provide new apartments to them in Bezirganbahçe. Pointing out the billboards placed across the demolition site in Ayazma saying “the new city of Modern Europe,” these media agents blamed the Küçükçekmece Municipality and the Mass Housing

³⁹ “Kadınların Eşitlik ve Özgürlük Talebi Sokaklardaydı,” *Sendika.org*, March 5, 2006, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.sendika.org/2006/03/kadinlarin-esitlik-ve-ozgurluk-talebi-sokaklardaydi/>.

⁴⁰ “Kadınların Eşitlik ve Özgürlük Talebi Sokaklardaydı.”

⁴¹ “Kentsel Dönüşümde son halka: Ayazma yıkılıyor,” *Sendika.org*, February 12, 2007, accessed April 28, 2015, <http://www.sendika.org/2007/02/kentsel-donusumde-son-halka-ayazma-yikiliyor/>.

Administration for making fun of the Ayazma people.⁴²

To summarize the discourse production of media agents during the first period of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project, it can be stated that the mainstream media agents had various reasons for endorsing the concept of urban transformation in Turkey. They supported the actions of the government, the Mass Housing Administration and Küçükçekmece Municipality by developing a promotional discourse, and they ignored the problems of the Ayazma project. On the other hand, the alternative media agents criticized the profit-oriented actions of the political actors who intervened in the production of urban space without regard to the physical and social outcomes. In contrast to the mainstream media that depicted a modern and homogenous city that would be created through the urban transformation projects of the government, the alternative media portrayed the tragic results of the urban transformation projects in the hands of the JDP government. In this sense, although the alternative media could not stop the start of the urban transformation process in Ayazma during the first period of the project, it provided convincing reasons for being against the project. However, these reasons were not effective enough to compete with the “attractive” promises of the mainstream media: there were millions of people in large cities living in shantytowns with really poor conditions and the only thing these people needed was a hope for the future. The colorful assertions of the political actors and the deceptive claims of the mainstream media constructed a more powerful discourse than the alternative media in terms of depicting a hopeful future. Although this portrayal of the future was not realistic from the very beginning of the story, the desire to get rid of the poor living conditions was more dominant than the fear of the possible tragic outcomes of the new projects for the people living in squatter housing neighborhoods.

⁴² “Kentsel Dönüşümde son halka: Ayazma yıkılıyor.”

3.2 The Success Story in Ayazma vs. Victimization in Ayazma

In the second period of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project, the mainstream media focused on the “modern” living conditions of the Bezirganbahçe housing development and the squatters’ relocation to the houses in this development. In the news reported by the mainstream media, the demolition of the squatter housing in Ayazma and the construction of the new houses in Bezirganbahçe was introduced as a “housing revolution” of the state. Before the relocations to Bezirganbahçe started, the mainstream newspapers stated that the Mass Housing Administration’s social housing project in Bezirganbahçe had been completed and the titleholders in Ayazma had chosen their new houses in Bezirganbahçe by lot.⁴³ In this news, the mainstream media interpreted the relocations to Bezirganbahçe as becoming the owners of the new luxurious houses in Bezirganbahçe thanks to the urban transformation project in Ayazma. In the relocation process, the issue of “civilizing” the squatter society was highlighted by the political actors, and it was supported by the mainstream media once again. According to the newspaper reports, Küçükçekmece Municipality was planning to give training to the people in Ayazma about “living in modern apartments of Bezirganbahçe” and “adapting to city life.” According to this plan, there would be different classes for children, women and unemployed men. The unemployed men would receive job training, during which they would be provided with a stipend by the municipality until they found a job. The municipality would provide their health insurance costs and living costs until they reach the optimum living standards.⁴⁴ After the relocations started, this narrative was supported by mentioning the satisfaction of the people who had moved to their new houses in Bezirganbahçe. In the same period, the demolition of the squatter houses started, so the

⁴³ Serdar Canıpek “Dünyanın en büyük projesi,” *Sabah*, September 16, 2006, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2006/09/16/gun129.html>.

⁴⁴ Ercan Sarıkaya “Gecekonducuya apartman kursu,” *Sabah*, March 7, 2007, accessed May 3, 2015, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2007/03/07/gun109.html>.

narratives of “cleaning” the land, transforming it into a “modern” neighborhood and “civilizing” the poor society were developed simultaneously.⁴⁵ With the start of the demolition in Ayazma, the significance of the project was announced once again, and the people who resisted the demolition of their houses were presented as “rebellious” people who hindered the normal process of the project.

After a while, a weak but extraordinary shift in the discourse of the mainstream media occurred. In the process of the demolitions in the site, the tenant families who were not offered housing in Bezirganbahçe were left homeless. Some of these tenant families moved to other squatter housing neighborhoods, but the remaining eighteen families who did not have enough money to move to a another squatter house set up tents in their old neighborhood and stayed in the ruins of Ayazma due to their economic troubles. During this process, they built relationships with other neighborhood organizations to make their voices heard and attracted the attention of the mainstream media due to their story’s reality-show-like nature. These families appeared on some TV shows and talked about their poor living conditions in the Ayazma ruins.⁴⁶ In response, the mayor of Küçükçekmece Municipality spoke on these TV programs and promised to provide housing in Bezirganbahçe for the people who were left homeless in Ayazma and to help them pay their monthly installments.⁴⁷ Although the mayor did not keep his promise, the mainstream media picked up the most colorful part of the story and ended their “wretchedness” narrative with the charitable gesture

⁴⁵ Sarıkaya “Gecekonducuya apartman kursu.” and Yasin Kılıç “Gecekondu bölgeleri modern şehre dönüşüyor,” *Zaman*, August 27, 2007, accessed May 2, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/sehir_gecekondu-bolgeleri-modern-sehre-donusuyor_580743.html.

⁴⁶ Tahsin Aksu, “Barakaya son bakış,” *Milliyet*, November 14, 2008, accessed April 29, 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/barakaya-son-bakis/yasam/haberdetayarsiv/15.11.2008/1016319/default.htm>. and Tijen Burultay, “Ayazmalılar kentsel dönüşüm mağduru,” *Sabah*, November 19, 2008, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://arsiv.sabah.com.tr/2008/11/19/haber,E90D510801CF49DC80F73E0D43E25C5E.html>.

⁴⁷ “Ayazma Mağdurları Bugün Ne İstiyor!,” Ayazma Mağdurları, accessed May 15, 2015, <https://ayazmamagdurlari.wordpress.com/hakkimizda/>.

of Küçükçekmece Municipality.⁴⁸ The mainstream media talked about the problems of the tenant families after the demolition of their houses in Bezirganbahçe and, above all, it emphasized the solutions offered by the political actors for these problems—even though these “solutions” did not solve the problems of the tenants in the end. The mainstream newspapers’ approach to the demolition, relocation and problem-solving activities of the political actors was clear: the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project was a very successful—even revolutionary—project that cleared the Ayazma neighborhood of squatter houses, upgraded the appearance of Ayazma, improved the living standards of the previous inhabitants of the neighborhood and contributed to the development of a new Istanbul.

While the “cleaning” of the Ayazma neighborhood was still in progress and the mainstream media was developing its clean and modern Ayazma discourse, the news about police attacks on eighteen tenant families living in tents in Ayazma was reported by the alternative media websites with a resistive discourse.⁴⁹ The images of the women and children attacked by police and the remains of the tents and sheds were published on the websites to narrate the pathetic condition of the Ayazma squatters in a more effective way. These networks reported the news about the people who entered the New Year in the tents and sometimes about a woman, who newly gave birth in a tent in the extremely cold winter of Istanbul. By emphasizing the wretchedness of the Ayazma people who were living in tents and ruins, the alternative media indicated the resistance of these people and called on all the NGOs, professional associations, public welfare organizations, and political parties to support their

⁴⁸ Bulldozer Neo-liberalism in İstanbul: The State-led Construction of Property Markets, and the Displacement of the Urban Poor, p.86.

⁴⁹ “Evleri yetmedi şimdi de çadırlarını yıktılar,” *Sendika.org*, November 30, 2007, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.sendika.org/2007/11/evleri-yetmedi-simdi-de-cadirlarini-yiktilar/>. and Bawer Çakır, “Ayazma’da Belediye Önce Evleri, Şimdi de Barakaları Yıktı, Halk Sokakta,” *Bianet*, November 14, 2008, accessed May 3, 2015, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/110855-ayazma-da-belediye-once-evleri-simdi-de-barakalari-yikti-halk-sokakta>.

resistance.⁵⁰ An online petition was started by the inhabitants of Ayazma to stop the ongoing demolitions in Ayazma, and this was announced by the alternative media networks.⁵¹ Moreover, several panels and symposiums were organized by some professional associations and research institutions to discuss ways to resist urban transformation projects like in Ayazma, Sulukule, Başbüyük and Tarlabası and these panels and symposiums were announced by the alternate networks and analyzed after these events.⁵²

There were many individuals who lent an ear to the call of the people in Ayazma and the alternative media agents, supported the Ayazma resistance by organizing public demonstrations.⁵³ It was reported by the alternative media that other low-income districts of Istanbul were being evacuated and that “these districts were being gentrified under the guise of transforming these districts into modern neighborhoods”.⁵⁴ In this process, the Ayazma resisters got into touch with people who were affected by the urban transformation projects in other districts of Istanbul and in other large cities. Developing a “solidarity” discourse in response to the cooperation between the victims of the different projects, the alternative media reported news about the implementation of other transformation projects and emphasized the collective resistance of people against the oppressive urban politics of the

⁵⁰ Melike Işık “Ayazma halkı destek bekliyor,” *Sendika.org*, November 18, 2008, accessed May 3, 2015, <http://www.sendika.org/2008/11/ayazma-halki-destek-bekliyor/>.

⁵¹ “Dikmen Vadisi’nde ateşler Ayazma halkı için yandı,” *Sendika.org*, November 16, 2008, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.sendika.org/2008/11/dikmen-vadisinde-atesler-ayazma-halki-icin-yandi/>.

⁵² “Uzmanlar ve Aktivistler "Emek Eksenli Siyasetin" İmkanlarını Konuştu,” *Bianet*, December 29, accessed April 28, 2015, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/111626-uzmanlar-ve-aktivistler-emek-eksenli-siyasetin-imkanlarini-konustu>. and “İMECE 3. yıl forumu yapıldı,” *Sendika.org*, December 10, 2009, accessed April 29, 2016, <http://www.sendika.org/2009/12/imece-3-yil-forumu-yapildi/>.

⁵³ “Ayazma’da buluşuyoruz,” İmece, accessed May 15, 2015, http://www.toplumunsehicilikhareketi.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=23:ayazmada-bulusuyoruz-16-ubat-2008-&catid=20:etkinlikler.

⁵⁴ Fatih Pınar, “Tarlabası’nda Rantsal Kuşatma,” *Bianet*, May 13, 2009, accessed May 3, 2015, <http://www.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/114481-tarlabasi-nda-rantsal-kusatma>.

government.⁵⁵ Moreover, the support by some international organizations was reported by the media to keep the soul of resistance alive.⁵⁶ In the meantime, Ayazma resisters set up a website named *Ayazma Mağdurları* (“the victims of Ayazma”) and started to publish news about their resistance process, the demolitions in Ayazma, police attacks, and life in the ruins.⁵⁷ They documented these events through images and published these images and some official documents, such as official letters from Küçükçekmece Municipality and the Mass Housing Administration and the Ayazma people’s petitions to Küçükçekmece Municipality and the city governor. The images of victimization—images of ruins, tents, remains of the demolished structures and people living there—and the images of resistance captured by the Ayazma people and other people, who supported their resistance, enriched the resistance and solidarity discourse of the alternative media. (Figure 2 and Figure 3)



Figure 2 and Figure 3: The ruins of Ayazma

⁵⁵ Şenay Kumuz, “Yıkıma karşı direnecekler,” *Sendika.org*, June 15, 2008, accessed May 4, 2015, <http://www.sendika.org/2008/06/yikima-karsi-direnecekler/>. and “Ayazmalılar verilen sözlerin tutulmasını istedi,” *Sendika.org*, November 16, 2008, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://www.sendika.org/2008/11/ayazmalilar-verilen-sozlerin-tutulmasini-istedi/>.

⁵⁶ “Konut İttifakı Hareketi yıkım mağdurlarını ziyaret etti,” *Sendika.org*, July 29, 2008, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.sendika.org/2008/07/konut-ittifaki-hareketi-yikim-magdurlarini-ziyaret-etti/>.

⁵⁷ www.ayazmamagdurlari.wordpress.com

In this period, the people who moved to Bezirganbahçe also became the subject of news reported by the alternative media. In contrast to the discourse of the mainstream media that emphasized the “civilization” of the poor community in Bezirganbahçe, the alternative networks announced that the people in Bezirganbahçe were having great difficulty in paying the monthly installments and adapting to apartment life after living in squatter houses with gardens for years. The complaints of the people living in Bezirganbahçe were highlighted in the solidarity discourse of the alternative media.⁵⁸ According to the news in the alternative media networks, the people who had relocated to Bezirganbahçe could not get used to living in high-rise apartment blocks and the customary rituals of apartment living such as using elevators, keeping their doors closed all the time, and not being able to grow their own vegetables. Moreover, they complained about the isolated environment of Bezirganbahçe and its distance from their workplaces. However, the biggest problem was their inability to pay the monthly installments and their accumulated debt. At the end, as stated by the alternative media, a vast majority of people who had been relocated to Bezirganbahçe could not live there, and they sold their houses with the debt and moved to other districts in the city.

In the second period of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project, then, the mainstream media and the alternative media had completely opposite arguments about the issues of demolition, eviction, and relocation in Ayazma. In the mainstream media, the demolition of the squatter houses was interpreted as an opportunity to rebuild the city—as if it were a *tabula rasa*—and give it a new soul. Therefore, when the bulldozers entered Ayazma and the relocations started in Bezirganbahçe, the mainstream media praised the transformation process by ignoring the urban transformation project’s tragic impact on the lives of Ayazma people and presented what happened in Ayazma as a success story. On the other hand, the

⁵⁸ For further information about this “civilization” issue and daily life in Bezirganbahçe, please see Baysal, “From Ayazma to Bezirganbahçe: The Aftermath of Relocation.”

alternative media developed its discourse by focusing on the complaints of the Ayazma people who experienced the “success” or the “failure” of the Ayazma project as the witnesses of the transformation process. As previously mentioned, in the second period of the project, the mainstream media emphasized the resistance of the tenant families in Ayazma who were left homeless after the demolitions, and it supported this resistance by describing the “resistive” actions as a way of stopping the inequitable urban policies of the political actors in Turkey. Despite the fact that neither the resistance of the people in Ayazma nor the “solidarity” discourse of the alternative media could stop the demolitions in Ayazma, the resisters’ and alternative media’s insistent actions encouraged the people living in other urban transformation zones to resist against future urban transformation projects.

3.3 Marketing the New Ayazma vs. Rereading the Tragedy

The third period of the Ayazma project started with the “clearing” of Ayazma of the ruins of the squatter houses completely in November 2009. At this time, the mainstream media networks highlighted the success story of the private construction company, Ali Ağaoğlu, who bought the squatter housing neighborhood to build a new housing project, My World Europe. First of all, Ağaoğlu’s ongoing project in Ayazma was described by the newspapers as an “environmentalist” project that was going to produce its own electricity by means of the electric power station as a part of the project.⁵⁹ In Ağaoğlu’s words, “everyone deserves to live in good conditions and My World Europe project provides this opportunity for the people in Istanbul at very low prices”; the newspapers described the project as “Ağaoğlu’s remarkable success in the Turkish construction sector.”⁶⁰

⁵⁹ Özdemir “Başbakan TOKİ’ye her gün gecekonduları soruyor.”

⁶⁰ Sadi Özdemir, “Yüzde 1 peşinat formülü işe yaradı, konutta krizi dağıttı,” *Hürriyet*, March 6, 2010, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/14023344.asp>. and “Reklam filminde kendisi rol aldı,” *Hürriyet*, September 24, 2010, accessed May 4, 2010, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/15859073.asp?noMobile=true>.

Even though Ađaođlu earned a good reputation by means of the complimentary news of the mainstream media, he still sought new ways of becoming more popular. When the Turkish national basketball team, “The 12 Giant Men,” won two silver medals at major international tournaments, Ađaođlu bestowed twenty-one apartments in “My World Europe” on the members of the team, and reports of his “generosity” appeared in the mainstream newspapers several times.⁶¹ According to the news, after Ađaođlu gave the luxury houses to the members of “12 Giant Men,” thousands of people queued up to buy houses from the project and become neighbors of the members of the national basketball team.⁶² In this process, benefiting from his instantaneous fame, Ađaođlu played on the TV commercials for My World Europe, and the mainstream media made news about the success of these commercials.⁶³ According to these newspaper reports, by means of the popularity of these advertisements, Ađaođlu sold most of the apartments before the completion of the project.⁶⁴

After the squatter houses in Ayazma were completely demolished, a discourse of advertising the new housing project, My World Europe, was constructed by the mainstream newspapers.

⁶¹ İbrahim Balta, “12 Dev Adam’a, bir hafta içinde 700 komşu geldi,” *Zaman*, September 25, 2010, accessed May 3, 2015, http://www.zaman.com.tr/ekonomi_12-dev-adama-bir-hafta-icinde-700-komsu-geldi_1031865.html.

⁶² Balta, “12 Dev Adam’a, bir hafta içinde 700 komşu geldi.”

⁶³ “Ađaođlu reklamdan 1 milyon dolar aldı eğitime verecek,” *Milliyet*, September 26, 2010, accessed May 1, 2015, <http://www.milliyet.com.tr/agaoglu-reklamdan-1-milyon-dolar-aldi-egitime-verecek/ekonomi/haberdetayarsiv/07.10.2010/1293994/default.htm>.; Eren Güler, “İnsanlar konut almak için kuyruđa giriyor,” *Hürriyet*, October 1, 2010, accessed April 29, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/15902055.asp>. and “Satış ofisine bir günde 2 bin ziyaret,” *Zaman*, September 26, 2010, accessed May 1, 2015, http://mobil.zaman.com.tr/ekonomi_satis-ofisine-bir-gunde-2-bin-ziyaret_1032138.html.

⁶⁴ For the newspaper reports promoting the My World Europe project see “6 aya 3 proje sığdırdı yabancılara kapıyı açtı,” *Hürriyet*, October 25, 2010, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/16124157.asp>. and “Satış ofisine bir günde 2 bin ziyaret.”

To make an interpretation about the social and economic status of the owners of the apartments in My World Europe, it can be considered that, in 2010, the cheapest apartment in the project was about 250.000 TL, and the most expensive apartment was 950.000 TL. It means that, the apartments were bought by upper-middle class and upper class groups in Turkey.

The promotion of the My World Europe project was enriched with colorful renderings of the ongoing project. In these images, a so-called “utopian” world was depicted with a “clean” environment and “modern” people. Moreover, the images of Ağaoğlu with politicians and other famous public figures were attached to the news about My World Europe. This promotion process continued for a long time, even after the completion of the project.



Figure 4: My World Europe



Figure 5 and Figure 6: My World Europe

In the period after the evacuation of people from Ayazma, the construction of My World

Europe started. Unlike the mainstream media, the alternative media criticized Ađaođlu and his project in Ayazma and focused on the criticisms of urban professionals, non-governmental organizations, and professional chambers as well as the inhabitants of Ayazma. As a response to Ali Ađaođlu's TV commercials of My World Europe, Ayazma people shot a short movie, "My World Ayazma," to protest the Ayazma Urban Transformation Projects, gentrification in Ayazma, and demolition of the houses and this movie was shown by the alternative media.⁶⁵ With the demolition of the all the squatter houses and the removal of all the ruins, the resistance of the Ayazma people decreased. Most of them moved to other district to set up tents or find cheap squatter houses, but some of them continued their legal struggle. The alternative media continued to report on these people's resistance but started a retrospective discourse at the same time. The story of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project was written out from the beginning and utilized by the alternative media to revisit the victimization of the people in Ayazma. Moreover, with a retrospective approach again, the government's urban and housing policies were criticized by emphasizing the "tragic" end of the transformation story in Ayazma. The advertisement strategies of Ađaođlu, and the role of the politicians and mainstream media in this advertisement process were highlighted on the websites.⁶⁶ With the rising popularity of Ađaođlu by means of the mainstream media, the dark side of this so-called "success story" of Ađaođlu was declared once more on these websites. Since there were many other urban transformation projects in progress in different

⁶⁵ "Ali Ađaođlu'na Ayazmalılar'dan reklamlı yanıt," *Sendika.org*, December 14, 2010, accessed May 2, 2015, <http://www.sendika.org/2010/12/ali-agaogluna-ayazmalilardan-reklamli-yanit/>.

⁶⁶ "Açılımlı Dönüşüm Ve Kentsel Yalanlar," *Imece*, accessed May 2, 2015, http://www.toplumunsehircilikhareketi.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=150:acilimli-doenuem-ve-kentsel-yanlar&catid=35:en-mahalle&Itemid=52.; Yaşar Adanalı, "Bir "kentsel aklama" hikayesi: Ađaođlu My World," *Sendika.org*, October 1, 2010, accessed May 3, 2015, <http://www.sendika.org/2010/10/bir-kentsel-aklama-hikayesi-agaoglu-my-world-yasar-adanali-mutlukent-wordpress-com/>. and Ezgi Bakçay Çolak, "Küresel Markalı Kente İsyân," *Imece*, accessed May 3, 2015, http://www.toplumunsehircilikhareketi.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=169:kueresel-markali-kente-syan&catid=8:makaleler&Itemid=15.

cities, the alternative media utilized the story of Ayazma project to start a new resistance against other projects. After a while, the alternative media almost completely turned its attention to the other urban transformation projects, but even a long time after the completion of the Ayazma project, it continued to revisit the story of the victimization in Ayazma.

During the period between the start and the completion of the Ayazma Urban transformation Project, as described above, the alternative media networks produced different discourses and according to the shifts in the timeline of the project, they used images to enrich their discourses. Besides these images produced by the alternative media, photographs of the process of the transformation in Ayazma taken by a photography collective, Nar Photos, both aimed at the creation of the public awareness about the story of Ayazma and supported the discourse of the alternative media with the power of the images.

As stated on their website, Nar Photos was established in 2003 as an independent collective of photography artists for "understanding and expressing" the world, emphasizing the inequalities of the world, and depicting the social ignorance about these inequalities collectively through the agency of photography.⁶⁷ The collective has been sharing their photography archives with people through street exhibitions, books, publications, and their own website since their foundation. These artists focus on different groups of society; especially the oppressed and ignored groups in Turkey and produce photo-interviews to depict the injustice conditions of the contemporary world.

After the announcement of the urban transformation project in Ayazma, two photographers from Nar Photos, Kerem Uzel and Serra Akcan started to take photographs of Ayazma, the squatter houses, the people living there, their daily lives in Ayazma, their public

⁶⁷ See www.narphotos.net

demonstrations, the people's eviction from Ayazma, their relocation to Bezirganbahçe, life in Bezirganbahçe and the tenants who stayed behind and set up their tents in Ayazma. They then created a photography collection called "Ayazma Neighborhood, Urban Transformation" that consists of twenty-five photographs. The artists produced all the photographs in black and white to emphasize the deep and rich content of the photographs by neutralizing color. These artistic images showing the process of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project through the eyes of the inhabitants of Ayazma were published on the website of the Nar Photos, and, they were used in local and international publications and also used by the alternative media as the witness of the process of the Ayazma project. The photographers attached short informative texts to each photograph and explained the story behind them. Therefore, the photography collection provided additional information about the story of transformation for the visitors of the website.

Some of these photographs inform the observer about daily life in Ayazma before the demolition of the neighborhood, some of them give hints about the culture of Ayazma, some of them narrate the disappointment of Ayazma people, some of them describe their sorrow. There is one photograph showing two people looking at Ayazma from a distance just before the start of the demolitions. (Figure 7) There are some other photographs that emphasize the contrast between the life in Ayazma and the rest of the city. For example, in one of the photographs, a squatter house in Ayazma is seen with three sheep standing in front of the house. (Figure 8) The laundry is hanging outside of the building and a woman and her son are standing near the exterior door. There is not a strict boundary between the inside and outside of the house—in contrast with the apartments in Bezirganbahçe. Another photograph shows the new life in Bezirganbahçe and its 12-story buildings, which are so different from the one or two story houses with gardens the residents lived in Ayazma. (Figure 9) The photograph

shows a man standing lonely between the huge buildings of the social housing development. These photographs produced between the start and end of the transformation project in Ayazma communicated with the people outside of Ayazma and touched them with the silent but deep language of photography.



Figure 7: The last sight at Ayazma



Figure 8: Life in Ayazma



Figure 9: Catastrophe in Bezirganbahçe

As described above, in the third period of the transformation in Ayazma, the mainstream media, the alternative media and other organizations that recorded the process of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project like Nar Photos approached life after the demolition of Ayazma from different perspectives. In contrast with the mainstream media that ignored the social and economic trauma of the Ayazma people and produced a new language of words and images to market the “transformed” land for its new owners, the alternative media dealt with the whole Ayazma story from the beginning and emphasized the intentions behind the actions of the political actors and the tragic effects of these actions on the lives of poor people evicted from Ayazma.

4. Ruins as a Locus of Revolutionary Potential

...But one of the things that often happens with disasters is that new things come out of them. These new things can be very, very significant. I think the reason why disaster produces something new is because the typical bourgeois power structure disappears, and the ruling classes are unable to govern. That creates a situation where people can start to govern themselves outside of those traditional power structures. So we are likely to see possibilities emerge, not

only in Rojava but also elsewhere.⁶⁸ David Harvey

After the finalization of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project, both the mainstream media and the alternative media continued their discourse production about the new urban transformation projects in other districts of Istanbul as well as other large cities of Turkey. However, after a while, the Ayazma case fell into oblivion in time and went down in history as an “achievement” of the political actors in Turkey for the mainstream media. On the other hand, the alternative media revisited the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project as the story of transferring urban land from urban poor to the urban bourgeoisie by state force. The alternative media, in its battle with other urban transformation projects in Turkey, pointed to the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project as evidence of the oppression of the “others” of the society by the state, and it kept the Ayazma case as a current issue for its audience. It is important to underline the fact that the Ayazma people’s tenacious activism even after the whole Ayazma was demolished supported the construction of this collective memory. In the meantime, the neighborhood organization in Ayazma continued to organize public demonstrations about the inequitable urban policies of the government in solidarity with other neighborhood organizations. The alternative media networks focused on other urban transformation projects in Turkey and reported the news about the aggrieved parties in these projects. Therefore, the alternative media networks enriched their discourse by emphasizing the parallel victimhood of various groups suffering from the urban transformation projects in Turkey. Besides the continuous discourse production of the alternative media networks that

⁶⁸ This is an excerpt from an interview with Professor David Harvey that was conducted in Turkey on May 26, 2015. Harvey points out the condition of the Middle East after the recent wars and emphasizes the physical and social destructions in Middle Eastern cities. He names these tragic events as “disasters.” I found the relationship between “disasters” and future “possibilities”—with positive and hopeful connotations—very related to our case. Harvey’s words about the war in Rojava and Kobane imply a kind of hope—despite the destructive nature of the disaster and war itself. I think the hope implied here is not much different from the hope that rises from ruins. David Harvey, “Reclaiming the city from Kobane to Baltimore,” accessed June 1, 2015, online available at: <http://roarmag.org/2015/05/david-harvey-interview-rojava-baltimore/>.

are mentioned in the previous parts of this thesis, a documentary film, *Ecumenopolis: City Without Limits*, by İmre Azem, that reveals how the neoliberal politics of the Turkish government shape the unequal growth and transformation of Istanbul through the case of Ayazma Urban Transformation Project, was shown in independent movie festivals in 2011; its approach to the issue contributed to the existing critical evaluations of the issue of urban transformation in Turkey. Predictably, the documentary could not reach a big audience, but it still raised public awareness about urban land's becoming a space of capital accumulation in large cities.⁶⁹ The film provided a new perspective to the existing debates on urban transformation by portraying the big picture of various power relations behind urban transformation projects, so it was supported and advertised by the alternative media.

In addition to the alternative media networks that dealt with the case of Ayazma, independent organizations that recorded the transformation process in Ayazma like Nar Photos, the short movie, and “My World Ayazma” shot by Ayazma people as a response to Ağaoğlu TV commercials for the project My World Europe, the documentary film became another witness of the urban decay that was buried under the “modern” towers of the new world in Ayazma. All of these witnesses recorded the transformation of urban land through the visual and textual materials provided by the ruins of Ayazma. All of these witnesses recorded the transformation of urban land through the visual and textual materials provided by the ruins of Ayazma. As Walter Benjamin stated in his *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, “in the ruin, history physically merges into setting.”⁷⁰ The ruins of Ayazma preserved the story of

⁶⁹ Because of the leftist ideological stances of the producers of the movie and because of the fact that *Ecumenopolis* is an activist movie, the producers preferred not to be supported by a sponsor to show their movie in movie theatres. This decision affected the marketing of *Ecumenopolis*, the number of movie theatres that the movie was shown and the number of people saw the movie in movie theatres. Acting as activists, the producers of the movie preferred to show *Ecumenopolis* in some events for free—besides movie theatres. Because of these reasons, it is not possible to provide the exact number of the people who have seen this documentary movie.

⁷⁰ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p177

the birth and death of the neighborhood until they were completely swept from the land. They preserved the moments of hope and resistance as well as disappointment and destruction during the transformation of Ayazma.

Although ruins emerge as products of destruction, they also turn into new construction through the continuous accumulation of new stories. Although ruins emerge from the destruction of a specific object's existence, According to Walter Benjamin, ruins are not temples of melancholy and gloominess, but rather places of dialectical images of different historical surfaces, which can be remembered and "redeemed" in the future.⁷¹ Because of the ruins' capacity for producing these dialectical images, they do not only point out deterioration, but also a set of future possibilities with blithe or desperate results. While talking about dialectic images buried in ruins and their revival in various layers of history, it is crucial to mention Benjamin's concept of history that attributes significance to the relationship between present and past in terms of its potential to produce future revolutions. In his "Theses on the Philosophy of History", Benjamin, emphasizes the differences between historicism and historical materialism by comparing these two concepts' interpretation of the past in relation to the present.⁷² According to Benjamin, historicism is predominantly concerned with understanding "the past" as dependent on its own temporality in a linear time concept. On the other hand, historical materialism attracts attention to "the present" that is to be reproduced in a dialectical relationship with "the past." In this viewpoint, the past preserves an index of temporary moments, which is open to redeeming in the present. Benjamin states "the materialist presentation of history leads the past to bring the present into

⁷¹ Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, p177

⁷² Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History."

a critical state”.⁷³ In contrast with more conventional theories of history based on a linear time concept, which interprets time as a “homogenous” and “empty” room, where “one could wait for the emergence of the revolutionary situation with more or less equanimity,” Benjamin’s interpretation of the concept of time is full of moments of “revolutionary rupture” within the endlessness of history.⁷⁴ From this perspective, a historian, rather than evaluating history as an index of events that are lined up according to a chronological order, apprehends the “constellation” that is formed with the present and earlier layers of history.⁷⁵ A true portrayal of the present is possible with thinking it as a constellation that includes a group of stars, some of which are close to the point that we are standing and some of which are far away. Benjamin evaluates the moment of “now” and the moment of the “past” together, in a unity. He proposes that, the only way of interpreting the past is looking at it from the perspective of the present. In the “revolutionary moments” of history, the moment of the present and the moment of the past meet and their unity leaps as a rupture in history.⁷⁶

In the case of Ayazma, the revolutionary moments where the past and the present meet can be experienced through the agency of alternative media. The alternative media—in contrast to the predominant historicist approach of the mainstream media that interpreted the transformation of Ayazma within the boundaries of the past and never revisited it again with a critical approach—sought opportunities to bleed the past images of the ruins of Ayazma into the present. During and after the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project, the alternative media in Turkey archived moments of “tragedy” and “resistance” that came into being in the

⁷³ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Eiland, H. and McLaughlin, K. Trans., (Cambridge, UK, 1999,) 471.

⁷⁴ Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, 4 -402

⁷⁵ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 263.

⁷⁶ Benjamin, “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” 261.

heart of the ruins of Ayazma. The ruins of Ayazma witnessed the story of the land and the alternative media recorded the images of testimony buried into the ruins. Ruins, like Ayazma, store the passed moments of yesterday, freeze these moments and burry them inside to reveal them again in the revolutionary moments of future. In these moments, the frozen images of everyday life/urban life become the generators of individual or collective resistances. Having the potential to preserve the frozen images of the past, ruins wait for the ruptures in history to fuel a future revolution. However, in many cases—like in the case of Ayazma—the city does not allow these ruins to stay in place forever.⁷⁷ The removal of the ruins mean the clearing of the debris from the history forever, but when the ruins are recorded on another surface, they continue their existence in images and texts. In this vein, the agents of recording the dialectical images of ruins come into question. These agents, like the alternative media in Turkey, provide new confrontational moments between the ruins and their observers. As stated previously, after the demolition of Ayazma, the ruins of the district preserved the images and stories of Ayazma until the ruins were completely cleared from the land for the construction of My World Europe. With the start of the new construction in the site, the ruins of Ayazma were erased from the land with all the images they contained. However, although they don't exist on the land anymore, the ruins were immortalized by means of the alternative media. In other words, the dialectical images of Ayazma were placed in the collective memory of the society to be redeemed as a “rupture” in the future through the agency of the alternative media. And as we saw above, according to Benjamin, the revolutionary changes in future will be experienced through these ruptures breaking the linear continuity of history.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ For example, in the case of Ayazma, the ruins were removed from the land for building new residential buildings, My World Europe project, in the place of these ruins.

⁷⁸ Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project*. Ed. Rolf Tiedmann. Trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin. Cambridge, MA and London: Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1999. P. 463-464

Therefore, it can be stated that, although the alternative media in Turkey speaks to a comparatively small audience and it is very difficult for it to intervene in the actions of the state directly, the alternative media in Turkey provides a medium for the accumulation of the frozen images of history and places them in the collective memory of people. These frozen images can then be recalled in revolutionary moments in the form of ruptures in history. The accumulated images of the ruins fuel urban resistances. Although the resistance of small groups cannot stop the transformation of cities, the alternative media utilizes the dialectic images of the past to support these groups and remind them of the forgotten history. These groups seek for firing new resistances and constituting future's urban movements. The alternative media utilizes the dialectic images of the past for supporting the resisting groups and reminding them the forgotten history.

As described in this thesis, the alternative media agents played a crucial role in recording and transmitting the story of Ayazma, producing a critical discourse about the way that the political actors and private investors transformed the urban space and molding the public opinion accordingly. The stories and images of the ruins of Ayazma were utilized by the alternative media for confronting the audience with the "reality" of Ayazma. During the transformation of Ayazma, the dialectical images of the process were buried in the ruins of Ayazma. Here the word *images* does not imply just its literal meaning, but also a metaphorical one: the frozen moments of destruction and construction, demolition and rising or victimization and victory. The alternative media captured these moments and fixed them into a written discourse. Although the discourse of the alternative media could not have had an impact on the implementation of the Ayazma project, it utilized the discourse of Ayazma for firing new collective resistances. Although these resistances organized by small groups could not change the urban transformation plans of the political actors, they contributed to the

accumulation of the resistive moments. The people who supported the public demonstrations against the Ayazma project and who resisted the demolition of the neighborhood came together for other neighborhood resistances.

The images of the ruins of Ayazma were remembered in various times: when some leftist organizations started demonstrations to protest the construction of the third bridge over the Bosphorus in Istanbul, when Turkey became a candidate for hosting the 2020 Olympics in Istanbul, when the Turkish government enacted a law for implementing new urban transformation projects without struggling with legal barriers in the neighborhoods that have an earthquake risk, or when the city municipalities started building new shopping malls by clearing some important historical buildings in Turkish cities. In all of these cases, the moments of destruction, demolition, sorrow, despair and resistance in Ayazma, which turned into dialectical images played an important role in reviving the soul of resistance in revolutionary moments. In these cases, the resisters grew their resistance through the accumulation of the dialectical images of other ruins. The soul of this resistance found one of the most important revolutionary moments in Occupy Gezi movement in June 2013 that started as a result of the accumulation of public discontent with the Turkish government's urban and social policies. This movement marked a turning point for the history of democracy in Turkey. In the Occupy Gezi movement, the urbanites of Istanbul as well as people from other cities, who had some common concerns about the actions of the government in general, became a "collective body" to advocate for their "right to the city".⁷⁹

⁷⁹ David Harvey revisits Lefebvre's concept of "right to the city" and states that: "We live in an era when ideals of human rights have moved centre stage both politically and ethically. A great deal of energy is expended in promoting their significance for the construction of a better world. But for the most part the concepts circulating do not fundamentally challenge hegemonic liberal and neoliberal market logics, or the dominant modes of legality and state action. We live, after all, in a world in which the rights of private property and the profit rate trump all other notions of rights." David Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review* 53, September-October 2008, <http://www.newleftreview.org/?page=article&view=2740>.

Despite the fact that the right-to-the-city claim made in Turkey was not able to re-form the dominant urban politics of the government—because this claim was not powerful enough to build stable political and organizational forms, the Gezi uprising marked a very important Benjaminian “rupture” and a revolutionary moment in the historiography of Turkey, which will be able to read better in the coming years.

Considering the revival of the dialectical images of the ruins of Ayazma in various moments of history—like in Gezi uprising as well as other contemporary public resistances—this thesis explores how the Benjaminian concept of history and time, and the relationship between the past and present can be read in a contemporary case like Ayazma. In this sense, this study claims that the dialectical images of Ayazma as well as other transforming cities and areas will be recalled and redeemed in the breaking points of history to construct future revolutions not only in the context of Turkey, but also in other geographies with resisting bodies.

Concluding Remarks

In this thesis, the discourse production of mainstream and alternative media in Turkey is investigated through the case of Ayazma Urban Transformation Project in Istanbul in order to comprehend the positions of the media in molding the public opinion about the concept of urban transformation in contemporary Turkey. Urban transformation has always been a controversial issue in Turkey and since the early 2000s, it has been one of the most powerful

There is a contemporary wave of urban uprisings and all have in common a particular preoccupation with urban space. In this respect, Occupy Wall Street, Tiananmen, Tahrir, and Independence Squares and Gezi Park urban movements are dramatic manifestations of the struggles of social groups and the power of collective body in urban space. These movements and these public spaces provided a stage on which different actors demonstrated their ideals collectively. By exploding in public squares, these movements of collective bodies have built solidarity through simple togetherness and political activism.

apparatuses of the state in terms of manifesting the state's power and yielding profit to the state. Therefore, in the first part of this thesis, the economic, political and social conditions in the context of 2000s's Turkey that gave rise to the issue of urban transformation is analyzed. In this analysis, it can be seen that the emergence of the JDP as the only authority in making decisions about the issue of production, demolition and reproduction of urban space has made the issue of urban transformation in Turkey a speculative concept. In the second part of this thesis, the issue of urban transformation is exemplified with the case of Ayazma Urban Transformation Project that was started in 2004 and completed in 2010. During the period that Ayazma project was implemented, the political actors and private investors who were involved in the urban transformation process in Ayazma changed the lives of the people living in the squatter houses in a negative way. In the meantime, as described in the third part of this thesis, the mainstream media newspapers developed a promotional discourse for supporting the urban transformation process in Ayazma. On the other hand, the alternative media emphasized the political, ideological and economic benefits for the government in the Ayazma project and warned their audiences about the project's possible tragic outcomes, so it developed an oppositional discourse. The mainstream media and the alternative media changed the direction of their discourses according to the some key events that happened during the process. In order to compare the attitudes of different media networks towards the Ayazma project, the opposing discourses of these media agents were analyzed according to these shifts in the timeline of the project.

When the mainstream media's and the alternative media's approaches to the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project are evaluated in the first three parts of this thesis, it can be stated that these media agents could not meet on a common ground about neither the issue of the transformation of underdeveloped environments in cities in general or the eviction,

demolition and reconstruction of Ayazma in particular. Considering the fact that Ayazma was in a really poor condition and it needed a kind of regeneration on the site, it can be stated that neither the mainstream media nor the alternative media dealt with this issue with a neutral discourse. Both sides of the media utilized the poor condition of Ayazma to develop a promotional or resistance discourse about the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project. Although the evaluation of the tendentiousness or the neutrality of these media agents is not a part of this research, it can be stated that, both of these media groups developed their discourses for supporting or resisting the government rather than describing the condition of Ayazma objectively and offering new solutions for solving the problems of the neighborhood. Therefore, despite the difference of the discourses produced by the mainstream media and the alternative media, these media agents used similar representation and description methods to enrich their arguments. For instance, while the mainstream media published the images of the squatter houses in Ayazma to emphasize the neighborhood's poor condition and its need for a large scale "transformation," the alternative media used the images of the tents and ruins of Ayazma to describe how miserable the Ayazma people were after their houses were demolished during the urban transformation project. In this example, each type of image production pointed out a different kind of wretchedness, and these images were used for enriching a different argument. (Figure 10, Figure 11 and Figure 12) Moreover, while the mainstream media produced texts about the satisfaction of the people living in Bezirganbahçe and published images showing the "modern" apartment buildings in Bezirganbahçe, the alternative media produced texts and images telling a completely different story. Despite the difference of their arguments, both media groups reported news about the new social housing development in Bezirganbahçe according to their own ideological stances.



Figure 10: Children playing in henhouses in Ayazma before the transformation



Figure 11 and 12: The ruins of Ayazma after the demolition

Despite the fact that the mainstream media is more powerful than the alternative media because of the relative size of its audience and its institutionalized formation, the alternative media has a remarkable potential for opening up new possibilities to fire future revolutions. In the fourth part of this thesis, it is stated that alternative media produced a resistive discourse about the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project and during this process, it recorded the resistance moments and images of the neighborhood that was turned into ruins. These ruins kept all images of Ayazma inside until they were removed from the land and the alternative media fixed these images in its discourse and saved them for the future generations. Revisiting Walter Benjamin's interpretation of historical materialism and

concept of time that regards the past as a room of dialectical images that would be redeemed in the future, this thesis states that the alternative media has a different mission than the mainstream media in terms of recording the dialectical images of the ruins to the collective memory of society, carrying these images to the present to fire ruptures in history and triggering urban revolutions.

As a concluding remark, it can be stated that the problems of profit oriented urban transformation projects, eviction of people from their neighborhoods for transferring the urban land to more privileged social groups, relocation of the evicted groups to isolated high-rise apartment blocks and the discourse production of mainstream media and alternative media in these transformation processes are not peculiar to Istanbul or Turkey. As stated in the very beginning of this thesis, there are many other developing countries like Turkey that have experienced rapid urbanization in large cities since the second half of the 20th century and there are many urban deterioration, gentrification, eviction, and victimization stories in different contexts that give rise to different urban resistances. Therefore, the story of the Ayazma Urban Transformation Project is not a unique case but it is significant to revisit the case of Ayazma as well as other urban transformation cases to refresh the memories of all collective bodies, revive the revolutionary moments of these cases, fire new ruptures in history and fuel new urban resistances. As mentioned previously, David Harvey states, “one of the things that often happens with disasters is that new things come out of them. These new things can be very, very significant.”⁸⁰ This thesis claims that the “new things” mentioned by Harvey are the possible urban revolutions and these revolutions will occur through the dialectic images of urban disasters.

⁸⁰ Harvey, “Reclaiming the city from Kobane to Baltimore.”

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