

FROM YASSIADA TO DEMOCRACY AND LIBERTIES ISLAND:
REJUDGEMENT OF DEMOCRAT PARTY, RESTORATION OF MEMORY,
MEMORY-LED REGENERATION OF PLACE

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MEMORY-LED REGENERATION OF PLACE**

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ABSTRACT

FROM YASSIADA TO DEMOCRACY AND LIBERTIES ISLAND: REJUDGEMENT OF DEMOCRAT PARTY, RESTORATION OF MEMORY, MEMORY-LED REGENERATION OF PLACE

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This thesis examines the transformation of Yassıada, located off the southern coast of Istanbul, into the “Democracy and Liberties Island,” within the framework of spatial transformation and the construction of socio-cultural memory. While the island has been redesigned as a museum-hotel-restaurant complex, this transformation is analyzed both in terms of the reproduction of physical space and the reconstruction of memory. The urban regeneration practice, which presents a unique case in terms of capital accumulation processes and commodification dynamics, is interpreted through the concept of memory-led regeneration. Simultaneously, the transformation of the island also signifies an initiative of memory construction and restoration through the discourses, commemorative practices, and musealization efforts of various actors. The study analyzes how policymakers conceptualize, plan, and reconstruct memory through the museum, monuments, commemorative structures, and sculptures on the island. In this context, it explores how memory is shaped, and visitor experience is directed through the mosque, hotel, museum, and monuments, as well as the visual and auditory materials exhibited. Furthermore, it questions what is chosen to be remembered or forgotten through the narratives constructed by these structures.

Based on a comprehensive evaluation of the new space, its content, and associated practices, the study reveals that policymakers’ approaches to the island and its memory have evolved over time. It also demonstrates that space has failed to become a brand or attraction center as

seen in international urban regeneration strategies, that commercial enterprises have not achieved the expected economic impact, and that practices such as worship, congresses, and commemorations have gradually been abandoned.

Keywords: Memory-led Regeneration, Memory Construction, Restoration, Memorialization, Commodification of Place.



ÖZ

YASSIADA'DAN DEMOKRASİ VE ÖZGÜRLÜKLER ADASI'NA: YENİDEN YARGILAMA, HAFIZA RESTORASYONU VE HAFIZA ODAKLI KENTSEL DÖNÜŞÜM

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Bu tez, İstanbul'un güney kıyısında yer alan Yassıada'nın "Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Adası"na dönüşüm sürecini; mekânsal dönüşüm ve toplumsal-kültürel belleğin inşası bağlamında incelemektedir. Ada; müze-otel-restoran kompleksi olarak yeniden tasarlanırken, bu dönüşüm hem fiziksel mekânın yeniden üretimi hem de belleğin yeniden inşası açısından ele alınmaktadır. Sermaye birikim süreçleri ve metalaştırma pratikleri açısından özgünlük arz eden bu kentsel dönüşüm uygulaması, hafıza-odaklı dönüşüm kavramı üzerinden açıklanmıştır. Adanın dönüşüm süreci diğer taraftan aktörlerin söylem, anma ve müzeleştirme pratikleriyle bir hafıza inşası, restorasyonu girişimine işaret etmektedir. Adadaki müze, anıt, anma, heykel gibi uygulamalar üzerinden politika yapıcılarının hafızayı kavrayış, planlama, yeniden inşa biçimleri analiz edilmektedir. Bu bağlamda, adada inşa edilen cami, otel, müze ve anıtlar gibi yapılar ile sergilenen görsel-işitsel materyaller üzerinden belleğin nasıl şekillendirildiği ve ziyaretçi deneyiminin nasıl yönlendirildiği tartışılmaktadır. Ayrıca, bu yapılar aracılığıyla oluşturulan anlatının, neyi hatırlamay ya da neyi unutturmayı tercih ettiği sorgulanmaktadır.

Adanın dönüşümü neticesinde ortaya çıkan yeni mekânın, içeriklerin ve mekâna bağlı pratiklerin bütüncül bir değerlendirmesi neticesinde; politika yapıcılarının aday ve adanın hafızasını kavrayış ve sahipleniş biçiminin zamanla değiştiği, mekânın uluslararası kentsel dönüşüm stratejilerindeki uygulamalardaki gibi marka veya cazibe merkezi yaratamadığı,

ticari işletmelerin beklenen ticari etkinliđi sağlayamadıđı ve ibadet, kongre, anma gibi pratiklerin zamanla terkedildiđi ortaya konulmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hafıza Odaklı Kentsel Dönüşüm, Hafıza İnşası, Anıtsallaştırma, Mekânın Metalaştırılması.



To those who resist forgetting and carry memory through traces of history...



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The city is man's most consistent and, on the whole, his most successful attempt to remake the world he lives in, more after his heart's desire. The city is the world which man created; it is the world in which he is therefore condemned to live. Thus indirectly, without a clear sense of the nature of his task, in remaking the city, man has remade himself.¹

How successful or consistent it is a matter for another debate but there is a reciprocal and self-reproducing relationship between human and urban transformation/evolution. The reproduction and reshaping of the human self can be considered in terms of redefining and reconsidering human experience, memory, and feeling. From this point of view, it is possible to conclude that the space that carries the memory of the past and embodies the collective memory, reconstructs the human being, his/her experience and memory.² On the other hand, it is argued that analyzing the process of urban formation or spatial practices—where people and space are in a mutually constitutive relationship—without considering dominant power relations, the prevailing political-economic system, and the capitalist processes of capital accumulation and production relations, would constitute a narrow and reductionist approach. In this study, there will be a discussion on the practices of construction, reconstruction and restoration of the memory of people and space; on the other hand, the concept of an urban regeneration strategy will be put forward through the commodification/commercialization dynamics related to capital accumulation processes in the transformation processes of urban space.

This thesis will examine the process of the transformation of Yassıada, located on the coast of Istanbul in the Marmara Sea, into the Democracy and Liberties Island by reconstructing it as a

¹ Robert Park, *On Social Control and Collective Behavior*, Chicago 1967, p. 3.

² Nora, P. (2022). *Hafıza Mekanları*. Doğu Batı Yayınları.

museum-hotel-restaurant complex. The transformation of the island will be discussed from two perspectives: the reconstruction of the island as an urban space and the construction and restoration of social/cultural memory... In one dimension, the study focuses on the process of regenerate and reconstruct of the space through memory, while in the other dimension, it is interested in how the reconstructed and redesigned museum island reconstructs, restores or erodes social/cultural memory and discourse. In the following section, by leaving both positions looking from memory restoration to place and from place and construction to memory, the island and its museum will be analysed from the point of view of the visitor. By means of the sculptures, monuments, paintings, installations, etc. in the museum and in different parts of the island, as well as the hotels, mosques, restaurants built on the island, the tension/relationship between the commercialisation strategies and political/cultural aims/agendas, remembering/not remembering preferences of policy makers and performers will be evaluated.

The main focus of the study is the attempt to explain the urban transformation process in Yassıada through the concept of memory-led regeneration. This concept will be analysed in a comparative manner with other leading factor or reference point (smt.-led) urban regeneration strategies. Yassıada is a unique urban space with its characteristics such as the non-existence of a residence on it, access/transportation constraints, and the absence of private property. The absence of the community/neighbourhood on the island, which is one of the main urban elements in terms of the concept of urban regeneration³, has created a conceptually disputable and unique case in practice. Different conceptual approaches (see also UN-HABITAT, 2024 & Keles,R. 2004 & TMMOB, 2008⁴) to urban regeneration processes will be discussed in the following sections, however, in this study, the concept of urban regeneration is defined/considered as a set of strategies and actions implemented as an inclusive and general urban intervention practice. The transformation process of Yassıada is considered as an urban regeneration process shaped around various but integrated (social, political, economic) agendas. Although the transformation process includes memory debates, cultural (re)construction initiatives, commemorative practices and current real political context; it is

³ Amirtahmasebi, R., Orloff, M., Wahba, S., & Altman, A. (2016). *Regenerating Urban Land: A Practitioner's Guide to Leveraging Private Investment*. World Bank, Washington, DC

⁴ The Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects (TMMOB) defines urban transformation as "the entirety of strategies and actions implemented to improve the economic, social, physical, and environmental conditions of urban spaces experiencing collapse and deterioration through comprehensive and integrated approaches."

İlke, M. (2008). *Kentsel Dönüşüm ve Bursa Raporu*. TMMOB Şehir Plancıları Odası Bursa Şubesi.

argued that these topics are secondary aspects that are articulated in the rhetoric of politics, aiming to establish a legitimization ground and attract/reach out to the masses. The primary claim of the thesis is that the main driving or guiding force in the transformation process of Yassıada is commodification and capital accumulation strategies based on construction and built environment investments, in this process, issues such as cultural initiatives, memory construction and restoration are used and considered as a source of legitimacy, facilitator, consent. While discussing the transformation of Yassıada in the context of memory-led regeneration, the writer's position is that the reference to memory is used as a leverage in the process of commodification of the island with a rent-seeking motivation and is articulated in discourse and practice.

Some of the main questions/problems that the thesis focuses on can be summarised as follows:

What dynamics come to the fore in the reconstruction/regeneration processes of the urban place as a Democracy and Liberties Island? What kind of uniqueness or similarity does the emerging regeneration practice present in the literature and global/national cases in terms of 'urban regeneration' strategies?

How has AKP's cultural memory and related cultural initiatives and investments been shaped? In the debates on the establishment of cultural hegemony, what are the reasons that push AKP to restore the narrative/memory or to construct a counter-memory? Where can AKP's practices in the process of reconstructing memory be positioned within the economic (commercial) or political agenda?

In terms of commodification of place and memory restoration, in the tension between these two processes, how can we interpret the transformation of Yassıada in terms of its aims, discourse, practices, results and the structures/products/works that used?

In order to deal with all these questions/arguments in depth analysis; an interdisciplinary approach such as urban policy planning, memory studies, cultural studies, political economy, visual politics etc. has been adopted. This study aims to reveal the relationship between urban studies, urban regeneration strategies and memory studies, particularly focusing on memory restoration/construction. In this respect, understanding the decision-making mechanisms that shape the motivations and practices of decision-makers, planners and implementers in the transformation process of Yassıada is of crucial importance.

The main statement/idea which this study is shaped around; “the development- construction processes in Yassiada, which is evaluated (attempted to disclosure) through the concept of memory-led-regeneration, and the memory restoration and counter-memory construction processes that operate in parallel, is to clarify what is prioritised and what is focussed in the process of both regeneration and counter-memory construction”.⁵

In order to analyse the process and discussion from one end to the other, the preferences of policy makers and performers/executors (construction companies, designers and implementers etc.) for remembering and forgetting, their positions within the constructed memory-history dichotomy will be analysed, while on the other side, the extent to which the island space, which is presented as a monument-museum-memory space, is reconstructed with commercial motivations in the context of commodification of place will be criticised.

⁵ *Within the discussion of what is the focal point of reference for the concept of memory-led regeneration, which is put forward and attempted to be explained, rent-seeking, capital accumulation and redistribution are positioned on one side, and the process of narrative construction and persuasion of cultural investments, remembering/forgetting practices are positioned on the other side.*

CHAPTER 2

THESIS PLAN AND FLOW

This study is structured in three main sub-sections. In the first part, a discussion on the memory-led urban regeneration strategy will be carried out, and it will be analysed in the context of how the island has been subjected to a constructional transformation led by memory. In order to clarify the process, international studies and practices in urban regeneration strategies will be examined. This will help create a conceptual framework for smt.-led regeneration strategies and analyse relevant studies and examples in the literature. It will be explained how urban intervention and urban regeneration processes evolve in the context of capitalist urbanization dynamics. While discussing how urban place is positioned or redefined within commodification/capital accumulation processes; construction processes, built environment investments, urban transformation and urban intervention processes in Turkey will be evaluated in terms of financing, capital transfer and re-distribution and the involvement of policy makers, public-private actors. Neo-liberal urbanization strategies such as ‘brand city’, ‘urban marketing/marketing’, ‘creative cities/class’, which are prominent in the literature within the capitalist urbanization process, spatial intervention practices and examples of applications (on a national-international scale) will be examined. The similarities and uniqueness⁶ of the national and global scale cases will be analysed in terms of urban regeneration processes, state involvement/impact on construction and development activities, urban regeneration strategies and built environment investments.

In the first part of the study, the transformation of Yassıada, where commercial buildings such as hotels, restaurants and congress centres were built in parallel with the construction of a commemoration place/museum within the urban regeneration strategies (smt.-led-regeneration) that focus on a reference point, will be tried to be explained by introducing the concept of memory-led regeneration. One of the main claims here is that with the memory-led regeneration strategy, policy makers and developers restore and reconstruct the island site not

⁶ Penbecioğlu, M. (2011), “Kapitalist Kentleşme Dinamiklerinin Türkiye’deki Son 10 yılı: Yapılı Çevre Üretimi, Devlet ve Büyük Ölçekli Kentsel Projeler”, *Birikim*, 270: 62-73.

only with a political/social agenda, but also with a commercial, rent-seeking motivation. In core, the first axis on which the thesis is based is the examination and evaluation of urban regeneration strategies carried out in the focus of a reference point, and from this point of view, analysing the process of transforming Yassıada into the Democracy and Liberties Island through a memory-led urban regeneration strategy in an attempt to explain a new concept.

The second part of the thesis will focus on the transformation process of the island in the context of the construction of a new discourse or counter-memory, memory restoration/reconstruction. This section will discuss the AKP government's attempts, especially since the 2010s, to pursue a historical reference/starting point against the cultural hegemonic or official discourse, to establish a historical connection, to identify continuities and breakpoints, to invent a constitutive discourse when necessary. Within the discourses and practices of the AKP government, especially in its practices of reconstructing urban place; it will be also discussed what it prefers to remember, forget and restore in its memory, and in this respect, which historical moment/image/myth it adopts or ignores/disregard. Through these debates, it will be elaborated how the government establishes a historical relationship with the Democrat Party and the 1961 Coup and how it monumentalizes this relationship through the space of Yassıada. In order to clarify historical relationship, embracement or disregard, the AKP's need for the construction or restoration of memory must be properly understood. For this purpose, the AKP's initiatives on culture and arts, especially in the 2010s, when social resistance/opposition was strengthening and expanding, and the reasons that pushed policymakers towards these initiatives will be discussed. In this section will focus on the concepts of collective and cultural memory and their relationship with the discipline of history in order to provide a conceptual framework. The process of transformation of collective memory from individual memory to an institutional and subjectless memory will be analysed in the context of the distinction and interaction between history and memory.

The third section will examine the constructions (mosque, hotel, lighthouse, etc.) and museum components such as audiovisual objects, sculptures, exhibitions and monuments built on the island as a commemorative space, a museum. Through the actions of the inclusion, relocating and modification of these structures, objects and contents, it will become more understandable how the discourse, the new consensus, chooses to remember or forget, to erode memory, what it ignores, and therefore what it chooses to embrace or reject a heritage.

While policy makers construct rhetoric on building or restoring the discourse or counter discourse, in parallel, implementers, content producers and companies can shape collective

memory by producing structures, monuments, products and artifacts that visualize this discourse/myth. It will be evaluated how memory is shaped and visitor experience/impact is intensified through the sculptures and monuments, museum contents, artifacts and installations, animation, visual and audio aids located on the island.⁷ In the museum and island space which is designed in the format of a theme park, the reinforcers used to strengthen the message-narrative-feeling given by the structures and objects arranged in the space will be revealed. On the other hand, the commercialization of commemoration and memory will be discussed through the transitions established between the contents subject to commemoration and commercial spaces.



⁷ Çolak, E. (2021), “Türkiye’de Devlet İkonografisinin İnsası ve Çağdas Sanatta Yapısökümü” Yüksek lisans tezi, Ankara Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü. Ankara Üniversitesi.

CHAPTER 3

CAPITALIST URBANIZATION, URBAN REGENERATION STRATEGIES AND MEMORY-LED REGENERATION

3.1. Capitalist Urbanization and Urban Regeneration

In order to determine a consistent and orderly perspective in addressing urban transformation processes and strategies, it is necessary to analyze (from a broader perspective) spatial change/transformation processes by adopting a theoretical approach. Especially since the second half of the 20th century, the concept of urban space has been redefined beyond the physical environment where social, political and economic relations and activities take place. In this new dimension, urban place is reallocated in a position that creates economic value through socio-spatial arrangements linked to hegemonic relations of production and capital accumulation processes and plays a critical role in capital accumulation and the reproduction of social relations.

In the first axis of the study, a discussion will be conducted around the concept of “regeneration”. One of the important steps here is to evaluate the ability and practices of policy makers and practitioners to change, transform and reconstruct the environment/space in line with capital accumulation processes and for commercial purposes. In this direction, it is organized to explain urban regeneration processes, urban intervention practices and applications through relations of production, capital accumulation and reproduction processes. In this section, the urban regeneration process will be evaluated with reference to the dynamics of capitalist urbanization through a political-economic system approach.

In urban transformation processes and practices; (specifically) capitalism and space related debates, capitalist urbanization dynamics, analysis of the city through capital accumulation processes, commodification of place etc. concepts and debates have been discussed in Marxist literature especially since the second half of the 20th century.⁸ In this period, it can be stated

⁸ Sahin, C. (2020). *Kapitalizm-Mekân İlişkisi: Fordist ‘Sanayi/İşçi’ Kenti İle Post-Fordist ‘Küresel/Hizmet Kenti Karsılastırması Üzerinden Bir Değerlendirme. Sosyal Siyaset Konferansları Dergisi*, 79, 237-275.

that there has been a significant shift in terms of the urban structure and the role of the city in production relations, and that urban transformation debates have intensified to this extent. The fordist production approach and the related industrial city structure that had been dominant until the 1970s have transformed into a post-fordist city structure that can be characterized by the concepts of “global city”, “service city”, “creative city and classes” etc. as a result of the change in production dynamics and the related deindustrialization process.⁹ In this process, the common point of all these actions (regenerate, reform, reconstruct) related to urban place is the attempts of the capitalist system and production relations to design/redesign the city with the motivation of capital production-accumulation-circulation.

In order to understand the practices of organizing/reorganizing space with capitalist dynamics, the theoretical approach of David Harvey and Henry Lefebvre, which focuses on the model of circuits of capital or nature of capital, is taken as a reference. Lefebvre ascribes to space a “secondary nature” beyond the fact that it is the place on which relations of production and activities are realized/materialized. Here, 'primary nature' refers to the city as a space integrated with the production process and relations, while 'secondary nature' refers to the commodified urban place, which is a product of these relations of production rather than an object.¹⁰ There is a reciprocal relationship in which the space produced/reproduced as a commodity is both the result and the creative force of capitalist relations. According to Lefebvre, under the capitalist system, space is a commodity that is reproduced for profit maximization: “Space is both the result and the environment in which relations of production are reproduced.”¹¹

This first cycle of capital accumulation, which we will also refer to as the first stage of capital accumulation in Harvey's words in the following sections, refers to the process of production and accumulation of surplus value, which is predominantly labour-intensive and dependent on industrial production. It is possible to associate this process of capital accumulation with and read it simultaneously with the Fordist production and the related capitalist industrialization

⁹ *The Great Depression of 1929 and the economic crises that followed were fundamentally caused by a sudden and sharp contraction in demand and excessive accumulation crises. In response to the demand problem, the scope of production and consumption has expanded and diversified over time. On the other hand, the downward trend in profit rates over time has led to a shift in activity and resources from real production to financial markets and other investment instruments such as real estate. All these processes have redefined spatial division of labor, the definition of space, and its role in exchange value and capital accumulation processes, restructuring their structure.*

¹⁰ Simonsen, K. (2005). “Bodies, Sensations, Space and Time: The Contribution From Henri Lefebvre”, *Geografiska Annaler. Series B. Human Geography*, No: 87(1), 1–14.

¹¹ Lefebvre, Henri (1979), *The survival of Capitalism: Reproduction of the Relations of Production*, (New York: St. Martin's Pres).

See also. Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*, Wiley-Blackwell

period, which can be characterized by elements such as standardization in products and labor, demand-determining product and demand management, mass production, which has become dominant in the manufacturing industry of central economies since the 1920s. By Keil and Brenner; “Fordism is the regime of accumulation that dominated the industrialized western world from the Second World War until the early 1970s. Production growth in the Fordist model is closely linked to a class settlement between capital and labour, based on mass production technologies and contributing to relatively specialized labour relations and rising working class incomes. Moreover, rising working class incomes are reinforced by an expansionary welfare state apparatus that stabilizes domestic demand for consumer goods.”¹² Although it varies by period and region, with the spread of standardization, automatization, mass production and specialization in industry, the above-mentioned (Fordist) production approach has reshaped consumer demands, the division of labour and especially territorial organization. To this extent, the urban space has been reorganised and re-positioned within the flow of capital by means of cheap labour, raw materials and logistic convenience required by the manufacturing industry.

Within the spatial organisation of Fordist production and/or capitalist industrialisation, especially with the dominance of Keynesian policies, the position of the state has also been transformed. In this period, the state started to reshape urban place in response to changing production dynamics and relations, by using macro-structural interventions and accumulation strategies.¹³ Investments in mining, ports, roads and physical infrastructure, interventions in demand management, unionisation and wage policies, provision of services and facilities (such as social housing, transport) can be given as examples of the state's practices of socio-spatial regulation and control in line with the changing economic-political understanding.¹⁴ As will be mentioned again in the following sections, the process Harvey calls ‘secondary circuit’ refers to the phase in which capital expands through infrastructure investments, housing construction, real estate and finance sectors rather than direct production, especially with the change in state intervention practices. (see also Harvey, 1988¹⁵) Here it is possible to refer to a dependent urbanisation that proceeds in parallel with industrial financial development. The Urban

¹² Brenner and Keil. (2013) “Küresel Kentlerden Kentselliğin Küresellesmesine”,(Çev.) M. Üçoğlu, *Birikim Dergisi*, İstanbul.<http://www.birikimdergisi.com/kisi/5979/neilbrenner>.

¹³ Katznelson, I. (2019). *Marksizm ve Kent*, (Çev.) Ceren Göğüs, İstanbul: Ayrıntı Yayınları

¹⁴ Cities such as Swansea, Bilbao, and Glasgow, which will be discussed later in this paper and serve as examples of industry-led regeneration and culture-led regeneration strategies, were designed as worker-mining-port cities based on the Fordist accumulation system and industrial production and productivity dynamics.

¹⁵Harvey, D. (1988). *Geographical and geopolitical consequences of the transition from fordist to flexible accumulation. America's new market geography*

Question by Manuel Castells, published in 1972, briefly argues that production, surplus value and supply are concentrated in different geographies due to dynamics such as cheap labour, natural resources and sales markets, and that this regional difference establishes and reinforces a self-reproducing relationship of structural dependency between central and peripheral economies and cities.¹⁶ It is possible to say that there is a similar unequal development between regions and cities today. Although Castells explains urbanization through economic processes like Harvey, on the other hand, according to Castells, space is largely considered as the place where labor power and collective consumption are reproduced. In other words, Castells perceived the urban not as a space that is reproduced to ensure the continuity of capitalist relations, but as a platform where labour is reproduced. Today, as mentioned, one can speak of a relationship of unequal development or dependent urbanization between regions/cities, but considering the changing and diversifying relations of production (flexible demand, information technologies, service sector, etc.) and capital accumulation strategies (finance and real estate sector, production of built environment, etc.) and practices, it is observed that there is a more asymmetrical and intricate relationship between center-periphery regions and cities. Since the second half of the 20th century, neo-liberal economic policies and post-fordist production dynamics have emerged and become increasingly dominant in central economies as a result of the stagflation waves especially in the 1970s, the crises of overaccumulation due to the shortage of demand from time to time, and tendency of the rate of profit to fall, especially in industrial production areas.¹⁷ These changes in economic perceptions and practices have reshaped/redefined capital accumulation processes, the speed of circulation, production relations and consequently urbanization processes. Supply-demand mismatches or fluctuations, developments in information technologies and the services sector, and increased efficiency in financial markets have resulted in the slowdown, contraction and blockage of the economic system based on industrial production/accumulation. Supply-demand mismatches or fluctuations, developments in information technologies and the services sector, and increased efficiency in financial markets have resulted in the slowdown, contraction and blockage of the

¹⁶ Castells, M. (1977) *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach*, Edward Arnold, London.

¹⁷ Marx describes the tendency for the rate of profit to fall as a result of increased productivity, or in other words, the development of the productive power of labor. The development of productive power brings with it a higher capital composition. While the fixed capital used in the production process increases, the share of variable capital decreases relatively. Therefore, the amount of value transferred to each individual commodity in the production process decreases relative to the previous level of capital composition. The fundamental result of the increase in the composition of capital is the devaluation of commodities. If this increase in the composition of capital occurs not in individual sectors but in key areas or areas assumed to reflect the organic composition of total capital, it creates a decline in the general rate of profit even if the rate of surplus value remains constant or increases. Marx, Karl. *Kapital: Ekonomi Politiğin Eleştirisi* (3. Cilt). çev. Erkin Özalp, Mehmet Selik. İstanbul: Yordam Kitap, 2015. S.217-236

economic system based on industrial production/accumulation. (see also Jessop 2005¹⁸) At this point, in Harvey's terms, capitalism has responded to its problems with spatial solutions, through territorial expansion and concentration on specific areas of economic activity.¹⁹ Harvey conceptualizes the second cycle as the urbanization of capital, based on Lefebvre's circuit model in the context of the capital's flows and crises. In this respect, capital accumulation based on the industrial production process, which is defined in the first capital cycle, was able to overcome problems such as lack of demand, overaccumulation and falling rates of profit by being transferred to the second and third cycles. The redirection of capital into the second cycle requires the production of the built environment and thus reorganization of urban space, with the state playing a regulatory role in this process. In the second cycle, capital surpluses are redirected away from the industry/production sectors and towards large urban infrastructure projects, real estate investments and environmental projects.²⁰ At this stage, urban space becomes an area of speculation. This expanding investment process in the construction sector presents itself in the form of new housing projects, shopping malls and infrastructure initiatives. In the second cycle, it can be argued that urban place is the subject of a real estate project, especially through its exchange value in the real estate sector. On the other hand, the circuit of capital was realized through infrastructure investments and financing in areas such as health, education, and transportation, all of which were privatized and commercialized. Harvey's third circuit is shaped around the consumption (service, hospitality, culture etc.) industry. Over time, capital accumulation shifted to the "third circuit" with the privatization of many services (health, education, etc.), resulting in diverging consumption. During this period, technological developments and changing consumer preferences and needs directed capital surpluses mainly toward sectors such as tourism and services. In this circuit of capital, urban place becomes the centre of the aforementioned 'service' consumption and thus determines the territorial preferences of capital investments.

The second and third cycles of capital are based on a more dynamic urban conceptualisation and practice. Capital becomes a fixed investment in a particular place until a more profitable 'space' or 'practice of space production' is found. At the same time, capital, on the one hand, is fixed in place, on the other hand, it tends to be in constant movement and flow.²¹ How has the economic-political process conceptualised in terms of capital accumulation and the inter-

¹⁸ Jessop, B. (1992) *Fordism and post-Fordism: A critical reformulation*, in Scott, A. J. and Storper, M. (eds) *Pathways to Industrialization and Regional Development*. London

¹⁹ Harvey, D. (2008). *Umut Mekanları*, (Çev.) Zeynep Gambeti, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları. p.75

²⁰ Harvey, D. (1982). *The Limits to Capital*. Oxford: Blackwell.

²¹ Harvey, D. (1989) *The Urban Experience*, The John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London.

cyclical movement of capital been reflected in capitalist urbanisation practices? In developed capitalist countries, with the post-fordist period, capital has gradually left or reduced industrial (manufacturing, mining etc.) production areas and transferred to consumption-oriented service sectors such as trade and tourism, financial sectors and information technology-oriented sectors. The transfer of capital to the second and third spheres also changed the scale of the capital cycle. On the one hand, the scope of products and services has diversified according to consumer preferences and demands, and on the other hand, capital accumulation has found the ability to move (easier and faster) in the global market through new spatial forms/figures such as "global city" and "brand city." The accumulation and circulation of capital, as well as the demand for more flexible and diverse consumption, have led to the deindustrialization of many industries and, consequently, the financialization of market. In this process, capital accumulation has primarily flowed into the finance sector and related markets, as well as commoditized services such as education and healthcare, and various sectors such as tourism, entertainment, culture and art. The study will discuss the commercialization of Yassiada through spatial arrangements, such as hotels, congress centers, and memorials, as well as the capital and resource transfers related to producing the built environment during the island's regeneration. Within the new urbanisation dynamics, the place has been rearranged in accordance with the commercial benefits and opportunities brought by sports, art organisations, tournaments, congresses, festivals, fairs, etc. and the commercial benefits and opportunities they bring, and in other words, it has been made suitable for 'hosting' the flow of capital. In the following sections, it will be analysed how Yassiada, which is memory or narrative in its moment, is regenerated through the aforementioned 'rent-seeking' understanding. Besides social activities, a considerable amount of capital accumulation has been directed toward financial markets. Financial activity areas and business lines have become increasingly important, as have human resources. The demands and needs of the people working in the financial sector and related fields have been effective in determining the products and services offered. As a result of the aforementioned deindustrialisation process, the diversity in the products and services produced-consumed, the change in the business lines and employee profile due to the change in production relations, an urban place that is regenerated / regulated in accordance with the new 'flexible' economy in terms of both production and consumption and in mutual relationality has emerged. This new urban place formation has been conceptualised with prefixes/references such as 'brand city', 'global city', 'creative city'. In Sassen's terms, global cities stand out in the finance and service sectors, as well as in technology-oriented production. They are also the market for these products and services,

attracting, inviting, and hosting consumers with the desired demographic profile.²² This shift involves not only the supply and demand of products and services, but also the establishment of a socio-cultural hegemony through technology-oriented products, as well as financial, cultural, and artistic activities and services. The mutually interacted and mutually constituting relationship mentioned at the beginning of the study has also transformed the urban identity. Instead of the manufacturing/labour city of Fordism, which focused on labour and labour reproduction; the inhabitants of the global city are mainly from the middle- and upper-income classes. They demand knowledge-, technology- and culture-based products and services, and, in popular terms, they 'buy experiences'. Since the 1990s, the power of the 'experience industry' - the arts, culture and creative sectors - to stimulate urban growth and revitalisation has been widely recognised and actively supported by policy makers.²³ This new sphere of consumption has brought about info-based, culture-based, entertainment-based production formation, which is defined "creative industries" in the literature. These new production relations have also produced the concepts of "creative cities" and "creative class" in the urbanization literature. The concept of the creative city refers to the mobilisation of creativity inherent in the arts and culture to nurture new industries and employment opportunities by the harnessing of creativity to forge liveable, vibrant and attractive cities.²⁴ Florida defines the creative class as people who engage in work whose function is to 'create meaningful new forms' that contribute to urban and regional economic development.²⁵

Allen Scott has explained this transformation based on the relations of production under 4 main headings.²⁶

1. Developed capitalist economies have increasingly focused on non-standardised products in sectors such as technology-intensive manufacturing, business, finance and 'personnel services', and in a wide range of cultural industries, from media to fashion-intensive crafts.
2. These sectors exhibit significant horizontal and vertical fragmentation tendencies. Selected groups of firms are developing into networks of specialised yet complementary producers, which tend to concentrate, particularly in large cities.

²² Sassen, S. (1991). *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, Princeton University Press

²³ Julie T. Miao (2023) *Inside-out in creative industry-led urban regeneration: the roles of developers in Liverpool and Bristol compared*, *International Planning Studies*, 28:2, 178-192

²⁴ Landry C. (2000) *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*. London: Earthscan.

²⁵ Florida R (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class: And how It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York: Basic Books.

²⁶ Allen John Scott (2014) *Beyond the Creative City: Cognitive-Cultural Capitalism and the New Urbanism*, *Regional Studies*, 48:4, 565-578

3. Increasing shares of the output of these sectors are marked by firm- and place-specific product characteristics.
4. As a result of this new reorganisation of production relations, the share of the labour market calling for/employing cognitive and cultural skills such as reasoning capacities, technical understanding, leadership, communication skills, cultural awareness and visual imagination is expanding.

The concept of 'creativity' within this production-related transformation process is mostly evaluated through the alternative areas/market it can create in capital accumulation processes. Similarly, the competitiveness and/or branding ability of the city is measured through its ability to respond to the non-standard, flexible and dynamic consumption demands mentioned by Scott. Creative, global, brand city places are being redesigned according to these needs of capital accumulation. The process of transforming unused or underutilised places, such as factories, mines, harbours, slum areas, warehouses and other facilities, or places with an insufficient economic return or rent, by realising their economic potential, is an example of creative industry and creative city implementation.

Especially since the 1990s, urban regeneration projects have been discussed in literature and practice as “creative” solutions to the new capital accumulation dynamics and hegemonic economic production-consumption relations mentioned above. Within the scope of this study, the ability of the concepts of industry, culture, property and (especially in the case of Yassiada) memory, which are defined as driving/engine forces in the process of urban regeneration, to transform space will be discussed.

3.2. Capitalist Urbanization, Built Environment Investments and Urban Regeneration in Turkey

To summarise in the previous sections of the study, the response of capitalism to the profitability crisis and demand management issues that emerged in the 1970s was the set of policies known as neoliberalism. The impact of these policies on capital accumulation processes was to provide financial scaling and liberalization to accelerate the inter-cycle movement of capital, which provides capital to flow into more profitable areas, rapidly. On the other hand, the share of non-standard, flexible production areas in the economy has increased in line with changing/transforming consumption habits. As a reflection of all these processes on urban space, especially since the 1990s, urban forms and organisations conceptualised in

urbanisation practices and literature through definitions such as 'global city', 'creative city', 'brand city' and 'competitive city' have emerged. These respond to new consumption demands and capital accumulation strategies.

With the aforementioned global demand, financialization and the development/change of capital flow preferences, it is possible to argue that there is an interest in the creative industries in Turkey as well. Especially from the 2000s onwards, attempts have been made to attract global capital in the construction sector and urban regeneration practices in Turkey. The Ümraniye and Ataşehir Finance Centres built as real estate-finance complexes, the transformation of the Ottoman-era Fışekhane, Gazhane and Bomonti Breweries into culture and arts centres, and (mega) housing projects in Sulukule and Fikirtepe are examples of projects carried out by decision-makers and project developers with different motivations and purposes. As a peripheral/semi-peripheral economy integrated into global capital, it is difficult to discuss a process of deindustrialization in the Turkish economy similar to that seen in central economies, or a parallel process of development in knowledge- and technology-based sectors. On the other hand, it can be said that business/efforts aimed at service-oriented consumption in urban spaces are parallel to international practices, due to the process of financialization or financial dependence in countries such as Turkey and the impact of sectors such as services and tourism on total economic activity. A critical characteristic of growth in the construction sector during the AKP era is that capital accumulation is largely based on financialization/debt. The financial sector's activity in the construction sector extends beyond financing. Taking into account factors such as the determination of regional real estate rents and demand management, it becomes apparent that the AKP's economic policies adhere to the neoliberal policies observed worldwide. These policies include financialization, consumption based on financialization, investment, commercialization of urban spaces, and accumulation through capitalist urbanization.

On the other hand, in the capitalist urbanization process of Turkey in the 2000s, the construction sector has a privileged and priority position in ensuring the growth/accumulation cycle. The importance and priority of the accumulation regime based on the construction sector in Turkey is not limited to purely economic factors such as the transformation of production relations, capital accumulation, and growth strategies mentioned in the previous sections.

According to Yeşilbağ, the construction sector and construction-based accumulation regime in Turkey appear as a hegemony²⁷ project.²⁸

Since the AKP came to power in 2002, the construction and real estate sector, which has been identified as a strategic sector in economic growth and distribution policies, has been placed at the center of the political-economic agenda. In this context, urban regeneration projects, mega real estate projects, infrastructure and built environment investments are shaped as a result of policymakers' political and economic preferences.

In terms of the relationships between the state, finance, and construction sector actors, and in terms of the state's active involvement, Turkey's built environment investments and large-scale real estate projects (implementation, the state's position and legal regulations, financing conditions, etc.) have a unique pattern. Construction and project development activities in Turkey are not only economic in terms of zoning processes, financing conditions, and construction and operation models, but also highly political in terms of the patronage relationships established during this process, wealth/resource transfer, the effective guiding role of policymakers, ease or difficulty of financing, and the integration of construction into political rhetoric. The state's policies and preferences regarding the construction sector are not limited to simple priority sector preferences based on economic rationales in public-private applications related to urban spaces. It is a preference related to a series of different layers and fields, from production to profit redistribution, from rent sharing to social policy regimes, from class formation processes to power balances between capital fractions and state regulatory mechanisms.²⁹ This study argues that urban regeneration practices in Turkey differ in the literature and in practice in terms of characteristics such as the specific role of built environment investments, privatization and operating models, and legal regulations. The uniqueness of the urban regeneration process in Yassıada, which is examined in this study, will be revealed through the aforementioned characteristics.

In capitalist urbanization processes, built environment investments play a strategic role in ensuring growth/accumulation cycles. Through built environment investments, spatial

²⁷ The hegemony project can be defined as a class-related political actor organizing both the relations between factions within the ruling class and the relations between the ruling class and the subordinate classes around a political and ideological leadership for the benefit of the capital accumulation process.

Jessop, Bob (2005), *Hegemony, Post-Fordizm ve Küresellesme Ekseninde Kapitalist Devlet*, Yaral, Betül ve Alev Özkazanç (Der.), (İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları). P.171

²⁸ Yeşilbağ, M. (2016). *Hegemonyanın harcı AKP döneminde inşaata dayalı birikim rejimi*. Ankara Üniversitesi Siyasal Bilgiler Fakültesi Dergisi, v.71, n.2, pp.599-626.

²⁹ Yeşilbağ, M. a.g.e., (2016)

arrangements requiring high resource transfers have expanded the scale and space of capital accumulation, and the (demolition and) reconstruction of space has enabled the reproduction of capital. To this extent, during the AKP era, legal regulations were made more practical, state-related public and private actors were activated in the market, and unique resource transfer and operating models were implemented for built environment investments and large-scale construction projects. In the 2000s, numerous legal regulations were enacted to promote and facilitate the production of urban built environments and to identify policymakers and project developers.³⁰ In addition to incentives and tax exemptions, interest rate setting, and credit campaigns aimed at stimulating demand, specific legal regulations have been enacted for the sector. Examples of such regulations include Municipal Law No. 5393, Law No. 5366 on the Protection and Preservation of Worn-Out Historical and Cultural Immovable Assets, Law No. 4957 on the Promotion of Tourism, and Law No. 2985 on Public Housing (TOKİ). In addition, the state's effectiveness and regulatory and decisive role in the sector has been increased through public and private institutions such as TOKİ, Emlak Konut, Real Estate Investment Partnerships, and relevant ministries. Various profit-sharing and transfer methods have been developed through these institutions. The privatization of public land, the allocation of usage rights, financial assistance for companies, public-private partnerships, and build-operate-transfer/build-operate models have enabled the state to influence urban development and restructure relationships between actors. Privatization is an important source of capital accumulation. In this way, public spaces or areas owned or managed by the public are transferred to a specific capital group's control for a set period of time or permanently. The group then converts the spaces into businesses, parks, tourist facilities, shopping malls, and similar establishments.³¹ This enables the transfer of income/resources from the public sector to the private sector preferred by the government.

Overall, it is noted that the construction sector in Turkey, urbanization, and urban regeneration strategies and practices cannot be fully understood by focusing solely on economic factors such as neoliberal economic policies, post-Fordist production relations, and financialization.

Taking into account the identification of project developers, the provision of special-purpose financing conditions and operational practices, state-related institutional interventions, and legal regulations, it is argued that the approach and practices in Turkey are highly political, and

³⁰ Balaban, O. (2008) *Capital accumulation, the state and the production of built environment: the case of Turkey*, ODTÜ Şehir ve Bölge Planlama Bölümü, Yayınlanmamış Doktora Tezi, Ankara.

³¹ Sahin, C. a.g.e., (2020)

that reading them solely through capital accumulation processes and cycles would be insufficient to explain the findings and arguments targeted in this study. Looking at the transformation process of Yassıada on a micro scale and general practices in Turkey, it is argued that the AKP acted systematically and strategically for economic and political reasons, particularly in the 2010s, due to factors such as its interventions in urban spaces in Turkey, the methods it used, and its preferences for developers.

In the context of this thesis, the transformation of Yassıada into a museum and business venture; how policymakers (executives and developers) integrated it into their political agenda; how and to what extent it responded to political/ideological needs; and what kind of memory/narrative initiative it undertook will be detailed in the following sections of our study. The transformation process on Yassıada and the island analyzed in this study occupies a unique position within “smt.-led-regeneration” strategies in terms of capital accumulation and transfer processes, the involvement of policymakers and project developers, and their objectives. The urban transformation process on Yassıada is the product of a multi-dimensional, interrelated and intricate relationship.

The reconstruction process in Yassıada, which will be re-discussed in the following sections, is considered to be comparable to the examples in the literature in terms of capital accumulation/transfer through the built environment investments and commodification of urban space; on the other hand, it is also considered to be distinct in terms of the restoration of memory through the transformation of place, developer selection, political interventions and directives, and business management.

3.3. Urban Regeneration Strategies, International Literature and Practices

Urban regeneration has been defined in literature as a comprehensive, area-based and multiagent collaborative planning process that improves the physical, environmental and socioeconomic conditions of an urban area and links the generated benefits to the wider urban fabric of the city. In particular, urban regeneration focuses on underutilized land or distressed urban areas, aiming to bring back their functionality and vibrancy. Globally, the term urban ‘regeneration’ has evolved over time and across regions. According to the local context, urban regeneration strategies can have similar objectives yet adopt different approaches. These strategies encompass a range of interdependent initiatives, including restoration of heritage

buildings, rehabilitation of environmentally degraded areas, activation of public spaces, revitalisation of underutilised land and distressed urban areas.³² Urban regeneration has been evaluated/discussed in the literature and implemented in practice by public/civil organizations, academic studies, professional chambers, policy makers mainly around the themes of urban planning and urbanization, housing opportunities/conditions, urban living conditions and accessibility to services, (to a lesser extent) ecology and sustainability, urban architecture and aesthetics. In this direction, the main purpose and strategic implementation areas of urban regeneration can be specified as follows; development of urban infrastructure, planning and zoning/housing activities, network and expansion of public services (transportation, health, education, etc.), protection of cultural heritage, development of urban economy and trade.³³

Urban regeneration is categorized into different sub-practices according to the forms and methods of intervention. Urban renewal, rehabilitation, redevelopment, revitalization, protection and social mobilization³⁴ are the main ones.³⁵ While not exactly overlapping, the phenomenon of urban regeneration is used as an encompassing concept to cover the above-mentioned methods, which differ from each other to a greater or lesser extent.³⁶

Although the forms and methods of intervention in the urban place vary, in the sense of the “concept” and the discussion that the thesis tries to clarify; the urban regeneration action will be criticized in the context of **economic efficiency/performance** of the urban place and its extensions, and practices will be examined. In the United Nations Human Settlements Programme's (UN-Habitat) 'Urban Regeneration in Inclusive Communities - Thriving Cities' sessions and explanatory note of 09.09.2024, it is stated that the urban transformation process involves integrated strategies and objectives such as the provision of housing, infrastructure, service networks, environmental, cultural and historical restoration, recovery and protection, and the enhancement of economic efficiency.³⁷ The report includes examples of good practices

³² United Nations Human Settlements Programme. (2024). *Urban regeneration in the context of UN-Habitat's Flagship Programme 'Inclusive Communities – Thriving Cities'*. Executive Board of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, 55th meeting of the Ad Hoc Working Group on Programmatic, Budgetary and Administrative Matters, 09.10.2024

³³ Koçak, Hüsamettin (2008), “Kentsel Yaşam Kalitesinin Gelistirilmesi için Stratejik Çalışma Alanları”, *Yerel Siyaset*, Sayı 31, ss. 41-47.

³⁴ Although the concept of social mobilization is defined in the urbanization/urban planning literature as a method of providing an economic function based on changing the social structure of space, it would be consistent with what has been discussed in the previous chapters of this thesis to treat this concept as gentrification.

³⁵ Görün, M., & Kara, M. (2010). *Kentsel Dönüşüm ve Sosyal Girişimcilik Bağlamında Türkiye’de Kentsel Yaşam Kalitesinin Artırılması*. *Yönetim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 8(2), 137-164.

³⁶ Keles, Rusen (2004), “Kentsel Dönüşümün Tüzel Altyapısı”, H. B. Tuna (Editör), *Dosya: Kentsel Dönüşüm ve Katılım*, *Mimarist Dergisi*, TMMOB Mimarlar Odası İstanbul Büyükkent Subesi, 4(12), 73-75.

³⁷ UN-Habitat. a.g.e., (2024)

with different focal points for various countries/regions. Although the project/practice examples included in the report are classified based on focal points such as cultural heritage, transformation of industrial areas, inclusiveness and sustainability, transformation of neighborhoods, when the practices are examined in detail, it is understood that the main motivation is to (re)gain economic function and increase economic efficiency.

This study asserts/defends that the memory-led urban regeneration strategy, which is argued to be the focus of Yassıada's regeneration process, and other “smt.-led-regeneration” strategies that will be discussed in the following sections can be similarly differentiated/characterized, but the primary motivation in these practices is economic return such as regional rent, capital accumulation, and investment attraction.

So, in the processes of urban transformation, how does this economic return/accumulation arise from or get realized? The most important action/initiative of capital accumulation related to urban regeneration is fixed capital for the production of urban built environment. According to Harvey's conceptualization, capital is fixed to place in the second cycle, and in this way space forms the built environment necessary for production/consumption. Mega housing projects, neighborhood regeneration, construction and renovation of plants, factories, hospitals, hospitals, ports are different models and scales of the urban built environment.³⁸ The process of transformation of Yassıada into the Democracy and Liberties Island, which is the subject of our study, presents a unique example of the construction/reorganization of the built environment with its components such as hotels, mosques, restaurants, museums and congress centers. For this reason, the discussion on urban regeneration in this thesis will be limited within the scope of examining the production of built environment and the processes of capital accumulation associated with the production of the built environment, and the discussion of urban regeneration will be conducted in this focus.

In the process of urban regeneration, economic surplus, capital accumulation, circulation/transference and absorption can be realized in different processes and conditions. Firstly, the regenerated place has the objective to provide the necessary environmental conditions for productive and profitable economic activities. It is mostly related to the condition of use and value of the place, such as transport, infrastructure facilities, accommodation conditions. The second process/method is the accumulation of capital through the financialization or commodification of place. Dynamics like historical & cultural heritage

³⁸ Harvey, D. (1978). *The Urban Process under Capitalism: A Framework for Analysis*. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 2, 101-131. (S.118)

of place, location advantage, rental potential are decisive. In this process, the place itself becomes a commodity of investment/accumulation, in addition to hosting commercial activities. The market value of the reorganized site is in the foreground, with the aim of attracting capital on the basis of this speculative value. Capitalist urbanization redefines urban space into a commodity defined by its exchange value rather than its use value.³⁹ These type of urban regeneration practices are generally planned on a regional scale (neighborhood, district, etc.) and aim to transform the social stratum in the area subject to the implementation. This process, called social mobilization in urban planning literature, often results in displacement in urbanization practices. The third stage aims to ensure the circuit of capital accumulation through spatial reconstruction and the absorption of overaccumulation. Here, especially large-scale built environment investments, which require large amounts of investment, ensure the absorption of accumulation and its transfer/re-transfer to potentially profitable areas. As we will discuss later, the demolition and reconstruction of the sports hall where the trials were held and the officers' dormitory where political prisoners were imprisoned, which constituted an important part of the museum on the island, and the optimization of its location and the area it occupied within the island can be given as examples of such spatial reconstruction. In order to explain this process, Harvey extends Schumpeter's concept of 'creative destruction' and considers it as a mechanism of transformation associated with the continuous adaptation of space to the processes of capital accumulation. According to Harvey, the production and reproduction of place inevitably involves processes of creative destruction to ensure the continuity of the capitalist economy. Urban regeneration represents the beginning of a new cycle in capital accumulation.⁴⁰ Spatial reconstruction is not only a process of accumulation, transfer and absorption. It also defines a socio-political process. As is common in Turkey, through public tenders and privatizations, policy makers determine to whom resources will be allocated in the reconstruction process. Moreover, regeneration projects increase regional rent and property values and redefine the social stratum of residents, resulting in social mobilization, which we conceptualize as 'gentrification'. The capitalist state plays an active role in the adaptation of urban space for capital accumulation, which shows that creative destruction is not only an economic but also a political process.⁴¹

The process of urban regeneration can be summarized as a set of planning and initiatives aimed at giving function to urban areas, revitalizing them and improving their conditions and

³⁹ Harvey, D. (2008). "The Right to the City", *New Left Review*, No: 53, S.29

⁴⁰ Harvey, D. a.g.e., (2008) S.152

⁴¹ Harvey, D. a.g.e., (2004) S.237

facilities. On the other hand, when the regeneration strategies of policy makers, regulators, project developers, public-private initiatives regarding urban places and the dynamics leading to these strategies are analyzed; it is observed that the motivations leading urban regeneration strategies and the dynamics of intervention in the urban place are mainly focused on the integration of the urban place into the process of generating economic returns; such as the carrying out of projects and regulations that will attract capital, realizing the potential for commercialization, increasing property and rent value, making space and spatial components marketable... Increasing the exchange value of a place can be achieved through large real estate projects that will drive demand, as well as by promoting and branding the cultural, historical, social and spatial characteristics of the place that will attract international demand/interest. Branded cities compete with each other to attract capital moving to more profitable areas in the global market. Through the arrangements/reconstruction of the urban place; it is aimed to attract international demand and therefore accumulation through activities such as international events, congresses, fairs, competitions, organizations, etc. Another initiative associated with economic efficiency within urban regeneration practices is the built environment production investments. Built environment investments are highly effective in capital accumulation, circulation and absorption processes in respect of their scale, the role and activeness of the state, and the wide range of their application areas. For this reason, regeneration and reconstruction activities related to built environment investments have emerged as a strategic choice by policy makers and private initiatives.

Urban regeneration processes have been implemented in a similar context in Turkey, especially since the 2000s. The AKP government, in its economic policies that prioritize growth, give special role to the construction sector and urban regeneration and has placed these practices at the center. As mentioned in the previous sections, although there has not been a process of deindustrialization and industrial profitability problem as in developed economies, it is observed that urban regeneration projects oriented towards global demand and capital have been developed in Turkey due to the developments in the services sector such as tourism, domestic consumption and finance sector. In a similar way, with the AKP government, built environment production investments in Turkey have taken a significant place in the economic-political agenda. Construction projects such as bridges, airports, hospitals, shopping malls-workplace-residential complexes, ‘mega’ real estate projects and neighbourhood transformation projects, which are examples of urban regeneration practices with different purposes, methods and scales, have been put into practice sometimes by the state, sometimes

with the cooperation of the state, and sometimes with the directives and guidance of the state. Although the production of built environment in Turkey shows similarities with the practices of other countries in terms of capital accumulation processes (see also Penbecioğlu, 2011), it contains unique practices in terms of the distribution of public resources, resource transfer due to the determination of developers, operating models and financing conditions/opportunities. The AKP government's strategic prioritization of construction and built environment investments can be explained by a series of multiple and integrated reasons. On the one hand, the practice of construction has been incorporated into AKP's political rhetoric with references such as 'service/hizmet', 'revival/ihya', 'power/kudret' and has constituted an important moment in its populist discourse.⁴² On the other side, the construction sector, which was identified as an easy and fast growth strategy, was prioritized for macro-economic targets. The uniqueness of the urban regeneration process in Turkey originates from the active, intervening role of the state/political authority. In many large-scale projects in Turkey, the state mechanism plays an active role in determining the area to be transformed, the regeneration method and the implementers/project developers. In this way, the political authority is able to control the flow of capital and manage the distribution of public resources. On the other hand, the implementing, regulating, controlling and, when necessary, interrupting power of the state has been established/strengthened with the determination of financing conditions through public banks, tax and incentive facilities, regulation/reorganization of the powers granted to public institutions (such as TOKİ, EmlakKonut, Ministries, Municipalities etc.) according to the needs, and legal regulations. Various legal arrangements made in the early 2000s gave the authority to determine/declare urban regeneration areas to municipalities and relevant ministries, and in addition, the authority of TOKİ was expanded.⁴³ Another strategic institution in the urban regeneration process in Turkey is TOKİ. Established in 1984 to provide loans to small-scale contractors and citizens wishing to own a house, TOKİ has been transformed into a powerful state apparatus with a huge budget, equipped with extraordinary powers such as granting zoning permits, privatising state land, declaring certain regions as urban regeneration areas and carrying out transformation projects, through 14 separate legal amendments to its legislation between 2002 and 2008. Similarly, the 2010 legal amendment that gave metropolitan municipalities the right to declare any area an 'urban regeneration' area, thereby bypassing existing legal constraints on urban space, served as a massive incentive to the

⁴² Bora, T. (2016). *Türk Muhafazakarlığı ve İnşaat Sehveti: Büyük Olsun Bizim Olsun. İnşaat ya Resulullah* (pp. 9-16). Birikim Yayınları.

⁴³ Balaban, O. (2011), "İnşaat Neyin Lokomotifi?", *Birikim*, 270: 19-26.

construction and real estate sectors.⁴⁴ Institutions equipped with wide authority and competency, subsidies and financing facilities, and legal regulations enable the commodification of the selected rent areas. To describe or demonstrate the application in a flow, capital is transferred from the public sector to the private sector by first declaring state/treasury-owned lands such as forests, coastlines, public spaces etc. as renewal/transformation areas and then transferring them to private enterprises through privatization, public tenders and transfer of operating rights.

Although the methods and practices differ in terms of scale, period and region, it can be concluded that the motivation of economic return/outcome is characteristic of all urban regeneration processes. Urban regeneration strategies, both in international practices and in Turkey, are shaped in accordance with the capitalist economic-political system and thus the capital accumulation regimes.

3.3.1. Urban Regeneration Strategies and “...”-Led-Urban Regeneration

With reference to the “creative industries” shaped according to the new consumer demands and production relations mentioned in the first part of the study, urban transformation models that focus on a leading factor as a marketing/branding strategy that can compete in the global market have been put into practice. This leading factor, which is taken into focus in urban urban regeneration practices, will be positioned at the center of this thesis in explaining and creating the conceptual framework of the regeneration process of Yassıada. In the following sections of the study, urban regeneration strategies and practices will be critiqued through different focal points or leading factors such as industry, culture and property. After establishing the conceptual framework of “Smt.”-led regeneration initiatives and classifying them through practices, the regeneration process of Yassıada into the Democracy and Liberties Island as a museum-commemoration space will be discussed through the concept of memory-led regeneration.

The concept of Led-Regeneration can be considered as a strategy of urban intervention defined by the reference point it focuses on or the subject/theme it puts in front of. In practice, this reference or forename is characterized as the driving/leading value of the regeneration. The constitutive element for the concept is the notion of "regeneration". The concept of

⁴⁴ Balaban, O. a.g.e., (2011)

regeneration, which can be defined as a metacode, is the constant in the process and the identified focal points/leading factor constitute the unique/distinctive aspect of the transformation practice.

One strategy that is widely used in the literature and serves as a model is culture-led regeneration. It can be defined as the transformation of the idle, unproductive industrial areas into cultural areas or a culture-oriented transformation, which mentioned in the previous sections. Industry-led regeneration, heritage-led regeneration, property-led regeneration, tourism-led regeneration strategies, which can be associated with creative industries and have points of intersection and distinction with culture-led urban regeneration, are also used comparatively in the discussion and analysis of the literature. An exceptional conceptual inconsistency needs to be mentioned here. The reference points mentioned above in the literature (culture, industry, heritage, etc.) generally point to the focal/driving force or factor that will lead transformation in regeneration strategies. On the other hand, in some exceptional transformation strategies and practices, the focus/reference point describes the object that is targeted for transformation. It is understood that some of the examples defined and analysed in the literature as industry-led regeneration are realized in practice as the transformation of industrial areas in the context of “creative industries”, in other words, this urban regeneration strategy is similar to culture-led regeneration in practice.⁴⁵ In the practices discussed in the literature, it is seen that the process of deindustrialization in developed economies is effective/determinative. Culture, industry, heritage ... no matter how it is termed, the subject that is transformed and recommodified in practices is idle, inefficient, out-of-use facilities, warehouses, mines and similar industrial sites and facilities.

The concept of memory-led regeneration will be analysed in a unique position as it uses the driving force - memory - as both the leading factor of regeneration and what is dynamically transformed. First, the concept of Led-Regeneration and its prominent applications will be analysed comparatively; the similarities and differences with the concept of memory-led regeneration and the regeneration practice of Yassiada will be tried to be revealed.

In terms of the cycles of capital discussed in the first part of the study, urban transformation strategies will be analysed with reference to the production of the built environment such as commercial facilities, hotels, art centers, convention centers, event spaces in the second cycle of capital, and the transformation of space in accordance with culture, art consumption, and

⁴⁵ Miao, Julie T. (2023) *Inside-out in creative industry-led urban regeneration: the roles of developers in Liverpool and Bristol compared*, *International Planning Studies*, 28:2, 178-192

information and finance based sectors in the third cycle of capital. These processes point to commercialization/commodification practices through the development of commercial/real estate projects on the one hand, and on the other hand, a strategy of branding the city by labelling it with the characteristics of arts & cultural or experience consumption and hosting international events.

3.3.2. Culture-Led Regeneration Strategies and Applications

We have previously mentioned the evolution of creative industries/sectors as a reflection of economic growth/development strategies and capital accumulation processes on urban intervention practices and their active role in urban regeneration processes. In the process of globalization and acceleration of the spatial cycle of capital, culture as an industry suited for mass consumption and urban revitalization, culture management policies have gained considerable value in urbanization practices. The culture industry, designed/directed for mass consumption, points to an integrated and unified concept of culture that makes everything it touches similar.⁴⁶ In this context, the corporate or enterpriser culture that has developed in the field of arts and culture, especially in the US and Britain, has been built into urban revitalization and renewal processes. With the process of de-industrialization and the emergence of the creative industries, the demand and economic focus has shifted from manufacturing to new cultural consumption and the operation and management of that culture. These new areas of consumption can be defined by different concepts such as “experience”, “hospitality”, “event” industry. The spatial counterpart of these processes has been the transformation of idle, inefficient or functionless brownfields and facilities/sites, taking into account their potential for culture-led regeneration. In this context, the main goal of global growth strategies is to attract capital, investment, skilled labour (the creative class), and tourists by restructuring cities and urban economies as centers of "creativity" and knowledge-based centers.⁴⁷ The theme of competition imported from the market economy, especially in western/central economies, describes competition around the reorganization towards mass consumption, knowledge-technology-finance-based sectors, and international capital. The culture-led regeneration strategy, which emerged as a culture-oriented method of attracting demand and investment to urban space, branding and revitalizing the city, can be defined as a set of implementations that

⁴⁶ Adorno, T. W. (2023). *Kültür Endüstrisi: Kültür Yönetimi. İletişim Yayınları*.p.11

⁴⁷ Sınmaz, S., & Altanlar, A. (2021). Culture-led Urban Transformation Strategies for Industrial Heritage and Industrial Areas in Istanbul. *ICONARP International Journal of Architecture and Planning*, 9(2), 1010–1035.

transform the city around cultural programs and activities. As a consequence of growth and profit-oriented urbanization policies, culture-led regeneration practices are motivated by the transformation of inefficient urban space for the purpose of capital accumulation or economic value creation, typically shaped by entrepreneurial/investor strategies targeting high incomes. The main target/mission and method that can be generalized in the literature and practice of culture-led regeneration is the transformation of the urban image of declining industrial cities through urban renewal and cultural investment, the achievement of an advantage in international competition, and consequently getting economic returns/accumulation through investment, visitation, events, economic cooperation, etc.

3.3.2.1. Bilbao and Glasgow

The cities of Glasgow in Scotland and Bilbao in Spain are distinctive and pioneering examples of culture-oriented urban regeneration practices that follow each other in time and include similar practices. Throughout the 19th century, both cities developed as dominant centers of production and manufacturing, located at the center of economic activity and labour, with mining sites/operations and shipping industries. In both countries, the volume of industrial business has been shrinking since the 1970s, while GDP and employment rate have declined remarkably.⁴⁸ In response to the economic decline, initially, from 1985 onwards, through the coordination of public and private organizations, international investment reports and project development plans, a post-industrial economic model was adopted in Glasgow in order to reshape and reconstruct the urban space and image. In this transformation process, it was primarily aimed to substitute the shrinking industrial base (production, income, employment, etc.) with the service sector on the one hand, and to rebuild the city's image around cultural and touristic activities on the other. It can be argued that these two targets are intertwined with each other. In the 1970s, the city's negative image was a major deterrent for potential investors, and the city was associated with concepts such as poverty and violence.⁴⁹ Founded in 1985 with the collaboration of local business elites and the public sector, the Glasgow Action initiative can be considered as the starting point of urban regeneration and culture-oriented development strategies. As part of this initiative, art festivals, exhibitions and conferences, opera and

⁴⁸ Gomez, M. (1998) 'Reflective images: The case of urban regeneration in Glasgow and Bilbao', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 22 (1): 106-121

⁴⁹ Paddison, R. (1993) *City marketing, image reconstruction and urban regeneration*. *Urban Studies* 30.2, 330-50.

orchestra events were organized, and projects to attract foreign investors were implemented. Although a culture-led regeneration strategy is adopted at the urban scale, a property-led urban regeneration strategy that can set an example at the neighbourhood scale can be mentioned/considered. Housing renovation and improvement actions were taken within the scope of the project named Merchant City. Although it is stated in the literature that the housing profile for the neighbourhood is rehabilitated and regional rent is increased, the social exclusion effect brought about by this property-led regeneration is emphasized as a negative outcome.⁵⁰ Another controversial issue concerns the transformation of Glasgow Green Park, which has been in public use since 1450. The transformation of Glasgow Green, which has hosted mass demonstrations and protests and is an important place for the labour movement tradition, for commercial purposes has been heavily criticized.⁵¹

It is stated that the urban regeneration strategy and practices of the city of Bilbao, which follows the practices of Glasgow in adopting a regeneration strategy that focuses on culture, has been exemplified/modelled to the extent that it can be defined as the “Bilbao Effect” in the literature. Bilbao, which is in similarities with Glasgow in terms of deindustrialization and its negative economic outcomes, has seen its economic indicators decline since the mid-1970s.⁵² The narrowing of business opportunities, the decline in employment and the loss of qualified population are cited as the most prominent economic problems. In order to solve the problems associated with industrial production and the related socio-political structure, a strategy of marketing the city through the image of culture & arts was adopted. In this respect, the Metropolitan Bilbao Strategic Renewal Plan was prepared and implemented in 1992 under the guidance of the public authority. One of the unique elements in Bilbao's urban transformation process is the iconic architectural structures and art centers that can be identified with the city image. The Guggenheim Museum, the Euskalduna Palace of Conference and Performing Arts, the Uriarte Bridge and the Norman Foster Metro system have become symbolic landmarks of the city's image. On the other hand, the US-based Guggenheim Museum, designed by architect Frank Gehry in 1997, is a pioneer in the culture-led regeneration strategies of Bilbao. Designed with an iconic architecture, the museum is one of the symbolic buildings of the city and is a typical model for the multinational museum form that can provide different capital

⁵⁰ Basdoğan, S., & Manisa, K., (2015). *Endüstrileşme Sonrası Kentlerin Dönüşümü Konut Odaklı Kentsel Dönüşüm Örneği Merchant City Glasgow. Yapı*, no.404, 50-58.

⁵¹ Keating M. and Frantz M., *Culture-led Strategies for Urban Regeneration: A Comparative Perspective on Bilbao*, *IJIS* 16 (3) 2004, 187–194.

⁵² Gomez, M. a.g.e. (1998)

flows such as naming rights, sponsorship, strategic partnership, international funding support.⁵³ The Guggenheim Museum, which is run almost entirely with a corporate mindset, has branches in different countries, the application of franchising/royalty rights in museology, its expansionist and homogenizing aspect has blurred the line between culture & arts activity and the service sector, making this relationship capable of serving complex/intricated purposes and objectives. This commercialization, economic value creation and reconstruction of the city based on culture has been presented/promoted as a “rebirth” of the city in terms of international reputation, tourism and other economic returns. Conversely, the globalization of museums and art centers by branching out for commercial purposes, royalty rights, and expansionist tendencies have been redefined in the literature as the McGuggenheim Effect.⁵⁴ It is attempted to overcome the economic decline in both cities through cultural landmark investments, cultural branding strategies and accompanying comprehensive urban renewal projects. Another common point for both cities is that they are home to regional separatist movements. Within these urban regeneration practices, these political debates and identity have been considered by decision-makers and practitioners/developers as a matter that need to be overcome/diluted like poverty, unemployment, infrastructure problems, economic and other environmental issues. Another discussion topic in the literature is the level of effectiveness of culture-led urban regeneration strategies and the measurement of its effectiveness. In different studies, there are different evaluations/analyses on the measurement of the benefits (through economic indicators such as employment, number of visitors, tourism revenues) created by the regeneration of the cities of Bilbao and Glasgow.⁵⁵

3.3.3. Other Regeneration Strategies and Practices

Despite references to different focal points (industry, heritage, etc.) in the literature, cultural-led regeneration implementations with/overlapping examples are also common. Although different studies refer to leading factors such as industry and property, Paintworks Site regeneration projects in Bristol can be categorized within creative industry-oriented cultural

⁵³ Wu, Chin-Tao; (2005). *Kültürün Özelleştirilmesi, Türkçesi: Esin Soğancılar, İstanbul, İletişim Yayınları, s.444*

⁵⁴ Mathur, S. (2005). *Museums and globalization. Anthropological Quarterly, 78(3), 697-708.*

⁵⁵ Plaza, Beatriz (1999), ‘The Guggenheim-Bilbao Museum Effect: Reply to Maria V.Gomez’ “*Reflective Images: The case of urban regeneration in Glasgow and Bilbao*”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 23 (3): 589-592*

renewal/regeneration initiatives.⁵⁶ The site of the Phonix paint and varnish factory and brewery was purchased in 2003 by an outsider real estate developer with the aim of providing housing and building/renovating commercial and industrial buildings (offices, shops, workshops, etc.). The entire end-to-end transformation process was carried out by this private company. Bristol's regeneration is a unique example of the power of private developers in decision-making, planning, implementation and maintenance, with an emphasis on social engineering and industrial heritage. Here, the industrial idle site has not been digested by different cultural structures, the original structure has been adopted as heritage, only its use and image have been transformed. In the regeneration process in Bristol, the main motivations and behaviours of developers were shaped around the mainstream economic structure⁵⁷, but there was also an important agenda of reshaping and sustaining the profile of residents. As the executive of the creative industries, the target group was identified as “growing culture-curious middle class” and the projects and residences were designed for this group. The project developer has taken the reshape/rebuilt of this resident group one step further and intervened in the lease-sale processes of the real estate within the project and has also activated the city council with the power to influence public authority decisions and planning.⁵⁸

Within cultural growth strategies, creating a “creative class” that will consume the new culture produced is an important dimension. Within the post-industrial model, cultural activities respond not only to consumption habits, but also to entertainment and leisure needs and the cosmopolitan identity of the creative class.⁵⁹ Here, the creative class is not only part of or a producer of urban identity, but also the target consumer of cultural activities or industries.

The city of Liverpool, one of the most important working-class cities in the UK, has experienced a similar deindustrialization and economic decline since the 1970s, and its response to the economic decline has likewise been shaped through urban spatial arrangements and reorganizations. In many of the examples we have mentioned and will mention to this extent, it is emphasized that urban intervention and urban regeneration strategies and interventions are aimed at the accumulation of capital, the circulation and absorption of capital; and the form of urban space that is compatible with the relations of production and demand

⁵⁶ Miao, J. T. 2020. “Getting Creative with Housing? Case Studies of Paintworks, Bristol and Baltic Triangle, Liverpool.” *European Planning Studies* 29 (6): 1050–1070.

⁵⁷ Julie T. Miao (2023) *Inside-out in creative industry-led urban regeneration: the roles of developers in Liverpool and Bristol compared*, *International Planning Studies*, 28:2, 178-192

⁵⁸ Julie T. Miao a.g.e. (2023)

⁵⁹ Sinmaz, S., & Altanlar, A. a.g.e. (2021).

dynamics that come with the post-industrial, post-fordist period, as detailed in the early parts of the study. Compared to other cases, Liverpool has implemented a comprehensive urban regeneration program that includes different models and practices such as housing, retail, industrial area rehabilitation at the city scale. The redevelopment of the Baltic Triangle, the renovation of Anfield Stadium, the restoration of the Albert Dock, the retail-led development building of Liverpool One complex are examples of how Liverpool's city image has been renewed in a multifaceted way after being labeled as an industrial & port city in the past. In this urban regeneration process, local capital groups were mainly involved, while the metropolitan municipality played an active role in planning and directing the process.

In many cases, such as Liverpool and Bristol, driving forces such as culture, property, tourism, industry, etc. have been carried out together, intertwined and in cooperation within the creative industry strategies. The distinguishing factor in these large-scale and integrated practices is the impact, involvement and direction of the public authority. In the cases of Bilbao and Bristol, there has been considerable criticism and controversy about the extent to which the concerns, demands and needs of the city's residents were taken into consideration or ignored by the outsider developers imported from outside the city or country who designed and implemented the regeneration process. The Maboneng area in central Johannesburg has similarly undergone a property-led transformation process, driven and implemented largely by a private developer.⁶⁰ Similar to other examples, the process of deindustrialization since the 1980s has left empty warehouses and factory buildings in the Maboneng area, located in the light industrial zone on the outskirts of the city. In 2008, an international real estate development company purchased vacant warehouses and facilities, and a hybrid architectural study was developed for the reuse of these spaces. As a result, a mixed-use complex was built, including galleries and studios, creative office spaces and residences. Johannesburg has been transformed into an art and culture center for cultural consumption and the creative class that demands this cultural “commodity”. In this respect, the Maboneng area has been considered a typical example of “creative” property-led urban regeneration. In the regeneration process, the developer used art, design and creativity as a vehicle to enhance and redevelop the abandoned spaces of factories and warehouses, transforming them into mixed-use/hybrid spaces for artistic, commercial and residential use. The regeneration process has boosted the image and popularity of the area, and consequently increased demand. With the rise in local real estate

⁶⁰ Gregory, J.J. (2016). *Creative industries and urban regeneration – The Maboneng precinct, Johannesburg. Local Economy: The Journal of the Local Economy Policy Unit*, 31, 158 - 171.

prices, the Municipality has revalued many properties in the surrounding area, and the higher valuations have forced many property owners to sell because of increasing rates and taxes on buildings.⁶¹ In the case of Maboneng, which has been presented as an example of successful property-led urban renewal in terms of the attraction of creative businesses through investment in arts and culture and the renewal of the city's image, there has been criticism that inequalities of benefit have arisen as a result of the significant involvement of private initiatives/developers in financing, planning, steering and implementation, and the lack of public urban management. The expectation of rent/profit from the real estates invested by project developers and the increase in regional rent and exchange value have led to consequences such as exclusion and gentrification for residents.

Another case of the regeneration of industrial sites for tourism is the transformation of the copper and coal mines and plants in the Lower Swansea Valley in Wales by adopting them as “industrial heritage”. The focus of the Lower Swansea Valley Project, planned with public incentives and directives, is the transformation of mines and facilities, which are seen as sources of industrial waste and pollution, with the aim of revitalizing tourism.⁶² During the regeneration process, the industrial history of the region was appropriated as a cultural heritage and interpreted as a site-specific narrative. In other words, the practitioners' strategy can be summarized as “... translating the meaning of the industrial space and process in an entertaining, captivating way to create demand...”.⁶³ As Dicks argues, industrial heritage is central to Wales' national narrative.⁶⁴ A fundamental aspect of using this heritage to stimulate or drive tourism is the idea of uniqueness, the distinctiveness of the past as a unique brand... The transformation of the Swansea valley reveals how the industrial past as a metaphor, as an aesthetic, is linked to economic goals and the transformation of idle, useless, (partly) harmful areas. The behaviour of policymakers is an important determinant in the process. The Lower Swansea Valley and mineral fields, which had been idle and awaiting transformation since the 1980s, were treated in the 1980s and 1990s as areas awaiting decontamination and rehabilitation but underwent a unique transformation process with devolution in 1998, the establishment of the National Assembly for Wales and the development of unique, autonomous

⁶¹ Jason, S. (2014). *Urban renewal's bourgeois curse*. *Mail and Guardian*, 08.08.2014

⁶² May, S. (2023). 5. In *Heritage-Led Regeneration and the Sanisation of Memory in the Lower Swansea Valley* (pp. 77–88)., Routledge.

⁶³ Price, William R. 2021. “Mining for Tourists: An Analysis of Industrial Tourism and Government Policy in Wales.” *Tourism Planning & Development* 18(4), 435–456.

⁶⁴ Dicks, B. 2019. “Industrial Heritage as Place Making.” In S. Berger (Ed.), *Constructing Industrial Pasts: Industrial Heritage Making in Britain, the West and Post-Socialist Countries*, 68–80. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

economic policies. What is marketable or commoditizable under the themes of experience, leisure, hospitality points to a endless field of creativity. The National Waterfront Museum and the Big Pit Coal Museum are examples of industrial heritage initiatives that are different from traditional mining, maritime and industrial museums. The attraction of visitors is targeted with supporting elements such as adding video, voting and animation. (see also BBC, 2005⁶⁵)

The promotion and marketing of the area associated with pollution and toxic waste in the Lower Swansea Valley through its own story/history is an example of this creative industrial horizon. One of the key drivers of this regeneration in Lower Swansea has been Swansea Enterprise Park, the largest enterprise zone in the UK, established in Swansea in 1981. The first phase of the Swansea Enterprise Zone project, which includes the Lower Swansea Valley, has seen global businesses, retail and shopping centres established within the business park. The transformation of the enterprise park through retail/business-led regeneration in the 1980s brought about the transformation of the nearby coal mines. The state has taken a comprehensive view of the financing and transformation intentions for the whole Swansea region and has activated and implemented planning controls and local tax incentives for the enterprise zone, and marketing and project development for the valley.

Although the method, implementation and outcomes differ, culture-led urban regeneration strategies aim to re-transform or reuse idle, non-functional industrial areas through new creative industries based on culture. In these cases, although the implementation and implementer, location and scale differ, depending on the ownership of the project (public authority, private initiative, public-private partnerships); it is seen that the intensity of the objectives such as employment, property rent, investment attraction, tourism income, etc. varies. LA Walt Disney Concert Hall, London The Shard Hotel, Centre Pompidou Museum are examples of iconic architectural structures built with the Bilbao model; Zollverein Coal Mine in Essen, Oberhausen Gasometer depot, Distillery District in Toronto are examples of cultural-led regeneration of industrial areas. The transformation of industrial areas in Turkey with reference to culture is characterized by the transformation of facilities built in the 1800s during the Ottoman period, especially after 2010, when Istanbul was selected as the European Capital of Culture. Urban interventions conducted in the context of the attempt to establish cultural hegemony, which we will discuss in the following sections, are also considered to be one of the most important driving forces in culture-led urban regeneration practices.

⁶⁵ BBC News. (2005, October 30). Ancient skeleton was 'even older'. BBC News. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/south_west/4339086.stm

3.4. Culture-Led Regeneration Cases in Turkey

Compared to the conceptualization of culture-led regeneration and mainstream practices, it can be argued that regeneration practices in Turkey show some differences in terms of the priority of regeneration, the subject of regeneration and the executor/implementer profile. In order to clarify urban regeneration practices in Turkey, it is crucial to refer to the development of the political-economic system. As a (semi-) peripheral economy, the Turkish economy is characterized by limited heavy industrial capacity due to dependence on raw materials and energy, limited value-added production such as information technologies, and dependence on external financing (such as funds, stock exchanges, debt instruments).⁶⁶ To this extent, the Turkish economy has been integrated into global capital as a peripheral economy, especially since the 1990s, and policies have been developed to attract the capital surplus that emerged in the central economies under global liquidity conditions with the promise of ‘higher returns, interest’. Within this structure, foreign capital inflows are vital for economic growth. From the 2000s onwards, this capital attraction has been attempted to be sustained through monetary policies such as interest rates and parity, as well as through credit-based (domestic) borrowing, financialization and resource/funding allocation to certain private sectors for the domestic market. Considering the low share of the manufacturing industry in total GDP in Turkey, capital accumulation strategies based on the services sector and construction are decisive/distinctive. The initial and probably the most important stage of the urban regeneration process and related capital accumulation around the critical role of the construction and financial sectors mentioned in the previous sections is the financing process.⁶⁷ The preferences of political power and its local bureaucratic extensions are shaped around construction and urban transformation strategies for resource allocation and financialization, rather than (at least as much as) direct financing, to transform the city. Also similarly, the services sector and investments such as tourism and hospitality constitute a large share in the sectoral distribution of the economy. (see also TUIK 2023, Özgün, F. 2023⁶⁸) Although it is debatable how coherent and planned, they are, it can be said that AKP-era regulations and investments regarding the urban space are a series of attempts to attract tourists and visitors, as well as the aforementioned capital through financial instruments such as funds and investments. It is stated that urban

⁶⁶ Akçoraoğlu, A. (2018, August 25). *Türkiye’de birikim rejiminin krizi*. BirGün. Retrieved from <https://www.birgun.net/haber/turkiye-de-birikim-rejiminin-krizi-228033>

⁶⁷ Güngen, A. R. (2021). *Borçlandırma siyaseti-Türkiye’de finansal içerilme*. İletişim Yayınları.

⁶⁸ Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu. (2023). *Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu (TÜİK) Veri Portalı*. Retrieved from <https://data.tuik.gov.tr>

Özgün, F. (2023). *Türkiye’de Hizmetler Sektörü İstihdamı ile Ekonomik Büyüme Arasındaki İlişki*. Uluslararası Ekonomi ve Yenilik Dergisi, 9(1), 69-93.

regeneration in Turkey varies in terms of projects, implementers/developers, regions, financing conditions, and objectives of urban regeneration, with the same economic purpose and different methods, around the effectiveness of public and semi-public actors such as TOKİ, Emlak Konut, and private capital clientelist relationship with political power in the urban regeneration process.

Urban regeneration practices show diversified objectives and practices at the provincial, regional and neighbourhood scales. When analysing urban regeneration practices in Turkey in terms of leading factor/determinant; Fikirtepe and İzmir-Bayraklı property-led regeneration, Sulukule and Tarlabası tourism/state-led regeneration, Antalya Kaleiçi, Galata, Galataport tourism/property-led regeneration, Ataşehir and Ümraniye finance/retail-led regeneration strategies can be shown as model examples. (bkz. Sınmaz & Altanlar 2021, Ozden 2012⁶⁹) In addition to the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization and the relevant municipalities, TOKİ and Emlak Konut are very active in these implementations, sometimes undertaking the project entirely and sometimes in partnership with the aforementioned public institution.

The urban regeneration and displacement process in Sulukule, described in the literature as tourism-led or state (local government)-led urban regeneration, stands out as a pioneering and symbolic example of the law enacted in 2005 that granted local governments the authority to declare and implement redevelopment areas in historical sites.⁷⁰ Neslişah and Hatice Sultan neighbourhoods in the Fatih district of Istanbul, predominantly inhabited by Romany citizens, known as Sulukule, were called “the rotten tooth of Istanbul” by the dentist mayor of the time.⁷¹ According to the Municipality's website, the objectives of the project can be summarized as the renewal of areas of physical-economic degradation, protection of the socio-cultural structure of the region and ensuring local participation in the planning process, protection and revitalization of the historical & cultural area, tourism function and income-generating activities.⁷² The Sulukule Urban Renewal Project, carried out in cooperation with the Municipality and TOKİ, has gone beyond the concept of renewal and turned into a real estate-housing-oriented regeneration practice. With the displacement of the Roman population, whose traditional and ethnic characteristics shaped the physical structure and cultural identity

⁶⁹ Ozden, P. (2012). *Culture-led regeneration projects in post-industrial areas: the Istanbul experience*.

⁷⁰ 5366 Yıpranan Tarihi ve Kültürel Tasınmaz Varlıkların Yenilenerek Korunması ve Yasatılarak Kullanılması Hakkında Kanun. (2005). Resmi Gazete. Retrieved from <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/21.5.20059668.pdf>

⁷¹ Bayhan, B. (2013, Ağustos 6). Bir zamanlar Sulukule vardı.Arkitera. <https://www.arkitera.com/haber/bir-zamanlar-sulukule-var-di/>

⁷² Ozden, P. (2008). *An Opportunity Missed In Tourism-led Regeneration: Sulukule*.

of the neighbourhoods, it has become clear that the promises of effective participation, protection and maintenance of the socio-cultural and cultural structure presented at the beginning of the project have not been realized, on the contrary, the profile of the neighbourhood and the socio-cultural structure have undergone a sharp transformation.⁷³ Similarly, in the Tarlabası neighbourhood, which was declared a renewal area in 2008 under Law No. 5366 and included in the scope of urgent expropriation, and which was described by the then head of TOKİ as “a home of terrorism, drugs, and a distorted view of the state”, a planned and comprehensive gentrification attempt was made, displacing the neighbourhood residents.⁷⁴

Public-private partnerships with build-operate-transfer or operation transfer models are another method of urban regeneration implemented by the government in Turkey, especially since the 2000s. The practice of the commodification of space can arise through the direct commodification of space as the subject/intermediary of a commercial activity or through the direct commodification of space through its exchange value. In many of the mentioned cases, commercial activities in the space and accumulation strategies realized through the speculative value of the space are analyzed. An alternative approach to understanding capital accumulation regimes involves the realization of accumulation through the transfer of resources/wealth from public to private entities. In the build-operate-transfer or transfer-of-operations model, which is widely applied in Turkey, the public authority, on the one hand, transfers the costs of project development and implementation (through bank credit) to the private sector, and on the other hand, determines where the resources/capital will be transferred by identifying the implementer. Tendered in 2013 the Galataport and Haliçport projects and the Haydarpaşaport project tendered in 2019 were subjected to transformation through the aforementioned business/operation models, and the tenders were won by capital groups known for their close ties to the AKP government. For example, the Haliçport Project was constructed by Sembol - Ekopark Construction - Fine Otelcilik in partnership with Fettah Tamince for 49 years (4 years for construction and 45 years for operation) with a Build-Operate-Transfer model. Within the scope of the project, it was projected to build a hotel, apart hotel, office buildings, commercial units, religious facility, food and beverage areas, congress and culture center, entertainment centers such as cinema, etc. and 2 marinas with a mooring capacity of 70 yachts within the

⁷³ Hokmabad Ghoshouni, S. (2018). *Integrated evaluation of urban regeneration projects: Case study of Sulukule neighborhood in Istanbul*

⁷⁴ Piskin, T. (2017, Aralık 1). *Tarlabası'ndaki kentsel dönüşümün 12 yıllık hikayesi. Bianet.* <https://bianet.org/haber/tarlabasi-ndaki-kentsel-donusumun-12-yillik-hikayesi-192010>

historical shipyard area.⁷⁵ As we will discuss again in the Yassıada regeneration process, in cultural development, tourism or culture-oriented regeneration processes in Turkey, regeneration practices serve intricate and multi-purpose interests. In addition to cultural and artistic spatial arrangements, the project also includes a hotel, conference center, and other commercial establishments, intertwined with religious motifs that the government frequently relies on. We will analyse Yassıada, which is similar to Haliçport in terms of design and implementation, albeit on a different scale. Another capital accumulation strategy is the process of financialization based on debt/credit. The banking system plays a special role in financing construction or urban transformation, which constitute an important phase in the AKP's practices of transforming spaces. Low-interest bank financing had a significant impact on large-scale construction projects that left their mark on the 2000s. On the other hand, capital accumulation is achieved by increasing demand, particularly through mortgage loans. This is done by leveraging and repeating the debt of a commodity, such as land, housing, or facilities, on both the production and consumption sides. For example, Doğuş Group and Bilgili Holding, which won the Galataport Project tender, used approximately €1 billion in bank loans to finance the project. The loan provided by the consortium of six banks was signed for a 3.5-year principal repayment period and a 14-year loan term. Considering the financing conditions and the privilege of transferring operating rights, it is observed that a significant public benefit/source has been transferred in favor of the project developer companies.⁷⁶

It can be said that culture-led urban regeneration projects have become widespread in Turkey, particularly since the 2010s. The preference for a political-economic axis integrated with EU-Western policies in the 2000s and the accompanying legal regulations, followed by initiatives to turn Istanbul into a brand city in the 2010s after its economic benefits were discovered, and Istanbul's selection as the European Capital of Culture in 2010 are remarkable milestones for culture-led investments. A more important reason is the cultural hegemony project attempted by the AKP in response to the social opposition that arose in the 2010s. The AKP's culture and culture-oriented urban investments and initiatives have been shaped around these socio-political developments.

In terms of culture-led urban regeneration processes in industrial areas, Turkey has not experienced a process of deindustrialization as observed in central economies, due to its

⁷⁵ *İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi. (n.d.). Haliç Port (Tersane İstanbul). Şehir Planlama Müdürlüğü. Retrieved April 20, 2025, from <https://sehirplanlama.ibb.istanbul/halicport/>*

⁷⁶ *Hürriyet. (2016, Ağustos 31). Galataport için 4.5 milyarlık imzalar atıldı. Hürriyet Ekonomi. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/ekonomi/galataport-icin-4-5-milyarlik-imzalar-atildi-40212561>*

economic structure and development. Therefore, there are very few examples of the regeneration of idle, unproductive/ineffective industrial areas or facilities from the Republican era. Instead, it is possible to consider the decentralization of industry in metropolitan areas.⁷⁷ Examples of the culture-led regeneration of industrial sites include Hasanpaşa Gashanesi (1892), Fişekhane (1840), Bomonti Beer Factory (1902), Feshane – Art Istanbul (1833) and Silahtarağa Power Plant (1914) are examples of factories and facilities built largely in the 1800s during the Ottoman period. The Büyükdere Match Factory, built in 1932, and the Beykoz Paşabahçe Factory, established in 1934, are among the limited areas dating back to the early Republican era that are no longer in operation and are considered to have potential for cultural-led regeneration.

In Turkey, the transformation of industrial areas through cultural initiatives has been influenced by Istanbul being named European Capital of Culture in 2010 and the projects implemented within this framework. This title, which has been awarded to selected countries every year since 1985, aims to highlight cities on the international stage, provide them with funding, and transform them into centers of attraction.⁷⁸ The selection of the Capital of Culture is the institutionalized and documented application of concepts such as competitive city and brand city, which were discussed in the previous sections of this study, with the aim of generating income and accumulating capital. As we mentioned in previous sections, Glasgow was selected as the European Capital of Culture in 1990, while Liverpool was selected in 2008. Being selected as the European Capital of Culture is considered an important factor in urbanization processes for countries and cities, and Istanbul. It helps determine policy priorities and secure national and international financing and funds. In this regard, the revitalization/redevelopment of abandoned industrial areas within cities as cultural spaces has been included in the strategic plans and agendas of local governments.⁷⁹ In this context, Hasanpaşa Gasworks mentioned above underwent a culture-led regeneration in 2014, Fişekhane in 2017, Feshane in 2018, and Bomonti Ada in 2015, on the initiative of the municipality and private project developers.

In conclusion, it has been concluded that urban regeneration strategies and practices developed around a driving force or leading factor emerged in response to the deindustrialization process that began in the 1970s, particularly in developed, central economies, and were realized through the transformation of inactive, idle, and inefficient industrial sites into marketable,

⁷⁷ Sinmaz, S., & Altanlar, A. a.g.e. (2021).

⁷⁸ Ozden, P. a.g.e. (2008).

⁷⁹ Sinmaz, S., & Altanlar, A. a.g.e. (2021).

demand-generating, capital-attracting commodities. In prominent applications, the loss of accumulated/surplus value experienced in areas such as manufacturing, heavy industry, and mining has been replaced by new sectors characterized by flexibility, globalism, and creativity. The classification of the examined cases based on their application, expected/targeted outputs, and results is presented in the table.

Table 1: Classification of Regeneration Strategies and Cases

Regeneration Strategy	Case	Applications	Expected/Aimed Outcomes	Criticisms
Culture-led	Glaskow	1.Transformation of industrial sites	1.Economic indicators (Tourism, employment, GDP etc.)	Displacement/ exclusion
Heritage-led	Swensea	2.Public guidance/directives		Disregard, erosion of spatial/cultural identity
Culture-led	Bilbao	3.Image reconstruction, iconic architecture	4.International funding	Displacement/ exclusion
Property-led	Maboneng	2.Public guidance/directives	2.Real Estate Rent/Value	
		Real estate development	3.Creative Class	
Creative Industry-led	Bristol	1.Transformation of industrial sites	2.Real Estate Rent/Value	
Toursim-led	Sulukule	2.Public guidance/directives		
		Real estate development		
Creative Industry-led	Liverpool	4.Urban regeneration, scale intricate applications	1.Economic indicators (Tourism, employment, GDP etc.)	-
Culture-led	Gazhane	5.Local participation and initiatives	4.Cultural event center	-

When examining smt.-led regeneration projects and strategies, the common objectives that can be generalized in practice can be listed as follows: conversion of idle spaces, improvement of social! and physical conditions, capital inflow and stimulation of demand in the service sector, improvement of economic indicators such as employment and production, and creation of a qualified population/workforce.

The economic value created by new industries is measured through economic indicators linked to the service sector (tourism, employment, GDP, etc.) and through the real estate/rent value of the location and related assets (real estate, commercial units, etc.). In this regard, efficiency and effectiveness analyses in the literature point to economic conditions and outputs such as

unemployment, travel demand statistics, and migration rates.⁸⁰ It is considered that discussions have been limited in terms of local residents' participation, community building and the impact of exclusion, gentrification, and public space use/restriction. Upon closer examination of the literature, it becomes clear that discussions on the effectiveness of transformation tend to focus on criteria such as real estate value, service consumption, visitor numbers, and employment. Topics such as the transformation and use of public spaces, the effects of exclusion and gentrification associated with real estate development projects, the privatization and homogenization of commodified culture, spatial characteristics, identity, and disregard for authenticity are often overlooked. In urban transformation programs, a conflict may arise between elements such as culture, heritage, and history, which are considered important reference points in highlighting the unique character of the city, and marketable/commoditized versions that are in demand and suitable for sale. In other words, there may be tension between cultural activities at the heart of urban renewal projects and local cultural codes in practice; commercial applications should not be encouraged at the expense of losing the local cultural environment or other elements unique to the city.⁸¹ Although the cases of urban regeneration may vary, the critical issue of this study is that culture (and also history, identity and memory), which is considered as a point of reference in culture-led (and memory-led) urban regeneration practices within the context of economic development, growth paradigm or capital accumulation strategies, is itself transformed into a consumable commodity. In the literature and practices evaluated within the scope of cultural projects and programs in Turkey; it is generally aimed at the transformation of old city centres and historical neighbourhoods, it has a more real estate-oriented character, and therefore, it is significantly moving away from the principle of public benefit. (bkz. Sırmaz & Altanlar 2021)

There are significant differences in methods and scale in the cases examined, and to this extent, the priorities and objectives of the implementations vary. A more accurate approach is adopted to analyse each application within this uniqueness. Yassıada and the memory-led regeneration of the island, which is discussed in the focus of the thesis as an urban intervention strategy in line with the political agenda, is a unique example in terms of the commercialization practices of the space, demographic structure (non-existence), engagement with political rhetoric, and the mechanisms of capital distribution.

⁸⁰ Paddison, R. 1993. "City Marketing, Image Reconstruction and Urban Regeneration." *Urban Studies* 30 (2): 339–349.

⁸¹ Kunzmann, K., R. (2004). *Culture, creativity and spatial planning. The Town Planning Review* 75(4): 383-404.

3.5. Evolution and Transformation of Yassıada into “Democracy and Liberties Island”

Yassıada, which is located in the archipelago on the southern coast of Istanbul, known as the Prince Islands or the Princes' Islands, is an island that has been home to various civilizations throughout history, with limited settlement and occupation. The history of the island dates back to the Byzantine Roman period. During the Byzantine Empire, it started to be used as a place of exile from the 4th century. Byzantine Emperor Theophilos (829-842) built the Platea Monastery.⁸² In 860, Patriarch Ignatios, who was exiled, had a church built in the center of the island. In the 12th century it was invaded by the Latins and in the 15th century by the Russians.

During the Ottoman Empire, after the conquest of Istanbul, the island remained uninhabited for a long time and was purchased in 1859 by Sir Henry Bulwer, the British ambassador to Istanbul. Bulwer had a castle-like building, and a castle-sized mansion built on the island. In the late 19th century, the island was purchased by Ismail Pasha, the Khedive of Egypt, but was neglected for a long time.

In 1947, it was taken over by the Naval Forces of the Turkish Armed Forces and opened for training services in 1952. The island was used as a military facility and a training center was established by the Naval Forces Command. In 1993, Istanbul University Fisheries Faculty Institute moved to the island, but the faculty left the island in 1995. During the Republic of Turkey, Yassıada is known as the place where Democrat Party politicians were tried, especially after the military coup of May 27, 1960. The execution decisions of Adnan Menderes and two ministers were taken in this court. In 2013, the name of the island was changed to the Democracy and Liberties Island and a regeneration project was initiated in 2015.

The idea of transforming Yassıada into a memorial site as an “island of democracy” was first put forward by the “Young Civilians-Genç Siviller” initiative, who visited the island and organized events on May 27th, 2008 (and subsequent May 27ths). In the following years, various civil organizations, relatives of politicians tried in the coup and political figures close to the AKP government participated in the island visit and commemoration ceremonies held on the anniversary of the coup.⁸³ The AKP likely heard the call/suggestion of the popular civil society organization of the time, as the relevant ministry and the municipality have made a series of statements and legal arrangements since 2011. In 2011, Ertuğrul Günay, Minister of

⁸² Zariği, Y. L. (2021). *Hatıralarım Kaybolan Bir Dünya İstanbul 1800-1920*. Literatür Yayıncılık.

⁸³ Oğur, Y. (2020, Mayıs 28). *Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Adası'nda bir gün*. Karar. <https://www.karar.com/yazarlar/yildiray-ogur/demokrasi-ve-ozgurlukler-adasinda-bir-gun-1565624>

Culture and Tourism, visited the island with the mayor and the governor of Istanbul and announced that the island would be transformed into a museum as a place of remembrance, as well as an area for cultural events, an accommodation facility, exhibition and meeting halls. The minister also stated that for Sivriada, which is the second of the “Hayırsız Adalar”, the stone quarry on the island is planned to be converted and used as an amphitheatre.⁸⁴ At the AKP's project launch meeting before the 2011 general elections under the title “Turkey is Ready, Target 2023”, policy targets were announced under the headings of social, economic, infrastructure and urbanization. At this meeting, the islands project was included among the projects in addition to the city hospitals and Taksim project. At the meeting, Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan said that Yassıada would no longer be a “yaslı ada” and that they aimed to turn these two islands into symbolic islands of Turkey and added that convention centers and hotels would be built on these islands. Speaking at the same meeting, Istanbul Mayor Kadir Topbaş said about the islands project, “There are two congress centers being considered on Yassıada and Sivriada. Two new centers that are planned almost like Davos. These projects are also very important. I think these projects will attract the attention of the world.”⁸⁵ The disclosures of policy makers, stakeholders and implementers in the transformation process of the island will be re-evaluated in the following sections. On the other hand, emphasized symbolic space, Davos-ification and attracting the world's attention in the statements show that the regeneration process of the island shares characteristics and similarities with the “smt-led” regeneration strategies mentioned in the previous sections in terms of plan and agenda. In this period, as a strategy for capital accumulation and growth, AKP government and its capital affiliates put resources and effort into large-scale built environment investments. In addition to the city hospitals, Taksim Pedestrianization and AKM Project, the Islands Project; Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge and Galataport, which were put out to tender in 2012, Istanbul Airport and Haliçport, which were put out to tender in 2013, and the 1071 Malazgirt Boulevard (METU road) project, which started construction in 2012, are examples of large-scale projects that were built in the same period and are controversial in terms of their implementation and methods.

In 2011, Yassıada, which was owned by the National Treasury and used as a military zone, was allocated to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism to be used as a museum with the decision of the General Directorate of National Real Estate dated 27.04.2011 and numbered 13071.

⁸⁴ *Hürriyet*. (2011). *Demokrasi adası oluyor*. *Hürriyet*. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/demokrasi-adasi-oluyor-18343293>

⁸⁵ *CNN Türk*. (2011, Nisan 10). *Taksim Meydanı trafiğe kapatılıyor*. *CNN Türk*. <https://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/taksim-meydani-trafige-kapatiliyor-99312>

During this period, the Minister of Culture and Tourism and the Mayor of Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality made statements that the island would be designed with tourism and cultural potential.⁸⁶ On 16.11.2012, the archaeological site status of the island was withdrawn and it was declared a “sustainable protection and controlled use area” by the decision of the Regional Commission for the Protection of Cultural and Natural Assets.⁸⁷ In 2013, Yassiada and Sivriada were initially opened to zoning within the scope of the Omnibus Law No. 6456 for purposes such as visits, businesses, accommodation, etc.; afterwards, with the 1/1000 and 1/5000 scale zoning plan amendments, the construction permit within the scope of Cultural & Touristic Facility was set as 0.65 for Yassiada and 0.45 for Sivriada.⁸⁸ During the same year, the name of the island was changed to the Democracy and Liberties Island and planning and studies were initiated for its use as a museum, tourism and congress center.⁸⁹

On 06.05.2015, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization granted a construction license to TOBB-affiliated Gümrük ve Turizm A.Ş. for Yassiada and Sivriada for tourism facilities, congress centers, hotels, restaurants, hairdressing salons, patisseries, marinas, etc. The groundbreaking ceremony of the project, which aims to function the island as a congress and tourism center with structures such as restaurants, hotels, museums and conference halls, was held on 14.05.2015. The project on the island was undertaken by MESA. The architecture and implementation was carried out by Arme Concept, a company owned by AKP Deputy Chairman Çiğdem Karaaslan and his husband, whom the President thanked at the opening. On

⁸⁶ <https://www.arkitera.com/haber/yassiada-muze-olacak/>
<https://www.arkitera.com/haber/taksim-bir-yila-yayalasiyor/>

⁸⁷ Adalar Savunması. (2016). Yassiada Raporu Mayıs 2016. Pg.9-10. Retrieved from <https://sehirplanlama.ibb.istanbul/>

⁸⁸ In the Plan Notes of the 1/1000 Scale Conservation-Oriented Implementation Zoning Plan, which was prepared and approved in conjunction with the 1/5000 Scale Plan Revision, it is stated that within the “Tourism + Cultural Facility Area,” the following structures may be constructed: “hotel, bungalow, café, restaurant, heliport area, park, open-air museum, square, library, administrative building, museum, conference hall, exhibition hall, and viewing terrace.” (Adalar Savunması, 2016).

⁸⁹ By means of an amendment to Article 27 of Law No. 6456, titled “Law on the Regulation of Public Financing and Debt Management and Amendments to Certain Laws and Decree Laws,” published in the Official Gazette dated April 18, 2013 and numbered 286, Yassiada and Sivriada were excluded from all conservation legislation. The relevant provision in the omnibus law introduced the following regulation: an Additional Article 2 was appended to the “Law No. 3996 on the Procurement of Certain Investment and Services within the Framework of the Build-Operate-Transfer Model,” stipulating that “cultural and tourism-oriented investments and services on Yassiada and Sivriada, to be carried out by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism under the build-operate-transfer model, may be implemented in terms of planning, zoning, and construction without being subject to the provisions of the Coastal Law No. 3621 and other restrictions and procedures stipulated in the legislation.” (Adalar Savunması, 2016).

May 27, 2020, the sixtieth anniversary of Turkey's first military coup, the Democracy and Liberties Island was inaugurated as a congress center and open-air museum.⁹⁰

During the construction process, it has been determined and reported by various NGOs and professional chambers/organizations that the Byzantine and Ottoman historical structures (castles, cisterns, dungeons and other ruins)⁹¹ on the island were destroyed, the coastal/marine ecosystem was damaged, and the green area was destroyed by paving the way for a significant construction rate of 0.65. (bkz. Adalar Savunması) Despite objections and counter-lawsuits by the Adalar Initiative, professional organizations and political parties, the construction process could not be prevented, and the island was subjected to a comprehensive/sharp transformation.



Figure 1 – Yassıada Before and After Urban Regeneration. 11.05.2025 available at <https://sehirplanlama.ibb.istanbul/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/YassıadaRaporuMayıs2016.pdf>

TOBB-affiliated company has handed Yassıada back to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, which had been operating it under the “build-operate-transfer” model. It has been reported that the “Katre” Hotel, which was given the right to operate on the island, was handed over because

⁹⁰ Sabah. (2020, May 27). Tarihi gün: Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Adası açılıyor. Retrieved from <https://www.sabah.com.tr/gundem/2020/05/27/son-dakika-tarihi-gun-demokrasi-ve-ozgurlukler-adasi-aciliyor-baskan-erdogandan-onemli-aciklamalar>

⁹¹ During the Eastern Roman Empire period, Yassıada was used as a place of exile beginning in the 4th century. In the 9th century, during the reign of Byzantine Emperor Theophilos, a monastery named Platea Monastery was constructed on the island. In 860, Patriarch Ignatius, who lived in exile on Yassıada, commissioned the construction of a church at the center of the island; the cellars beneath the church were used as dungeons. In the mid-19th century, British diplomat Sir Henry Bulwer purchased the island with the permission of Sultan Abdülmecid and built a castle resembling Anglo-Saxon fortresses.

Kültür Envanteri. (n.d.). Kültür Envanteri. Retrieved June 25, 2025, from <https://kulturenvanteri.com/>

it did not meet the expectations for visitation and use. Following the TOBB transfer, on 14.02.2023, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (letter dated 18/01/2023 and numbered 3398372) leased the right of override for 20 years to Birun Ada Otelcilik Turizm A.Ş. for an annual fee of 4.2 million Turkish Liras for a 5-star hotel facility with a capacity of 324 beds on 103,750 square meters of treasury real estate. The shareholders of the company in charge are Albayrak Holding, known as the AKP government's capital affiliate.⁹²

In the background of the process, a legal arrangement was made to outsource the island reconstruction process “without tender”⁹³ to TOBB-affiliated company and to grant the operating rights for 29 years. In this way, the capital groups that would realize the regeneration project and thus transfer public funds were selected, and the change in the tender procedure facilitated this resource transfer. After the island's commercial units failed to generate the expected revenue, it was given back to the relevant ministry after approximately 3 years and then the Albayrak capital group was granted the right of over-use with a public allocation decision. According to the report issued by the Presidential Strategy and Budget Directorate on Public-Private Partnership Practices in 2019, the investment amount of the Yassıada-Sivriada Project is stated as 140,476,765 dollars.⁹⁴ Considering the amount of investment disclosed in official reports and the annual amount of the transfer of the operating rights of the island for 20 years, it can be stated that there has been a considerable second capital reallocation/transference. Recent news reports on the island have revealed that the hotel and museum receive very few visitors, whereas foundations and associations close to the government organize tours and some politicians come to the island for their personal trips.⁹⁵

⁹² Ağirel, M. (2023, April 6). Yassıada'da dönen oyun. Cumhuriyet. Retrieved from <https://www.cumhuriyet.com.tr/yazarlar/murat-agirel/yassiadada-donen-oyun-2068603>

⁹³ The regulation you referred to is included in the Council of Ministers Decision No. 2011/10611, published in the T.C. Resmî Gazete on June 11, 2011. According to this decision, which outlines the implementation procedures and principles of Law No. 3996 on the Procurement of Certain Investment and Services within the Framework of the Build-Operate-Transfer Model, the following provision was introduced: “Public professional organizations or their umbrella institutions may be directly contracted to carry out cultural and tourism-oriented investments and services. These public professional organizations may either undertake the investments and services themselves or have them carried out through other companies.”

T.C. Resmî Gazete. (2011, Haziran 11). 3996 sayılı Bazı Yatırım ve Hizmetlerin Yap-İslet-Devret Modeli Çerçevesinde Yaptırılması Hakkında Kanunun Uygulama Usul ve Esaslarına İlişkin Karar (Karar Sayısı: 2011/10611). <https://www.resmigazete.gov.tr/eskiler/2011/06/20110611M1-11.htm>.

⁹⁴ Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı. (2019). *Dünyada ve Türkiye’de Kamu-Özel İşbirliği Uygulamalarına İlişkin Gelişmeler Raporu*: 2018 (s. 37-38). Ankara, Türkiye: Cumhurbaşkanlığı Strateji ve Bütçe Başkanlığı.

⁹⁵ Arı, İ. (2023, Ağustos 27). Halk değil AKP’liler gidiyor. BirGün. <https://www.birgun.net/haber/halk-degil-akp-liler-gidiyor-463895>

3.5.1. Analyzing the Transformation of Yassıada Through the Memory-led Regeneration

The discourses of the policy makers regarding the transformation of Yassıada were initially presented around the construction of a democracy museum or memorial space with the aim of facing with the past and drawing lessons from it. On the other hand, it has been observed that discussions about the Museum of Democracy are often accompanied by a "project" discourse in the rhetoric of both AKP politicians and municipal and bureaucratic officials. In statements and visits to the island, it is frequently noted that the island, which is seen as a symbolic value, will be built with congress centres, hotels and other facilities for events, together with a museum and a memorial site. (see also AA, 2019⁹⁶, Hürriyet, 2011) In other words, while the narrative or discourse (the reconstructed narrative) is being embedded in the physical environment, it is realized that the substantial motivations related to the physical environment and its transformation are also articulated in the discourse/narrative. This study argues that two integrated agendas were carried out during the island's transformation process and that, over time, objectives such as rent-seeking and capital redistribution became dominant. The following sections will also discuss the memory debates, the AKP's memory, and the attempts to restore and reconstruct memory. The study focuses on the specificity of the urban regeneration practice on the island.

Like the cultural and industrial, heritage (heritage-led regeneration) discussed in the previous chapters, memory can also be promoted as a place-specific brand or asset. To this extent, space and its history can be articulated in marketing strategies. Although there is usually a marketing strategy based on the commemoration and perpetuation of affirmed (positive) historicity such as religious celebration, liberation, independence; there are also spatial marketing-branding practices that aim to attract visitors-investors through historicity such as death, punishment, isolation, war. In addition to the attraction of visiting the site as a practice of “dark tourism”⁹⁷, in some cases, it is seen that the site (with its memory) is directly transformed into a commercial enterprise or acts as an instrument for capital accumulation, being disconnected from its historical context. The kebab restaurant opened under the Madımak Hotel, the transformation

⁹⁶ Anadolu Ajansı. (2019, Mayıs 27). Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Adası yıl sonunda açılacak. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-demokrasi-ve-ozgurlukler-adasi-yil-sonunda-acilacak/1489710>

⁹⁷ The concept of “dark tourism,” which began to be discussed within the culture industry particularly after World War II, refers to an activity in which people visit sites whose primary motivation is death or tragedy, by transforming memory and commemoration spaces into forms of entertainment. Gündem, Ö. (2022). *Karanlık Turizmin Söylemi Bitmeyen Hafıza ve Anma Mekânları. Mimarlık kuramı*, (427), (43-47).

of the Punta Carretas Prison in Uruguay, known for the torture of political prisoners, into a private shopping mall, and the hotels and restaurants built on the Democracy and Liberties Island can be given as examples of this direct transformation into commercial enterprises. In the case of the Madimak Hotel, memory and spatial practice are disassociated/separated while the example of Punta Carretas Prison is defined as the erasure of the space of memory.⁹⁸ Within the scope of this study, a reciprocal, dynamic relationship between the physical condition of the place, its marketing and commodification potential and its historicity will be attempted to be revealed. Furthermore, the practices and outcomes of transforming the island into an island of democracy or a place of memory will be analysed in the context of memory restoration, narrative construction, and meaning-making, as well as commodification, marketing, and branding initiatives.

Similar to other reference or focal point-led urban regeneration strategies, the concept of memory-led regeneration can be considered as a marketing, commodification and branding strategy for economic activity such as return/profit, capital inflow, tourism and visitors. Furthermore, there are similarities in the commodification of the industrial, cultural, and political aspects of the place to economically revitalize and reuse idle spaces. Within the process of project implementation and transformation of Yassiada; the aims such as utilization of the idle island place, symbolization/branding, developing projects that can provide commercial return, attracting global interest, etc. have been widely emphasized by politicians; consequently, the regeneration of the island, project development and planning have been carried out with these motivations. (bkz. AA, 2019) It can be considered that the idea of making the island like “Davos” is a reflection of the aim of attracting global attention as a brand. In the initiative to create a brand/global city, spatial memory is highlighted as a distinctive regional symbol or landmark. Spatial memory can be commodified, homogenized or restored to attract global or local attention and demand. At this point, it is possible to mention the branded use of concepts such as violence, war, isolation and torture. While on the one hand, the construction or restoration of these concepts and the memory to which these concepts refer is carried out in a manner integrated into the political agenda, on the other hand, it is seen that commercial operating methods and resource distribution mechanisms for the commercialization practices of space within the capital accumulation regime are put into practice. In order to understand the integrated and interrelated relationship here, it is necessary to analyze the relationship

⁹⁸ Draper, S. (2011). *The business of memory: Reconstructing torture centers as shopping malls and tourist sites.* In K. Bilbija & L. A. Payne (Eds.), *Accounting for violence: Marketing memory in Latin America* (pp. 129–133). Duke University Press.

between spatial/regional marketing, commodification strategies/preferences and the politics of memory. In the following sections, we will from time to time refer to this reciprocal and dynamic relationship.

Although it shows similarities with the other (smt.-led) regeneration strategies in the literature and global practices at some points, the regeneration of Yassıada through the memory-led strategy is put forward as a unique example in many respects.

As an urbanization practice in line with the political agenda, the memory-led regeneration of Yassıada serves multiple and intricate purposes. The AKP has become increasingly authoritarian and taken a confrontational/revanchist position, especially since the 2010s, when it began experiencing various crises of legitimacy. An important source of legitimacy for the AKP is its memory and cultural investments. In the following sections, the AKP's (cultural) investments in restoring memory or, in other words, constructing a counter-memory will be analysed in detail. Here, it is just pointed out that while the AKP transforms the space with a rent-seeking motivation, the populist narrative for its contemporary needs also has an important place and is carried out in parallel. In practice and especially in discourse, the transformation of Yassıada into the Democracy and Liberties Island reflects the AKP's search for a historical starting point and continuity from its memory and its attempt to expand the 'us' front against the "other", elite and the Kemalist establishment. On the other hand, construction projects characterized by the rhetoric of reviving the past (ihya), execution (icraat), and service (hizmet) are considered an important aspect of AKP's populist discourses and a strategy of hegemony. (see also Yeşilbağ, M. 2016) AKP also frequently repeats the rhetoric of service "hizmet" in order to establish historical continuity and a successor-successor relationship with the Democrat Party. In summary, Yassıada's regeneration process differs from other smt.-led regeneration strategies in terms of its dynamic and reciprocal relationship with memory, its political agenda, the interventions of policymakers, and its integration into discourse.

Yassıada and the regeneration process of the island are differentiated by its geographical and demographic characteristics such as being further away from the mainland compared to other Prince's islands and not being historically used/preferred as a settlement. These physical conditions have created differences in terms of the methods and target outputs applied in the project development and operation process. In the other urban regeneration processes discussed previously, it was stated that community formation/engineering practices resulted in social mobilization or gentrification. Due to the lack of residence on the island, it is not possible to discuss this type of social mobilization. On the other hand, it is realized that access to the island,

which is considered a public sphere, is restricted or allocated to a certain group of people through limited ferry services⁹⁹, compulsory event tickets, private hotel & restaurant enterprises. This may be associated with the distance of the island or the lack of residence, but it should not be missed that during the project development process, the allocation of the island for private use & group was voiced and directed by the Prime Minister of the period;

*"Thus, I hope that we can turn the island into an island where not only national but also international meetings are held... We have done these kinds of places in the centre of Istanbul, Antalya, Ankara. Now we wanted to utilize this place on such an island, **in such a place, as a place where no one can come, no one comes, only the actors come and attend the meeting.**"¹⁰⁰*

The absence of residency on the island, on the other hand, means that there is no potential for property rent, which is the primary motivation for the AKP's construction investments. This condition has led project developers and other project parties (ministries, municipalities, construction companies) to develop different capital accumulation and commercialization strategies. The transformation of Yassıada through public tender and transfer of operation is also unique in terms of capital accumulation and commercialization practices. The target outputs that can be generalized for the urban regeneration strategies discussed in the previous sections of this study mainly focus on economic indicators such as employment, tourism, and regional real estate rents. Similarly, commercial establishments such as hotels and restaurants have been built on Democracy and Liberties Island for the tourism and service/hospitality sectors. However, there is another noteworthy practice here in terms of the capital accumulation regime. In Turkey, a common practice in the financing of built environment investments is the outsourcing of construction and project work to private companies through public tenders, in exchange for which the company is granted operating rights. During the urban regeneration process in Yassıada, a similar business transfer was carried out, with the necessary legal arrangements made quickly in advance, and the business was transferred to a company affiliated with TOBB on a "non-tender" basis. (see also Ağirel, 2023) Here, we can talk about a type of free market economy based on patronage relationships and resource transfers between the public and private sectors.¹⁰¹ In the first phase, it was stated that the

⁹⁹ Unlike other islands, which are accessible through widespread public transportation, the service days and hours for Yassıada are highly limited. Tickets for transportation to the island can be purchased through a private event website. <https://demokrasiveozgurlukleradasi.com.tr/iletisim>

¹⁰⁰ Anadolu Ajansı a.g.e., (2019)

¹⁰¹ T24. (2023, Subat 5). Prof. Ayata: Türkiye'de ahabap-çavuş kapitalizmi isliyor; kayırmacı gelir ve servet transferleri, sosyal yardımlara ayrılan kaynakları geçti! T24. <https://t24.com.tr/haber/prof-ayata-turkiye-de->

island's regeneration project would be carried out by a company affiliated with TOBB (with the status of a public related institution). The construction was carried out by the aforementioned company, while the museum design and implementation were carried out by a company called Outdoor Factory, and the architectural and project development work was carried out by Arme Concept, a company co-owned by the AKP Samsun deputy. When examining the past projects of these companies, it was observed that both companies had been contracted through tenders for many projects belonging to the ministry and AKP municipalities.¹⁰² The second part of the capital cycle involves the transfer of operating rights for the built environment and its components. The operating rights of the hotel and other businesses located on the island were granted to a company affiliated with TOBB for 29 years through a tender process. Three years after the transfer, the company gave back the operating rights to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Subsequently, in September 2022, an announcement was made in the Official Gazette stating that the hotel and other real estate properties would be allocated to private entrepreneurs for operation. By its official letter dated January 18, 2023 (No. 3398372), the Ministry of Culture and Tourism announced that a operating right would be granted to Birun Ada Otelcilik Turizm A.Ş. for a period of 20 years, starting from January 18, 2023. The right pertains to the construction and operation of a five-star hotel facility with a capacity of 324 beds, to be established on a public treasury land of 103,750 square meters, along with an additional 10,043 square meters of reclaimed (fill) land. The annual payment for the superficies right has been set at 4.2 million Turkish Liras, corresponding to 5% of the total investment cost. (see also Ağirel, 2023) Considering that the aforementioned (Birun Ada) company, established by the Albayrak capital group in December 2022, has no other activities/initiatives, it can be concluded that it was established for the purpose of operating the island. According to the 2019 report on public-private partnership practices prepared by the Presidential Strategy and Budget Directorate, the investment amount for the Yassıada-Sivriada Project is USD 140,476,765. Considering the investment amount announced in official reports and the annual operating rights transfer amount for 20 years, it can be concluded that a considerable secondary capital transfer has occurred.

The budget was large, and the project design was multi-faceted and multi-layered. The project was for an island with an area of approximately 45 acres. The large budget and project design

ahbap-cavus-kapitalizmi-isliyor-kayirmaci-gelir-ve-servet-transferleri-sosyal-yardimlara-ayrilan-kaynaklari-gecti,1034512

¹⁰² Diken. (2015, Temmuz 30). AKP'nin becerikli vekili: 'Yassıada mimari' 78 gençlik merkezi, 11 kentsel dönüşüm projesi de kapmış. <https://www.diken.com.tr/akpnin-becerikli-vekili-yassıada-mimari-78-genclik-merkezi-11-kentsel-donusum-projesi-de-kapmis/>

were explained by the built environment investments and spatial restructuring required for capital accumulation. Here, emphasis is placed on two fundamental motivations. Firstly, in order to maximize the use of the limited island space, structures such as the old military officers' dormitory and sports hall, which occupy a significant area, will be demolished and rebuilt to expand the usable space. These structures have been rebuilt within the project in accordance with their original designs. In order to create space for buildings such as hotels, mosques, and convention centers on the island, the construction area was initially increased to 0.65, green areas and historical buildings were ruined/destroyed, and all buildings were demolished, resulting in a comprehensive demolition and reconstruction process. Although arrangements and restorations are made for the re-functioning of historical, memory-related, monumental spaces and structures in the process of urban transformation within capitalist urbanization practices; Yassıada represents a very exceptional example as an example where the environment or structure representing the memory of the place is completely demolished and rebuilt. Transformation in places that can be defined as memory sites (such as Ulucanlar, Diyarbakır Prison, Madımak) is based on the preservation or restoration of these sites and related structures. In addition to the re-functionalization of the structures on Yassıada or the optimization of space utilization, there is also the issue of producing a space that meets capital accumulation requirements. Large-scale restructuring and built environment production investments are being made for the purpose of ensuring the continuity, circulation, and absorption of capital accumulation. Harvey uses the concept of “creative destruction” to explain the process of reconstruction that has become particularly evident in the process of urban transformation.¹⁰³ Creative destruction can be summarized as the process of demolishing the existing urban fabric/structure in an area and replacing it with new, higher-value projects. This typically involves large infrastructure projects, housing/real estate developments, and commercial redevelopment. We can interpret the process of destruction and reconstruction on the island as a kind of creative destruction. In addition to providing commercial business functions, as mentioned in previous sections, the cycle of capital accumulation (expansion and

¹⁰³ *Capitalism, in order to overcome crises of capital accumulation, directs capital toward infrastructure, housing, and urban projects, thereby transforming the built environment into a “capital absorption” mechanism. This process activates the mechanism of “creative destruction” by devaluing existing structures and modes of production to sustain the circulation of capital. Urbanization functions both as the spatial expression of this destruction and as a site where capital is temporarily fixed. However, the fixity of the built environment becomes the ground for new crises, thereby reproducing this cycle. See also Harvey, D (2010). The Enigma of Capital and Crises of Capitalism. London: Profile Books. P.85*

absorption) can be achieved through high-scale and high-yield construction and contracting projects, financing, and the transfer of operating rights/resources. Capital accumulation occurs not only through the mobilization of capital—i.e., visitors, consumers, and customers—but also through the development and construction of projects, the transfer of businesses, and the determination of income transfers.

In summary, during the island's transformation process, narratives and memorialization practices aligned with political needs were imprinted on the spatial and public sphere, while concurrently capital accumulation and commercialization practices were implemented by same actors. Considering the island's land area, distance from the mainland, residential and transportation conditions, and historicity (historic structures), it is considered that the primary goal of the project developers is to maximize commercial/economic returns and capital accumulation. The decision to demolish and rebuild memorialized spatial structures (dormitories, court-sports hall, etc.) rather than restoring them, the design of large-capacity structures such as mosques and conference centres that do not meet public needs, and the destruction of other historical structures and green spaces on the island for the construction of all these structures, demonstrate that commercial motivations have prevailed over commemoration and museumification practices in the transformation of Yassıada.

Up to this point, urban regeneration strategies and memory-led regeneration processes in Yassıada have been discussed with a focus on capital accumulation and commercialization practices. Another factor that makes the regeneration of Yassıada unique is the role of memory as a dynamic element in the urban regeneration process, which will be analyzed in the following sections. Before deepening into the concept of "memory" in the memory-led regeneration process of island, discussions on the relationship between memory and space in the literature and AKP's politics of memory and the initiative/need to restore memory will also be analyzed.

CHAPTER 4

FROM REGENERATION OF YASSIADA TO RESTORATION OF MEMORY

“Places are never just places in memory.
Memory invades them, occupies them,
erases them and shapes them again.”¹⁰⁴

The second section of the thesis will discuss the debates surrounding memory on the other axis of Yassiada's spatial transformation. The island's transformation process can be approached from an economic perspective, but this will fall short of being comprehensive. In the context of the AKP's attempt to refresh, restore, or construct counter-memory, the structural, nominal, and rhetorical transformation of Yassiada is an important milestone. As a reflection of the AKP's dynamic memory, the transformation of Yassiada serves practical-political purposes beyond the economic returns it brings, the history it contains, excludes, highlights, or erodes. Just as the accumulation regime of capital requires different cycles for continuity; policymakers' practices of approaching memory and spatial and cultural investments in this direction indicate a layered and perio-specific structure. Before analysing practices of constructing, restoring or eroding memory/counter-memory, it is important to give a general overview of the relationship between memory and the social, cultural or spatial. For this reason, we will first engage in a general discussion of memory and space, followed by an examination of the AKP's memory and its practical needs and efforts to re-construct memory. After portraying the memory promoted by the AKP and the legacy of the Democrat Party within this memory, the cultural investments and attempts to transform space will be critically examined in line with the memory that the AKP has assigned to itself or the historicity it has constructed (in order to spatialize this memory).

¹⁰⁴ Solnit, R. (2013). *The Faraway Nearby*. Viking. P.60

4.1. Memory Fields, Memory and History

The etymology of the "memory", which has Latin and/or Anglo-French origins (derived from the words *memor* and *memoria*), is explained in relation to concepts such as mindfulness, mental capacity of remembering, and sense of commemoration.¹⁰⁵ Since the mid-20th century, theoretical approaches developed in the social sciences have highlighted the concept of memory as a fundamental component and carrier of social relations, cultural norms, identity construction, and political narratives. These approaches have gone beyond remembering and recalling as individual cognitive functions. In this context, memory has become a determining factor in power relations, identity construction, past representation, and spatial interventions through shaping, restoration, forgetting, and representation of past initiatives.

Taking into account the context of the thesis and the interdisciplinary nature of the social sciences, it is pointed out that memory should be examined in relation to collective memory, culture, space, and the political sphere. While memory studies have emerged over the past thirty years as an academic discipline that has developed in the social sciences and primarily examines the social forms of memory, its roots lie in the work of Maurice Halbwachs in the 1920s.¹⁰⁶ Maurice Halbwachs, one of the founding figures of memory studies, argued that individual memory is shaped within a social framework. The concept of collective memory, which is his most important contribution, argues that individuals construct their memories not only from their own individual experiences, but also through the norms, values, and narratives of the social groups to which they belong: "It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories."¹⁰⁷ This approach contextualizes memory within cultural, historical and ideological structures. Inspired by Halbwachs, the literature on collective memory examines how individual experiences are transformed into a social narrative, and which experiences are forgotten or suppressed. In this context, memory is not only the carrier of the past, but also a constituent element of today's social order and identity politics.

Pierre Nora highlights the autonomy of memory in relation to history. According to him, while history is documentable, verifiable and fixed, memory is alive, changeable and linked to collective experiences. Nora relates memory to social belonging and dynamism/changeability,

¹⁰⁵ Online Etymology Dictionary. (n.d.). Memory. Etymonline. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/memory>

¹⁰⁶ Hafıza çalışmalarının nasıl kurumsallaştığı ve kanonlaştığı üzerine bkz. Marek Tamm, "Beyond History and Memory: New Perspectives in Memory Studies," *History Compass* 11, no. 6 (2013), 458 – 473.

¹⁰⁷ Halbwachs, M. (1992). *On Collective Memory*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, p. 38

stating that “Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name; history, only a representation of the past.”¹⁰⁸ Nora clarifies the memory-history dialectic as follows:

“Memory and history, far from being synonymous, appear now to be in fundamental opposition. Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present; history is a representation of the past. Memory, insofar as it is affective and magical, only accommodates those facts that suit it; it nourishes recollections that may be out of focus or telescopic, global or detached, particular or symbolic-responsive to each avenue of conveyance or phenomenal screen, to every censorship or projection. History, because it is an intellectual and secular production, calls for analysis and criticism. Memory installs remembrance within the sacred; history, always prosaic, releases it again. Memory is blind to all but the group it binds-which is to say, as Maurice Halbwachs has said, that there are as many memories as there are groups, that memory is by nature multiple and yet specific; collective, plural, and yet individual. History, on the other hand, belongs to everyone and to no one, whence its claim to universal authority.”¹⁰⁹

4.2. Memory and Place

The main factor that makes memory suitable for transformation, dynamizes it, and diversifies it is the ability of memory itself to take root within space, images, and objects. The concept of ‘lieux de mémoire’ (places of memory) developed by Nora describes new memory spaces constructed with symbols, monuments and museums, alongside the loss of natural memory transmission spaces in the modern age. In this line of thought, the following sections of the study will frequently touch upon the practices of constructing memory spaces during the transformation of Yassiada. Here, there is a tense relationship between, on the one hand, history based on archives and evidence, and, on the other hand, memory associated with experience, emotion and meaning production. This study will examine discourse, practices, and museum

¹⁰⁸ Nora, P. (1996). *Realms of memory: Rethinking the French past*. Columbia University Press. p.64

¹⁰⁹ Nora, P. (1989). *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire*. *Representations*, 26, p. 7

content to clarify the "narrative/meaning production" imprinted on the memory space constructed in the process of reconstructing the past in institutional, ritual, rhetorical, and spatial terms. The construction of memory space is highly political in terms of attempts to remember or forget something, its incompleteness, its prominence or obscurity, and its erosion.

There are widespread studies in social science literature on memory constructed through the instrumentalization of space. Memory spaces have been placed in a highly political position by initiatives such as renaming places, commemorative practices, and the physical reconstruction of historical significance. Pierre Nora's concept of "lieux de mémoire" (places of memory) is based on the view that memory has lost its natural means of transmission in the modern age and must therefore be conveyed through physical symbols. Nora describes this situation as follows: "Memory takes root in the concrete, in places, gestures, images, and objects; history, on the other hand, is closely tied to the continuity and progression of time and the relationships between objects. While memory is absolute, history can only grasp the relative."¹¹⁰ Memory spaces give concrete form to the past and provide it with a symbolic function. In this context, monuments, museums, ceremonial grounds, cemeteries, and even street names can be considered as forms of collective memory embedded in space, certain events are glorified through places, while others are disregarded. Thus, policies of remembering and forgetting are constructed through space. The relationship between memory and place is not limited to preserving and transmitting the past; it also serves to legitimize the present and shape representations of the future. For this reason, memory spaces become the battleground for ideological struggles. The organization of public space, architectural choices, restoration projects, and museumification activities all serve to (re)produce collective memory within a specific framework.

4.3. Ritual, Remembrance, and Memory Transmission

It is widely discussed in social sciences that memory is transmitted not only through texts, objects, or places, but also through bodily practices, rituals, and public ceremonies. In this context, memory becomes both a represented and an executed/performed phenomenon. The transmission and permanence of memory depend not only on symbolic codes but also on bodily repetition, social performances, and ritual arrangements. Paul Connerton theoretically

¹¹⁰ Nora, P. A.g.e. (1989).

conceptualizes memory not only as a cognitive mental practice but also as an embodied one. In particular, in his works *How Societies Remember* (1989) and *How Modernity Forgets* (2009), he explains how memory is transmitted through the body, habits, and rituals:

“Our bodies remember in a way that our minds cannot. Bodily practices embed memory in the routine of social life... In habitual memory, the body is a repository of the past, a mnemonic instrument through which the social is reenacted.”¹¹¹

Rituals are special temporal and spatial constructs in which the past is reproduced, and community identity is consolidated. National holidays, commemorative days, official marches, funerals, or religious ceremonies all serve to keep a certain historical meaning alive, ensure intergenerational transmission, and establish the community's memory regime. Such practices are organized not only to remember, but also to strengthen collective bonds and build ideological consensus. In this context, monuments and museums are spatial representations of ritual. A monument is a physical structure that represents a specific historical event or figure that has been glorified in the collective memory. Monuments are not only ‘built’ but also ‘visited’ places. In this sense, the meaning of the monument is completed by the practices surrounding it and the impressions it leaves on the memories of visitors. In Nora's words: “Les lieux de mémoire arise because there are no longer milieux de mémoire.”¹¹² In other words, rituals and monuments are artificial but effective memory carriers constructed in the absence of natural memory environments. Museums are also places where the past is formalized, selectively chosen, and displayed. Museum arrangements/layouts reflect political decisions about what should be remembered and what should be forgotten. The way objects are displayed, the order of the narrative, and the logic behind visitor guidance are all products of an ideological selection and rewriting process. For this reason, museums are not places that provide neutral information; they are symbolic spaces of cultural hegemony. On the whole, rituals, monuments, and museums enable memory not only to be preserved but also to be performatively reestablished. In this context, memory is not only remembered, but also kept alive, repeated, and experienced by the community. Therefore, the reproduction of memory through the body, space, and ritual transforms it into a living and changing social practice.

¹¹¹ Connerton, P. (1989). *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge University Press, p. 72, p.158

¹¹² Nora, P. A.g.e. (1989).

4.4. Forms of Forgetting

Memory politics is defined by a constant interplay between remembering and forgetting. Forgetting is not only a natural cognitive process, but also a socially organized, planned, and implemented action. Power relations determine/choose not only what will be remembered, but also what will be forgotten. This selectivity both defines the limits of collective memory and determines the relationship established with the past. Forgetting practices mostly function through spatial arrangements. The demolition of a building, the renaming of a space, or the erasure of a place are among the strategies used to erase collective memory. In this context, forgetting is an ideological act of obliteration. A demolished prison, a converted military site, or a historic site turned into a tourist attraction are examples of memory being spatially erased or replaced by another representation.¹¹³

It's important to keep in mind that this is also a tool of state policy and ideological orientation, whether you remember it or not. Totalitarian regimes attempt to control collective memory by ignoring historical opposition figures or suppressing traumatic events from the past. This intervention in memory politicizes not only the question of what is to be remembered, but also what is to be forgotten.

Marc Auge states that memory, and therefore identity, is shaped by forgetting;

“Remember, it is not just about losing the past, but also about memory engineering that allows for the reshaping of identity... What remains (reminiscences or traces) is the result of erosion caused by forgetting. Memories are shaped by forgetting, just as the coastline is shaped by the waves of the sea.”¹¹⁴

In summary, memory includes not only what is remembered, but also what is forgotten. The demolition, conversion, or trivialization of a space can be interpreted as a kind of attempt to obliterate its memory. It is evident that forgetting, as much as remembering, plays a central role in shaping collective identities and historical narratives.

¹¹³ See also; *Accounting for violence: Marketing memory in Latin America*. Duke University Press.

¹¹⁴ Augé, Marc. *Unutma Biçimleri*. İstanbul: Yapı Kredi Yayınları, 2019. p.59

4.5. Counter-Memory Construction and Memory Struggles

Memory is not merely a singular narrative space shaped by states, official institutions, or sovereign powers; it is also a field of alternative forms of memory, counter-narratives, and spatial struggles developed in opposition to these dominant narratives. In this context, “counter-memory” refers to forms of resistance developed against dominant historiography, following in the footsteps of Michel Foucault. Counter-memory aims to make historical experiences that have been officially erased, suppressed or marginalized visible again in the public sphere.

Counter-memory is often revealed through spatial interventions. The construction of alternative monuments to repressed events, the transformation of symbolic spaces by local communities, street art activities, memory walks, or ceremonies held in cemeteries are all part of counter-narratives developed against collective memory. In this sense, counter-memory is not only discursive but also a spatial act. The commemoration programs organized by civil organizations that land on the island every May 27 before the Yassıada regeneration process are one of the examples of such counter-memory practices.

Derek Alderman examines the relationship between memory and place within a political framework, focusing particularly on strategies of “place naming.” According to Alderman, the names given to streets, squares, or buildings are an area of hegemony in terms of how social memory is shaped and whose history is represented in the public sphere. However, these areas can also be reinterpreted through the interventions of local actors. Alderman states: “Commemorative place naming is both a form of symbolic power and a potential tool of resistance.”¹¹⁵ This approach reveals that public memory spaces are not fixed, but rather spaces open to constant struggle.

The urban regeneration process on Yassıada began with the renaming of the island, before the tender, construction, and project development. Since the 2010s, AKP has made extensive use of place naming regulations for bridges, hospitals, squares, and so on.

Counter-memory is important not only for exposing past injustices, but also for making current inequalities visible and generating new visions for the future. The memories of different groups, minorities, women, displaced communities, and dissident political actors are often excluded from the official narrative. This exclusion pushes them to create counter-memories.

¹¹⁵ Alderman, D.H. (2000). ‘A Street Fit for a King: Naming Places and Commemoration in the American South, *Professional Geographer*, 52(4): 672-684

Counter-memory practices are usually bottom-up processes. Unlike the monumental architecture or official museum narratives imposed by the state, counter-memory is usually produced by local initiatives, civil society organizations, or activist communities. Therefore, counter-memory is based on reclaiming and reinterpreting the place or memory of a place.

Traverso draws attention to the role played by counter-memory in the remembrance of traumatic pasts. According to him, mass violence events (genocides, coups, forced disappearances) that have occurred throughout modern history are kept alive not only through official commemorative ceremonies but also through alternative forms of remembrance: “Counter-memory does not aim to replace history with myth, but to reveal the partiality of official memory and restore complexity to the past.”¹¹⁶

According to Tanıl Bora, the AKP's efforts to revise memory can be defined as memory restoration or counter-memory construction.¹¹⁷ When the attempt is to reject, undermine, and alter the constituent/foundational mythology of the Republic and the "Westernized" perception of history promoted by official history, the AKP's efforts to restore memory can be defined as counter-memory. On the other hand, in the 2010s, especially after the 2013 Gezi Resistance and the social crisis and power struggles that followed, it is argued that the AKP government became more absolute and totalitarian, and in this direction, it shifted from constructing a counter-memory to constructing a constituent power narrative. The AKP's adoption of a founding-hegemonic narrative, such as the “New Turkey,” resulted from its attempts to establish cultural hegemony and consolidate its grassroots support. These attempts occurred in response to the AKP's loss of legitimacy at critical turning points, such as the 2013 Gezi Resistance, the post-2013–2015 Peace Process conflict environment, the December 17–25 Corruption Operations, and the July 15, 2016, coup attempt. At this point, the founding narrative offers the opportunity to redefine the meaning and origin narrative of the hegemonic in social memory, and thus the possibility to determine the future.¹¹⁸ The AKP's need and efforts to construct, restore and erode memory will be revisited in the following sections.

The position of this thesis is based on memory not only as a passive record of the past or a purely neurological process, but also as an active social construction process that produces and legitimizes the subject and directs the future. Halbwachs' concept of collective memory and

¹¹⁶ Traverso, E., *Geçmişini Kullanma Kılavuzu*, çev. I.Ergüden, Versus Kitap, İstanbul, 2009.

¹¹⁷ Bora, T. (2020). *Hafızayı planlamak ve heykelleştirmek*. In *Hafıza ve sanat konuşmaları* (s. 78). Hafıza Merkezi.

¹¹⁸ Ünal Çınar, R. (2021). *Ecdadın Çağrısı: AKP İktidarında Bellek Mücadelesi*. İletişim Yayınları. p.68-69

subsequent literature have attempted to clarify the relationship between memory and society, while Pierre Nora's concept of memory spaces has contributed to our understanding of how memory is integrated into the physical environment. In this way, memory manifests itself not only in minds, but also in streets, monuments, museums, and spatial arrangements. Places are not only tools for remembering, but also for forgetting. Augé explains how forgetting works ideologically through the concept of non-places; in this context, the memory-erased structure of modern cities is critically evaluated. In an environment where **memory is not only preserved but also suppressed and erased, the act of remembering becomes a form of political resistance**. As a result, memory exists alongside space; both concepts shape and reshape each other. Just as space carries memory, memory also gives meaning to space and reinterprets it. This reciprocal relationship plays a central role in both the construction of identities and the conduct of political and cultural struggles. Therefore, memory studies provide an indispensable framework for understanding the ideological orientations behind spatial arrangements and how social narratives are produced.

Within the scope of this study, reference points such as the Democrat Party, Adnan Menderes, and the Yassıada Trials will be analysed as a narrative construction/restoration in line with the daily needs of policymakers, and Democracy and Liberties Island will be analyzed as a manifestation of this memory in the physical environment, ritual, and commemoration. The practices of highlighting and forgetting discussed in each section of the above-mentioned literature series, highlighting and forgetting practices, changing the physical environment or place names, commemoration practices, narrative/meaning creation and attempts to incorporate the space, and attempts to commodify memory, will be examined in terms of how they were incorporated into application in the transformation of Yassıada into the Democracy and Liberties Island. On the other hand, the AKP's memory and its need and efforts to revise that memory will be discussed.

4.6. From Counter-Memory Construction to the Narrative of Constituent Power: The Memory of the AKP

Collective memory is not so much a repository of an individual's mental processes but rather a selection of collective remembrances that arise within the framework and context of the community in which the individual lives.¹¹⁹ Therefore, this memory is more than just historical.

¹¹⁹ Halbwachs, M., *On Collective Memory*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992. p.38

It signifies a discursive and symbolic space that is constantly being rebuilt by social and political networks.¹²⁰ This part of the study aims to analyse and interpret the narrative established as a result of social and political relations, as well as the representation and symbolic forms of this narrative. The narrative embedded in the space, ceremony, rhetoric, and ritual, and how and with what motivations this narrative was constructed, will be critically examined. The spatial representation of this discourse and meaning production will appear as restructuring or (re)functionalization. Here, it is possible to talk about temporary differences and multi-layered political manoeuvres.

The Justice and Development Party (AKP), which has held political power for more than 20 years, has changed/diversified its memory construction and restoration initiatives according to temporary needs and power relations in different areas. The AKP's memory planning and investment has, in some periods, focused on a search for origins/roots and the production of meaning, while in other periods it has sought to establish continuity and connections in opposition to the official narrative that imagines the Republic as a break or a turning point. It has adopted a fluid and variable discourse that shifts between nationalist or liberal conservative, radical or moderate Islamist, Pan-Islamist or Neo-Ottomanist rhetoric. On the other hand, attempts to restore memory or construct counter-memory against Kemalist memory as a constituent narrative/mythology are the main battleground in the AKP's program of memory planning. The AKP's historical narrative takes a position directly opposed to the Kemalist regime and official narrative, which it caricatures as the "CHP Zihniyeti" and constructs its historical and cultural codes through this counter-narrative. Although there are different discussions and definitions of Kemalism, it can be defined as a founding platform based on unchanging secular principles, a modern/Western identity, and a consistent lifestyle. This platform also emphasizes cultural homogeneity and the territorial integrity of the nation. Thus, it constructs the official memory and origin narrative of the nation-state.¹²¹ The social memory that the AKP has set out to construct; taking the founding mythology of the Republic and the political/cultural regime loyal to the Kemalist narrative as a whole discourse and set of practices that has distanced and alienated the "nation-ethos" from its roots, made it forget its

¹²⁰ Parmaksız, Y.P.M., "Çanakkale Bellek Savaşı", *Neye Yarar Hatıralar? Bellek ve Siyaset Çalışmaları*, der. Pınar Metis Yelsa Parmaksız, Phoenix Yayınevi, Ankara, 2012, s. 281-302. p.8

¹²¹ Cizre, O. ve Çınar, M., "Turkey 2002: Kemalism, Islamism, and Politics in the Light of the February 28 Process", *The South Atlantic Quarterly*, cilt 102, sayı 2-13. 2003, s. 309-332.

past and essence, and excluded and marginalized those who do not fit the identity it has designed/dictated.¹²²

This section will attempt to characterize the efforts of the AKP and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, which have been the decisive focus and policy makers in Turkish politics since the 2000s, to (re)construct memory. The reason for this periodic separation is the change in the AKP's efforts to extend its hegemony into the historical and cultural sphere and its position vis-à-vis the official narrative (from counter-memory to founding memory) in line with the ownership, weakness, and/or absolution of power over time. Drawing on Reyhan Ünal Çınar's periodization and developing it further, this section will examine how the AKP relates to its founding and counter-memory, and its practices of memory transformation.¹²³

When the AKP came to power in the early 2000s, it responded to the demands of international capital for a "moderate" Islamism, taking into account the reaction of other established power centers in the country (closure cases, military interventions, bureaucratic obstacles, etc.), and adopted a more moderate representation that conveyed the message that it did not pose a threat to the founding ideology. During this period, it could be argued that AKP relied on the tradition of the Democrat Party (DP), which represented the periphery in contrast to the Kemalist secularist center, in a context where the center-right had been eliminated by the postmodern coup of February 28.¹²⁴ The party has removed its religious garb (the shirt of Milli Görüş) during this period and, rather than presenting itself as an Islamist alternative to secular Turkey, has defended itself as a conservative democrat, claiming that it will offer a solution to the problems of neoliberal crises, capitalism, and globalization.¹²⁵ The first ten years of the AKP were marked by purges and reorganization in institutions¹²⁶ such as the bureaucracy, the

¹²² Bora, T. (2020). *Hafızayı planlamak ve heykelleştirmek*. In Z. G. Yüceil (Ed.), *Hafıza ve sanat konuşmaları 2020* (s. 78). *Hafıza Merkezi*.

¹²³ See also Ünal Çınar, R. A.g.e. (2021). *The struggle over collective memory between Kemalism and the AKP has been divided into three distinct periods. The 2002–2006 period is characterized as a phase in which the AKP sought to differentiate itself from the Islamist tradition and to articulate this contestation on a symbolic level. The 2007–2010 period is defined as a process of representing the periphery against the secular, "elite" center, consolidating support, and establishing alliances in opposition to the ideal citizen constructed by the founding power. From 2011 onward, the period is summarized as one in which the increasingly authoritarian government-initiated efforts to construct a foundational memory.*

¹²⁴ Dağı, I., "Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, Güvenlik ve Mesruiyet Arayışında", *AK Parti, Toplumsal Değişimin Yeni Aktörleri*, der. Hakan Yavuz, Kitabevi Yayınları, Ankara, 2010, s. 121-140.

¹²⁵ Ünal Çınar, R. A.g.e. (2021).

¹²⁶ Between 2002 and 2012, legal proceedings such as the Ergenekon (2007) and Balyoz (2010) trials were conducted with the aim of dismantling the existing structures within the Turkish Armed Forces (TSK), the judiciary, and the bureaucracy. Additionally, the structure of the High Council of Judges and Prosecutors (HSYK) was altered through the 2010 constitutional referendum, paving the way for the appointment of judiciary members aligned with the ruling government and the Gülen movement. During the same period, appointments within the police force and the National Intelligence Organization (MİT) reshaped institutional cadres, while efforts to

judiciary, and the Turkish Armed Forces on the one hand, and on the other hand, investments in the discursive and symbolic construction of victimhood alliances within the Republican era to establish legitimacy and consolidation against these power centers. In the second decade of the AKP, within the framework of collective memory planning, discourses/narratives such as New Ottomanism, New Turkey, and Nationalist Conservatism appeared at different times and with varying intensity, but the discourse of national will against the secular elite and the Kemalist establishment remained constant. During its first term in power, the AKP formed alliances based on victimhood within the history of the Republic. These alliances were a response to the Republic Mitings, the e-memorandum, and, in subsequent periods, the Gezi Resistance and conflicts/crises with capital groups. Through these alliances, the AKP expanded the "us" side within its own narrative. The AKP views the Democrat Party (DP) and the Motherland Party (ANAP) as their predecessors and allies. These parties emerged from the masses-real nation and ending the rule of the elite. Consequently, they were purged or targeted for purging.¹²⁷ As we will return to later, the AKP's position in power over time and its view of "the other" have changed its position in this shared victimhood, along with the constituent narrative.

The next stage in the AKP's battle for memory has been symbolic investments in the Ottoman Empire. The rhetoric and search for origins shaped around references to the Ottoman Empire or Neo-Ottomanism emerged as a result of memory production that emphasized continuity with the past, particularly with the Ottoman Empire, rather than imagining the Republic as a breaking point or a new era, and accordingly glorified the splendour of the Ottoman Empire.¹²⁸ The (neo)Ottoman reference can be seen as a bridge between the early period of the AKP's victimhood alliance and the discourse of the excluded/periphery, and the "New Turkey" discourse as a re-founding power. Periodicity and continuity are debatable, but in the thesis, the (Neo) Ottoman discourse has become one of the key reference points in the "new constituent power" narrative of AKP, as a manifestation of cultural and identity polarization and, of course, under the influence of crises such as Gezi and July 15. The AKP's symbolic and discursive investments oriented toward the Ottoman Empire can be conceptualized as a

weaken military tutelage led to increased influence over Supreme Military Council (YAS) decisions, thereby altering the internal balance of power within the TSK. See also Tas, H. (2018). Authoritarianism and the judiciary: Political trials in Turkey. British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 45(2), 167–182. Tas, H. (2018). Authoritarianism and the judiciary: Political trials in Turkey. British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, 45(2), 167–182.

¹²⁷ Bora T. Yerli ve Milli, "Zamanın Kelimeleri (İstanbul: Birikim Kitapları, 2018), 192-206.

¹²⁸ Bora, T. (2020). A.g.e.

revelation of the original ancestral culture that has been forgotten, as well as an interpretation and reformulation of the genetic codes of its historical roots. This is in direct opposition to the respectable/desirable culture and citizenship of the nation-state's official narrative. These initiatives have been explained as a nostalgic character-dominated move with the claim of re-founding.¹²⁹ The search for roots or the production of founding narratives/meanings is as important for establishing legitimacy as it is for consolidating and mobilizing the masses. The New Ottoman discourse reflects an attempt to expand and consolidate its (voter) base in terms of the target group, geography, and identity.¹³⁰ In response to the homogeneous discourse of the nation state, the AKP has addressed the founding principle to the pre-Republican era, planning to construct a narrative that implies continuity with the Ottoman Empire rather than a break with it. Within this continuity, the DP and ANAP have been positioned as pioneers/predecessors who symbolized the nation's efforts to return itself into an “ethos” but were interrupted.

Collective memory, based on the subjectivity and sense of experience it attaches to the past, lays the groundwork for the idea that the nation has a shared past and a shared future built upon that past.¹³¹ Thus, with a national identity based on tradition invented in continuity with the past, one can be expanded/turned into “us.” Therefore, in response to modernism's need for fixation and homogenization, collective memory, which is an important tool in establishing a political community that can be created by establishing a bond between people, is a construct of the constituent power that fixes the nation to a single “origin” and a certain “debt of meaning” and standardizes it. Traditions circulated through repetition and transmission are fixed in our memory as a founding principle and origin.¹³² In this sense, various communication tools, spatial arrangements, and renaming, as well as ceremonies and rituals, have been employed to link pre-Republican origins to heroic narratives, powerful victories, and inclusivity. These have been interpreted in nationalist, conservative, and Islamist ways in

¹²⁹ Bora, T. (2020). *A.g.e.*

¹³⁰ By developing a neo-Ottomanist vision, the AKP sought to position Turkey as a regional power grounded in the legacy of the Ottoman Empire. This ambition was shaped by a desire to assume the role of a “big brother state” in the Middle East and was concretized through efforts to reestablish influence over the Ottoman hinterland, particularly in the context of its Syria policy, along with attempts to assert sectarian and political dominance. Simultaneously, during the peace process, the Kurdish issue was approached with reference to the multicultural and decentralized heritage of the Ottoman Empire; instead of the “one nation” discourse, a multi-identity understanding of citizenship was promoted through historical models akin to the “millet-i Osmaniye.” In this way, the AKP utilized the Ottoman past as a tool for contemporary political legitimacy both domestically and internationally. See also Hintz, Lisel. (2018). *Identity Politics Inside Out: National Identity Contestation and Foreign Policy in Turkey*. Oxford University Press.

¹³¹ Traverso, E., *A.g.e.* 2009.

¹³² Hobsbawm, E. J. (2006). *Kısa 20. yüzyıl: 1914–1991 Asırlıklar çağı* (Y. Alogan, Trans.). Everest Yayınları.

certain places. Epic narratives such as the Conquest of Istanbul in 1453, the Battle of Malazgirt, and the Siege of Kut al-Amara, rituals, the production of TV series and film content, and initiatives such as remembrance and memorialization activities have been used to construct an identity and counter-memory with the aim of replacing the official ideology.

In the period following the AKP's first 10 years, particularly with the Gezi Resistance and the July 15 coup attempt, the aforementioned search for origins and production of meaning has evolved into a new founding power and Erdoğan's dominant nation under the discourse of the "New Turkey." The period after 2013 can be summarized as follows:

"... After 2013, the government abandoned the Pan-Islamist rhetoric of embracing the territories inherited from its ancestors, which extended to the remaining Ottoman lands, and instead focused on those it had excluded from Kemalist citizenship. It has now entered into a single-actor pathology. In its third term, with the Gezi protests, the end of the Arab Spring, the December 17-25 corruption investigations, and the end of the Kurdish peace process, the AKP's political approach has turned into a friend-enemy dichotomy in which both internal and external opposition have been completely marginalized. In order for the government, which has lost its legitimacy, to maintain control, the state creates the impression that it is constantly at war with a perceived threat during this process of party-state identification. Thus, the AKP gained the opportunity to challenge Westernization, which it viewed as the root cause of Kemalist hegemony. However, it was forced to swiftly link its Pan-Islamist-inspired Neo-Ottomanism to an obscure Islamic nationalist ideology..."¹³³

4.6.1. July 15 Coup Attempt and the Reconstituted Ruling Power Memory

It is possible to mention several turning points for the AKP in the process of restoring and/or (re)constructing collective memory. In the period after 2013, when social opposition deepened and the government responded by becoming more authoritarian and harsher in all respects, the AKP undertook a series of narrative, cultural, and spatial reorganization initiatives as part of

¹³³ Akça, İ. (2018). 1980 sonrası Türkiye'de hegemonya projeleri ve otoriterizmin değişen biçimleri. In İ. Akça, A. Bekmen, & B. A. Özden (Eds.), *Yeni Türkiye'ye varan yol: Neoliberal hegemonyanın insası* (pp. 27–69). İletişim Yayınları.

Yılmaz, Z. (2017). *The AKP and the spirit of the 'New' Turkey: Imagined victim, reactionary mood, and resentful sovereign*. *Turkish Studies*, 18(3), 482–513.

Ünal Çınar, R. A.g.e. (2021).

its memory planning, both to establish legitimacy in the face of crises and to consolidate its own base.

The July 15 coup attempt and the Gezi Resistance, despite their different dynamics, objectives, and actors, have mobilized the accumulated energy on both sides of the political spectrum. Regardless of how successful it has been, the AKP has, on the one hand, instrumentalized all state apparatus in a coercive/forceful manner against the expanding and diversifying opposition groups that formed alliances during the Gezi resistance, while on the other hand prioritizing cultural policies aimed at undermining the cultural hegemony it has long been unable to establish. The Gezi Resistance and the AKP's efforts to establish cultural hegemony will be discussed again in the following sections

This section will critically examine the July 15 military coup attempt and the resulting symbolic and narrative processes within the context of the AKP's "re-founding" narrative, memory planning, and memory-building efforts. In order to narrate the epic story of the constituent and liberation of the Republic within its own history, the AKP set out to discover continuity with the pre-Republican periods and claim ownership of this heritage. However, because it was unable to identify an origin/reference or starting point that was compatible with its culture, identity, and community, it has been characterized by everyday realpolitik relations and a pragmatic, unstable, and slippery ground. To this extent, it can be seen that the ideological-cultural codes within the AKP's historical narrative have shifted from representing the victimized and exclusionary environment of the period to embracing the Ottoman legacy in opposition to the official ideology/history, and from there to asserting the legitimacy of reestablishing itself as the founding power.

The July 15 coup attempt, and the ensuing power struggle resulted in victory for the AKP, providing it with the epic historical moment it needed for its own narrative and origins. The AKP will no longer have to search for traces of its constituent power in its past and in its quest for meaning, either before the Republic or during the Republican era.

Nagehan Tokdoğan has stated that the suppression of the July 15 coup attempt caused a major shift in the political tradition from which was characterized by a discourse of victimhood, replacing a historical narrative dominated by defeat and repression with a completely different narrative of the present that could be described as one of triumph and self-worship.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Tokdoğan, N. (2018). *Yeni Osmanlıcılık: Hınç, nostalji, narsisizm*. İletişim Yayınları.

This victorious moment has also led the AKP to revise its position within its own narrative. The AKP has altered its relationship with movements such as the DP and ANAP, as well as its appropriation of them, through shared victimization such as on May 27 and Feb 28. This transformation represents a departure from the AKP earlier position as the representative of the periphery and the marginalized—those who positioned themselves in opposition to Kemalist tutelage, and who, as a result, were subjected to coups, political obstruction, executions, and poisonings. In doing so, the party - Erdoğan separate itself from its former narrative of solidarity with the “men of the nation – milletin adamları” who shared a common fate under the previous order. Instead, the AKP now aligns itself with a vision of a “new” Turkey¹³⁵, one that claims to have ended the oppression of the old guardianship regime. Like Democracy and Liberties Island, the prominence given to the “epic” of July 15 in city squares, monuments, and museums, regardless of context, is a manifestation of this return to essence and even a rediscovery of what is essential.

Just as the Republic was established through resistance against Western colonialist ambitions and invasions, the AKP defines its resistance against the coup attempt as a second struggle for liberation against the West and its collaborators, and from this definition derives a claims to a founding role that allows it to redefine Turkey. Constitutive power offers the opportunity to redefine the debt of meaning and the narrative of origins in the collective memory, and thus to determine the future.¹³⁶

Empowered by its status as the founding status, the AKP has abandoned its position as the oppressed/victim and assumed a position of power. Over time, this attitude has become aggressive and revengeful toward the other. In this context, the coup d'état of May 27 has been strongly embraced. The AKP has shifted from a discourse focused on victimhood to one of “attacking the perpetrator.” Erdoğan, who visited the Yassıada during the construction period, expressed his position against the coup in this way:

“...The era of coups is now over in this country. By doing this, we are essentially saying; look, we have turned the place where you staged your coup into a paradise. You were the coup

¹³⁵ The AKP government itself began using the label “New Turkey” after 2010. In fact, it was during Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s 2014 presidential campaign that this term gained prominence. Erdoğan launched the campaign with a strategic document titled “On the Road to the New Turkey,” announcing that he would be the president of the New Turkey. This discourse was institutionalized in 2015 through the “New Turkey Contract,” which, grounded in both liberal-conservative and restorationist Ottomanist assumptions, once again emphasized the notion of a “strong state and nation.” See also Bora, T. (2023, Ocak 16). “Yeni Türkiye”. Birikim Haftalık. <https://birikimdergisi.com/haftalik/7718/yeni-turkiye>

¹³⁶ Ünal Çınar, R. A.g.e. (2021).

*plotters, but we have made this place sparkle. This also highlights the difference between us. The name “Democracy Lantern” carries a lot of meaning. Our hope is that people will no longer have to endure such things. Are there still those who harbor such ambitions? Yes, there are. From within or from outside. Unfortunately, such ambitions persist in various parts of the world. As we grow stronger, no one can stage a coup in this country. **The entire issue is about us gaining power...***”¹³⁷

The invention of origin/tradition is not enough to reestablish constituent power. The constituent narrative, which is responsible for carrying its origins and the debt of meaning it has created into the future, must establish a continuity across time in order to bridge the gap and disconnect between the beginning of the nation-state and the present and future. Although the discourse of July 15 occupies a central position in the AKP government's memory planning, it is argued that the AKP, which draws narrative manoeuvres in line with daily political needs, remains uncertain about the ground on which it will establish its meaning production and origin narrative.¹³⁸

Following the coup attempt on July 15, the AKP attempted to partially replace Kemalism's homogeneous nation-state paradigm with a New Ottomanism ideology that transcends the boundaries of the community, incorporating it into a “local and national - yerli ve milli” discourse with an Islamic national identity. While attempting to construct a “New” Turkey within the historical and spatial boundaries of the old Turkey, the AKP has continued to maintain continuity in its discourse by frequently referring to the Ottoman Empire, which it claims as its origin and foundation;

*“In this coup attempt, our nation showed its determination to claim this land as its homeland, just like it did a thousand years ago at Malazgirt. Just as it did 717 years ago in Söğüt and 563 years ago in Istanbul, our nation has proclaimed to the whole world that it sees Anatolia not only as its living space but also as its future. Our nation responded to those who attacked it in order to prevent it from becoming independent 100 years ago in Çanakkale, Kut’ül Amare, and Dumlupınar, and it gave the same response on July 15.”*¹³⁹

¹³⁷ Anadolu Ajansı. (2019, Mayıs 27). Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Adası yıl sonunda açılacak. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-demokrasi-ve-ozgurlukler-adasi-yil-sonunda-acilacak/1489710>

¹³⁸ Ünal Çınar, R. A.g.e. (2021).

¹³⁹ TCCB, “15 Temmuz Darbe Girişimi ile ilgili Meydanlara Yaptıkları Konuşma”, 23 Temmuz 2016, <http://www.cumhurbaskanligi.gov.tr/konusmalar/353/49742/15-temmuz-darbe-girisimi-ile-ilgili-meydanlara-yaptiklari-konusma>. (17.06.2025)

To summarize, the milestones of the AKP's memory planning are: 1-The glorification of the Ottoman Empire as an ancestral figure and the making of symbolic investments 2-The disconnection from ancestral roots and the suppression/obliteration of identity through the Republic's secular modernization project, 3-Re-establishing broken ties by reinventing origins and reminding people of forgotten/suppressed history, 4-References to the “new” and “re-new” in the construction of identity and narrative for the construction of the present and the future, 5-Being victorious and powerful, and transitioning from counter-memory to constitutive memory. This historical narrative is a collective effort to remember the injustices, sanctify the will of the people, and represent the AKP's victory as a restoration. Here, there are continuities and discontinuities in the AKP's historical reading, interpretation, and positioning, as well as in its attitude toward “the other,” in terms of intensity/impact and temporal differences. The gaps between the experience transmitted (narrative) and the experience actualized/lived within memory politics can be transformed into a manoeuvring space or instrument of power. Ricoeur has put forward the concept of trace as a reference for historicity. A trace is a remnant of the past in the present, but this remnant is not merely a physical sign; it is also a representation filled with meaning. The “trace” as a remnant of the actual experience and the “narrative” determined by today's power relations, as well as the gaps between these two references and who fills them, how, and with what... construct and reconstruct the relationship between history and memory. Thus, rather than establishing dominance over “reality” or replacing memory with official history, it is a matter of constantly re-examining /reconsidering the relationship between history and memory.¹⁴⁰

July 15 transformed the memory of the AKP and, consequently, the social memory; it also processed this narrative on the discursive, spatial, customary, formal/institutional dimensions. The coup attempts and the social response it provoked have given the AKP the tradition and roots it needs during times of social crisis. We can interpret the formalization, ritualization, and infiltration/integration practices of July 15 at the implementation level through the AKP's invention of its tradition/origins. “Invented tradition” can be defined as rituals and practices that are not ambiguous in a broad sense but rather eliminate ambiguity by becoming institutionalized at a formal level.¹⁴¹ These practices attempt to establish continuity with a history that suits them wherever possible (in space, discourse, memory, etc.). As mentioned in previous sections, in AKP memory planning, first the origin narrative was invented, and then

¹⁴⁰ Ricoeur, P., *Hafıza, Tarih, Unutuş*. çev. M.E. Özcan, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul, 2017.

¹⁴¹ Hobsbawm, E., & Ranger, T. (Eds.). (1983). *The invention of tradition*. Cambridge University Press.

a relationship of identification, ritualization, and continuity was constructed with this transmitted/narrated origin. The AKP tradition involves practices such as eliminating “uncertainties,” symbolic re-functionalization and renaming, rediscovering ancestors and establishing continuity, ritualization, and spatialization of ideological narratives. The AKP presents these practices as a replacement for the “old” constituent power, staging what might be called a performance of a “second-hand” glorious past.

The new ruling power's ritualization practice of officially declaring July 15 as “Democracy and National Unity Day” and celebrating it as a national holiday with commemorations and ceremonies every year is a notable example. In contrast to the official holidays and ceremonies of the nation-state, which the AKP camp has been compulsory attending for years, the liberation day of the new Turkey myth has been brought to the fore. In addition, the AKP has redefined the symbolic meaning of places such as districts, roads, squares, and parks by changing their names.¹⁴² Similarly, an intensive place naming strategy has been adopted for Democracy and Liberties Island. As discussed in the section on memory spaces, with such changes, the government both creates memory spaces that showcase its victory and uses the reinforcing nature of the new names it gives to these places in terms of collective memory. The Adnan Menderes Congress Center, Admiral Sadık Altıncan Library¹⁴³, Fatin Rüştü Zorlu Mosque, Katre Island Hotel¹⁴⁴, and, of course, the subject of this study, the renaming of Yassıada as Democracy and Liberties Island, are examples of such renaming practices.

Finally, museumification practices such as exhibitions, monuments, and memorials play an important role in the AKP's memory restoration focused on July 15. As in the Museum of Democracy and Liberties and the memory spaces within it, the “epic” of July 15 has found a prominent place for itself, independent of its context and significance. A forced connection was established with the site-specific memory practice, establishing the reference and founding position of July 15.

¹⁴² Due to the struggle it demonstrated during the War of Independence and the losses it endured, the title “Kahraman” (Heroic) was granted to Maras, and “Sanlı” (Glorious) to Urfa. Similarly, following the coup attempt, the government awarded the title “Kahraman” to the district of Kazan in Ankara—where people took to the streets to resist the coup on the night of the attempt—renaming it “Kahraman Kazan.” In addition, the Bosphorus Bridge in Istanbul, where the coup attempt began, was renamed “15 July Martyrs Bridge”; Kızılay Square in Ankara was renamed “15 July National Will Square”; and the General Staff Junction was renamed “15 July Martyrs Junction.”

¹⁴³ The structure commissioned by Henry Bulwer in 1864 on the island has been restored and repurposed as a library.

¹⁴⁴ The name of the hotel, Katre Island, was inspired by a quatrain featured in the book *Zindan Duvarları*, authored by Faruk Nafiz Çamlıbel, one of the 592 defendants tried on Yassıada on the morning of October 14, 1960, following the May 27 Military Coup.

4.6.2. Menderes' Legacy: Between Constitutive and Constructive Power

The Democrat Party and Adnan Menderes symbolize the historical unity of the nation and the majority against the Kemalist elite within the AKP narrative. The main slogan used by the Democrat Party in the 1950 elections, “Enough! The people have the final say!”, has also frequently been used in AKP rhetoric.

As previously discussed, during periods marked by crises of legitimacy and societal opposition (such as the Gezi Protests or electoral defeats), as well as during times when its power was reaffirmed or consolidated (such as electoral victories or the coup attempt), the AKP has continuously reconstructed its political discourse. This reconstruction has also manifested through various power configurations (such as electoral alliances or the peace process), resulting in the evolution and renewal of its historical narrative and its position within this memory framework. As previously discussed, during periods marked by crises of legitimacy and societal opposition (such as the Gezi Protests or electoral defeats), as well as during times when its power was reaffirmed or consolidated (such as electoral victories or the coup attempt), the AKP has continuously reconstructed its political discourse. This reconstruction has also manifested through various power configurations (such as electoral alliances or the peace process), resulting in the evolution and renewal of its historical narrative and its position within this memory framework. Prior to the July 15 coup attempt, the AKP constructed a narrative of partnership and continuity with the Democrat Party, which was perceived as the embodiment of the national will in the face of military-bureaucratic tutelage and its interventions or threats. By framing the concept of the “national will” as the foundation of legitimacy for the absolute authority of elected power against “tutelage,” the AKP employs the May 27 coup as a foundational reference point to reinforce this theme. In 2013, during the mass Gezi protests, which the AKP interpreted as a coup-like “operation” against the national will, a broad platform of pro-government foundations and associations launched a campaign under the slogan “Men of the Nation-Milletin Adamları” thereby reviving and recontextualizing the memory of May 27. The posters bearing the slogan “Men of the Nation” featured images of Adnan Menderes, Turgut Özal, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.¹⁴⁵ All three were portrayed as heroes of the national will: the first was overthrown and executed following a military coup;

¹⁴⁵ Prior to the 2015 elections, outdoor advertisements prepared by the AKP featured billboards titled “Men of the Nation,” depicting Adnan Menderes, Turgut Özal, and Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. A slogan that rapidly circulated on social media during the 2013–2014 period and subsequently appeared in public spaces read as follows: “You hanged Menderes, you poisoned Özal, we will not let Erdoğan be devoured.” *Milliyet*. (2009, Mart 4). *Basbakan Erdoğan 38. mitingini Aydın’da yaptı*. *Milliyet*. <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/yerel-haberler/aydin/basbakan-erdogan-38-mitingini-aydin-da-yapti-10094391>

the second, according to some claims, died under suspicious circumstances; and the third was allegedly being targeted for removal by “domestic and foreign powers.”¹⁴⁶ Following the July 15 coup attempt and the subsequent victory of the AKP and Erdoğan—an outcome that enabled the reconstruction and restoration of a new constitutional narrative—their position within the historical alliance and narrative constructed around the Democrat Party and the May 27 coup underwent a significant transformation. The discourse of victimhood was replaced by a more assertive, antagonistic, and revanchist reckoning. Although this shift appeared to signal a rupture from the previously established continuity and origin narrative, the AKP frequently continued to reference the Democrat Party’s tradition, discourse, and practices as a source of legitimacy for its newly reconstructed foundational narrative and its emerging “yerli ve milli” community.

Within the AKP’s collective memory, the image of the Democrat Party has been interpreted through an eclectic lens of either nationalist-conservative or liberal-conservative frameworks, depending on the demands of everyday political manoeuvring. Notably, Devlet Bahçeli, the leader of the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP)—then and still a coalition partner of the ruling government—also attended the inauguration ceremony of the Democracy and Liberties Island. In line with a historically selective reading shaped by contemporary political needs, a commemorative inauguration was held in which even some of the coup-affiliated officers were remembered favorably. The extent to which this “commemoration” was instrumentalized is evident in the discourse that reimagined Alparslan Türkeş—the officer who read the coup declaration—as an opponent of the coup itself.

“We also commemorate the late Alparslan Türkeş with respect, who, while in exile in India, reportedly opposed the legitimacy and legality of the execution orders and made efforts to prevent the tragedy.”¹⁴⁷

Coming to power in 1950, the Democrat Party adopted a conciliatory and alliance-oriented approach toward the country’s Islamic segments. Although Islamic ideas regained visibility and influence under DP rule, they were not permitted to emerge as an independent political force. Consequently, Islamism found its place within a broader ideological framework often referred to as nationalist-conservatism, under the umbrella of the Democrat Party. In this regard, the Democrat Party’s ambivalent stance toward embracing and prioritizing Islamic

¹⁴⁶ Bora, T. (2020). A.g.e.

¹⁴⁷ Sabah. (2020, May 27). A.g.e.

politics—despite its alliance with the Islamic grassroots—can be likened to the early period of the AKP. One of the most significant examples of the bond established around conservatism is the re-Arabization of the call to prayer (ezan), which served as a key reference point in the AKP’s search for ideological roots and its construction of a counter-memory and identity.

The practices of spatial intervention and construction-development activities undertaken by the Democrat Party and the AKP exhibit significant similarities, particularly in terms of their role within each party’s broader political discourse. In order to reveal these similarities, we will examine the urban development initiative—commonly referred to as the Menderes zoning development program—carried out in Istanbul between 1956 and 1960. The redevelopment program, launched on September 23, 1956, through a press conference held by Prime Minister Menderes, prioritized traffic and road infrastructure. In addition, it aimed to enhance Istanbul’s appeal to foreigners by demolishing old buildings and constructing new ones in their place. Within this framework, numerous roads, connectors, boulevards, and avenues were constructed across Istanbul, alongside efforts to widen existing ones. In addition, the construction of new and high-rise hotels and apartment buildings was initiated. As a result, Istanbul underwent a redevelopment and expropriation process during which approximately 5,000 structures—including many historical buildings—were demolished.¹⁴⁸

During this period, road construction and related infrastructure projects played a central role in Istanbul’s public works and urban development activities. Especially after 1956, these initiatives were effectively transformed into a government policy and significantly accelerated. The Istanbul-Edirne Road, the Istanbul-London Highway, and the Istanbul-Tekirdağ Highway were among several major road construction projects undertaken during this period.¹⁴⁹ Menderes, who regarded the redevelopment of Istanbul as a matter of “national importance – memleket meselesi”¹⁵⁰ overcame all obstacles in his path—including historical buildings, green spaces, and private properties—through rapid expropriation or demolition, following a “done and dusted” approach. Construction and redevelopment activities, framed as a matter of national urgency or a state of mobilization, often disregarded legal, bureaucratic, and regulatory constraints—as well as rights and interests such as private property and public benefit—under this presupposition. Similarly, the construction of roads, avenues, and bridges

¹⁴⁸ Gül, M. (t.y.). *Menderes dönemi İstanbul’unda imar hareketleri ve arka planı. Büyük İstanbul Tarihi*. <https://istanbultarihi.ist/325-menderes-donemi-istanbulunda-imar-hareketleri-ve-arka-planı>

¹⁴⁹ Tuna, I. (2019). 1950-1960 yılları arasında İstanbul’da kentleşme ve imar faaliyetlerine genel bakış. *MSGSÜ Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 3(20), 393–409. p.401

¹⁵⁰ Gökhan Atılğan, *Osmanlı’dan Günümüze Türkiye’de Siyasal Hayat, Yordam Kitap*, s. 431.

has remained a central element in the AKP's populist discourse of performance and service delivery. When it comes to bypassing legal and judicial procedures, it is possible to say that the AKP is more proficient than the DP... As mentioned in the previous sections of this study, it has been stated that legal and bureaucratic obstacles have been overcome/circumvented in the Yassıada regeneration project. During this process, objections and protests raised by civil society organizations or business associations were largely ignored or dismissed, framed as the product of a mindset that allegedly sought to disrupt public order and undermine the well-being of the "nation." In a parallel timeline to the urban transformation of Yassıada, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan responded to student protests against the construction of a road through the Middle East Technical University (METU) campus by stating: "Today I saw a banner that read, 'We want forests, not roads.' What nonsense. There are plenty of forests. Without roads, you can't reach the university. Let's send you to the forests then—go live there. Just because they say so, are we supposed to give up on cities? Roads are civilization. We will not stop building roads." With this statement, Erdoğan established a symbolic connection to Adnan Menderes's vision of civilization, particularly through the centrality of road construction. In the same statement, the Prime Minister also referred to the Yassıada transformation project, stating: "We are preparing a project for Yassıada. We named it the Democracy and Liberties Island. A group went and wrote in the courtroom, 'We won't let anyone touch our island. Yassıada belongs to us.' Who do you think you are? Yassıada belongs to those who stand for freedom."¹⁵¹

With the consolidation of its power, the definitions of what constitutes a national issue, what serves the benefit of the "nation," and what should be prioritized or disregarded have also become absolute. Empowered by this notion of absolute truth or general interest, both Menderes and Erdoğan assumed an active, supervisory, and directive role in urban interventions, construction and development activities, and large-scale projects. It is frequently observed that, with their informed and decision-making positions, Erdoğan and Menderes have occupied the ultimate determining role particularly in the planning, zoning, construction, and operational processes of large-scale built environment investments, while other limiting and supervisory mechanisms have been disregarded. During the AKP era, it has been observed that in the design of numerous built environment investments, profit-oriented and arbitrary practices have prevailed over planning, and that in many projects, construction processes have

¹⁵¹ *Hürriyet*. (2013, Eylül 18). *Başbakan Recep Tayyip Erdoğan: "Gidin ormanda yaşayın"*. <https://www.hurriyet.com.tr/gundem/basbakan-recep-tayyip-erdogan-gidin-ormanda-yasayin-24739459>

continued in violation of legal decisions (such as suspension or cancellation).¹⁵² In Menderes's urban development program for Istanbul, the processes of rapid project design and execution were carried out in the absence of comprehensive planning and programming, accompanied by an extensive process of expropriation and demolition. This rapid demolition process was featured in the August 12, 1957, issue of *Time* magazine under the title "Turkey: Benevolent Bomber." The article cites, as an example of swiftly and arbitrarily made demolition decisions, a telegram in which Menderes conveyed a demolition order during his visit to Baghdad.

*"On business in Baghdad recently, Menderes jumped out of bed in the middle of the night to send a cable announcing, 'Have decided to tear down house opposite Spice Bazaar on Eminonu Square. Proceed with expropriation.'"*¹⁵³

During the transformation process of Yassiada, Tayyip Erdoğan, who monitored the island by helicopter and occasionally visited it, provided input on various aspects including the architectural plans, musealization practices, non-museum-related uses of the site, and even the landscaping efforts intended to replace the trees that had been cut down.

In his visit to the island in May 2019, Erdoğan stated the following: *"...Whatever was promised in the project must be completed. You saw trees placed in large pots as part of the landscaping efforts—some trees can survive, others cannot. They said things like, 'Trees were cut down, trees were uprooted, this and that happened.' The current goal is to plant 40,000 trees here. Imagine what this place will look like after planting 40,000 trees. The construction here will be concealed among the trees, and it will become much more beautiful. I really like spruce trees. A lady said, 'Mr. President, spruce doesn't grow here.' There are mostly broad-leaved pines and similar species..."*¹⁵⁴

A very similar rhetoric can easily be found in the statements of Adnan Menderes as well.

"Within the speed and enthusiasm of development activities, historical monuments will not be neglected, the characteristic features of Istanbul will not be damaged, monuments previously hidden among ruins will be revived and restored to the value and grandeur they possessed at

¹⁵² Bianet. (2020, Ağustos 24). "Kaçak sarayı ne zaman tahliye ediyorsunuz?". <https://bianet.org/haber/kacak-sarayi-ne-zaman-tahliye-ediyorsunuz-229576>

¹⁵³In an article published by *Time* magazine criticizing the expropriations carried out as part of urban development projects in Istanbul, extensive coverage was given to the demolitions. The report noted that American tourists visiting the city were under the impression that Istanbul had been bombed in the aftermath of World War II. *TIME*. (1957, August 12). Turkey: Benevolent bomber. *TIME Magazine*. <https://time.com/archive/6888064/turkey-benevolent-bomber/>

¹⁵⁴ <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-demokrasi-ve-ozgurlukler-adasi-yil-sonunda-acilacak/1489710>

the time of their construction, and one hundred thousand trees will be planted in place of the three hundred that were cut down.”¹⁵⁵

Another point of convergence between the rhetoric of the DP and the AKP is the conquest of Istanbul. Both the DP and AKP's spatial planning has frequently addressed the theme of (re)conquering Istanbul. Constantinople, whose conquest was heralded in Islamic belief, is the symbolic city at the center of the Ottoman-Islamic civilization's imperial hegemony. Although the conquest by Fatih Sultan Mehmet fulfilled this Islamic myth, according to Islamist perspectives, the identity of Istanbul as an Islamic city has been corrupted through modernization and Westernization. From the standpoint of Islamist ideology, **this degenerated landscape renders Istanbul in need of reconquest.** Within Islamist and nationalist-conservative ideology, the reconquest of Istanbul has been a prominent theme since the 1950s. The reconquest symbolizes the return of Istanbul to its essence, which had been degenerated by its Western identity. As discussed in earlier sections, references to the “new” (such as New Ottomanism, New Turkey, or the New Conquest) are employed as expressions of a return to the origin or essence. The concept of the “new” can be understood as an attempt to reset memory—a symbolic effort to anchor the past or the origin as a new point of departure. In this sense, it functions as a facilitating element in embedding the renewed narrative into collective memory.

For Menderes, the issue of Istanbul's reconstruction is virtually the narrative of a triumphal procession. This triumph signifies the victory of a reconquest of Istanbul. Aydın Boysan asserts that the destruction initiated by Menderes essentially obliterated the 500-year-old Ottoman-Turkish city. Menderes's ‘conquest’ is, in essence, like the destruction of post-conquest Istanbul. Much like the ‘conquest’ that drowned Yassıada in concrete in an attempt to transform it into a mausoleum for Menderes...¹⁵⁶ As with the Democrat Party, for the AKP, the reconquest of Istanbul is deemed necessary to reclaim the city lost through modernization/westernization.¹⁵⁷ The Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, inaugurated on the anniversary of the conquest of Istanbul; the reopening of the Hagia Sophia Church for worship as a mosque; the reconstruction of Gezi Park and the Artillery Barracks – Topçu Kışlası within the scope of the Taksim Project; and the monumental Taksim Mosque built in alignment with

¹⁵⁵ Boysan, A. (2004). *Adnan Menderes Belediyeciliği İmar Hareketleri Uygulama ve Sonuçları*. Mimar.ist. 4 (13), ss. 23-31.

¹⁵⁶ Boysan, B. (2020). *Menderes'ten önce, Menderes'ten sonra*. İST Dergi. <https://www.istdergi.com/tarih-belge/menderesten-once-menderesten-sonra>

¹⁵⁷ Bora, T. (1995, Ağustos). *Fatih'in İstanbul'u*. Birikim, (76). <https://birikimdergisi.com/dergiler/birikim/1/sayi-76-agustos-1995/2274/fatih-in-istanbul-u/2765>

the Orthodox Church are among the spatial interventions aimed at the re-conquest of Istanbul. From this perspective, the regeneration process involving the demolition and complete reconstruction of Yassıada—turning the island into a mass of concrete and even rebuilding original structures such as the gymnasium and soldier officers' dormitory—embodied full fidelity to the 'memory' of the deceased figure it commemorated. It represents a destruction, construction, excavation, and concreting undertaken for profit, in defiance of the city's natural and historical fabric.¹⁵⁸

Within a broad framework of discourse and practice, it is argued that the shared collective memory of the AKP and DP, the continuity of their historical narratives, and their predecessor-successor relationship are not limited to the representation of a suppressed and ignored milieu opposed to the Kemalist and bureaucratic elite/tutelage. Instead, it is claimed that there is continuity and similarity in rent-based, arbitrary, and unplanned practices and the rhetoric underlying them. These parties have adopted a nationalist-conservative, neoliberal market economy and occasionally authoritarian ideology over time. Thus, Ottoman or Islamic references and themes of reconquest have been integrated into their rhetoric and programs and have been imprinted on the urban space.

4.7. Cultural Investments

As an aspect of the search for meaning and origin, or in line with practical politico-economic needs, the AKP has (re)constructed memory by inscribing the cultural codes it has established and invented into the collective memory. This section will focus on the AKP's cultural performance and the dynamics of cultural investment within the domains of memory construction or restoration.

The AKP's historical narrative and discourse, on the one hand, rest upon the representation of the national will in opposition to a tutelary political elite; on the other hand, in its cultural manifestation, it assumes the position of the defender of the nation's common sense and authentic culture against a Westernized, and consequently corrupted and identity-lost, culture. The AKP's attempt to hegemonize its populist culture has been designed around this

¹⁵⁸ Özdal, H. (2020, Mayıs 31). Menderes'ten Gezi'ye: Yassıada'nın 'fethi', İstanbul'un imhası. *Gazete Duvar*. <https://www.gazeteduvar.com.tr/yazarlar/2020/05/31/menderesten-geziye-yassiadanin-fethi-istanbulun-imhasi>

dichotomy. Under the banner of nativeness and national identity, thousands of pro-government cultural contractors strive to produce works that demonize the West and Western values, perpetuate the image of foreign conspiracies, and seek to revive the 'forgotten' culture of the nation. The failure of these efforts and the inability of the 'native and national' culture to establish hegemony are attributed to a small elite that has monopolized the cultural and artistic sphere.¹⁵⁹ The subject of the cultural power that the Islamist-conservative memory seeks to contend with is a bloc composed of 'White Turks,' Kemalists, and leftists. This cultural monopoly is portrayed as alien or indifferent to what is native, surviving through the mimicry of Western culture, and through its hegemony, suppressing, obstructing the flourishing of, or rendering invisible the native and national culture.¹⁶⁰

Since coming to power in 2002, the AKP has established an instrumental relationship with culture. In the 2000s, influenced by the EU harmonization process and efforts to cultivate a 'moderate' image for international capital, the cultural sphere largely followed a trajectory aligned with the neoliberal economic program. In the 2010s, particularly after the 2013 Gezi Resistance, the 'Kurdish' peace process, and the coup attempt, political motivations came to define the fundamental structure of the instrumentalization of the cultural field.

In the 2000s, the AKP's efforts to attract international capital, its 'moderate' approach toward domestic and global capital groups, and particularly its alliance with capital circles that may be characterized as secular, gave rise to a periodical partnership and relationship of mutual interest between the AKP's cultural policies and these capital groups. "Much like their counterparts around the world, contemporary art museums and other art institutions established by major corporations in Turkey can be interpreted through the lens of objectives such as tax exemption, advertising and promotion, image building, internationalization, forming close ties with political power, and generating direct or indirect revenue."¹⁶¹ During this period, in addition to capital groups investing in the field of culture and arts—benefiting from various incentives—the government's perception of culture as an economic and diplomatic instrument, symbolized by the merger of the Ministries of Culture and Tourism, also played a significant role. As a spatial institutional reflection of the economically driven cultural investments of the 2000s, the SMT-led regeneration strategies discussed in the first part of the thesis may be cited

¹⁵⁹ Keten, E. T. (2020, Ekim 9). AKP'nin popülist kültürü ve kültür müteahhitleri. *E-Skop*. <https://www.e-skop.com/skopdergi/akpnin-populist-kulturu-ve-kultur-muteahhitleri/5899>

¹⁶⁰ Bora, T. (2023, Aralık 25). Kültürel hegemonya. *Birikim*. <https://birikimdergisi.com/haftalik/8174/kulturel-hegemonya>

¹⁶¹ Rastgeldi G., *Türkiye'de Çağdas Sanat Piyasasının Gelişimi: 2001 Krizi ve İktisat Bankası Koleksiyonunun Satılışı, Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Hacettepe Üniversitesi, 2019, p. 97.*

as illustrative examples. Urban regeneration processes in Galata, Cihangir, Sulukule, and Yassıada—the latter being the focal point of this thesis—can be cited as examples of strategies aimed at turning Istanbul into a high-yield cultural brand, strategies that establish both discursive and practical continuity between Erdoğan and Menderes, as frequently emphasized in other parts of this study. As a target and outcome of these implementations, Istanbul, which was designated the European Capital of Culture in 2010, had already begun undergoing a cultural-structural transformation years in advance.

Throughout the 2000s, the AKP viewed the cultural sphere as an economic and diplomatic instrument; however, beginning in the 2010s—particularly following the Gezi Uprising—it began to explore ways of politically instrumentalizing culture in response to identity-based cultural polarization, the legitimacy crisis triggered by social opposition, and the need to consolidate its support base. Although some conservative writers brought discussions of cultural hegemony and conservative art to the agenda before Gezi, a significant shift occurred in cultural policies and investments following the Gezi Movement, which can be interpreted as both a class-based and cultural movement. As the AKP government increasingly lost its capacity for political manoeuvring, it began investing in intersections between selective memory and the cultural sphere as a means of establishing a legitimacy base in the face of political and social crises and consolidating its own constituency. In this context, the AKP mobilized all its institutional and economic power to establish 'cultural hegemony.' Ministry funds and allocations, content produced through state television, the prioritization of associations and foundations, and investments in cultural, artistic, and musicological activities have constituted key nodes of this mobilization. Magazines published by right-wing/Islamist circles (such as *Misvak*, *Cins*, *Hacamat*, *Nihayet*), high-budget television series like *Diriliş Ertuğrul* and *Payitaht Abdülhamid*¹⁶² that reconstruct Ottoman and Islamic history through an epic narrative, museums representing the same discourse, and cultural-artistic events such as the Yeditepe Biennial are among the institutionalized, formalized, and ritualized cultural activities of the AKP.

Despite all the effort expended and resources allocated, the AKP's cultural hegemony problem persists or fails to reach the desired level, as frequently acknowledged by Erdoğan himself. Although a large number of events, programs, and publications are presented in quantitative

¹⁶² Tırpan, M. (2025, Mart 16). *Tabii'nin misyonu ve muhafazakâr estetiğin yeniden insası. BirGün*. <https://www.birgun.net/makale/tabiinin-misyonu-ve-muhafazakar-estetigin-yeniden-insasi-607608>

terms, the qualitative competence of these initiatives and the extent to which they surpass the culture they oppose remain open to debate. The AKP's counter-culture has been implemented by reducing it—both in method and execution—to a mere instrument of politics. **This qualitative deficiency indicates not a cultural hegemony, but rather an attempt at establishing cultural power.** For the AKP's cultural producers—who represent a directed, imposed performativity that leaves no room for mediation or interpretation—political agendas and economic gains have taken precedence over cultural activities. One of the most illustrative examples of this is the Albayrak Media Group, which functions as the flagship of the AKP's 'native and national' culture, encompassing numerous magazines, newspapers, television channels, and publishing houses. This capital group, referred to by Emre Keten as 'cultural contractors,' is also remembered as the owner of the company that operates the hotel on Yassiada at a remarkably favorable rate! An end-to-end engineering operation that produces, instrumentalizes, and ultimately commodifies culture... This form of cultural contracting leads us to one of the central arguments of this study: **Yassiada, on the one hand, represents a space where memory construction materializes through the performativity of cultural contractors; on the other hand, it becomes the subject of urban transformation strategies grounded in profit, real estate, and commercial operation.**

Musealization activities also correspond to the sphere in which the AKP's attempts at cultural hegemony intersect with practices of (counter-)memory construction or restoration. Acts such as 'erecting a monument' or 'opening a museum' function not only as performative gestures but also as discursive performances, serving as potent symbols of memory construction itself. Regardless of its content or 'quality,' the act of monumentalization and musealization functions as a memory initiative in and of itself. The Panorama 1453 Museum, opened in 2009, the Malazgirt Museum from 1071 to 2071, the July 15 Memory Museum, and the Democracy and Liberties Island are among the AKP's museum projects within its broader memory planning agenda. In the final part of the study, the transformation of Yassiada into the Democracy and Liberties Island will be examined within the context of museum and memorial site construction. This analysis will cover the island's components, including buildings, museums, monuments, installations, and exhibitions, as well as other structures such as the hotel, congress center, and mosque.

CHAPTER 5

DEMOCRACY AND LIBERTIES ISLAND: WHAT IS REMEMBERED AND WHAT IS FORGOTTEN

“Monumentalization” and “museumization” are not only actions, but also powerful symbols of memory construction as discursive performances. Regardless of their content or “quality,” the acts of monumentalization and museumization function as memory operations in themselves.¹⁶³ In order to archive/fix the narrative in memory, leave a strong impression, and facilitate recall and re-evocation, it is necessary to symbolize and concretize the memory that is constructed. To this extent, the narrative needs to be spatialized, ritualized, commemorated/monumentalized. Within the scope of the spatialization and monumentalization of the AKP's collective memory, the production of space and spatial transformation at Democracy and Liberties Island will be examined as an intersection of the AKP's memory with the cultural sphere and spatial dimension. Monuments, museums, and other applications and their representations will be discussed in the context of spatial representations of memory, while opening, visiting, and commemoration practices will be discussed in the context of discursive and everyday representations of memory. There will be an analysis of the manner in which objects and content are displayed in island spaces and component museums, the methods and order of narration, and the ideological choices made by policymakers and project developers regarding their preferences for remembering, highlighting, forgetting, or suppressing/eroding. The contradictions between experienced, realized, and conveyed phenomena will be revealed.

5.1. Inauguration Ceremony

Yassıada, which was renamed in 2013 and underwent a transformation project initiated in 2015, was inaugurated as a complex comprising structures such as a museum, a convention center, and a hotel on the 60th anniversary of the 1960 military coup. Initially introduced/presented as a memorial site or an open-air museum, the transformation project

¹⁶³ Bora, T. (2020). *A.g.e.*

gradually expanded—purportedly in fidelity to the memory of the deceased—into a construction-heavy 'complex.' As a result, commercial enterprises such as hotels, restaurants, and cafés, along with structures like a mosque and a convention center, came to occupy a significant portion of the island. Structures such as the mosque, convention center, and shopping mall function almost as the signature or seal of the AKP's all-encompassing construction paradigm. Despite initial claims that Yassıada would resemble places like Davos or Camp David during its planning, construction, and inauguration phases, it remains debatable whether the island has ultimately become the commemorative site it was claimed to be, or the profit-driven attraction it was designed as.

The inauguration ceremony held on May 27, 2020, was attended by President Erdoğan, the leaders of the People's Alliance—Devlet Bahçeli and Mustafa Destici—President of the Directorate of Religious Affairs Ali Erbaş, as well as various politicians and bureaucrats. The ceremony commenced with a prayer led by the Directorate of Religious Affairs ¹⁶⁴, an institution that assumed a significant role in the construction of the new Islamist nation during the AKP era. Although the Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) and its leader Devlet Bahçeli were in opposition during the project's planning phase, their participation in the inauguration, rallies, and official ceremonies began following the party's inclusion in the People's Alliance (Cumhur İttifakı) in 2018. In his opening speech, Erdoğan commemorated Alparslan Türkeş—the figure who read the coup declaration—as **a gesture aligned with the new political consensus.**

¹⁶⁴ Batuman, B. (2019). *Milletin Mimarisi: Yeni İslamcı Ulus İnşasının Kent ve Mekân Siyaseti*. Metis Yayıncılık. p.78



Figure 2 – Inauguration Ceremony 11.03.2025 available at

<https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-demokrasi-ve-ozgurlukler-adasi-gonullerdeki-hasbi-sevginin-nisanesi-olacak/1855151>

In the same inauguration ceremony, Erdoğan delivered an extensive speech in which he addressed the entire political agenda—from Menderes’s development initiatives to the hospitals built during his own tenure, the distribution of free textbooks, and cross-border military operations. These actions were framed as a continuation of the Democrat Party’s legacy of service and development, while the presence and threat of the 'putschist CHP mentality' were reiterated. Emphasis on history and the exhortation to learn from it were frequently repeated. Erdoğan stated that although history cannot be changed, it is within their power to alter the form of remembrance in order to ensure its correct interpretation.¹⁶⁵

We will focus on the memory restoration aimed at altering the form of remembrance, as articulated by Erdoğan, and on the museum practices and contents that contribute to the reconstruction or erosion of meaning.

¹⁶⁵ *Anadolu Ajansı. A.g.e (2020)*

5.2. The Spatial Experience of the Island

If the buildings and other structures on the island are to be categorized in terms of historical period, construction/form, and intended purpose, excluding the sculptures and installations located in open areas, the island comprises three enclosed museums, historical buildings and ruins from the pre-transformation period, as well as buildings designated for everyday use (such as commercial enterprises, places of worship, and meeting facilities). (Figure 2)

Ultimately, in addition to the castle and cisterns built on the island in the 1800s, the project introduced several new elements: the 'Democracy Lighthouse,' a 24-meter-high structure visible from the mainland; a courtroom simulation featuring wax figures of the tribunal and the defendants; prison cells representing the detainees' quarters; the 'Aydın House' symbolizing the birthplace of Adnan Menderes; various sculptures; a memorial park square; and exhibition spaces. Furthermore, the island now hosts a convention center with a capacity of 600 people, a hotel with 320 beds, a mosque accommodating 1,200 worshippers, and several restaurants.

In addition, numerous installation artworks have been placed throughout various parts of the island; Unsent Letters, The Blindness of Justice, and What Remains are some of among them...



Figure 3 – Island Map. 11.05.2025 available at <https://demokrasiveozgurlukleradasi.com.tr/>

5.3. Museums

5.3.1. Hasan Polatkan Sports Hall and May 27 Museum

The former sports hall, where the Yassıada trials were held, was demolished and transformed into the 27 May Museum with the stated aim of 'conveying the darkest periods of the island's history to future generations and the world.' Although it is claimed that the museum was reconstructed in accordance with the original, comparisons with historical photographs reveal discrepancies in seating arrangement, window placement, and overall dimensions. At the entrance of the museum, summaries of the case files that were the subject of the trials—such as the 'Baby Case,' the 'Dog Case,' and the 'Expropriation Case'—along with the verdicts, are displayed. Upon entering the courtroom, visitors encounter wax figures of Adnan Menderes, Celal Bayar, Hasan Polatkan, and Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, all of whom were sentenced to death, seated in the defendants' chairs. The courtroom also features wax figures representing the judicial panel, members of parliament, and security forces.

During the museum visit, visitors seated in the stands are shown the documentary *From Past to Present: Yassıada*. In this setting, the transformed space of the 27 May Museum employs an animated film—reminiscent of the Japanese anime style—enhanced with visual and sound effects to create emotional impact. In the approximately thirty-minute screening, each dialogue is accompanied by the illumination of the corresponding wax figure, while the voice-over dramatizes the coup process and the subsequent trials. The aim is to have visitors, seated in the former sports hall stands, bear witness to the courtroom proceedings.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Bergi, M. (t.y.). *Bir bellek mücadelesi mekânı olarak Yassıada*. Murat Bergi. <https://www.muratbergi.com/index.php/bir-bellek-mucadelesi-mekani-olarak-yassıada/>



Figure 4 – From Past to Today Yassıada. 15.05.2025 available at <https://www.muratbergi.com/index.php/bir-bellek-mucadelesi-mekani-olarak-yassiyada/>

The narrative, which includes a contemporary and pragmatic reading of history, is enhanced by dramatic storytelling and technological elements. In the documentary, the Democrat Party era is recalled alongside its democrat practices and development initiatives. This section appears to be designed to instill in visitors the impression and emotional response that Democrat Party members were prosecuted—and ultimately executed—for actions that were absurd in nature, lacking detail, and not constituting criminal offenses.

On the other hand, the documentary emphasizes—presumably in line with contemporary narrative needs—that both Alparslan Türkeş, one of the coup leaders, and İsmet İnönü, then-chairman of the CHP, were opposed to the executions. While Türkeş's anti-coup portrayal has remained consistent over time, President Erdoğan, in his 27 May 2025 commemoration speech, cited İnönü's statement, 'Revolutions are a legitimate right for nations when conditions are ripe,' thereby framing the CHP not only as a political actor complicit in the 1960 coup, but also as the source of what he described as military or societal coups in contemporary politics.¹⁶⁷

Within the courtroom content, there is a deliberate and designed practice of forgetting, as discussed in earlier memory studies. The actors of the period have been repositioned in accordance with everyday, pragmatic political needs. With regard to the Democrat Party era,

¹⁶⁷ AK Parti. (2025, Mayıs 27). *Cumhurbaşkanımız ve Genel Başkanımız Erdoğan, Genişletilmiş İl Başkanları Toplantısı'nda konuştu*. <https://www.akparti.org.tr/haberler/cumhurbaskanimiz-ve-genel-baskanimiz-erdogan-genisletilmis-%C4%B1l-baskanlari-toplantisi-nda-konustu-27-05-2025-17-35-29/>

issues such as pressure on the press and restrictions on freedoms, the establishment of the Investigation Commission and its unconstitutional practices, as well as repressive measures targeting universities (see also Koçak, 1997¹⁶⁸) have been excluded from the visible or sensible scope of the exhibition. This omission suggests the **construction of a form of consensus regime**. Before establishing a sense of associate and continuity with the Democrat Party, the AKP first instituted what Rancière refers to as the 'partition of the sensible'. According to Rancière, politics is not the exercise of power or the struggle for power. Politics is, above all, the organization of a space as 'political,' the configuration of a specific field of experience, and the determination of what is considered 'common' along with the subjects deemed capable of defining and debating these matters.¹⁶⁹ Consensus, as a regime that legitimizes the unequal distribution of power and function, is the implicit law embedded in space and discourse that defines one party's share or lack thereof. In the context of constructing a consensus regime, power reconfigures time, space, and identity, determining what is audible or inaudible, and what is visible or invisible. The courtroom narrative establishes a consensus around a tutelary regime that oppressed innocent, developmentalist politicians who represented the nation. It conveys a dramatic story stripped of beginning, end, and context, thereby erasing relationality with the historical period. At the discursive level, references to development, service, and infrastructure, such as roads, have drowned out and made imperceptible references to ecology, aesthetics, and historicity.

The dramatic narrative presented in the museum and the consensus it establishes have rendered critiques of the Democrat Party regime irrelevant or outside the scope of discussion. The figure of the Democrat Party and Adnan Menderes, within their historical context, becomes perceptible/sensible only through the configuration of continuity with the AKP—made possible by the reorganization of the space, that is, the political reconfiguration of space and time. In the replica of the courtroom that has been constructed, wax figures supported by visual and sound effects, dramatized dialogues articulated through the judge's voice, and lighting directions that determine the focal point provide the visitor/viewer with the opportunity to witness a historical moment and to become a subject within the narrative. In Rancière's terms, the viewer is thus transformed into a participant.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁸ Koçak, C. (1997). *Türkiye'de Demokrat Parti: Tarihsel ve Siyasal Bir Değerlendirme*. İstanbul: İletişim Yayınları.

¹⁶⁹ Rancière, J. (2012). *Estetiğin huzursuzluğu* (A. U. Kılıç, Trans.). İletişim Yayınları. P.25

¹⁷⁰ Kuman, C. (2014). *Sanatta ve siyasette sensorium meselesi ve katılımcıya dönüşen izleyici* (Yüksek lisans tezi, Işık Üniversitesi). YÖK Ulusal Tez Merkezi. <https://tez.yok.gov.tr/>



Figure 5 – 27 May Museum and Court. 28.01.2025 available at <https://demokrasiveozgurlukleradasi.com.tr/>

As seen in Figure 5, museum visitors are allowed to sit in the courtroom galleries and even in the defendant's chair. The theme of witnessing and accompanying history is a frequently expressed and applied method in many similar projects. Sinan Turaman, co-founder of Outdoor Factory—the company responsible for the design and implementation of the museum and previously involved in projects such as the July 15 Martyrs' Memorial and the Uzbekistan Symbol Monument—explained the purpose of new trends in musealization in a newspaper interview:

“Where will I see the Putra Mosque in Malaysia? Or how can I see Al-Aqsa Mosque? I think about this a lot. Let's go back to the year 1453, Sultan Mehmed the Conqueror performs the first prayer in Hagia Sophia. Or let me go to 1071, Alp Arslan in Kars... Again, it is based on spirituality, but I want to send people to places they cannot see, places they wish they could, like a kind of time machine.”¹⁷¹

The time machine metaphor mentioned by the company partner eliminates all intermediaries between the narrative-object and the subject, facilitates the digestion of the intended message,

¹⁷¹ Altuğ, E. (2023, Kasım 5). Keske dediğimiz yerlere bir zaman makinesi. Milliyet. <https://www.milliyet.com.tr/pazar/keske-dedigimiz-yerlere-bir-zaman-makinesi-7029573>

and ultimately commodifies the narrative and memory. It is possible to experience such theme park-like practices throughout every part of Democracy and Freedoms Island.

This practice can also be observed in other museums opened during the AKP era. For instance, on the official website of the Panorama 1453 Museum, which was opened in 2009, it is stated:

“... **You are invited to the Conquest of Istanbul.** On a 3,000 m² area, visitors experience the excitement of the conquest of Istanbul through three-dimensional reenactments, including imitations of cannons, gun carriages, and gunpowder barrels used during the siege, accompanied by 10,000 figures... As there are no reference points such as a beginning or an end to help grasp the reality and scale, although one enters an enclosed space, it creates the feeling of stepping into a three-dimensional outdoor environment...”¹⁷²

Similarly, in 2019, during a visit to the island to monitor the progress of the project, Erdoğan made the following statement regarding the replicas and reenactments on the island: “... Yassıada has been transformed into a historical set... The island has been designed in such a way that visitors can feel the trials that took place after the May 27 coup by walking through the actual locations, and to ensure that this feeling is conveyed to all visitors.”¹⁷³

Practices mentioned in museums such as July 15, the Conquest of 1453, and May 27 are frequently encountered. The primary aim here is to convey the intended message or sentiment directly, without mediation or abstraction. The subject’s deep involvement in the narrative establishes a relationship of domination within the simulation of court, trial, and execution, which functions as a despotic representation. Baudrillard explains this involvement not as the assertion of the subject’s existence, but as a desire to be present as an image.¹⁷⁴ In other words, within the narrative, the subject seeks their own appearance. **The “trial” simulation, which claims to replace reality, offers the visitor the opportunity to become the subject of the narrative and to be situated within the frame.** Baudrillard speaks of two forms of break: one caused by distance, the other by excessive proximity. It can be argued that the visitor’s involvement, combined with the dominance of the narrative and its hyperreal elements, leads to a rupture in context due to this intense entanglement.

¹⁷² Panorama 1453 Tarih Müzesi. (2025). Hakkımızda. <https://www.panoramikmuze.com/Home/Hakkimizda>

¹⁷³ Anadolu Ajansı. (2019, Mayıs 27). Cumhurbaşkanı Erdoğan: Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Adası yıl sonunda açılacak. <https://www.aa.com.tr/tr/turkiye/cumhurbaskani-erdogan-demokrasi-ve-ozgurlukler-adasi-yil-sonunda-acilacak/1489710>

¹⁷⁴ Baudrillard, J. (2012). *Kötülüğün seffaflığı* (I. Ergüden, Trans.). Ayrıntı Yayınları. (Original work published 1990) p.27

5.3.2. Adnan Menderes Museum

During the period when the island was under the administration of the Naval Forces Command, the building, which served as an officers' dormitory, was demolished and rebuilt, similar to the courtroom. During the trial process following the May 27 coup, it was used as a prison/cell. As part of the project, the building was transformed into the Adnan Menderes Museum. On the ground floor, a representation of the house in Aydın where Adnan Menderes spent his childhood and youth was constructed, and his early life is narrated. On the second floor of the museum, a replica of the plane crash experienced by Adnan Menderes in London on February 17, 1959, along with the wreckage of the aircraft, has been designed. This floor also includes replicas of Menderes's prison cell during the trial process and the gallows on İmralı Island. Additionally, there are "experience rooms" titled Longing, Silence–Suicide, Desperation–Hallucination, Fear of Death, Companions in the Cause, and The Cause Continues. In these rooms, the museum visit is transformed into an intensified experience through the use of sound, light, and other visual effects.

Compared to the first museum focused on the trials, this museum is content-wise fragmented and contextually disconnected, while the figure of Adnan Menderes is portrayed in a highly dramatic manner. Although the intention to fill the space or create visual density is understandable in this section, the inclusion of parts representing the house he lived in is particularly noteworthy.



GÜNDEM - 23 Haziran 2015 Salı 08:49

Adnan Menderes'in evi kaderine terk edildi



Merhum Başbakan Adnan Menderes'in doğum yılı olan 1899'dan idam edildiği 17 Eylül 1961'e kadar olan hayatının önemli bir kısmının geçtiği Aydın Çakırbeyli Köyü'nde bulunan çiftliğindeki evi kaderine terk edildi.

Figure 6 – 7: Museum and Adnan Menderes' House Replica – Current Condition of the House
Available at <https://www.iha.com.tr/haber-adnan-menderesin-evi-kaderine-terk-edildi-473260> and <https://demokrasiveozgurlukleradasi.com.tr/muzeler/adnan-menderes-muzesi> 11.05.2025

While a replica of the house was constructed in the museum, news reports from the same period as the project reveal that the original house in Aydın was in an abandoned and neglected state. Through this and other implementations, the island space represents, in Baudrillard's terms, a micro-scale simulation universe. The partial replica of the house is not an act of imitation or simulation, but rather an attempt to reproduce the real itself. As in the example of Adnan Menderes's house, by referring only to itself, it erodes—and even causes the loss of—the meaning of reality, without questioning its resemblance or authenticity.

A simulation possesses all the signs of reality, yet it cannot be the real itself. However, simulation blurs the boundary between what is real and what is fictional. Another fictional space within the Adnan Menderes Museum is the replica of the room/cell in which Adnan Menderes stayed throughout the trials.



Available at Book; *Yassıada – Menderes ve Muhafızları*¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁵ Tasdelen, M. N. (2005). *Yassıada – Menderes ve Muhafızları*. Dorlion Yayınları. (p. 62).



Figure 8-9-10: The cell designed in the museum, photographs taken in Adnan Menderes' room during his trial period Available at <https://demokrasiveozgurlukleradasi.com.tr> 11.05.2025

In the museum, the room where Adnan Menderes stayed throughout the trial is depicted as damp, neglected, and small. What is even more striking is that the windows are shown as being nailed shut with wooden planks. During my visit to the island, while describing this room to the group, the museum guide stated that the junta regime had deliberately sealed the windows in order to torment Menderes. Upon my return from the visit, when I asked the guide about this issue, he stated that different sources offer different accounts and that there is no photograph or document confirming that the windows were sealed in the manner depicted in the museum. Indeed, in photographs secretly taken by a soldier stationed on the island during the trials, as well as in other sources, it is clearly visible that the conditions of the room were not as illustrated.

In both the courtroom and the replicas of Adnan Menderes's house and the room in which he was imprisoned, what is presented is not an imitation, likeness, or parody, but a reality in which signs have been substituted for the original. In other words, it is an act of deterrence that replaces every real process with its operational twin. These examples can be interpreted not merely as representations or simulations, but as attempts to reproduce the real itself.¹⁷⁶ The demolition and reconstruction of all buildings on the island—including the courtroom, which carries historical significance, and the officers' dormitory—is a result of the intention to reproduce or substitute reality. From a holistic perspective, the regeneration practices on the island serve, on one hand, to optimize the use of the island space for commercial purposes, and on the other, to construct a more dramatic simulation of reality, particularly through the demolition and reconstruction of the buildings in accordance with contemporary needs.

¹⁷⁶ Baudrillard, Jean, *Simülakrlar ve Simülasyon*, çev. Oğuz Adanır, Ankara: Doğu Batı Yay., 2016. P.28

In summary, the island space reflects a micro-scale simulation universe that is accessible only on weekends, composed of replicas and illustrations, and of “reproduced” spaces through the demolition and reconstruction of existing structures, along with visual and auditory products imbued with emotion and sentiment as signs. In some sections, the museum content attempts to revise the historical narrative through the production of a “new consensus,” while in other spaces and displays, it engages in the creation of a fiction that not only goes beyond reality but also contradicts it.

5.3.3. Democracy and Liberties Museum

At the top of the island lies Democracy Square, which was created by leveling the terrain, along with the Adnan Menderes Congress Center. This area also hosts the island’s third museum, the Museum of Democracy and Freedoms. Similar to the other museums, this one extensively employs narrative techniques involving intense video and audio effects, as well as the use of wax figures to depict historical scenes and figures. The museum displays selected historical moments from the Late Ottoman period of the 1800s and the Early Republican era to the present day. A substantial part of the exhibition, titled “Struggles for Democracy from the Ottoman Empire to the Present,” is dedicated to this narrative through the use of sculptures, reenactments, and audio presentations. Events from political history—such as the 31 March Incident, the establishment of the first printing press in the Ottoman Empire, Bloody May Day, and the 15 July coup attempt—are presented in succession, accompanied by hyperrealistic reenactments, intense visual elements, and brief written explanations, yet disconnected from their historical context. The museum appears to prioritize visual abundance over a curated sequence or exhibition that could be meaningfully related to the narrative of the museum or the island itself.



Figure 11 – 12: Democracy and Liberties Museum 11.03.2025 available at <https://demokrasiveozgurlukleradasi.com.tr/>

It can be argued that the audiovisual intensity transforms the museum visit into an authentic experience. A visual construction saturated with meaning is presented, without any apparent need for explanatory context. Within this continuous visual flow, written information is notably limited; titles or brief summaries seem to have been deemed sufficient.



Figure 13: Democracy and Liberties Museum 11.03.2025 available at <https://www.muratbergi.com/index.php/bir-bellek-mucadelesi-mekani-olarak-yassida/>

5.4. Other Historical Structures and Artifacts – Monuments

Various sculptures and objects are exhibited in the open areas of the island. Among these outdoor installations are suitcase replicas mounted on a wall to represent the 592 members of parliament tried on Yassiada; the sculpture *The Unreachables*, symbolizing censored letters that were sent but never delivered; *The Blindness of Justice*; *Defeated by the Noose*; and *The Era's Radio*. In addition, an open-air exhibition titled *From Darkness to Light*, along with other sculptures, installations, and thematic listening stations, has been created.



Figure 14: Radio – photographed by the author 15.06.2025

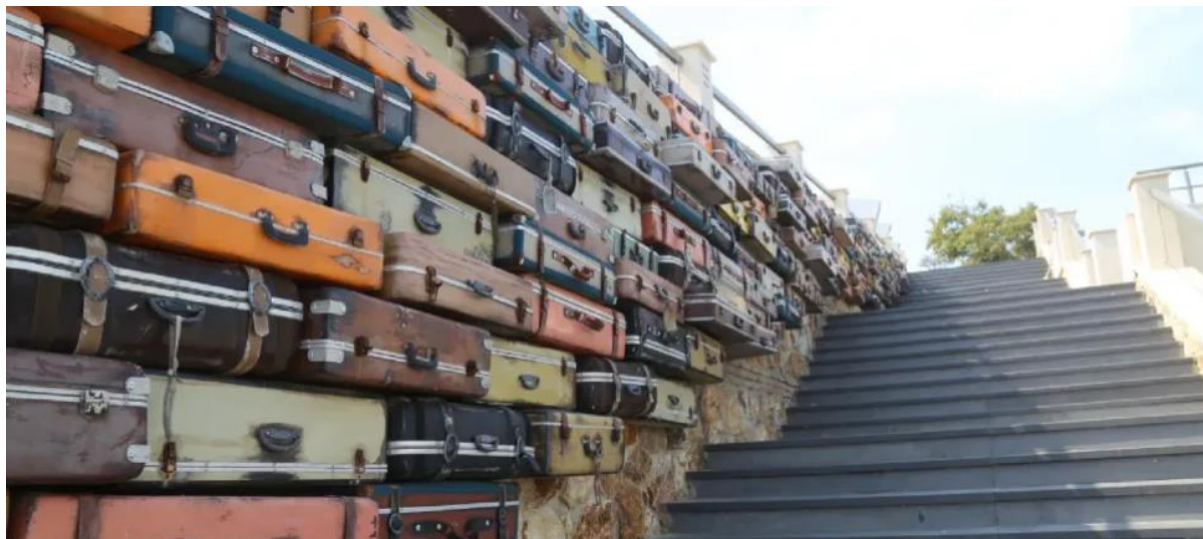


Figure 15: The Remaining Ones – photographed by the author 15.06.2025

Considering the museum contents on the island, along with other structures, installations, and open-air artworks, the concept of “kitsch” can be discussed in the context of the instrumentalization of everyday life and politics, its ease of commodification and consumption, and the linearity in conveying or evoking loaded messages. Within the modern/postmodern art dichotomy, the notion of kitsch entails a long and elaborate debate. Although there are various definitions of what constitutes kitsch, the term is generally used to describe vulgar, gaudy, banal, low-quality, and sentimental products that appeal to popular taste.¹⁷⁷ Kulka summarizes the fundamental characteristics of kitsch as follows: the depiction of high emotional intensity, recognizability in terms of object or theme, and the failure to enrich the subject’s associations with the depicted object or theme.¹⁷⁸ The island is populated with objects—within museums and artworks—that do not provoke a crisis of meaning for the visitor, are easy to absorb and digest, and are equipped with intensifying effects that appeal to all senses. The subject’s position in relation to the resulting product is on the passive side of a comfortable and domesticated flow of information.

Tanıl Bora summarizes the role of sculpture—and other artistic representations—in the conservative cultural and artistic sphere, as well as in memory construction, as “directly symbolizing a cause or an intention with a straightforwardness that leaves no room for interpretation.” He characterizes this as an excessive symbolism that leaves almost no space for art itself.¹⁷⁹

This process of simplification and thematization has also affected the island’s historical structures. The dungeons, corridors, and cisterns built during the Byzantine period in the 9th century were partially demolished and damaged during the construction phase of the project. Similarly, the château commissioned by the Ottoman-era British Ambassador Henry Bulwer in the 19th century was “restored,” and another structure he had built on the island during the same period was also “restored” and repurposed as the Admiral Sadık Altıncan Library. In line with the symbolic “reconquest” of the island, it can be argued that the Byzantine-era structures have been subsumed into or rendered invisible within the new construction. The so-called restorations of these buildings, much like other spaces on the island, appear to be more akin to demolitions followed by reconstructions, as evidenced by their hybrid old-new appearances. Only a very limited portion of Bulwer’s original château remains. Moreover, a wax figure

¹⁷⁷ İlkyaz, A. (2015). *Çağdas sanatın çıkmaz sokağı: Kitsch’in zaferi*. *Aydın Sanat*, 1(1), 1–10. p.3

¹⁷⁸ Kulka, T. (2014). *Kitch ve Sanat*, İstanbul: Altıkırkbes Yayınları.p.57

¹⁷⁹ Bora, T. (2020). *A.g.e.*

accompanied by sound effects has—perhaps inevitably—been applied to Henry Bulwer himself, the island’s former owner.



Figure 16-17: Old Version of the Castle, 22.04.2025, available at <https://www.levantineheritage.com/bulwers-castle.html>, Castle Under Construction available at <https://sehirplanlama.ibb.istanbul/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/YassiadaRaporuMayis2016.pdf>



Figure 18: Wax Statue of Henry Bulwer with sound effect thanks to the small speaker underneath available at <https://www.ahaber.com.tr/galeri/gundem/demokrasi-ve-ozgurlukler-adasi-dunyaya-acilacak-uluslararası-toplantılara-da-ev-sahipligi-yapacak> 22.03.2025

5.5. Convention Center, Mosque, Hotel and Other Commercial Enterprises

Following the transformation process of the island, which was presented as a site of commemoration, a significant portion of the area is now occupied by a convention center, a mosque, and commercial enterprises that were constructed independently of the island's historical context. As part of the ambition to make the island resemble “Davos,” a hotel with 125 rooms and a convention center with a capacity of approximately 600 people were built. In addition, three restaurant-café establishments were opened in different parts of the island. During the site visit, it was observed that two of the restaurants (960 Restaurant and Istanbul Restaurant) were closed, and only the İskele Café, which serves visitors coming solely for the museum tour, was open.

A mosque with a capacity of 1,200 people, named after Fatin Rüştü Zorlu—who is remembered for performing ablution and praying two rakats before walking to the gallows—has been constructed on the island as a structure that can be interpreted as a hallmark of AKP's construction politics. Considering that the island has no permanent residents and is only accessible via ferry or tour services on weekends, the extent to which such a large place of worship responds to the actual needs of the site has been critically questioned. The mosque figure, inscribed onto the space by the ruling power independently of the actual needs of the site, is perceived as a manifestation of the government's visibility and political influence—serving, in a sense, as a constitutional symbol of the “nation” and as the seal of the “architecture of the nation.”¹⁸⁰ According to a statement by the Islands District Mufti's Office, the mosque does not have a permanent imam; an imam is brought to the island only for Friday prayers, and there is no imam present on other days or for daily prayers.¹⁸¹ A mosque without an imam and without a congregation has, much like the simulated courtroom and the reconstructed Menderes house, transformed into a signifier that replaces the original, becoming a symbolic representation rather than a functional entity.

¹⁸⁰ Batuman, Bülent. *Milletin Mimarisi, İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2019*

¹⁸¹ Arı, İ. (2023, August 27). *Halk değil AKP'liler gidiyor. BirGün. <https://www.birgun.net/haber/halk-degil-akp-liler-gidiyor-463895>*



Figure 19: Birun Ada Hotel Road - photographed by the author 15.06.2025.

Following the completion of the island's regeneration project, the hotel—operated under the name Katre Hotel after its operating rights were transferred—was handed back to the relevant ministry due to its failure to generate the expected revenue. Subsequently, the operating rights of the hotel and its associated parcel were granted for a period of 20 years to a pro-government capital group. The hotel currently operates under the name *Birun Ada*. Whether this is a deliberate design choice or a result of the island's limited spatial capacity remains unclear; however, visual elements and installations related to the Democrat Party, the May 27 coup, and figures such as Adnan Menderes continue within the hotel premises. As seen in Figure 19, the doors of the hotel's outward-facing suite rooms open onto monuments featuring figures like Adnan Menderes and Celal Bayar or narratives from that historical period. Similarly, the suite rooms facing the sea overlook the *Democracy Lighthouse*.

The intertwining of memory spaces—such as museums, monuments, and exhibitions—with commercial venues, and the deliberate design that prevents visitors from avoiding either function, has transformed the island into a touristic theme park. Theme parks function as museums based on scientific, cultural, and historical themes; however, their content is animated around a specific theme. The animation process is equipped with visual and auditory presentations as well as interactive methods. Another characteristic of theme parks is the integration of narratives with fiction within entertainment systems, which are then presented

to visitors as a coherent concept.¹⁸² In other words, theme parks have become spaces grounded in consumer culture, where diverse cultural elements are displayed together, and artificial reality technologies are used to simulate real environments, thereby expanding the experiential distance for guests. Within this framework, the boundaries between historical events and fiction, commercial and touristic activities, and cultural and artistic assets have become increasingly blurred. As discussed in the first part of the study, the commercialization practice established between memory and regeneration also entails the commodification of memory's cultural representations in a synthetic, mass-culture-oriented, and functional manner. For this reason, the island's museum implementation and design projects were entrusted to a company with extensive global experience in theme park applications. In an interview with a magazine, Suphi Aydiner, the company's other partner, defined their main field of activity as the themed entertainment sector and described the company's mission as follows: "*Designing a theme park transports you from reality to a world of imagination. In this environment, we master the control of everything the visitor sees, hears, smells, and experiences.*"¹⁸³

The presence of contextually disconnected 'kitsch' elements, fictional narratives detached from historical authenticity, immersive visual and auditory effects targeting all senses, and the integration of these spaces with commercial areas collectively indicate the implementation of an intensive and comprehensive process of Disneyization in the island's transformation. The concept of Disneyization refers to a process in which inherited cultural symbols are simulated, reproduced, and offered for demand and consumption as a cultural phenomenon.¹⁸⁴ The term derives its name from the image-laden, semi-structured theme parks developed by the Walt Disney Company in various countries, and it refers to the social, cultural, and economic transformations generated through relations of mass consumption. (see also Bryman, 1999¹⁸⁵) The core components of this process include the transformation of cultural and historical content into consumable narratives (both commercially and symbolically), a hybrid integration of consumption across cultural and commercial domains, the staging of predetermined performances such as animation and simulation, and the orchestration and control of visitor movements.

¹⁸² Gök, A. B. ve Bingöl, B. (2017). Tarih ve Kültür Temalı Parklar. *İnönü University Journal of Arts and Design*, 7(15), 129-140. doi:10.16950/inustd.292033

¹⁸³ Aydiner, S. (2024, Mayıs 28). Bir tema parkı tasarlamak sizi gerçeklikten hayal dünyasına taşıyor. *Yapı Dergisi*. <https://yapidergisi.com/outdoor-factory-kurucu-ortagi-suphi-aydiner-bir-tema-parki-tasarlamak-sizi-gerceklikten-hayal-dunyasina-tasiyor/>

¹⁸⁴ Jameson, F. (2009). *Ütopya Denen Arzu*, (Çeviren: Ferit Burak Aydar), Metis Yayınları: İstanbul. p.291

¹⁸⁵ Bryman, A. (2004). *The Disneyization of Society*. London: Sage Publications

In its refunctionalized form following the transformation process, Democracy and Liberties Island constitutes key milestones in the (re)construction and marketing of memory:

1. The establishment of a new consensus at both discursive and practical levels,
2. The facilitation of narrative transmission to visitors through various intensifiers,
3. The design of a simulated universe that claims to substitute reality in alignment with its own narrative and constructed collective memory,
4. The use of musealization practices that avoid semantic gaps and leave no room for mediation or debate,
5. The implementation of commodification practices suited to mass consumption.

When the island space is considered in its entirety, a highly eclectic structure emerges. Monuments, statues, and performances presented in an epic and dramatic theme park style; historical narratives, counter-narratives, and restoration-oriented content serving commemorative functions; and efforts to create a destination for economic gain have all been implemented simultaneously and in an intertwined manner. There appears to be no concern with establishing or severing a connection between commercial activities, politico-ideological practices, and the historicity attributed to the island space. It can be concluded that policymakers, project developers, and design practitioners acted in an eclectic manner, driven by the motivation to maximize the use of the island area.

To summarize the resulting picture of all these implementations: what has emerged is a synthetic and partially fictional museum, representing a form of totalitarian kitsch. With the construction of a new foundational narrative, the legacy and partnership of Menderes and the Democrat Party have been relatively abandoned. As a result, commemorative visits and programs have remained scarce; the facilities built with commercial expectations failed to generate the anticipated returns and were subsequently transferred or shut down; other structures such as the mosque and the congress center have remained unused; and overall, visits to the island have been notably limited in terms of both scheduled programs and visitor numbers.

It appears that, for the AKP, the intended use or symbolic lifespan of the island has come to an end. Although the party leadership had organized commemorative programs on the island every year on May 27 since its opening, no such event was held in 2025. From another perspective, within the challenge of “commemoration versus commodification” one might

argue that 'memory disappears in the commemoration.' Nancy Maden describes this struggle as “...a struggle between commemoration and commodification, between the honorable impulse to remember and the mundane reality of making that laudable vision come true...”¹⁸⁶



¹⁸⁶ Maden, N. (2011). *Marketing and Sacred Space The Parque de la Memoria in Buenos Aires*. In K. Bilbija & L. A. Payne (Eds.), *Accounting for violence: Marketing memory in Latin America* (pp. 129–133). Duke University Press.

CONCLUSION - SUMMARY

This thesis analyzes the transformation process of Yassıada into the Democracy and Liberties Island under three main themes: urban regeneration strategies, memory/counter-memory construction and restoration initiatives, and practices of musealization and commercialization.

The first main section of this study examines the literature and case studies on capitalist urbanization processes and the urban regeneration strategies shaped within this context. Based on the premise that urban practices cannot be evaluated independently of capitalist modes of capital accumulation, the analysis focuses on the processes of deindustrialization in center/developed economies, the emergence of service- and knowledge-based economies, spatially grounded regimes of capital accumulation and transformation, and their reflections on urbanization practices. Within this framework, the study discusses the prioritization of economic efficiency and indicators in urbanization and urban intervention processes.

Within urban regeneration practices, focal points such as culture, tourism, and property have been comparatively analyzed as leading factors or reference points. Based on this analysis, the transformation of Yassıada into the Democracy and Liberties Island is approached through the concept of memory-led regeneration. The thesis discusses regeneration models shaped around focal points such as culture, industry, property, and tourism within the framework of '...-led regeneration' strategies, and critically examines how Yassıada aligns with or diverges from the notion of memory-led regeneration. This concept refers to a process in which spatial memory is employed both as a means and an end—that is, it serves simultaneously as the justification and the objective of regeneration. In the transformation of Yassıada, a narrative of historical continuity was constructed around the legacy of Adnan Menderes, in line with the political agenda of the AKP. This narrative was embedded into the space and materialized through physical structures, while memory was also commodified through the incorporation of commercial facilities such as a hotel, convention center, and restaurant.

The regeneration process on Yassıada can be explained through David Harvey's concept of 'creative destruction,' whereby existing memory structures were demolished and reconstructed. This illustrates how space has become not only a medium for remembrance but also a tool for capital accumulation. The project also stands out for its implementation through a public-private partnership model, involving the allocation of resources to specific capital groups

without a competitive tendering process. In this respect, the regeneration process represents not only a physical transformation but also an instance of economic and political engineering. The uninhabited nature of Yassıada distinguishes it from conventional urban regeneration cases, as it lacks dynamics such as social engineering or property-based rent. However, this condition has nonetheless resulted in the privatization of public space and the reduction of memory to a singular narrative, through practices such as the allocation of space to specific groups and the restriction of public access. In this context, the relationship constructed between memory, space, and capital reveals the multilayered nature of the transformation.

The first part of the study aims to offer an original contribution to the literature on urban regeneration by introducing 'memory' as a reference point—providing a new perspective. When memory is positioned as the focal point, leading factor, or reference in urban regeneration, it signifies a complex and multifaceted process involving its integration into political-ideological agendas and the commodification/commercialization of remembrance, collective memory, and ritual. The case of Yassıada demonstrates that memory is not merely preserved but is also strategically produced, embedded into space, and utilized for political and economic purposes. In this regard, the concept of 'memory-led regeneration' is articulated through the Yassıada case in both a theoretical and practical sense.

The second part of the thesis analyzes the AKP's policies and practices of constructing and planning collective memory, as well as how these have evolved over time. The memory strategies discussed here go beyond a simple practice of remembrance or commemoration; they constitute a multilayered ideological and political project that involves processes of forgetting, rewriting, and spatial representation.

The AKP's engagement with collective memory reflects a multilayered strategy that varies according to the political needs of the period, rather than a fixed and monolithic narrative. During its first decade in power, the party positioned itself as a victim of Kemalist modernization, particularly through its discursive association with the Democrat Party (DP) and the construction of an identity centered on victimhood.

The AKP's memory linkage with the Democrat Party encompasses not only political but also spatial and cultural continuity. There are striking parallels between Adnan Menderes's urban development initiatives in Istanbul during the 1950s and the AKP's large-scale urban regeneration and transportation projects. The 'development drive' of the Menderes era was motivated by the construction of roads, boulevards, and hotels, during which thousands of

buildings were demolished, and historical textures were damaged. A similar approach has been maintained under the AKP, particularly in mega projects in Istanbul and Ankara, where legal oversight and planning procedures have often been bypassed.

In the AKP's memory strategies, the discourse of the 'reconquest' of Istanbul plays a central role. This narrative is based on the notion that Istanbul has deviated from its essence due to modernization and secularization and thus must be restored to its original state. Projects such as the Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge, inspired by the conquest of the city by Mehmed the Conqueror, the reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque, and the proposed reconstruction of the Artillery Barracks in Gezi Park are attempts to inscribe this symbolic conquest onto space. A similar practice of 'imagined conquest' is also evident in the reconstruction of Yassıada. The traumatic traces in the memory of the island have been replaced by the AKP's narrative of a 'glorious past.' The constructed buildings, musealization efforts, and the renaming of the island constitute the physical projection of this symbolic conquest. In this sense, Yassıada has been transformed into a kind of memory laboratory, where the traces of the past are erased and replaced by the AKP's ideological construct. The analyses presented in the second part of the thesis demonstrate that the AKP's memory politics are not merely about engaging with the past, but rather about reconstructing the past spatially, symbolically, and narratively in order to produce contemporary power relations.

The AKP's strategies for constructing memory have been influential not only in the political sphere but also in economic and cultural domains. Particularly after 2010, the cultural field has been positioned as a carrier of the state's ideological discourse, leading to various cultural investments aligned with this vision. Among these investments, museums hold a distinctive place. Institutions such as the Panorama 1453 Museum, the July 15 Martyrs Museum, and the Democracy and Freedoms Island Museum are products of this ideological musealization practice.

The 2013 Gezi Protests and the 2016 July 15 Coup Attempt represent structural turning points in the AKP's memory strategy. Gezi marked the first major instance of mass social opposition against the AKP, while July 15 provided the foundation for a 'foundational victory narrative' constructed in response to this challenge. The declaration of 'Democracy and National Unity Day' following July 15 has been inscribed into collective memory as a ritualized carrier of this new narrative.

The third part of the thesis examines the musealization and monumentalization practices implemented during the transformation of Yassıada into the 'Island of Democracy and Liberties' not merely as architectural productions aimed at remembrance, but as instruments of an ideological memory construction. This section reveals how the AKP's constitutional memory strategies are materialized in space, how representational tools are employed, and how the past is selectively rewritten. The spatial encoding of memory is analyzed through Baudrillard's theory of simulacra and Bryman's conceptualization of 'Disneyization,' emphasizing the construction of a narrative characterized by emotional intensity yet detached from historical context, in which representation is instrumentalized through exaggerated forms.

The museums on the island function not only as spaces for archiving the past but also as stages for the emotional and ideological internalization of the constructed narrative. The representational strategies employed in the three main museum buildings are supported by theatrical storytelling techniques, wax sculptures, dramatic sound and lighting arrangements, and animations. The aim is not merely to inform visitors, but to enable them to 're-live/experience' the past.

This museum, reconstructed after the demolition of the original courtroom, is equipped with wax figures, animated documentary films, and dramatic effects. Visitors are seated in the courtroom gallery, and during each line of dialogue in the animation, the corresponding figure is illuminated, creating the impression of witnessing the trial process. The second museum, shaped by subjective emotions, presents a heroizing biographical narrative through representations such as Menderes's house in Aydın, the plane crash, and prison conditions. Experience rooms titled 'longing,' 'silence,' and 'fear of execution' aim to evoke emotional catharsis through intense visual and auditory stimuli. Although it is known that the windows of the room where Menderes stayed were originally open, the museum presents a dramatized reality through simulation by depicting a damp and gloomy atmosphere with boarded-up windows. As Baudrillard suggests, an 'operational twin' that replaces reality has been constructed here; reality is erased within representation. The third museum presents events ranging from the Late Ottoman Period to the July 15 coup attempt through wax figures and three-dimensional visuals in a contextually fragmented yet emotionally intense manner. Visual and auditory saturation is prioritized, while written explanations are kept minimal. This museum reduces historical events to an epic narrative by detaching them from their context. The narrative resembles the exhibition logic of modern theme parks, where the visitor experience is structured more around emotional stimulation than knowledge transmission.

In the island's museums, sculptures, symbolic objects, experience rooms, and simulations reflect a form of symbolism that, as defined by Tanıl Bora, 'directly conveys meaning and leaves no room for interpretation.' Historical structures on the island, such as Byzantine-era cisterns and the Henry Bulwer Castle, have either been completely demolished or reconstructed under the guise of 'restoration.' This process constitutes not restoration, but rather reproduction."

The mosque built on the island, with a capacity of 1,200 people and named after Fatin Rüştü Zorlu, remains largely unused and often lacks an imam. Structures such as the congress center and hotel are less related to historical memory and more indicative of the AKP's strategy of establishing power through construction. Hotel rooms facing the 'Democracy Beacon' and Menderes statues exemplify a commodification practice situated at the intersection of memory, space, and tourism. The island's design as a touristic theme park can be explained through the concept of Disneyization: memory is transformed into a commercialized entertainment space where emotional narratives and simulations are marketed.

In these projects carried out by companies affiliated with the AKP, the relationship established between the 'themed entertainment' industry and political memory signifies the repackaging of cultural representations for mass consumption. As stated by a partner of the project developer, these spaces aim to 'transport the visitor into a dream world by controlling what is seen, heard, and smelled.' In this sense, museums, monuments, and exhibitions are transformed into spaces where foundational memory is imposed and consumed in an entertaining form.

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B. TURKISH SUMMARY / TRKE ZET

Bu tez, İstanbul'un güney kıyısında yer alan Yassıada'nın "Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Adası"na dönüşüm sürecini, kentsel dönüşüm stratejileri, hafıza/karşı-hafıza inşası ve restorasyon girişimleri ile müzeleştirme ve ticarileştirme uygulamaları bağlamında incelemektedir. Tez, mekânın fiziksel dönüşümünün ötesinde, belleğin inşası, restorasyonu ve yeniden yazımı süreçlerini, Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi'nin (AKP) politik hafızası ve bu hafızanın zaman içindeki dönüşümü üzerinden analiz etmektedir. Bu bağlamda, Yassıada örneği hem mekânsal hem de politik-ekonomik olarak çok katmanlı bir dönüşümün mekânı olarak ele alınmaktadır.

Tezin ilk bölümünde, kapitalist kentleşme süreçleri ve bu süreçlerin mekân üretimi üzerindeki etkileri teorik bir çerçevede ele alınmıştır. David Harvey'in sermaye birikimi çevrimleri ve Henri Lefebvre'in mekânın üretimi kuramları üzerinden, kentsel dönüşümün yalnızca fiziksel bir yeniden yapılandırma değil, aynı zamanda sermaye birikimi, metalaştırma ve ideolojik yeniden üretim süreçlerinin bir aracı olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, kentsel dönüşüm stratejileri (kültür odaklı, turizm odaklı, emlak odaklı) ulusal ve uluslararası örneklerle karşılaştırmalı olarak incelenmiş; Glasgow, Bilbao, Liverpool, Johannesburg gibi örnekler üzerinden, kültür, miras, sanayi ve turizm odaklı dönüşüm stratejilerinin ortak yönleri ve farklılıkları ortaya konulmuştur.

Yassıada'nın dönüşümünün, bu stratejilerle benzerlikler taşısa da özgün bir örnek olarak uygulandığı öne sürülmüştür. Ada, yerleşim olmayan, özel mülkiyete konu olmayan, ulaşımı sınırlı bir mekân olması nedeniyle, klasik kentsel dönüşüm örneklerinden ayrılmaktadır. Bu durum, adanın dönüşümünü hem kavramsal hem de uygulama düzeyinde tartışmalı ve özgün kılmaktadır. Tez, bu dönüşüm sürecini "hafıza odaklı kentsel dönüşüm" kavramı çerçevesinde ele almakta; mekânın fiziksel olarak yeniden inşası ile belleğin ideolojik olarak yeniden inşası arasındaki karşılıklı ilişkiyi analiz etmektedir.

İkinci bölümde, hafıza kuramları ve mekânla ilişkisi ele alınmış; Pierre Nora'nın "lieux de mémoire" (hafıza mekânları) kavramı, Paul Connerton'un ritüel ve bedensel hafıza aktarımı üzerine çalışmaları ve Michel Foucault'nun karşı-hafıza kavramı üzerinden bir tartışma çerçevesi sunulmuştur. Bu çerçevede, AKP'nin hafıza politikaları, 2000'li yıllardan itibaren

geçirdiği dönüşümle birlikte değerlendirilmiş; Gezi Direnişi ve 15 Temmuz darbe girişimi gibi kırılma anlarının, AKP'nin karşı hafıza inşasından kurucu hafıza inşasına geçişinde nasıl bir rol oynadığı değerlendirilmiştir.

AKP'nin hafıza stratejileri, dönemsel ihtiyaçlara göre şekillenmiş; ilk yıllarda mağduriyet ve karşı-hafıza söylemiyle şekillenen bu strateji, zamanla kurucu bir hafıza inşasına evrilmiştir. Bu süreçte, Demokrat Parti (DP) ve Adnan Menderes figürü, AKP'nin tarihsel süreklilik iddiasının ana duraklarından biri olarak konumlandırılmış; “milletin adamları” söylemiyle, Menderes-Özal-Erdoğan hattında bir siyasi miras ve meşruiyet zemini oluşturulmuştur. Bu söylem, yalnızca politik düzeyde değil, mekânsal ve kültürel düzeyde de dizayn edilmiştir. Yassıada'nın “Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Adası”na dönüştürülmesi, bu hafıza inşasının mekânsal izdüşümü olarak değerlendirilmiştir.

Üçüncü bölümde, adada inşa edilen müzeler, anıtlar, cami, otel ve kongre merkezi gibi yapılar detaylı biçimde incelenmiştir. Bu yapılar, yalnızca fiziksel objeler olarak değil, aynı zamanda ideolojik anlatıların taşıyıcısı, ticari ve gündelik faaliyetlerin mekânı olarak ele alınmıştır. Özellikle Adnan Menderes Müzesi, 27 Mayıs Müzesi ve Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Müzesi, dramatik anlatılar, balmumu heykeller, ses ve ışık efektleriyle donatılmış; ziyaretçiye yalnızca enformasyon akışı değil, duygusal bir deneyim sunmayı amaçlayan birer “tema parkı”na dönüştürülmüştür. Bu bağlamda, Baudrillard'ın simülasyon kuramı ve Bryman'ın Disneyleştirme kavramları üzerinden, adanın bir hafıza mekânı olmaktan ziyade, bir gösteri ve tüketim alanına dönüştüğü ortaya konulmuştur.

Adadaki müzelerde kullanılan anlatı teknikleri, tarihsel olayları bağlamından kopararak dramatize etmekte; ziyaretçiye pasif bir izleyici olmaktan çıkarıp, anlatının bir parçası haline getirmektedir. Bu durum, hafızanın araçsallaştırılması ve ideolojik bir çerçevede yeniden üretilmesi anlamına gelmektedir. Özellikle Adnan Menderes'in çocukluk evi, hücresi ve idam sahnesi gibi temsiller, gerçeklikten kopuk, duygusal yoğunluğu yüksek simülasyonlar olarak uygulama alanı bulmuştur. Bu simülasyonlar, ziyaretçiye “gerçek” bir deneyim sunma iddiasıyla, belleği yeniden üretmekte ve yönlendirmektedir.

Tezde ayrıca, adadaki yapıların işlevselliği ve sürdürülebilirliği de sorgulanmıştır. Cami, otel ve kongre merkezi gibi yapılar, adanın fiziksel ve demografik yapısıyla uyumsuz olarak değerlendirilmiş; bu yapıların zamanla atıl hale geldiği, ziyaretçi sayısının beklentilerin çok altında kaldığı ve ticari işletmelerin beklenen ekonomik getiriyi sağlayamadığı ortaya

konmuştur. Bu durum, AKP'nin hafıza inşasında süreklilikten ziyade, dönemsel ve pragmatik bir yaklaşım benimsediğini göstermektedir.

Yassıada'nın dönüşüm süreci, aynı zamanda bir sermaye birikimi ve kaynak transferi süreci olarak da ele alınmıştır. Tezde, adadaki dönüşümün kamu-özel işbirliği modeliyle, ihalesiz biçimde belirli sermaye gruplarına devredildiği; bu süreçte kamu kaynaklarının özel sektöre aktarıldığı ve bu aktörlerin aynı zamanda kültürel üretim süreçlerinde de rol aldığı vurgulanmıştır. Bu bağlamda, "kültür müteahhitliği" kavramı üzerinden, kültürel üretimin politik iktidarla iç içe geçmiş yapısı analiz edilmiştir.

Sonuç olarak; projelendirme, inşa-imar, açılış ve anma-anıtlştırma süreçlerinde hem kentleşme pratikleri hem de hafızayı inşa, yeniden inşa süreçleri açısından dinamik, girift bir söylem ve uygulama dizini içeren Yassıada, bugünkü adıyla Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Adası'nın dönüşüm süreci politika yapıcılarının, proje geliştirici ve sermaye gruplarının ve diğer aktörlerin amaçları, girişimleri, uygulamaları ve ortaya çıkan sonuçları bağlamında uçtan uca kritik edilmiştir. Mekânın dönüşümü ve dönüşüm stratejileri bağlamında ise hafıza odaklı kentsel dönüşüm uygulaması çalışmanın merkezine konumlandırılmış ve özgün bir uygulamanın kavramsallaştırılması açısından sıklıkla başvurulmuştur. Hafıza odaklı kentsel dönüşüm kavramı, bu bağlamda hem teorik hem de pratik düzeyde yeniden tanımlanmakta; mekânın, belleğin ve iktidarın kesişiminde özgün bir örnek olarak Yassıada'nın dönüşümü, çok katmanlı bir analizle ortaya konmaktadır. Tez, bu yönüyle, hafıza çalışmaları, kentsel dönüşüm stratejileri ve politik ekonomi literatürüne özgün bir katkı sunmaktadır.

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