Socio-spatial Dynamics of Contentious Politics: A Case of Urban Warfare in the Kurdish Region of Turkey

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Abstract

The literature on contentious politics tends to explain the dynamics of collective action on the ground of sequential events in national and international politics. This time-centered perspective in contentious politics usually discards the spatial dynamics of contention. This article draws on the growing literature on the geography of contentious politics and examines how production and transformation of the place witness and produce multiple layers of contention by focusing on urban warfare in Suriçi, Diyarbakır as a crucial case. This article focuses on the socio-spatial dynamics of Suriçi which have been constituted in everyday life within a certain physicality, and through collective identity, solidarity networks, relation of trust, strong communal ties. And, it argues that these socio-spatial dynamics which are targeted through top-down urgent expropriation decisions today, facilitated urban warfare in Suriçi when the Peace Process came to an end in the summer of 2015.

Key words: Kurdish; Suriçi; urban warfare; curfew; everyday politics

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Introduction

The failure of the Peace Process in Turkey as a result of rising authoritarianism and the rise of Rojava as an autonomous region escalated the tension between the state and Kurdish national movement in Turkey. This led the Kurdish national movement to declare autonomous self-rule in the various districts in the Kurdish region in the summer of 2015. However, these autonomous self-rule declarations were not recognized by the central government. In return, the central government declared curfews in the urban centers which resulted in violent confrontations between the state and PKK (Kurdistan Workers' Party) in urban centers and towns from the summer of 2015 up until the spring of 2016.

In Suriçi, autonomous self-rule was declared on August 14, 2015 (HDP, 2016: 21). The state for the first-time declared curfew and launched a "security operation" on September 6, 2015 (TİHV, 2017). These security operations which turned to an urban war between the Kurdish national movement and the state, which continued until March 9, 2016 (AMNESTY, 2016: 9). Even though the war ended in 2016, in the six neighborhoods[2] where the conflict was at its peak, the curfew is still going on today (TİHV, 2017).

Most of the macro political explanations for the emergence of urban warfare focus on the failure of the Peace Process as a result of rising authoritarianism in Turkey and the rise of Rojava as an autonomous region under the rule of the PKK. However, these explanations by themselves cannot explain why certain localities were host to urban warfare while other districts in the same city or region continued their everyday life. Therefore, in this study, I examine the micro level dynamics that facilitated the emergence of urban warfare by focusing on Suriçi as a case and addressing the question of why urban warfare emerged nowhere else in Diyarbakır, but in Suriçi. This article shows that the socio-spatial dynamics of Suriçi have been constituted within a certain physicality, and through a collective identity, solidarity networks, relation of trust, and strong communal ties. These socio-spatial dynamics facilitated urban warfare in Suriçi, Diyarbakır when the Peace Process between the state and the Kurdish national movement came to an end in 2015.

A Stage of Insurgency: Suriçi, Diyarbakir

Sur People's Assembly, composed of activists, co-presidents of Sur Municipality and a number of residents declared autonomous self-rule in Hasırlı neighborhood, Suriçi on August 14, 2015 (HDP, 2016: 24). After the declaration of autonomous self-rule, the first thing that the Kurdish militias tried to do was to bear arms and militarily defend "their place" from the state. Arif, a carpenter from Suriçi claimed that after the declaration of autonomous self-rule, they started to see the Kurdish youth of Suriçi under arms take charge of the public order in different neighborhoods. The Kurdish militias who organized under the Patriotic Revolutionary Youth Movement (YDG-H in Turkish) supported by the PKK started to make trenches and barricades after the declaration of autonomous self-rule. The state responded to these ditches and barricades by declaring a curfew for the first time on September 6, 2015.

From September 6, 2015 up until November 28, 2015, the armed forces of the state continued their small-scale operations, but they could not go into the neighborhoods due to the trenches and barricades (Gazete Duvar, 2017). On November 28, 2015, Tahir Elçi, the president of the Diyarbakır Bar Association, made a press conference in front of the Four-Footed Minaret in order to draw attention to the destruction in the historical city center because of the conflicts in the district. He was murdered during the press conference, and after his death the state declared another curfew on December 2, 2015, which was interrupted on December 11, 2015, for only 17 hours and lasted up until March 9, 2016 (Milliyet, 2016). During the 103 days of urban warfare in Suriçi, YDG-H militias and the state fought with

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each other in Dabanoğlu, Savaş, Hasırlı, Cemal Yılmaz, Cevat Paşa and Fatihpaşa neighborhoods using heavy weapons (Gazete Duvar, 2017).

According to the data provided by the Human Rights Association of Turkey (TİHV, 2017), overall, curfews have been officially declared at least 169 times in one city and in 39 districts of 10 cities in the Kurdish region and Suriçi was one of those districts. Urban warfare took place in at least 30 urban districts and a number of rural locations which caused killings, tortures, gender-based violence against women, displacements, disappearances and destruction of homes, as well as cultural monuments in those districts (OHCHR, 2017: 5). However, the scale and intensity of the encounter between the state and Kurdish national movement differed from each other in these places. According to the data provided by the report of OHCHR (2017), the most serious incidents that caused significant numbers of deaths and destructions were reported in Cizre -province of Şırnak, and then in Suriçi, Diyarbakır (p. 5). Nusaybin -province of Mardin, and Suriçi were two important locations where the largest destruction of houses, public buildings, and businesses occurred (see Figure 1) (OHCHR, 2017: 9).

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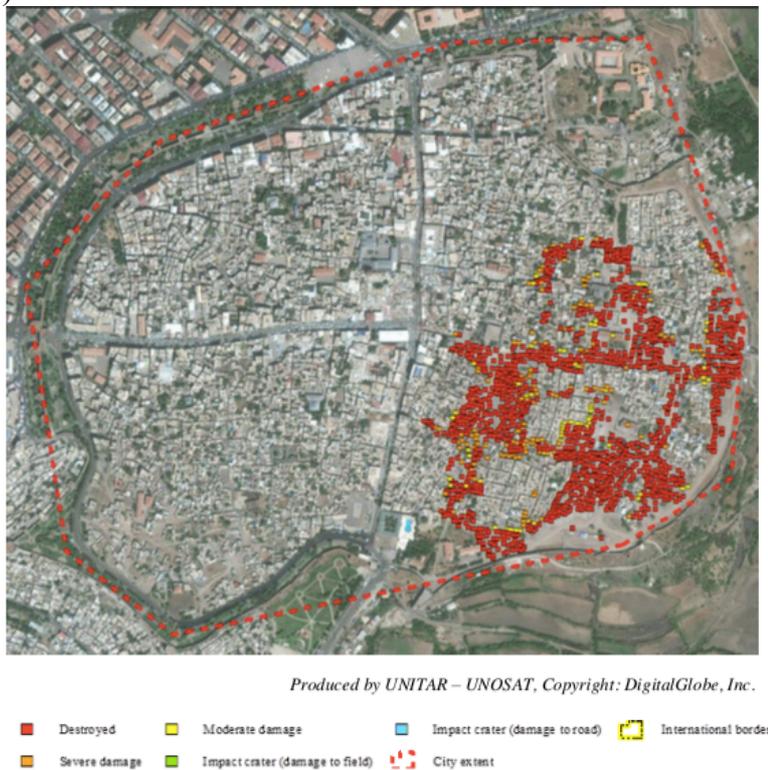| ■ Destroyed	□ Moderate damage	■ Impact crater (damage to road)	⌐ International border
■ Severe damage	■ Impact crater (damage to field)	⌐ City extent	

Figure 1: Destructions that took place in Suriçi during and in the aftermath of urban warfare by July 26, 2016 (OHCHR, 2017, p. 10).

This study takes Suriçi as a crucial case because it was an important center during urban warfare in the Kurdish region due to the duration and intensity of urban warfare in Suriçi as well as severe casualties and large destruction that occurred in the place. Even after the end of the conflict, the curfew in the six neighborhoods of Suriçi has continued until today which also made this curfew the longest curfew in the world history (Umut Gazetesi, 2018). In addition to that, expropriation of 6292 parcels of land from Suriçi by the Council of Ministers aftermath of urban warfare (GABB & Sur Municipality, 2016: 8; Resmi Gazete, 2016; AMNESTY, 2016: 8) showed that it was a crucial site of contention between the state and movement which targeted "to be brought under control" even after the end of urban warfare. Furthermore, Suriçi's history as being a 2000-year-old historical center of uninterrupted urban life made possible to research urban dynamics of contention in that specific place. As the residents of Suriçi indicated during the fieldwork, Suriçi has also been

an important center for the Kurdish struggle as the old center of the capital of historical Kurdistan, which is Diyarbakır.

All in all, this research is built upon a qualitative case analysis by taking Suriçi as a crucial case and seeks to understand production of Suriçi as a social space through scrutinizing everyday life patterns. Therefore, in this article I draw on the interviews that I conducted in Diyarbakır with 41 people in July 2016, March 2017, and July 2017 (Appendix) as well as news, documents and official reports on Suriçi. Among the interviewees, there were 29 local residents who either still live in Suriçi or had left it before or after the urban warfare. Most of these interviewees had not left Suriçi back then and the interviews took place in Suriçi. However, some of the interviewees who had left Suriçi due to the warfare and destruction I visited in different neighborhoods outside of Suriçi. This enabled me to observe the conditions that people from Suriçi faced as a result of forced migration. Among these interviewees, there were 16 male and 13 female interviewees. Their ages ranged from 17 to 75. Ethnic and religious background of these interviewees differed from one another to understand whether people before the warfare actually did realize everyday practices which could be argued as inclusive for all residents. In addition to these interviewees, there were 2 interviewees who do not live in Suriçi but attended religious ceremonies of an Armenian church in Suriçi. Among these 29 interviewees, there were also 3 shopkeepers and 2 mukhtars of Suriçi. Apart from local residents and people who work in Suriçi, elite interviews were also conducted in March 2017 and June 2017 with ten people. These ten people are composed of urban planners, architects, master architects, officers and activists.

Interviews were designed as semi-structured, that is to say, a framework was set beforehand; however, the structure of the interviews allowed interviewees to talk about their experiences, prospects and perceptions over space, as well as the multiple, unconventional ways to use space. I employed snowball sampling during my fieldwork. As would be expected, it was not easy to talk about the urban warfare with residents who directly experienced the violent clash between the state and PKK. Therefore, I started to conduct preliminary interviews with the residents and mukhtars of Suriçi who I met via my broker in July 2016. Then, I continued my interviews with the referrals of my first interviewees. Nevertheless, almost all of the interviewees preferred to be anonymous in this study which concentrates on a "sensitive issue". Furthermore, even though I assured them that I would use the information they provided anonymously, they still were not willing to openly talk about politics and what happened in Suriçi. Therefore, the interviews mostly focused on spatial imaginaries, memories, experiences and everyday practices in Suriçi.

Theoretical Framework: Spatializing Politics

Lefebvre (2007) claims that space is not a natural or objective entity; it always has its own history and conflicts within itself. He discusses the revolutionary potential of space by arguing that the violence of power which is used to actualize rationality of the state in a place would be answered through "the violence of subversion" (p. 23). Subversion against this rationality can be actualized through wars, revolutions, defeats and victories, because of the fact that the endeavor to realize this state-led normality is always subjected to transgressions in different forms (Lefebvre, 2007: 23). In addition to that, Merrifield (1993) argues that ruling ideologies like the capitalist world system have their own spatial configuration, but the realization of their spatial imaginary takes different paths in different places with a dialectical relation with macro level politics.

This understanding of space in a sense requires us to consider any events, changes or destruction in one locality, not just as a mere result of a macro political decision or change, but also as a result of micro political dynamics in that locality, which include that place's history, everyday life, and local institutional politics. In the case of urban warfare in Kurdish cities, even though macro political explanations of warfare and its implication on macro

politics and the Peace Process have been discussed publicly during and after urban warfare, the question of what role urban politics played within these districts has remained unanswered.

Before going into detailed discussions over the spatial dynamics of contentious politics in general, it is important to conceptualize what happened in Suriçi in 2015. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) argue about the compartmentalization within the contentious politics and suggest that focusing on just one of the areas of contentious politics such as social movements, strikes, wars, revolutions or other forms of political actions, limits us (p. 5). They rather emphasize the idea of the collective political struggle. While doing that, they avoid discarding unconventional means of struggle such as violence. The authors emphasize the causal mechanisms and processes of contention to trace commonalities of these various forms of contention rather than striving to classify varying forms of contentious politics (McAdam et al., 2001).

From this perspective, the Kurdish national movement with its actors in different scales of action is a social movement. However, what happened in Suriçi differs from legal politics, or guerilla movement, which has also been persistent in time with military discipline, tactical repertoires, and norms and patterns of its own. Although what happened in 2015 was a central decision made by the military wing of the movement, it was rather an episodic and fragmented moment within the history of the Kurdish struggle which can be described as urban warfare under the umbrella of contentious politics. Apart from being episodic and fragmented moment, I conceptualize this violent encounter as urban warfare because it took place in an urban setting with the use of heavy weaponry by the both sides.

After having situated the urban warfare within the concept of contentious politics, we need to decipher the mechanisms and processes of this moment. McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) clearly states that political actions occurred through continuity of interactions of people and people's relations with each other in a certain time and space (p. 12). They argued that these social processes can be deciphered through examining causal mechanisms behind them. However, they do not provide analytical tools to decipher these spatially constructed mechanisms and processes that can help us to locate contention in a place. Yet, as Harb (2017) proposes, certain questions are important to answer to understand context of processes and practices within a certain place to identify the contention:

> How and why does urban space contribute to public action and social movements? What is the relationship between power, space, and resistance? How do different groups utilize space to mobilize and facilitate collective action? Which forces that shape space (physical and technological, as well as social, historical, political, and economic) are combined to guide this action? More broadly, how do specific historical, national policies, and global forces shape cities? How are different inequalities constituted by urban life and how do they reconstitute the city? How do the ordinary practitioners of the city negotiate, navigate, appropriate, resist, and transform urban forms? (Para. 2)

In order to provide an answer to these questions, I will draw on the literature on the geography of contention. Firstly, the city is not the backdrop of social movements, rather it is a constitutive part of the collective action (Uitermark et al., 2012). Hence, instead of treating the space as a mere stage of the collective action, we need to understand it as "a relational conduit" through which a movement connects and develops (Uitermark et al., 2012). From this perspective, Martin and Miller (2003) put emphasis on spatial processes and mechanisms

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that bring about a contention in a place. Martin and Miller (2003) argue that how people perceive, shape and act upon grievances and opportunities can be shaped by the space, place, and scale in which they reside. In other words, social and political processes emerge in a certain time and space. Thus, the space should not be considered an empty container of activism but a constitutive part of social processes which leads mobilization in a certain locality. In other words, the relation between space and contentious politics is spatially and historically contingent. This perspective both redefines our conceptions of contentious politics, which have been extensively discussed from a time-centered perspective, as well as shift our attention from episodes of contention to mechanisms and processes in a specific time and space (Martin & Miller, 2003).

Particularly, Walter J. Nicholls (2007; 2008; 2009) proposes important analytical tools which contribute to our understanding of the geographical reasons behind social movements. He looks at the dynamics of spaces through networks, trust, strong ties or solidarity that can emerge in places. Nicholls (2007) argues that it is important to figure out the role geography has on a social movement in terms of the ways it contributes to people's perception of their problems, and their capacities to form networks and collective identities to struggle against the established system (p. 610). According to him, grievances, organizational forms, and consciousness of insurgents are dialectically in a relation with the space: "Thus, the specific role of the city for general social movements is in its function as a relational incubator, facilitating complex relational exchanges that generate a diversity of useful resources for campaigns operating at a variety of spatial scales," (Nicholls, 2008: 842). In addition to that, Nicholls (2007) explains how different places contribute to the nature of mobilization. He states that power relations in terms of political and economic life are not articulated evenly in different localities (Nicholls, 2007: 612). This situation would lead uneven articulation of grievances in distinct geographies which affects participation in a social movement (Nicholls, 2007, p. 612). In addition to that, unevenness in terms of the landscape may also lead for the uneven participation of citizens in a social movement in different places; due to the fact that political opportunities in a place also depends on its landscape (Nicholls, 2007: 613).

Leitner et al. (2008) also describe how places are not only sites for dense human interactions within given borders, but they are also places where power is imbued and so contested when the time comes:

> Places are sites where people live, work and move, and where they form attachments, practice their relations with each other, and relate to the rest of the world. Yet they are more than just sites where dense social relations within and beyond that place join up. They have distinct materiality and a material environment that is historically constructed -networks of roads and railroads, the layout and design of residences, offices, factories, public parks and recreation areas fences, walls, etc. This materiality regulates and mediates social relations and daily routines within a place, and is thus imbued with power (p. 161).

Furthermore, it can easily be argued that this materiality of the place which draws the boundaries of interaction also affects the socio-spatial boundaries of actions and mobility.

Overall, this study draws on the discussions of this newly emerging literature on the geography of contentious politics (Dikeç, 2001; Dikeç, 2005; Harb, 2017; Leitner et al., 2008; Martin & Miller, 2003; Miller & Nicholls, 2013; Nicholls, 2007; Nicholls, 2008; Nicholls, 2009; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2014; Uitermark et al., 2012; Schwedler, 2013; Springer, 2011). It further strives to provide a possible road map to "spatialize politics". In order to do that, it locates the concepts such as materiality of place, place-based identity formation, strong ties, trust, neighborhood relations and solidarity networks into the context of an urban warfare.

The Roots of Insurgency: Socio-Spatial Dynamics of Urban Warfare in Suriçi
Space is produced through political, social, and economic processes. This Lefebvrian understanding also claims that social space is produced through everyday life and also

produces certain everyday relations. While tracing social, political and economic relations through everyday life practices during the fieldwork, I came up with four main categories of socio-spatial dynamics in the place which facilitated the emergence of urban warfare in the district: Formation of a place-based collective identity; strong communal ties, relations of trust and solidarity reproduced through daily practice; being a relatively autonomous space for politicization; physical characteristics of the place that facilitate collective life practices and undermine the successful state penetration.

Formation of a place-based collective identity
The social movement literature strives to understand the process of collective identity formation, which paves the way for any collective action in political life (Miller, 2000). Scholars tend to look at the class, gender, ethnic or religious identities that bring about social movements, or individual identities in a rational choice model. However, Miller (2000) suggests that the place-based identity formation based on a sense of space may also facilitate political mobilization. He claims that the place-based identity is constructed through space and sometimes is strongly associated with the space itself (Miller, 2000: 64). I argue that the residents of Suriçi constructed an identity on the ground of being from Suriçi, and they combined this identity with their Kurdishness when they organized around the Kurdish national movement. Thus, collective identity formation and the emergence of urban warfare in 2015 was facilitated through the strong sense of belonging to the place, multicultural configuration of the place, and common grievances articulated in the place.

As Nicholls (2009) discusses, recurrent encounters between various political subjects in a geographically steady space increase the possibility of forming a coherent togetherness. In Suriçi too, the historicity, centrality and interaction between different groups of people were important to form a collective identity on the ground of a sense of belonging. First of all, it was a historical center where people from different ethnic and religious backgrounds formed dense links with each other and with the space itself over the years. This historicity and centrality are important in order to understand the strong sense of belonging for residents. Mahmut, one of the former residents who was forced to leave after urban warfare, explains this situation as: "If they ask me where is Diyarbakır? I would say Sur is Diyarbakır. Before, there was no other place. There were no such places (that you can see now). These areas were like a desert. There was only Sur," (Mahmut, personal communication, 2016).

The depiction of Suriçi's long history as the city center is important in three senses. First of all, the centrality of Suriçi gave people the chance to access all the means that could be expected from a city such as markets, transportation, and communication networks. Secondly, inhabitation in Suriçi did not have a short history like in Bağlar, Yenişehir or Kayapınar. This enabled people to give meaning to their life with respect to the historical background of the place. Thirdly, because of the fact that it is an old city center, people who lived there enjoyed the permanence by forming strong communal relations with other co-habitants. As one resident states:

> Sur has its own soul. It is a place where the life has continued for ten thousand years. If I come to Diyarbakır and do not visit Sur, what is the point of coming to Diyarbakır? If I visit Diyarbakır, then I need to see the old history of that city or the cultural structure of it, there is no point to just see apartments. If it is about seeing apartments, then I can go anywhere rather than coming to Diyarbakır. Apartments are everywhere in the end. However, there is no other place like Dengbêj House. There is only one Diyarbakır Dengbêj House. (Yavuz, personal communication, 2016)

This historicity and centrality of Suriçi distinguished it from the other newly established districts and neighborhoods in Diyarbakır. This authenticity of the place also reverberated through the way the residents framed the everyday relations. Sabri's depiction, for instance, shows how the residents narrated the unique environment in the district and how

the human interaction was understood within this framework of spatial uniqueness: "Sur is literally a distinct region, let's say a distinct city. It is a small city which has a social life in itself. Human relations within Suriçi are excellent, it is not possible to find such a social life outside of Sur," (Sabri, personal communication, 2016). Suriçi with its historicity and authentic atmosphere enabled its residents to construct a sense of belonging and identity over the space which was a crucial part of any collective action in contentious politics.

Moreover, the multicultural depiction of the place which constitutes the identity of the space and their sense of belonging came to light when they described their childhood memories. Childhood memories of interviewees characterize Suriçi as a place of diversity, rather than a monolith based on exclusive Muslimness. Even though most of the interviewees were Muslim Kurds, they gave reference to the non-Muslim legacy in Suriçi to describe the multiculturalism, rather than talking about their relations with the other Muslim groups such as Turks or Arabs. Muslim Kurds claimed that they built close relations based on trust with non-Muslim residents: "Our neighbors usually were Christians, Jews, and Armenians. We lived together. When we went out of the town, we would give our keys to them. We would not give our keys to the Muslim families, but we would give them to non-Muslims; don't get me wrong, we trusted them." (Murat, personal communication, 2016). Apo, a former Armenian resident of Suriçi also emphasized the harmonious environment in Suriçi that he witnessed and heard about from his mother. He argued that they had Jewish, Syriac, Armenian, and Kurdish neighbors with whom they formed close relations which included even fulfilling domestic tasks together.

According to Nicholls (2008), such a radical diversity in the city also provides the residents a sense of freedom from the tightly circumscribed roles, norms and expectations that one may find in culturally homogenous places (p. 3). He adds that this "wild" character of the place will always be targeted by the state so as to maintain the order (p. 4). In return, the places of diversity can inspire new innovative relations (Nicholls, 2008: 4). Similarly, this relative "freedom" in terms of the religious activities or expression of different ethnic identities was one of the reasons interviewees gave for why the state intervened. Sadık, for instance, argued that this togetherness was against the AKP's monist ideology based on Muslimness and Turkishness. According to Mahmut, the residents fought against this state intervention by combining their cultural and political identities which had been constructed through the codes of Suriçi:

> The intervention from the outside to a degree was an intervention in the cultural and political life in Suriçi. (…) They wanted to wipe this culture away. (…) Thus, the people responded to this intervention by integrating the cultural and political identity of Suriçi. In the end, it is not a self-evident phenomenon that a 70-year-old mother gets behind those barricades. Likewise, it is not a self-evident phenomenon that a 17 or 18-year-old teen stands behind those barricades. This occurred via the integration of the politicized Kurdish identity and the identity of Suriçi. (Mahmut, personal communication, 2016)

Hence, the multicultural configuration is an important component of the collective identity. Although this multicultural character of the collective identity has been challenged through deportation and destruction of the non-Muslim communities in the history of Suriçi, the close neighborhood relations of the past and multicultural visionary of the Kurdish national movement supported a certain degree of restoration of the multicultural past physically and socially. When it comes to its effects on urban warfare, the multicultural atmosphere of the place reinforced the diversity and thereby, a certain degree of freedom in terms of performing negative rights. This situation has been argued by the residents as one of the reasons why the state engaged in warfare in the first place. And, according to them, Kurdish militia fought against this state intervention to their multicultural everyday interaction by acting upon their

identity which had been constructed through primarily on the basis of Kurdishness but ideologically enriched through the multicultural codes in Suriçi.

In order to understand the process of place-based identity formation and its impact on urban warfare, we also need to focus on recent waves of human mobility in Suriçi. Apart from the deportation of non-Muslims in the beginning of 20th century, in more recent history, the civil war period between the state and movement caused important demographic changes in the configuration. During the 1980s and 1990s, people whose villages were burned down started to come to Diyarbakır. Particularly from 1991 to 1994, when the civil war between the state and the PKK was at its peak, there was important human mobility in the district (KMD, 2010: 28).

For economic reasons, Suriçi was an important destination for the newcomers during these years (KMD, 2010: 27). They particularly settled in neighborhoods such as Fatihpaşa, Savaş, Hasırlı, Ben û Sen, or Aziziye which are located in the outskirts of Suriçi. The concentration of these deprived families sped up a process of "slumification" in the eyes of the "other" residents. However, the real reason was, primarily, insufficient infrastructure and public services in these neighborhoods could not handle the increase in population. Because of this, the residents continued to live in very poor conditions, such as long-term electric cuts, problems regarding the sewage system, and so on (KDM, 2009). Secondly, these people who were forced to leave their villages did not have any regular income or job, and this impoverishment led these neighborhoods to have the highest crime rates in Diyarbakır (KDM, 2009: 19). Lastly, the image of poor-quality shanty houses and multi-story buildings also contributed to the treatment of these neighborhoods as the slums.

Although the process of migration was not handled well on the local level, and this in turn brought about various detrimental effects on people's lives as well as in urban life, I argue that the common grievances that have been articulated within these neighborhoods created another line of politicization which also contributed to the emergence of warfare. In the end, it was not a coincidence that neighborhoods in which urban warfare violently erupted were the same neighborhoods which went through the process of "slumification" during and after the 1990s. As Nicholls (2007) argues, the spatial unevenness in terms of the social, political and economic life generates different grievances in the society. Once these grievances are articulated and politicized, they contribute to mobilization in a given place (Nicholls, 2007: 612). After the residents settled in these neighborhoods, they experienced a similar spatial unevenness in terms of accessing social and public services. In addition to that, they lacked regular income. Moreover, Sabri, from the Savaş neighborhood, argued that all of the families in these neighborhoods one way or the other suffered from violence from the state:

> In Sur, there was not one community among it in which one family did not pay the price of this political struggle, did not suffer, whose village was not burned down, or who was not tortured. Not one. Any of the families you call for an interview would tell you a similar story. Even if nothing happened to them, their villages would probably have been burned or they would have been forced from their homes. This group of people has all united in Sur. (Sabri, personal communication, 2016)

Therefore, the human mobility in the outskirts affected the harmonious picture of the place by inflicting the fear of crime and creating a divergence between "us" and "them". This situation challenged the collective identity. However, once the Kurdish national movement started to organize around common grievances, newcomers and their experiences within the urban life enabled the production of political unity and an even stronger unity within these neighborhoods. Within this context, the residents reconstructed their identity based on common grievances and get politicized through these grievances. These common grievances as a part of collective identity were another socio-spatial dynamic that contributed to the emergence of urban warfare in 2015.

Strong communal ties, relations of trust and solidarity reproduced through daily practice
Nicholls (2007; 2008; 2009) suggests that strong ties, trust, and solidarity networks reproduced through everyday interaction based on proximity and stability are important facilitators of social movements. As in the case of Suriçi, apart from the identity and sense of belonging that have been produced through the place, everyday social practices shaped through strong communal ties, relations of trust and solidarity facilitated the emergence of urban warfare in 2015.

Throughout my fieldwork, the social life has always been the focus of interviewees. They usually described the neighborhood relations to illustrate the strong communal ties (re)produced in daily practice and encounters that are unique to Suriçi. For instance, Mahmut asserted that in Diyarbakır's new larger residential areas, neighbors do not know each other. However, in Suriçi everyone knew each other, even though they were not each other's next-door neighbors.

In order to describe the tight communal relations between them, almost all of the interviewees started to talk about the reciprocal relations. For instance, they talked about how every evening each neighbor gives a plate of their own dinner to their neighbors and in exchange, their neighbors also share their food with them. As a result of this dominant social interaction based on reciprocity, every evening the residents would sit at a dinner table which would consist of at least five-six different dishes.

In addition to the relations based on the reciprocity, interviewees usually referred to the uninterrupted neighborhood relations up until 2015. For instance, Arzu, a 58-year-old interviewee, stated that she came to Hasırlı neighborhood when she was 17 years old and that she had the same neighbors for 41 years until she had to move out. These uninterrupted neighborhood relations enabled the formation of strong ties over time. These strong ties among the neighbors led them to embrace each other's problems as their own problems or happiness as their own happiness over time. This created a sense of empathy among the residents:

> When there was a wedding, we would embrace it as a neighborhood. Nobody would call one person the host of the wedding. People would say that this wedding belongs to this street or that neighborhood. Everybody would make the wedding their own there. (Sabri, personal communication, 2016)

However, it wasn't only strong communal ties that perpetuated a politically organized stand, according to Ciwan from Hasırlı, the ideological similarity of the families also enriched the communal ties. He claimed that in Suriçi most of the families were Kurdish and ideologically similar to one another. Due to this demographic structure of the place, it was hard not to expect such strong solidarity.

When it comes to understanding the production of this unity in a social and political sense, Ciwan suggested that in the mornings the residents of Suriçi who had jobs or school would go their jobs and school. Others would go out to the streets and sit together with their neighbors and relatives. He argued that the politics would be the hot topic during these conversations, as might be expected in an environment where you were systematically discriminated against because of your ethnic background. This dialogue also contributed to the collective sense-making in terms of the Kurdish issue or other political discussions. Rojda, an interviewee from Hasırlı, stated that when the Newroz holiday approached, they would come together and start to discuss what to wear or what to do for Newroz in their neighborhood with their friends. Thus, spatial dynamics which brought people together also aided the process of learning politics, being a united whole so to speak, and being politically organized around one struggle on the basis of their Kurdish identity.

These strong communal ties among the residents also led them to trust one another. This strong sense of trust in one another appears in childhood memories:

Sur was a way of life. Sur was a fraternity, Sur was friendship, Sur was neighborliness, Sur was hospitality. At that time (in Sur), it was such a life that when a resident went somewhere for a while, he or she would leave his or her keys with neighbors or whoever without looking at their ethnicity. The doors were not closed. (Mehmet, personal communication, 2016)

Not surprisingly, these strong ties and trusting relations also helped them to build solidarity networks socially, politically and economically among each other as a community. These networks helped them out in terms of the problems they had to deal with in their everyday life. In that sense, according to Mehmet, Suriçi was a place where you could not find a poor person in the neighborhood. Once they saw a poor person in their neighborhood, all of the residents would support this person or family communally. Although the economic conditions of the residents did not differ from one another to a great extent, they tried to empower one another economically when it was necessary. For instance, they shared their food and stocks which improved everyone's living conditions to a certain degree: "The residents of Suriçi always helped each other. Let me give you an example: if I got ten sacks of wheat from the village, what would I do? I would take five sacks for myself, then I would allocate the remaining to my neighbors" (Yavuz, personal communication, 2016). Thus, these solidaristic relations increased their chances of survival in the district and also helped to sustain the demographic consistency until 2015.

These solidaristic relations did not only help to maintain households. Strong political organization and solidaristic relations also led the residents to band together against outside "threats". For instance, as Sabri explained, in the 1990s, because of these solidarity networks, people who were warranted for arrest could go and knock on the door of any house and be taken in. If they said that they were in a hard position, these people could stay and be sheltered at that house for months without any further question from the host. Rojda also argued that in certain occasions such as the birthdays of Abdullah Öcalan, anniversaries of the foundation of the PKK or Newroz, the intervention of the police in the neighborhood was expected. At those times, when young Kurds would gather for the celebration of these events the police forces would intervene in their gatherings. Then, young Kurdish activists would fight against the police forces and the police forces in return would use tear gas and water cannons on protesters. At those times, other residents would help the protesters by giving them water or lemons even though they would not participate in the protest directly.

Nicholls (2008) argues that in a place where certain norms are constructed through everyday relations, the collective actors can act upon certain expectations (p. 5). These solidaristic relations in everyday life became the norm, therefore when the Kurdish youth started urban warfare, they relied on these norms. They believed that this solidarity network which had protected the residents from "the foreign threats" until now, would also help them during urban warfare. To an extent, they were right, however, such a lasting and violent conflict required much more than what these everyday solidaristic relations could offer. Yet, Ayşe, the 30 years old interviewee from Fatihpaşa neighborhood, also claimed that during urban warfare, some of the families who shared a similar ideological position with the young Kurdish militias accepted militants into their homes and helped them. Nazlı, the 53 years old interviewee from Ali Paşa Neighborhood, also added that during urban warfare people from time to time made a commotion by knocking on doors or banging pans, pots or other iron utensils in support of the young Kurdish militias.

Suriçi as a relatively autonomous space for politicization

In addition to that, I argue that being a relatively autonomous space enabled the movement to integrate the everyday life of the residents more easily, as well as create a realm independent from state intervention. This situation, on the one hand, strengthened the movement. In return, the movement tried to expand these autonomous areas through continual bypassing of the

mechanisms of the state during the 2010s, when there was a relatively peaceful environment due to the Peace Process. Overall, this facilitated the declaration of autonomous self-rule in Suriçi, rather than any other central districts of Diyarbakır, that was then followed by urban warfare.

Suriçi's architectural design not only led people to interact with one another, it also helped the residents to "flee from" the state. In a sense, it was a physically safeguarded space which had been built upon strong communal ties, trust and solidaristic relations which had been perpetuated by the residents who shared similar ideological views with each other. This situation enabled the activists from the Kurdish national movement to act in a relatively autonomous space. This situation both facilitated the political organization and helped them to escape state intervention. As one resident indicates:

> In Suriçi houses are adjacent to one another. You can start from a rooftop in Savaş Neighborhood and can go along from one rooftop to another up until Cemal Yılmaz or Hasırlı Neighborhood. The system cannot intervene in this situation. I can remember from my youth that even though one was being sought by the police and the police searched the home to catch that person, it was impossible. Even if all of Sur was blockaded, it would still not be possible to seize that person. When the police knocked on the door, that person could find his/her way in Sur and save himself/herself. Sur was such a place. (Sabri, personal communication, 2016)

Alongside the architectural design of the place, associations and mechanisms that were found by the movement also perpetuated its relative autonomy. The residents developed mechanisms through which they tried to solve their problems without interference of the state. Ciwan, from Hasırlı neighborhood, explains these autonomous mechanisms that enabled them to solve their problems by themselves. He stated that when two families had a problem, neighborhood associations that were established by the movement, or other local bodies of the movement would be the mediator between sides. This mediatory role of the associations and mechanisms of the movement prevented the entrance of the police force in everyday life when there was a dispute between residents. Ciwan argued that the demand of young Kurds was basically to perpetuate this self-regulated everyday life without any "foreign" intervention. This also shows that the demand of autonomous self-rule had been already realized in certain areas of everyday life and for some of the residents this demand had been justified through their everyday experiences.

In addition to the mediatory civic mechanisms, the Kurdish youth who later organized under the name of YDG-H in 2013 became a parallel security force in the city. The interviewees argued that once the Kurdish national movement became more organized, state-led problems started to arise; drug-trafficking, gambling, and prostitution. According to Mehmet, after the 1980s, the residents had started organizing around the movement. However, in 1990s, the state tried to dissolve this unity by channeling or not intervening in local drug trafficking, gambling, and prostitution in the district. The interviewees suggested that the state did not intervene in the drug use and prostitution because it aimed to morally and politically corrupt the Kurdish youth. However, once YDG-H got more organized during the 2010s, thanks to both the relatively autonomous situation and the relatively liberal period, they started to intervene in what they perceived as problems. "The problems of drugs, gambling, and prostitution" was one of the important problems which they solved by their own means and "cleaned" Suriçi (Yüksekova Haber, 2014; Milliyet 2015).

Physical characteristics of the place that facilitate collective life practices and undermine the successful state penetration

Another important spatial dynamic that facilitated urban warfare was the physical characteristics of the place. The physical characteristics of the place facilitated the

construction of the abovementioned ideological unity or collective life practices in social and political life. In addition to that, the architectural design in itself undermined successful state penetration before and after urban warfare. Therefore, it was another significant socio-spatial dynamic that contributed to the emergence of urban warfare.

Suriçi is the historical center of Diyarbakır. It is part of larger province of Sur. The area is composed of 15 neighborhoods of Sur which are surrounded by at least 2000-year-old city walls of Diyarbakır. Although there is no precise date about when and by whom exactly the city first established it is known that city walls as well as the main architectural design of the city have been constructed by the Romans. Then, every civilization added on to that and left its traces in the landscape. Due to this long and rich history, it also has many cultural and historical monuments in itself remained from different civilizations. It was also the buffer zone of the UNESCO World Heritages in Diyarbakır which include Diyarbakır Fortress, the city walls of Diyarbakır, and Hevsel Gardens. This landscape had not gone through any dramatic changes since the Romans. Due to this, during urban warfare this historical physical configuration of Suriçi which was like a labyrinth with small streets, gateways and passages could have been utilized by people who truly knew the place.

When the interviewees talk about the reasons for the emergence of warfare, they stress the physical feasibility of the place as a battlefield alongside its ideological unity. For instance, Mehmet argued that a great majority of people supported the struggle against the state intervention in 2015, however this in itself would not be enough to explain the emergence of urban warfare if the physical conditions had not been feasible for such an insurgency. He asserted that in Bağlar district, for instance, people were again politically united; however, the roads are larger than Suriçi. In a place like Suriçi opening up a trench in order to block state forces from going into the neighborhoods was easier. Indeed, Suriçi had many cul-de-sacs and very small streets in which only two or three people could walk side by side. It prevented the entrance of large vehicles like tanks. This configuration of the city made it harder to be captured by state forces. When we look at the 1990s, this architectural design let people escape from the police raids, and in 2015 and 2016, it enabled the Kurdish militias to transform the small streets into the front lines to defend the inner city.

In addition to small streets and cul-de-sacs, old Suriçi houses which were made of basalt helped the young Kurdish militias defend themselves. When we compare basalt houses to apartments of today, the basalt houses withstand bullets while apartments cannot resist such attacks. Some of the interviewees also referred to the historical structure of Suriçi and implied that young Kurdish militias "might" have discovered old spots or gateways to defend themselves or escape when it was necessary.

Overall, the architectural design of the district treated as the one of the important dynamics that paved the way for urban warfare in two ways. Firstly, the landscape of Suriçi provided political opportunities for the Kurdish national movement because of its small streets, gateways, old houses made of basalt and city walls. Furthermore, the boundaries of everyday interaction and mobilization are also constructed through this physical configuration. Therefore, I argue material boundaries of Suriçi also contributed to the emergence of urban war in 2015.

Conclusion

I presented a micro level analysis of the emergence of urban warfare in Suriçi which concentrated on particularly everyday politics. The analysis of the socio-spatial dynamics demonstrates that the places were imbued with certain context, meanings and symbols, and images which were simultaneously deconstructed and reconstructed by the residents as well as local institutional actors and their ideological positions. All of these together produced certain spatiality in social, economic, political and physical senses which eventually facilitated the emergence of urban warfare in 2015. In the case of Suriçi, the material boundaries of the place drew the boundaries of interaction in everyday life as well as the

boundaries of actions and mobilization before and during the time of contention. The everyday interaction within the material boundaries of the place created an environment through which the residents constructed solidarity networks, strong communal ties, relations of trust and collective identity. And, all of these socio-spatial dynamics in everyday politics contributed to the emergence of urban warfare when the Peace Process between Turkey and the Kurdish national movement came to an end in the context of rising authoritarianism in 2015. I argue although the declaration of autonomous self-rule was the central decision of the PKK on the ground of changing macro political dynamics in national and international scales, urban warfare was actualized in Suriçi but not anywhere else in Diyarbakır due to these spatial reasons as well.

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APPENDIX

LIST OF INTERVIEWS

Nickname	Date of Interview	Occupation
Mahmut	2016	An activist
Sadık	2016	Wageworker
Kazım	2016	Officer
Sabri	2016	An activist
Yavuz	2016	Mukhtar
Mehmet	2016	Mukhtar
Murat	2016	Security staff
Arif	2017	Carpenter
İbrahim	2017	Tinsmith
Ekrem	2017	Tinsmith
Fatma	2017	Homemaker
Serdar	2017	Wageworker
Rojda	2017	Student
Ciwan	2017	Student
Arzu	2017	Homemaker
Cemil	2017	Retired
Aylin	2017	Homemaker
Zeynep	2017	Homemaker
Zeliha	2017	Homemaker
Aras	2017	Non-Muslim religious leader
Arzu	2017	Homemaker
Fadime	2017	Homemaker
Belgin	2017	Homemaker
Karanfil	2017	Student
Nazlı	2017	Homemaker
Narin	2017	Homemaker
Nurgül	2017	A purged officer from the municipality
Ayşe	2017	Health officer
Sıla	2017	Civil Servant
Yakup	2017	Non-Muslim religious leader
Apo	2017	Retired
Sedat	2017	Self-employment

Mert	2017	Student
Azat	2017	A member of DİMOD
Lale	2017	An activist from No to Destruction of Sur
Hüseyin	2017	Retired
Sedat	2017	Civil Servant
Melek	2017	Professor
Meltem	2017	Civil Servant
Metin	2017	Civil Servant
Saadet	2017	Civil Servant