



WHAT DİYARBAKIR LACKS IN LOCAL SERVICES

URBAN PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

DİYARBAKIR - 2024



Avrupa Birliği
sivil düşün

"This publication has been prepared with the support of the European Union as part of the Sivil Düşün Program. Dicle Toplumsal Araştırmalar Merkezi (DITAM - Tigris Social Research Center) is fully responsible for the content hereof which does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the EU.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CHP	Republican People's Party
Dem Parti	Equality and Democracy Party
DİTAM	Tigris Social Research Center
DTSO	Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
GAP	Southeastern Anatolia Project
GNP	Gross National Product
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HA	Hectares
HADEP	People's Democracy Party
HEP	People's Labor Party
İSPARK	İstanbul Otopark İşletmeleri Tic. A.Ş. (Istanbul Parking Lot Operations Inc.)
CDP	Conservation Development Plan
KOSGEB	Small and Medium Enterprises Development Organization of Türkiye
SİZ	Small Industrial Zone
MHP	Nationalist Movement Party
MTA	Mineral Research and Exploration
METU	Middle Eastern Technical University
OIZ	Organized Industrial Zone
PEN	PEN International Association of Writers
PİSA	Programme for International Student Assessment
SSI	Social Security Institution
SSPE	Subacute Sclerosing Panencephalitis
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
TKDK	Agriculture and Rural Development Support Institution
TMMOB	Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects
TÜİK	Turkish Statistical Institute or TurkStat
TÜGVA	Turkish Youth Foundation
TÜRGEV	Turkish Youth and Education Service Foundation
TYS	Turkish Writers' Union
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

From DİTAM

DİTAM organized four focus group meetings in Diyarbakır on the eve of the local elections with the participation of around 80 civil society organizations under four main topics as part of our project entitled "Identifying Urban Problems and Recommending Solutions".

The topics of the focus group meetings are as follows:

City, Environment, and Cultural Heritage

Socio-Cultural Life and Policies

Economic Situation and Rural Development

Women, Youth, and Children

We shared the results of these meetings with the public at a meeting titled "What Diyarbakır Lacks in Local Services", which was held in Diyarbakır on Tuesday, February 27, 2024, with the participation of relevant Diyarbakır-based and regional civil society organizations.

The Mayor of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality Tunç Soyer and former Mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality Feridun Çelik attended our meeting.

The purpose of the meeting was to highlight local services and their shortcomings, which are less and less talked about in the current intense political atmosphere, and to compare Diyarbakır's municipal services with their Western counterparts.

This publication contains the information gathered at the "What Diyarbakır Lacks in Local Services" meeting held in Diyarbakır.

DİTAM Board of Directors

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INTRODUCTION

DİTAM conducted a project entitled “Identifying Urban Problems and Recommending Solutions” in Diyarbakır on January 6-7 with the participation of about 80 individuals and organizations. The project consisted of four focus groups for the following discussion points:

1. City, Environment, and Cultural Heritage
2. Socio-Cultural Life and Policies
3. Economic Situation and Rural Development
4. A City for Women, Youth, and Children

We made the project results publicly available and opened them for discussion at a meeting entitled “What Diyarbakır Lacks In Local Services”, which was held in Diyarbakır on February 27, 2024.

Why did we do this project? We all know that the state has been deliberately neglecting the regions with a high Kurdish population since the first days of the Republic. This neglect is in every aspect of life, which is evident in the official economy, health, and education statistics published by public offices.

The already unfavorable start of the Kurds had led to an increase of deficiencies and shortcomings in local and municipal services, especially after taking into account the last 40 years of conflicts and the appointment of trustees since 2015.

Nine years under the administration of officials who are unfamiliar with the city’s past, culture, streets, and people have further increased the problems and shortcomings in local services. The Diyarbakır City Council, a legitimate institution established as per the Municipality Law that united all constituents of the city, has been almost completely dormant since 2015.

As a result, Diyarbakır lacked adequate municipal services and the quality of life of the community remained low. The same is true for other cities in the region. This is not only a current problem, but also a problem for the future.

DİTAM’s project aims to:

- Identify Diyarbakır’s problems and develop solutions in cooperation with civil society organizations, academics and professional associations,
- Communicate these problems and recommended solutions to relevant local and national organizations and people,
- Push relevant individuals and organizations to develop solutions and monitor the process,
- Make Diyarbakır’s unfair treatment visible at the local and national level.

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The results of the focus group meetings show that Diyarbakır was completely abandoned. Therefore, we want to highlight the local services and their shortcomings, which are less and less talked about in the current intense political atmosphere in Diyarbakır. We also want to compare our local municipal services with their Western counterparts. We believe that former mayors would be the ideal candidates to better understand and express these issues. Therefore, we invited the Mayor of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, Tunç Soyer, and the former Mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality, Feridun Çelik, to our meeting. They shared their valuable input in answering the question “What Diyarbakır Lacks in Local Services”. Thank you for their participation.

Of course, we can't discuss the Diyarbakır municipality separately from the Kurdish question. The last two mayors of the city, Gülten Kışanak and Selçuk Mızraklı, are in prison, while Osman Baydemir, also a former mayor, is abroad due to legal restrictions.

Despite all these negative events, Diyarbakır has a very strong civil society. Civil society has become more political in parallel with the recent intense political atmosphere in the region. Our goal is to make civil society's efforts, projects, and the data they collect more visible and to communicate them to the central and local political organizations. We are working to make the efforts of civil society a topic of discussion for politicians. After all, this is the reason why DİTAM was founded in the first place. Of course, we are aware that our project doesn't cover all the current issues. However, we also believe this project will guide our future efforts in this field.

We would like to thank the people, organizations and the participants of this meeting that have contributed to the preparation of this report.

DİTAM Board of Directors

CITY, ENVIRONMENT, AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Moderator: Nevin Soyukaya

1. PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

1.1. Damage to Suriçi's Historical, Cultural, and Social Fabric

Suriçi was the most damaged area of the city in terms of its historical, cultural, and social fabric. The conflicts since 2015 and the resulting security-oriented approach to the city, as well as the appointment of trustees, have deepened the extent of the damage. 82% of Suriçi was expropriated by a cabinet decision. As a result, Suriçi went through an extensive process of destruction and reconstruction, which led to the damage and disintegration of 50% of Suriçi. Suriçi was no longer a settlement but a commercial area. The security-oriented reconstruction of Suriçi was far from the city's architecture and traditional urban fabric. After the 2015–2016 period, the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning demolished the Suriçi area. Then, a new system was implemented to change the block/plot system and street boundaries. Then the CDP (Conservation Development Plan) was revised accordingly. Wide streets were built, contrary to the traditional street structure of Sur, for security purposes. The historical and cultural fabric of the city was damaged by the new plans and practices. The damage to the physical structure of the city, the expropriation decisions, and the depopulation of the area as a result of forced migration caused great damage to the collective memory of the city. UNESCO's assessment of the damage and destruction in Suriçi underlines the state's destructive practices.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

300 buildings have been registered as heritage sites in Suriçi since 1990. The number of registered buildings in Suriçi reached 595 (448 civil structures and 147 monuments) as part of CDP 2012. As of today, the number of registered buildings has decreased as a result of the destruction.

- Based on the projects that enabled Diyarbakır Fortress and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape to be included in UNESCO's World Heritage List, the blocks, plots, layouts, street boundaries, and masses in the 1954 cadastral

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map should be used to restore Suriçi's urban fabric.

- The World Heritage Site must be protected with a comprehensive approach.
- The 1/5000 Master Development Plan must be revised, a new CDP should be prepared for Suriçi that will include Hevsel Gardens.
- The World Heritage Site Management Plan needs to be revised and new conservation strategies for the site need to be determined, taking into account the current damage and deformation.
- All plans for the site must be implemented through a participatory and transparent process.
- Improvements must be made based on the UNESCO 2023 Reactive Monitoring Mission Report and relevant UNESCO decisions.

1.2. Urban Transportation Infrastructure Problems

The city's transportation infrastructure has serious problems. The centralized macro-level transportation investment and local-level transportation and infrastructure projects are far from the desired level. The new transportation policy, which embraces popular transportation trends such as high-speed trains, the opening of bypass roads despite being at the planning stage, the lack of sufficient urban transportation planning, the inadequacy of public transportation, and the failure to repair and rebuild roads without considering existing problems all lead to increased traffic and accident rates. The integration of tram lines and light rail systems into the urban transport infrastructure is still in the planning stage. The connection to the highway and the connection of the logistic zone to the port by rail must be done by the central government. However, they don't seem to have this matter on their agenda. One of the most important issues of the city is transportation. However, the problem should not be solved only at the city level. There are fundamental problems with the city's connection to other cities, intercity and international transportation networks.

Transportation issues were discussed under 2 main categories at the focus group meeting. The first is the city's connection to international roads and axes connecting to other cities. The second is the connection to other districts of the city and the overall inner-city transportation. As to the first point of discussion, the unfinished bypass roads, problems related to unforeseen delays in the construction process, and incomplete connections to transportation networks lead to the inner city roads being used for transit, thus increasing the traffic within the city. The delays in the highway and high-speed train connections to Diyarbakır also increase the problems of passenger and logistics transportation.

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Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

Diyarbakır is the only city without a bypass road among the 30 metropolises of Turkey. We need to carry out more effective projects and use lobbying and political pressure methods to solve the problem. The fact that the Mardin-Pirinçlik bypass road took 10 years to complete is an indication of the lack of a strong response to the city's needs at the central level. We need to have a strong pressure and lobbying mechanism at the local level. Bypass roads must be planned and built according to the current needs, the inner-city traffic plans must be revised, and the rail system must be used to relieve traffic and solve public transport issues.

As for the highway connections and the connection of the logistics zone to the port by rail, we must urge the government to include this in the agenda and the country's short- and medium-term plans.

Providing land for the Diyarbakır Logistics Village project would carry the city's logistics load to the outskirts. The completion of infrastructure and rough construction work is a big step forward. However, the highway and railway connections need to be completed for the project to become operational. The construction of the connections to the Şanlıurfa and Elazığ bypass roads will make a great contribution to the road integration of Diyarbakır. The Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure and the municipalities must work together to develop solutions to these problems. The projects must be initiated as soon as possible with a participatory process.

1.3. Centralized Decision-Making in Urban Planning

Decisions regarding private and public land not subject to urban transformation projects are made at the central level. There have been several targeted, profit-oriented revisions through the adoption of municipal decisions for urban planning. The main purpose of these targeted revisions is to use taxes and duties resulting from the revaluation as an instrument for sharing the profit between the decision-makers and those who benefit from such revaluation.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

We believe that civil society organizations can raise awareness, take legal action, and discuss unearned income generation practices on social media and other media platforms to prevent the Ministry of Environment, Urban Planning and Climate Change and the Trustee Administration from illegally canceling parks and recreational areas, educational and medical spaces, raising the value of these lands and selling them, or otherwise creating a wheel of bribery and making a profit with it. However, local governments must first take the necessary actions throughout the planning, implementation, and decision-making processes.

1.4. Urban Infrastructure Issues

The share of educational, medical, and cultural spaces, parks, and recreational areas that are essential parts of the urban infrastructure gradually decreased. Moreover, including more population to the existing development plans also indirectly contributes to the loss of public spaces and urban infrastructure. We have also witnessed several urban transformation projects in Suriçi, as well as in Fiskaya, Bağlar, and Kaynaratepe neighborhoods. There are many practices that do not focus on the people, rather aim to change the demographics and gain profit.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

Urban transformation and expropriation decisions must be revoked and urban transformation practices must be stopped to protect the historical and cultural fabric and collective memory of Suriçi. We should raise awareness and public pressure in this regard.

As for the mandatory urban transformation projects, the Ministry of Environment, Urban Planning, and Climate Change must implement the appropriate people-oriented practices that respect the right to property and housing. We must develop the methods and tools to participate in the preparation of urban transformation plans, whether they are adopted at the central or local level.

As we know from the case of the Sur-Silvan road, we must prevent large-scale attempts to grant unearned benefits to private landowners, expose the manipulated development plans and reports, expose the strategic reduction of the share of public spaces and green areas in the city by inflating the figures by 50% or even 100% in the population projections, study the current and projected population and find methods to fairly distribute the potential benefits of the projects among the entire population living in the affected areas, share the data obtained from these studies with the public and raise awareness.

1.5. Settlement and Housing Planning Problem

Kayapınar is the top region where the number of floors and the illustrative value in settlement and housing plans are increased the most. We also see several operations targeting Peyas and Fiskaya. There are also significant attempts to gain profit in the Bismil, Çınar, Eğil, and Silvan districts.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

We should maintain the focus on profit-oriented plans and revisions, whether they are in Diyarbakır city center or other districts. Being aware of the actions that aim to make profit is not enough. We should also raise awareness and discuss the concept of "ideological planning".

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Efforts to combat unearned benefits only target interest groups, which can lead to a lack of understanding of the underlying political motives or rationale behind security-oriented practices or those that target the social and historical fabric of the city. Therefore, we must review our objections in a strategic and multidimensional way and share the results with the public.

1.6. Generation of Unearned Benefits

There is an organized network within the city that determines the rise in value through an organic connection with the local and the central governments. This network of companies that constitutes the basis of the profit-making scheme manipulate municipalities and control the profits, especially on the Urfa and Elazığ boulevards.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

These structures unite around sharing profit. We must fight against them not only with the civil society organizations of urban planners and architects but also with the participation of the broader society. The city dynamics should adopt and support the attempts of the Chamber of Urban Planners. We should create legal funds for court cases. We should create structures such as the “City Council” that will focus specifically on unearned income and political development issues, and we should provide them with executive and financial support.

1.7. Illegal Housing and Occupation Attempts

The city has a poverty-driven illegal housing and occupation problem. There are also many profit-oriented organized occupation attempts, especially attempts to transform public spaces into private property, as seen from the Göletli Park case, violation of determined setback distances, road occupation attempts across the city. Cases of “aggravated occupation” have also increased, as seen in the case of Genesis Hospital. The attempts around the Tigris Valley, Hevsel Gardens, and *On Gözlü* Bridge (Dicle Bridge) can be given as examples of occupation, as stated by UNESCO in its 45th session decisions adopted in 2023.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

The security-oriented approach of the central government and the trustee administration to the city and the empty spaces created by it are used to justify the occupation and illegal settlements. This is seen as a natural and inherent behavior and right of the people. We should build a city-wide reflex against occupation and illegal housing, regardless of the identity, political views, and social background of the occupiers.

The occupation should not be justified by creating a narrative based on an “us” and “them” mentality.

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Municipalities must take urgent action against the occupation around the Tigris Valley, Hevsel Gardens, and *On Gözlü* Bridge. The evacuated areas must be redesigned according to the natural landscape.

The Chamber of Agricultural Engineers should bring the attempts to open the door to settlement in Hevsel by opening up recreational areas for construction to the Soil Protection Board's attention and ask the board for an annotation. TM-MOB should also file a lawsuit to prevent similar attempts and set a precedent for future cases. We need to continue these practices and get public support.

1.8. Class Hierarchy in Settlement Formation

Despite the large settlement areas in Diyarbakır, there are either vertical structures such as apartment complexes, or horizontal structures such as luxury villas for the upper and middle-income groups. These forms of settlement are used to create a class hierarchy in the city.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

The organized and established groups in Diyarbakır maintain the existing housing approach. We should develop ecological alternatives to the established contracting-based approach.

We have to prioritize the development of alternative plans instead of the big projects that seek high profits and aim to determine the market and shape the demand.

We need to keep in mind that demand isn't solely based on market conditions and offer a counter-argument to allow low-income families to own housing.

1.9. Rampant Increase in Water Consumption

Another problem with the large housing complexes built on large plots of land is the rampant increase in water consumption. In Diyarbakır, the problems caused by the careless use of water have become more and more obvious. Housing complexes are getting permission to open wells to irrigate the green areas included in the development plan, which has a negative impact on the underground water.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

The contractors' cost-driven approach to water management and the lack of environmental alternatives in the plan exacerbates the water use problem.

First, a systematic water use standard must be developed.

To prevent potholes caused by unregulated water use and drilling, just like the case of Konya Plains, there must be mandatory annotations in the development plan that ensure the recycling and reuse of gray water.

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1.10. Unavailability of Skilled Labor Due to the Housing Development Approach

Another problem with large housing complexes built on large plots of land is the unavailability of skilled labor. The design, manufacturing, estimation, fieldwork, and architectural applications for large housing projects are managed by a few big architectural firms. This prevents the engineers and architects from being employed by other offices than a select few, which in turn pushes the skilled labor into unemployment.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

The employment of skilled labor should be considered as an integral part of the housing process. More architects, engineers, and technicians would be employed if there were more housing projects on small plots of land for middle and lower-income groups.

1.11. Urban Problems Caused By Insufficient Urban Infrastructure

Inadequate infrastructure (clean and wastewater, water treatment systems, waste collection, and separation, stormwater drainage systems, etc.) is a problem. Costly and profit-driven systems are built for the city's water use. There are also significant flaws in the city's water treatment process. Infections and health problems increase due to the lack of adequate infrastructure. There hasn't been any substantial investment in the water treatment facilities built in 2002-2003 or any efforts to increase capacity. Collectors are not being refurbished, so the facilities can't achieve the desired level of reserve water filtration. In addition, excessive rainfall is causing more flooding.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

Municipalities must revise all infrastructure plans based on the city's current and future needs.

Clean water and wastewater systems need to be renewed based on current needs.

The contractors' cost-driven approach to water management and the lack of ecological alternatives in the plan exacerbates the problems. A water use standard must be developed first.

There must be mandatory annotations in the development plan to ensure the recycling and reuse of gray water for irrigation purposes.

In addition, individual solutions can be developed for wastewater reuse (such as using bath water to flush toilets).

1.12. Utilizing Rainwater and Stormwater

The Trustee Administration has no ongoing projects related to stormwater use, drainage, and signaling. There are problems with the biological treatment systems according to the analysis of recently taken samples. Wastewater is discharged into the Tigris River.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

Stormwater drainage, sewage, signaling, and biological treatment issues can be solved and planned as part of municipal services. We need to focus on methods to collect and use rainwater without treating it or adding it to the sewage system. To this end, municipalities should ensure the use of rainwater and stormwater in new settlements and housing projects. In particular, professional organizations should provide support by offering testing, field analysis, and reporting services.

Civil society organizations must be active in maintaining these services by providing guidance, whether the appointed trustee is in office or not.

The necessary infrastructure systems must be installed to prevent the discharge of waste into the Tigris River. There must be adequate mechanisms to enforce sanctions without discrimination.

All citizens of the city must be open to preventive sanctions regarding the pollution of the Tigris River. We can create a "river platform" for this purpose.

1.13. Disturbance of Urban Green Spaces

Since the trustee administration revoked the decisions on the protection of green areas and allowed their use for other purposes, the green areas of the city were reduced dramatically. Previous administrations set 10 square meters of green/public space per person as a criterion and they managed to exceed this target, reaching 11 to 12 square meters. However, since then, the green area status of Hevsel, Talaytepe, and Mastfiroş Tepe has been changed and they were opened up for construction, resulting in less than 4 square meters of green area per person.

Talaytepe, an area of 300 hectares, is completely handed over to TOKİ. It was removed from the green area category, sold, and turned into a construction site. Similar attempts are being made for the 350-hectare Mastfiroş Tepe.

In addition, the central authorities are converting green areas into construction sites for mosques and reserving them for TÜGVA, TÜRGEV, and other similar organizations. There are also private and individual attempts to occupy green areas and parks.

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Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

Diyarbakir and the Tigris Valley are essential parts of the city's ecosystem. Since the Tigris Valley and Hevsel Gardens are both registered as World Heritage Sites, they must be considered as a whole. To this end, the "Site Management Plan" needs to be revised to include strategic conservation measures and developed according to the overall structure, ecosystem, architecture, and landscape of the city.

Centralized decisions and targeted revisions of development plans to change the status of green spaces must be eliminated.

"Urban aesthetics" shouldn't just be a popular concept, but should be at the heart of the process.

Landscape should not be just about planting. We should approach this issue in a systematic and multidimensional way. Municipalities and relevant professional organizations should work together to address the problems of water consumption caused by planting trees on traffic islands, for example.

Noise and air pollution, carbon dioxide emissions, and other technical factors should be taken into consideration in landscaping works

It is clear that not only the trustee administration but also the previous municipal administrations have failed to create landscaping jobs. This should be resolved and landscaping should no longer be done randomly.

There is a misconception that landscaping projects are not necessary except for very large construction projects. Landscaping projects must become mandatory for all construction processes, especially for new settlements, regardless of the size of the project. We should opt for holistic solutions rather than local, temporary ones.

We also believe that taking legal action against ongoing changes would contribute to the solution. To give an example, the Diyarbakir Chamber of Urban Planners won 2 lawsuits they filed against the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning and managed to suspend the execution of the decision. Supporting these initiatives would contribute to the protection of green spaces.

1.14. Traffic and Parking Problems

Traffic and parking issues have been addressed separately. No one takes into account the potential traffic load of shopping malls, hospitals, banks, or other commercial spaces during the construction process.

Another problem is the increased need for parking. Moreover, there hasn't been an adequate technical selection process to determine the ideal areas for parking. The green public buses were removed and the owners of the bus lines were

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given 2 minibus operating permits instead, which contributed to the increase in traffic. This decision alone brought in double the number of public buses to the traffic.

There is some criticism of the lack of a pedestrian-oriented system in transportation. There are also issues with accessibility. Also, not enough is being done to encourage walking.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

Similar to the case of İSPARK (Istanbul), where the Metropolitan Municipality controls parking through a commercial enterprise, generates income for the municipality, and prevents criminals from taking control of certain areas due to the lack of adequate parking spaces and parking standards, Diyarbakır had an organization for parking management in the city, which was abolished by a court order. Therefore, an organization similar to İSPARK should be established.

Certain places should be prioritized for use. There should be fines or penalties against irregular parking. The main public roads and squares must be protected and prevented from being occupied.

Considering the ever-increasing population, the current transportation system, and the rate of car ownership in Diyarbakır, we can't expect traffic to be minimized easily. Traffic must be managed with more people-oriented practices. We must develop a more people-oriented and livable place by implementing methods that limit traffic at certain hours of the day by promoting public transportation.

The inner-city transportation network must be planned and revised to be more accessible to those with special needs.

1.15. Lack of a Pedestrian-Oriented Transportation System

There is some criticism about the lack of pedestrian-oriented systems in transportation. There are mostly car-centric solutions to reduce traffic. Grade-separated intersections make it difficult for pedestrians to cross major roads. There are problems with services accessible to disabled people. Not enough is done to encourage walking.

The height of steps on overpasses is not ergonomic, which discourages the use of overpasses in general. The rights of disabled citizens aren't taken into account. There aren't accessible options for the disabled, such as overpasses with lifts.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

- The city must have a people-oriented transportation plan, not a car-oriented one.

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- There should be no more grade-separated intersections that divide the city in half and make it difficult for pedestrians to cross streets.
- Ergonomic adjustments should be made, such as adjusting the height of steps to encourage the use of overpasses.
- Overpasses with lifts must be a standard for construction projects.
- A comprehensive approach that encourages pedestrians to walk must be developed.
- Pedestrian crossings must have accessible and facilitating features such as sound alarms or voice prompts.

1.16. Abandoned Buildings

Another problem is the fact that there are several abandoned buildings in the city, which are usually used as a systematic pretext for evacuation, expropriation, and urban transformation projects, especially in the Ali Paşa and Suriçi areas.

Abandoned buildings become meeting places for drug users, which leads to security problems in the neighborhood. The security concerns and complaints of the residents trigger the process of further destruction and demolition.

To speed up the structural transformation of Ali Paşa, Lale Bey, Ziya Gökalp, and Melik Ahmet neighborhoods, the trustee administration ordered water and electricity cuts. The infrastructure, especially the sewage system, was delayed. This, in turn, led to a significant decrease in the population. Our fears came true when the Sur Municipality, under trustee administration, issued a tender for the “demolition of the 13 abandoned buildings in the district” on 16.02.2024.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

- De facto urban transformation processes through intervention in abandoned buildings should be rejected. There should be a consensus on how necessary they are. Transformation processes should be planned with the space and people in mind.
- There should be an ecological transformation in Suriçi, as opposed to the profit-oriented and commercialized changes of physical spaces, which aim to rob the city of its identity and destroy the urban memory.
- The traditional socio-cultural fabric must be preserved.
- The central government and the municipalities must quit urban transformation policies that rely on abandoned buildings. Instead, they must develop participatory projects to physically, socially, and culturally improve the area.

1.17. Damages to Tigris River and Tigris Valley

Another issue raised in the focus group meeting is the damage to the Tigris River and the Tigris Valley. In addition, the gardening culture in Suriçi has disappeared because there are no more people left to work in Hevsel due to migration from the city. Therefore, industrial agricultural practices are adopted instead. As a result, the city began to lean towards growing corn, cotton, or other industrially viable products, which created a monocultural production.

The main damage caused by monoculture in Hevsel Gardens is the endangerment of endemic species, the increased use of chemicals and water, the extinction of plant diversity, and the transfer of damage through monoculture. One of the biggest threats posed by monoculture is the potential extinction of freshwater species in the region, which represents 25% of the total freshwater species in Turkey.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

Problems related to the Tigris River should be prioritized by the city and its citizens. To work on a solution for the Tigris River, we should first work on determining Tigris' status as a river, beginning from where it originates. Once Tigris is legally recognized as a river, we will be able to work on issues such as sand pits, occupation of the river banks, the 100-meter protection strip, etc.

We need to develop a systematic solution for issues such as water extraction from the river, use of river sand, waste discharge, and pollution. In addition, securing the legal status of the Tigris River is a prerequisite for the protection of its 635 species, including birds, fish, reptiles, and insects.

To minimize the damage to the river, we must prevent the construction of cafes and restaurants on the banks of the river, including the On Gözlü Bridge.

1.18. Issues in Disaster Planning

Recently, it has become clear that the city doesn't have an effective disaster plan for earthquakes. The fact that Diyarbakır, a city 400 km away from the epicenter of the recent earthquakes, experienced significant destruction indicates that there are problems in regulations and the application process.

6 buildings collapsed and 411 people lost their lives in the center of Diyarbakır during the earthquakes on February 6, 2023. None of the collapsed buildings had an occupancy permit. 2 of the collapsed buildings had illegally added floors.

According to the TMMOB Diyarbakır Branch of the Chamber of Civil Engineers, the severely damaged buildings in the city center are currently being demolished. It is estimated that there are 22,670 residential units in the severely damaged buildings that need to be demolished urgently. On the other hand, there are

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5,156 residential units in Diyarbakır that have been tendered by TOKİ, and yet no residential buildings have been completed or delivered.

The demolitions are not carried out according to the demolition regulations of the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning. Buildings are demolished from the ground up, even though they should be demolished from the top down. Buildings aren't sprayed during the demolition process, which creates large clouds of dust and exposes citizens to polluted air. There has been no asbestos testing in the demolished buildings. Therefore, the amount of asbestos in the area is unknown and the citizens face the risk of getting lung cancer in the future.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

After the earthquakes, the municipality created a new coordination unit called the Department of Disaster Management. The coordination and solidarity efforts of civil society proved to be crucial during the disaster. Forming a search and rescue team when necessary should be recognized as a requirement. It shouldn't be the responsibility of the municipality alone. Not only local governments but also the governor's office, central government, civil society, and the community should be involved in the coordination efforts. Disaster management plans must be comprehensive and inclusive.

- Disaster preparedness is a long-term effort that requires resources and time. Therefore, we must have legal regulations that can't be easily bent or relaxed by central or local administrations. We must take necessary measures to ensure the right and appropriate use of resources and impose legal sanctions for any violations.
- There should be a high-risk building inventory for the city. All buildings in the city should be registered in the inventory based on their risk level, and determining the seismic safety level of buildings must be mandatory.
- Relevant professional organizations and experts from universities must be consulted for strengthening, urban transformation, in-situ transformation, and social housing projects. These projects must be for the public good and not for profit. Social, economic and spatial development must be considered as a whole.
- Having a profit-oriented development plan, the lack of regulations and sanctions in the settlement lead to illegal housing and thus make zoning amnesties inevitable. Investment groups turn a blind eye to the construction projects of powerful people while trying to legalize private projects, which sets a really bad example for the public. There should be no more zoning amnesties.

A CITY FOR WOMEN, YOUTH, AND CHILDREN

Moderators: Meral Özdemir and Dilan Kaya Taşdelen

2. PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

2.1. Shut Down Solidarity Networks in Support of Social Life

The majority of the participants expressed that one of the main problems is the closure of solidarity networks that supported social life, especially before the trustee administration. The social life of the city has been significantly disrupted since child support centers, educational support centers, women's shelters, women's organizations, and children's councils working for children and youth were shut down.

The right of children and youth to participate in the city life, right to education, and freedom of expression have been significantly restricted.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

The participation rights of women, youth and children must be restored by creating new representative organizations similar to those that were active until 2015. It is crucial to identify the problems of the residents of Sur, Yenışehir, Kayapınar and Bağlar districts firsthand and develop solutions accordingly. After establishing the administrative mechanisms, we need to create the framework for how the city should be governed with women, youth and children.

It is very promising and important to see that local solidarity networks are taking new initiatives called "Zımsım Daycare Centers" despite all attempts to ban it or withdraw support.

The participants stated that the initiative for children's playrooms before 2012 gave parents an option and raised their awareness:

The community had playrooms before 2012. Parents and their children visited these playrooms, where families and women could share their problems and concerns.

Then *Bahçeye Zarokan* daycare center was opened, followed by *Zarokistans*. There were safe places where working parents could leave their children. Children had these spaces where they could play with their peers under the supervision of professionals, and communicate in their mother tongue.

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While women could do their laundry for free at the women's centers, their children could spend time in the center's playground. This made women feel safer and more comfortable, and they were able to find someone to help them find solutions to their problems.

After the trustee administration, these centers and initiatives were seen as a problem. Communication between women and people in general was damaged. People became alienated from each other and lost their links to communicate their problems.

This shows us how important it is to develop ways to create solidarity organizations, social life centers and communication channels regardless of whether there is an appointed trustee in office or not.

The children's rights commissioner of Diyarbakir Bar Association shared an important perspective on solidarity mechanisms in the social life.

The Diyarbakir Bar Association's Network for Children's Projects, which was established in cooperation with other civil society organizations in the city, is an important civil initiative with an important function. The main purpose of the initiative is to determine what kind of child-friendly city we should strive for. In 2018, there were some efforts to evaluate municipal strategic plans and activity reports to identify the actions taken for children. However, since the municipalities didn't share their work and activity reports, there were not enough data to work with. The trustee administration doesn't share the data that used to be available on the municipality's website.

While the "centralized" local administration refuses to share the data that should be publicly available, the Bar Association has published a policy document for children. This is an important initiative that can provide a basis for a solution.

Living spaces should be designed with children's physical and cognitive development in mind. There should be places where children and young people can have a quality and healthy social life.

2.2. Widespread Substance Abuse and Addiction

Substance abuse and addiction has become widespread among young people and even early adolescents and it is a huge problem that could negatively impact both our present and future.

Drug use, which can be seen as early as elementary school age, and financial problems create a huge fragmentation in society.

A participant working with children and youth expressed that the city, especially Suriçi, has received a large wave of immigration since the 1990s, and the popula-

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tion that left Suriçi after the armed conflicts isn't homogeneous.

The majority of the people who immigrated to Diyarbakır from neighboring cities such as Bingöl, Mardin, Şırnak, and Hakkari, where the conflict was more intense, are unemployed, unskilled, uneducated, and unable to add value to the city in terms of production, art, and culture. Although there has been an influx of immigrants to Diyarbakır from neighboring cities, many people also left the city and immigrated to larger cities or other countries. This changed the homogeneous structure of the city and created a more mixed demographic, turning the city into almost an intersection for immigrants. As a result of the conflicts, immigration, forced displacement, and other factors, drug use has become more widespread among the population, which consists mainly of unemployed, impoverished, and unskilled young people between the ages of 15 and 24.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

We need an overarching framework to develop a solution to drug use. One expert participant emphasized the importance of having a preventive approach rather than reintegration/rehabilitation of drug users and keeping new and potential users away from drugs. To do this, families need to be encouraged to be more aware and responsive.

It is recommended to avoid smoking in the home or in the presence of children, as it is one of the first encouraging factors for drug use. Another solution is to mobilize against drugs, create an urban consciousness against drugs, develop and implement policies based on expert opinions.

The Hevra institution, which is an organization that carries out field work on addiction and drug abuse, should become active again after its dormancy during the trustee administration.

In addition:

The Municipality must take preventive measures.

The sale of single cigarettes in shops near schools must be prohibited.

Penalties for drug offenses must be deterrent.

Addicts must be prevented from repeatedly offending and being in and out of jail.

The majority of addicts in prison start using drugs again after their release. The greatest risk associated with their release is the need to finance their drug use. These people start selling drugs in front of schools to finance their drug use.

The governor's office, the municipality, civil society organizations, and the citizens must work together to break this cycle.

Diyarbakır ranks 12th-13th in Turkey in terms of drug use. This shows the extent of the risk that children and young people are exposed to.

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Participants stated that there has been a significant increase in drug use among children/youth from Cizre and Silopi who are currently living in Suriçi after the armed conflicts in the area.

Drug use is more common among children who have lost their homes, and neighborhoods.

In addition, the participants pointed out that the military members in the area abused children, which is related to the drug use in the area, but there aren't enough official records on this matter.

2.3. Drugs and Political Shaping

How big is the drug problem in Diyarbakır? How do our data on drug use compare with the total number of drug addicts in Turkey? Is it a political and systematic decision to make drugs more accessible and widespread? Can we identify drug users? What's the social profile of the users?

The participants shared their opinions, solutions and suggestions in the focus group meeting based on these questions. The social structures in Diyarbakır that were aimed at the welfare of women, youth and children before the trustee administration became inactive, which accelerated the deterioration of the youth.

There were several organizations and initiatives that were actively supported by the local administrations, such as the Aram Tigran and Cigerxwin City Conservatories, educational support centers, sports events (i.e. the sports team called "Amed Spor"), the *Sarmaşık* Foundation, which identifies the disadvantaged groups in the city and organizes food banks, *Zarokistans*, which work for the development of children, neighborhood day-care centers, playgrounds, women's organizations and children's councils. However, they were either banned or lost the local government support. As a result, in a city where half of the population is made up of 859 thousand young people under the age of 24 according to TÜİK, the youth have been abandoned and denied the support they need. As it was also said in the meeting, certain politically-motivated actions such as dressing 12-13 year old children in religious attire create more grievances.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

We must first determine the full extent and scope of the drug problem and then develop strategies to address it. There is a huge gap between the recorded and actual drug situation in the city. Diagnosing someone with a drug use disorder is not only a medical task, but also a legal one. Any diagnosis or suspicion of drug use requires several tests and a lot of paperwork to be officially recorded. Medical centers and hospitals can't possibly find that amount of time for a single patient, considering how crowded and busy they are. Patients also don't want to get involved because they don't want to be exposed.

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We need to shorten the procedure or develop new methods that give faster results.

We can also estimate the magnitude of the problem by taking samples from the city's sewage system and testing for drugs. This will allow us to create a map of drug use in the city, determine the severity of drug use by neighborhood, and develop more radical solutions for the areas with the most severe problems.

It seems that abandoned buildings are favored for drug use. However, in another focus group meeting, participants expressed that abandoned buildings are used as an excuse to demolish registered buildings and carry out urban transformation projects. Abandoned buildings that are later illegally occupied create security concerns among residents, thereby creating a demand for urban transformation projects.

Participants also expressed that the attempt to use the drug problem to gain political power is another issue. Children of elementary school age have two choices at the end of the day: Either they give in to cultural corruption or they reject the degeneracy caused by drug use and other things by agreeing to the political design of the government.

In other words, parents are in a desperate situation where they are forced to make critical choices. If they send their children to madrasas, sects, or Quran classes, they can protect them from drugs. However, this would also mean that they agree to the assimilation of their children in terms of their culture and identity. Nevertheless, addiction problem must be addressed as a whole. The introduction of or access to drugs by children, as well as the desperation that pushes them to commit crimes as a result, must be assessed together.

2.4. Reviewing Spatial and Urban Plans

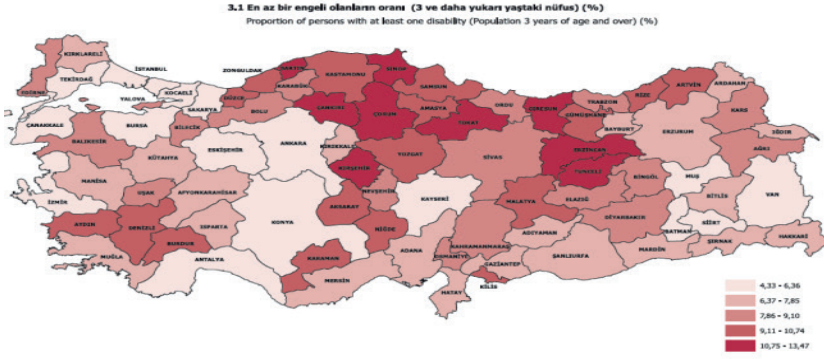
The meeting notes show that Diyarbakır is above the national average in terms of disability-related issues. The notes also show that the obstacles created by the city's social structure are also classified as disabilities. Disability is defined to include not only physical, auditory, or visual impairments, but also issues that hinder access to language and culture, as in the case of children with SSPE.

In a report published by the Ministry of Health, cities are divided into 5 different categories in terms of disability rates. According to the report, Diyarbakır is a 3rd category city with 7.86%-9.10% disability rate. According to this classification, about 8% of Diyarbakır's 1 million 818 thousand population will be disabled by the end of 2023. This corresponds to more than 140 thousand disabled people. *Engelsiz Bileşenler Federasyonu* (The Federation of Unimpeded Components) raised an issue at the focus group meeting about the care needed for patients with SSPE, which is usually seen in children and is caused by the measles virus.

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Figure 1: Proportion of persons with at least one disability (Population 3 years of age and over)



Şekil 1.2.3 En az bir engelli olan nüfusun oranı (3 ve daha yukarı yaş) (%)

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

First and foremost, current spatial and urban plans need to be reviewed to create a city that is inclusive of people with disabilities, women, children, youth, and people with special needs. Local governments need to approach spatial design, application, and the integration of all different communities into the city as a macro-level policy effort.

Some examples of spatial design suggested at the meeting include placing signs and panels in museums at a height that children can see, and building 3D models of cinemas, stages, museums, schools, hospitals, train stations and other public places to make them more accessible.

A participant stated that according to TÜİK statistics, there are 36,634 disabled people in Diyarbakir. The percentage of disabled people in Turkey is reported to be 6.9%. Diyarbakir ranks 3rd in the 5-group scale developed by the Ministry of Health, which means that Diyarbakir is average in terms of the percentage of disabled population. 36,634 disabled people out of 1 million 800,000 people in the city means a rate of 2% to 2.5%.

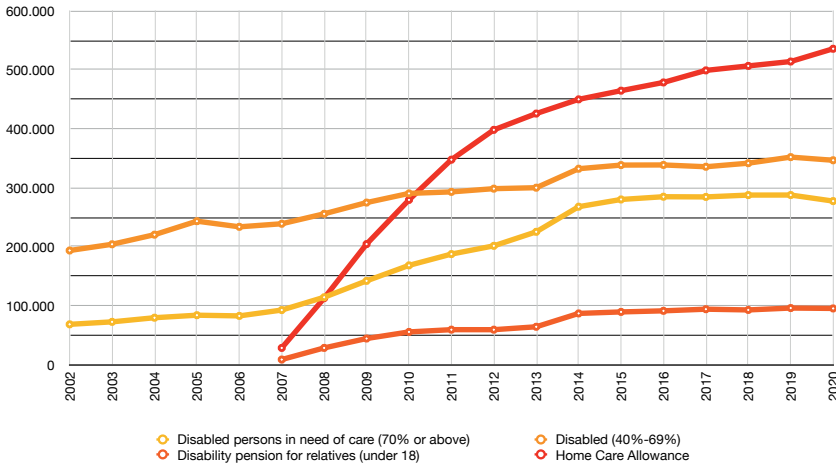
These figures may not include the other districts of the city or may not be up to date. Therefore, assuming that there are somewhere between 140 and 150 thousand disabled people in the city would lead to more effective results in creating solution strategies.

According to the Ministry of Health, 1 in 10 disabled people receives medical care at home. This corresponds to 600 thousand people in Turkey and 1% of the region's population.

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Figure 2: Number of Disabled Persons Receiving Pension and Home Care Allowance Under Law No. 2022



If we make the same estimates for Diyarbakir, we find that approximately 14-15 thousand disabled people receive medical care at home. Local administrations and the field work done by civil society organizations will play an important role in determining the true extent of the problem.

2.5. Women’s Organizations Shut Down and Disempowered by the Appointed Trustee Administration

Participants express that increased violence, especially violence against women, is a serious problem in the city. There are far fewer shelters and women’s organizations that provide a safe place for women who are subjected to violence by men. For many women at risk of violence, this is a matter of life and death. The disempowerment of women’s shelters and centers during the trustee administration exacerbates the problem.

Women experience not only physical violence, but also oppression, psychological violence, and marginalization as a result of deep poverty. The actions of the trustee administration to close down local organizations working for women’s empowerment made women even more vulnerable than they already were.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

One participant argued that one of the main issues that needs to be addressed is society’s perception, position, and approach to women. They emphasized the importance of reinstating women’s shelters that had been closed by the trustee administration. Traditionally, women are excluded from political, economic and social life, confined to the home, and expected to serve men and children.

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When this traditional view of women meets violence, the need for shelters to support women becomes even more important and urgent. Although violence is a serious problem for women, poverty and deprivation are also elements of oppression that affect them deeply. The participants emphasized that the previous administrations were very successful in terms of women's participation and expression and in solving women's problems.

The establishment of the Women's Department within the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality and district municipalities and the implementation of gender-responsive budgeting have empowered women and allowed the city to develop solutions to women's problems through a participatory process.

Participants stated that everything necessary to address women's issues, from building shelters to ensuring women's safety before they enter a shelter, can be done through budgeting. They argued that even though local administrations could allocate a sufficient budget, the first thing the trustee did after taking office was to close down all women's organizations and departments. As male violence against women continues in all its intensity, closing down and disempowering women's organizations make women even more vulnerable. These organizations must be empowered and reinstated.

The root cause of violence against women is men with traditional social values. Therefore, both men and women must work together to create a gender sensitive mentality and support it through education.

There must be panic buttons in public places for women and children. The most important step towards a better, more livable, and fair city is to ensure that there are multiple channels and avenues for women and children to reach out to authorities when they feel unsafe. Municipalities should be able to control and implement these methods and communication channels. Women- and child-friendly budgeting must be reinstated.

There are many poor women who have to do day labor such as cleaning and house-keeping to support their families since their husbands can't due to drug addiction. Participants mentioned the Ben-u Sen Neighborhood as an example. Women day laborers (or domestic workers) living in this neighborhood can't even find enough money to use public transportation, which is another factor that perpetuates violence. Poverty affects women the most. Women who are financially dependent on men are more likely to experience violence.

It is crucial for local governments and the community to create employment opportunities for women.

In the run-up to the local elections in March 2024, we need to form a pressure group, lobby and secure commitments to ensure that candidates have a firm stance on women's issues, especially violence against women. Participants also stressed the importance of building solidarity networks that allow women to work together and take advantage of their collective organizing power.

SOCIOCULTURAL LIFE AND POLICIES

Moderator: Reha Ruhavioğlu

3. PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

3.1. Damage Caused by the Appointment of the Trustees and Participation

The participants agree that the trustee administration lacks political, legal and social legitimacy. The appointment of trustees is a step that *de facto* denies the Kurdish people their right to vote and stand for election. After the appointment of the trustees, the municipal councils were dissolved, the city councils that facilitated participation were disempowered, and their links with civil society were severed. This damaged the organic structure of the city and created barriers between non-local officials and the city and its people.

In short, the trustee administration makes local democracy dysfunctional, creates a far-centralist faction in the region, refuses to tap into the city's potential, and exports the city's resources through imported administrators, which has a negative impact on all of the city's constituents, including those who support the government.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

We should record and analyze the human, cultural and social damage caused by the trustee administration and raise awareness about why it is not legitimate. Local and central actors and organizations should carry out projects to ensure that the political will of the city is respected.

Participation in the administrative processes for a more populist municipality can only be achieved by establishing pluralist neighborhood councils and involving all actors from different perspectives in decision-making processes. All communities in the city, regardless of their political preferences in elections, should be involved in the city's governance. The local administration should cooperate with mukhtars, professional organizations, labor organizations, civil society organizations, foundations, associations, and citizens' initiatives representing different views.

On the other hand, the organizations that the trustees cut off from the local ad-

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ministration, as well as other organizations that emerged in protest against the trustee's policies, tried to respond to the cultural needs and expectations of the city. New organizations working with women, youth, and children, as well as cultural and artistic institutions, such as Amed City Theater, Ma Music, Zarok Ma, Wêjegeh Amed, Amidart and Mordem, have emerged in this new civil society ecosystem in response to expectations and circumstances.

These organizations, most of which are members of the City Platform, should step up as stakeholders to cooperate, monitor, supervise and thereby strengthen the local administrations with their civil society background and experience. Local governments and civil society should take the necessary steps to strengthen their cooperation.

3.2.Preserving Urban Identity

We can define urban identity as a tangible and intangible cultural background produced by the people living in that city throughout history. In this respect, Diyarbakir has an urban identity that has been formed over thousands of years. According to most of the participants, the appointment of trustees is aimed at eroding this identity. Diyarbakir has a resilient heterogeneous identity that includes other ethnic and religious identities and cultures. There have not been enough policies to appreciate the city's diversity and multicultural nature, and yet the trustee administration presents the city's diversity as a tourist attraction and pushes away its pluralist nature. While the city administration did not protect the city's pluralist identity enough, the new trustee administration makes diversity even less visible. The book of Diyarbakir prepared by the trustee administration is not enough to represent the unique identity of the city. For example, Armenians were mentioned only in a few words. Moreover, the political identity of the city is an important part of its cultural identity. However, the Trustees' policies attack and attempt to erase this political identity through various methods.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

Although Diyarbakir's "urban identity" has been eroded to a certain extent by the trustee administration's policies, the city's dynamic and resilient cultural plurality manages to survive and protect itself. Monuments such as St. Giragos, Virgin Mary, Mar Petyun and the Grand Mosque remain the pillars of Diyarbakir's millennia-old identity.

Municipal resources were used to implement a more conservative cultural and urban identity in line with the religious, cultural and political stance of the trustee administration. However, civil society organizations continued to work and protect the city's cultural, linguistic, and religious plurality despite all the hardships.

The city's leaders must recognize the preservation of the city's diverse and mul-

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ticultural structure as the norm and act accordingly. The religious and cultural history of the city must be accurately represented. In addition, the administration must adopt a historical tourism policy that reflects the city's diverse and multicultural structure.

Relevant institutions, individuals and groups should be able to actively participate in policies related to the city's identity. They should be part of the consultation and monitoring mechanisms for the protection of the city's identity.

The right of all identities, beliefs, sects and opinions in the city to express themselves freely is a fundamental human right. Therefore, recognizing that diversity means enrichment of the city, all communities and belief systems should have the right to express themselves freely, regardless of their religion, sect, or philosophical and political views.

3.3. Transformation of Cultural and Artistic Activities

The Kurdish drama and music conservatories, kindergartens, daycare centers, youth and women's centers within the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality and the district municipalities provide important services that meet the needs of a large population, although they haven't been inclusive enough to reflect Diyarbakır's "urban identity" in the broadest sense. While local governments implement their own cultural policies, the central government has a different cultural policy of its own. Previously, two different culture and art scenes could coexist in the city. However, the central government, through the appointed trustees, closed down and purged cultural organizations, women's and children's organizations, and institutions that provided education in the mother tongue. As a result, city's cultural life, which had been largely maintained by the local administration, came to a standstill for the majority of Diyarbakır's population.

The Diyarbakır Culture and Congress Center, which was built to support Diyarbakır's vibrant cultural life, began holding events in line with the conservative policies of the government during the trustee administration. Art and culture events in Kurdish became almost non-existent. The city's billboards were filled with advertisements for writers and speakers that Diyarbakır had never heard of before. The municipality's resources were offered to those who were close to the government and whose activities were in line with the government's ideology.

Cultural and artistic activities about the Kurdish language and identity continued outside the city. Institutions such as the Amed City Theater and Ma Music were able to find a place for themselves around Diclekent and Mahabad Boulevard. This has largely shifted the consumption of Kurdish culture and art to this area and made it an economic status symbol. Alternative organizations that couldn't benefit from public support are unable to provide free or affordable services to those who live in low-income neighborhoods such as Sur and Bağlar.

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Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

Participants do not favor the return of independent culture and arts institutions founded by the artists dismissed by the trustee administration –such as Amed City Theater and Ma Music– to the municipality. However, they believe that they should be strongly involved in the implementation of cultural policies aimed at preserving the city’s identity. They argue that local governments should have mechanisms that allow these institutions to participate in cultural and artistic production as independent or autonomous organizations.

The neglected social and cultural life of the city should be revitalized, taking into account that the cultural services offered by the municipality have changed completely in the last 8 years. However, it should also be taken into account that cultural and artistic production should be more inclusive than in previous administrations.

The participants expect to see a long-term holistic cultural policy for Diyarbakir. Cultural institutions, civil society and other stakeholders should cooperate in the development, implementation and monitoring of the policy. The city’s civil dynamics should be able to both relieve the local administration of the burden of cultural policies, as well as to monitor and evaluate them.

3.4. The Mother Tongue Policy and Its Current Situation

Diyarbakir is the center of mother tongue culture and politics. The artistic and cultural production of the local administration, as well as the use of the mother tongue in general, is on the decline. According to the Kurdish Studies Center in Diyarbakir, only 30 percent of the adult population speaks Kurdish with their parents and 8.8 percent with their children. People also speak less and less Kurdish with their friends. The percentage of people who know and speak Kurdish is decreasing.

The Kurdish language courses and *Zarokistan* kindergartens opened by the local governments have been crucial for learning the language. On the other hand, intensive cultural and artistic production in the mother tongue also supported the spread of the language. However, the trustee administration changed the main function of the *Zarokistan* kindergartens and effectively closed the institutions where children could receive education in Kurdish. The changes in culture and art production also continue to have a negative impact on the use of the language.

While the rate of knowledge and use of the language is declining, a multi-stakeholder language movement with support from all walks of life is on the rise. The number of Kurdish-language publishing houses, the production of academic knowledge and publications promoting Kurdish folklore are increasing. 90% of the city supports the idea of public services and education in Kurdish.

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The local administrations of Diyarbakır, the center of Kurdish identity, have done remarkable things for the Kurdish language. They have increased the visibility of the mother tongue in social life. Today, however, both the visibility of Kurdish in public services and the use of the mother tongue have decreased dramatically.

Demands, Expectations and Recommended Solutions

The Diyarbakır Municipality should recognize the deteriorating state of the Kurdish language as one of the most urgent problems and work with stakeholders to formulate and implement a holistic policy. Local governments must publish and make available their language policies and their policy documents on the education and use of the Kurdish language.

Social, political and economic activities in Kurdistan should be conducted in Kurdish. Kurdish should be made the language of the market. Organizations and stakeholders should be encouraged in this regard.

Kindergartens and centers that provide education to children in their mother tongue should be reopened. Local governments should aim to integrate existing centers such as kindergartens while encouraging them to provide Kurdish education services. For example, municipalities should commit to providing human and material support to those kindergartens and day care centers that consider using the recommended curriculum.

Semi-public organizations such as the DTSO, the Bar Association, the Chamber of Physicians and other relevant CSOs should encourage the opening of Kurdish-language kindergartens within these organizations.

Kurdish language activities and entertainment for children should be organized in parks, the public visibility of the Kurdish language should be increased, and the reputation of the language should be protected by recognizing works in Kurdish.

Local governments should give priority to providing services in the mother tongue and employ staff who can do so.

Local governments should cooperate with Kurdish publishing institutions, provide multilingual books for children and distribute them free of charge. Activities should be organized to encourage children to read and write in their mother tongue. The use of the mother tongue should become widespread.

Municipalities should provide billboards or other platforms for the annual campaigns for the inclusion of elective Kurdish language courses in the national school curriculum, which will create leverage to push for a multilingual education policy. Students should be encouraged to take elective Kurdish courses and teachers should be provided with material support.

Local administrations should work to raise the prestige of the Kurdish language in Diyarbakır, the region, and the country.

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3.5. Education

Diyarbakir ranks at the bottom of almost all statistical surveys on education in the country. According to the TÜİK's Well-Being Index for Provinces (2015), Diyarbakir ranks 63rd in preschool enrollment, 64th in average high school entrance exam scores, 61st in average university entrance exam scores, and 53rd in university graduates. Diyarbakir also ranks 68th in Turkey in terms of public satisfaction with education services. In other words, we are not satisfied with education in the city.

Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

Good nutrition is the most important factor influencing academic success. The socio-economic level of a family is also an important variable, as it is directly related to both the nutrition and education of the child. Therefore, we should all agree that education is not just a school activity. Local governments should plan and implement a long-term policy to improve the quality of education in Diyarbakir.

According to PISA data, children who do not receive education in their mother tongue are 1 to 1.5 years behind children who receive education in their mother tongue, even if they are in the same grade. Therefore, mother-tongue and multilingual education should be seen as a right that dramatically affects the quality of education.

Local governments should work with experts and institutions to prepare a strategic plan on how to improve the quality of education in the city. The strategy should be implemented in cooperation with relevant institutions and stakeholders.

Essentials such as poverty alleviation and providing school meals should be the responsibility of the municipalities. Municipalities should select a few high-priority schools based on their needs as pilot schools to implement these services and expand from there. There should be more supported educational centers with meals and play facilities in low-income neighborhoods. Municipalities should work with the various communities in the city to provide support and scholarships to as many college students as possible.

3.6. Health

Diyarbakir ranks 68th in satisfaction with health services, 76th in satisfaction with health, and 15th in infant mortality rate. The general health policy is rather weak. There is also a great need and demand for access to health services in the mother tongue.

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The right to health is one of the most fundamental public rights. All citizens must have equal and free access to health care in their own language. This must be the main principle and policy in the provision of health services. Protective, preventive, and general public health services should be recognized as important duties of local authorities.

However, promoting health awareness and literacy is also a public responsibility. Local governments have a key role in this regard.

There should be a system of support, training, and incentives for medical personnel to provide health care in the mother tongue.

Regular studies on public health issues must be conducted in collaboration with relevant health institutions, chambers, civil society organizations and unions.

ECONOMIC SITUATION AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Moderator: Mehmet Arslan

4. PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

4.1. What Is the Ideal Development Axis for Diyarbakır?

The 4th focus group meeting started with the opening speech of DİTAM President Mesut Azizoğlu. Azizoğlu stated that the main purpose of the meetings organized under 4 main themes is to influence decision-making processes. He expressed that compared to other regions of the country, Diyarbakır and other cities with a high Kurdish population have been subjected to the state's targeted policies for 100 years, which became even more evident after the appointment of trustees in 2015 and the severing of the public's ties with local administrations. The moderator stated that the economy has entered a completely new era, which clashes strongly with the old one. He also expressed that it's not easy to read the economy through the theories of David Ricardo, Adam Smith, Karl Marx, etc., and it's becoming more and more difficult to explain certain things with the labor theory of value. He added that huge changes are happening through intellectual capital and young people in their 20s are making fortunes.

For example, Peak Games, a gaming platform founded by Boğaziçi students, was acquired by California-based gaming platform Zynga for \$1.8 billion, the highest amount ever paid by a foreign company for a Turkish technology company. Yemek Sepeti was sold to Germany's Delivery Hero for \$589 million in 2015, and Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba paid \$728 million for Trendyol, whereas Peak Games was sold for a total of \$1.8 billion. We need to discuss and establish the right framework for development in this environment of ever-changing concepts and methods of income generation with artificial intelligence on its way to becoming an essential part of everyday life.

We should analyze how the second industrial zone, the textile OIZs, SIZs and other rudimentary manufacturing sites could be more effective and productive, so that the industrial sector can produce better results in terms of the city's development. Alternatively, we can evaluate whether industrial development is an absolute necessity in the current paradigm. According to the 2022 Gross Domestic

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Product (GDP) data by sector, the share of industry in Turkey's total GDP is 26%, while it is 13% for Diyarbakır and Şanlıurfa. Diyarbakır ranks 46th and Şanlıurfa ranks 38th among 81 provinces in terms of industrial production value.

Although the two provinces that make up the TRC2 region are highly competitive in agriculture, they don't seem to have remarkable industrial infrastructure. Even though the industry-oriented development and growth approach is more popular, we need to analyze whether this approach is suitable for the city based on these data. Therefore, we need to try answering the question "What should be the right development axis for Diyarbakır?"

Demands, Expectations and Recommended Solutions

Although all potential development axes are discussed in detail, GAP has been at the center of the discussion. About 100 years ago, Diyarbakır ranked third after İstanbul and Bursa in terms of the number of registered workplaces. The participants argued that the main reason why Diyarbakır is no longer at the top is that the city has been deliberately kept underdeveloped. We have to create the right economic models to return to the old days of the city.

A new era of economic cycle has begun. We need to work on producing middle and high technology to adapt to this new era. Does the city have any advantages in the process of producing medium and high technology? If so, how can we categorize them? First of all, the city has significant potential and advantages in terms of human capital.

In terms of location, Diyarbakır has transportation and logistics advantages that can make the city an important power center if agriculture is integrated with the logistics infrastructure.

Another sector that could act as a powerhouse of development is agricultural production and processing. To achieve the best results in this area, we need to ensure proper integration with GAP and complete consolidation.

Approximately 20% of the world's organic agriculture, particularly organic cotton production, is done in the region. Organic cotton production can become an important agricultural force if we use the irrigation facilities of the Silvan and Tigris Kralkızı Dams. Another point to consider is the city's image as a "health center."

While there are many private hospitals in Diyarbakır that have become well-known brands, there aren't any private hospitals with national recognition.

In addition, many private schools have branches in the city, which indirectly increases the rate of white-collar employment.

4.2. Problems in Agriculture

We should make an overall analysis of the agricultural sector and find a balance

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between traditional and modern agriculture. Based on 2020 figures, Şanlıurfa and Diyarbakır rank 7th and 13th, respectively, among 81 provinces in Turkey in terms of agricultural production value. The two provinces that make up the TRC2 region have a comparative advantage in this area. We should evaluate agricultural industrialization in parallel with GAP and make projections on “land consolidation” practices, which define new ownership of agricultural land in rural areas and create tensions and even serious social conflicts. We should develop ways, methods and policies for the city’s position about GAP, also known as “Turkey’s never-ending project”, and determine lobbying and pressure mechanisms to move the project forward.

The state’s position on the GAP project is another major problem. The project has two main components: energy and irrigation. However, the project clearly focuses more on energy production and neglects irrigation. Although the income from energy production is more than enough to cover the project costs, the state constantly revises the amount of irrigable land. In the 2008 GAP Action Plan, the irrigation target was initially set to 1.8 million hectares. However, project revisions reduced the irrigable area to 1.35 million hectares. The irrigation target for the Silvan Dam, the most important phase of GAP in Diyarbakır, is 235 thousand hectares. However, this target has not yet been reached, which is very worrying.

Although some participants believe that GAP will contribute to Diyarbakır’s development goals, they also have concerns that the project itself is causing ecological problems. These problems include the dependence on imported seeds instead of using endemic species, the significant increase in energy and water consumption, the genetic modification of plants and seeds, the widespread use of illegal irrigation methods, the unregulated use of underground water resources, the narrowing of pasture areas and the resulting pressure on animal husbandry, the lack of full transition to agro-industry or mechanization despite product diversity, the normalization of labor exploitation through hiring cheap agricultural labor, and the acceleration of internal migration due to the transfer of cheap labor.

Another problem is the practice of land consolidation. Consolidation has become a tool of dispossession, supporting large producers by excluding small family farms from agricultural production, causing small producers and farmers to lose their land and to be forced into wage labor.

The huge market opened up by GAP presents both opportunities and problems. Participants argued that macro-issues and the climate impacts, which didn’t really exist before, are the secondary problems caused by GAP. Apart from the climate impact, the state’s support for imported seeds, especially those of Israeli origin, leads to genetic erosion of cultivated plants. The state clearly favors imported seeds over local diversity.

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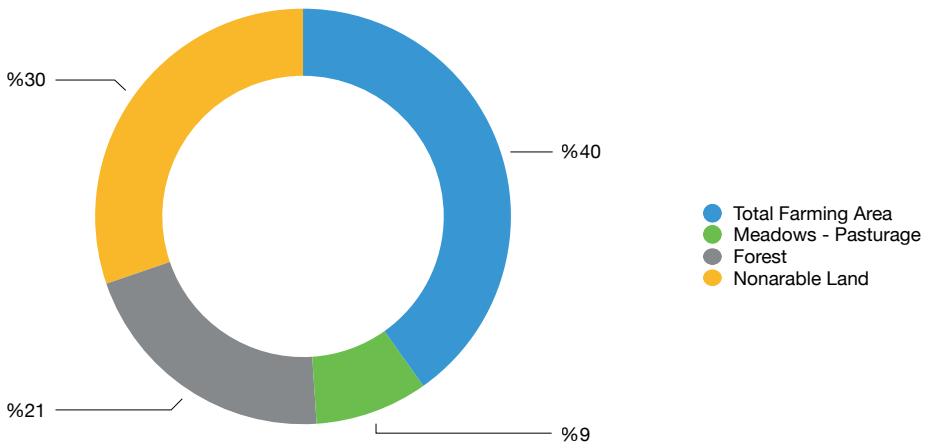
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Although there is a general consensus that GAP is central to development, there is also some criticism. Both supporters and opponents of the project have accurate assumptions and reasons for their opinions. If GAP is the prerequisite for the transition to value-added agricultural production, resistance to the project must be well managed. The lack of absolute acceptance of the project prevents us from creating a strong demand throughout the region for the completion of the project. One of the main points of resistance is the lack of satisfactory consolidation practices and the change in ownership structure due to land integration. The integration of small plots of land into larger ones as part of the land consolidation process will increase the efficiency of agricultural machinery and ensure more effective implementation of irrigation systems.

The following table, which was prepared based on the data of the Ministry of Agriculture, shows the distribution of land in Diyarbakir. The 235,000 hectares of land that will be brought under irrigation with the Silvan Project represents 38% of the total land area of Diyarbakir, which demonstrates the scope of the project.

LAND DISTRIBUTION IN DİYARBAKIR		
TYPE	AMOUNT (HA)	%
Total Farming Area	624.933	40,18
Meadows – Pasturage	136.590	8,78
Forest	323.460	20,79
Nonarable Land	470.544	30,25
TOTAL	1.555.527	100

Figure 3: Number of Disabled Persons Receiving Pension and Home Care Allowance Under Law No. 2022



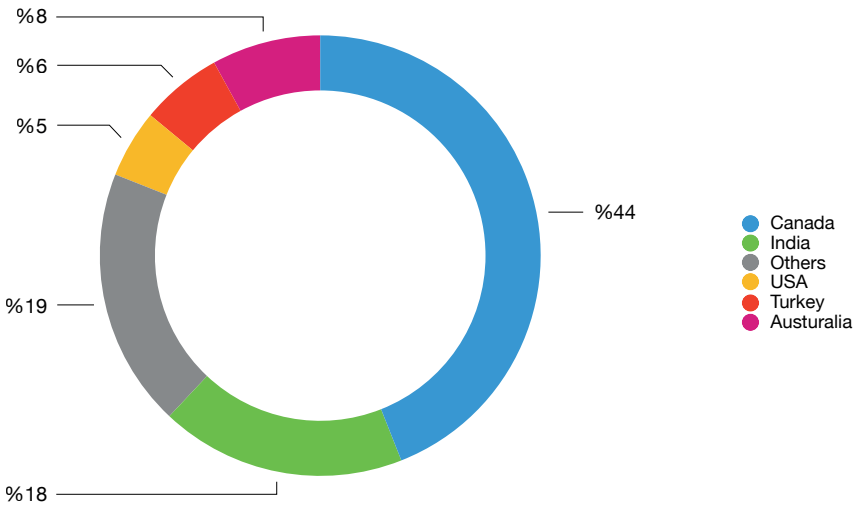
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Considering the impact of the investments made in the region on our agricultural production potential, GAP shouldn't be considered as just an irrigation project. It is an integrated project that affects not only the energy sector and irrigation, but also tourism, industry, and social life. Although there is some criticism of the project, it is still an ongoing development plan. The investments made for agricultural production have begun to be integrated into the project. It seems that the work on the Silvan dam is almost finished. There are some side effects of the project such as soil infertility due to irrigation. Several important academic studies have been done and necessary measures are taken regarding problems such as salinization. Local stakeholders must cooperate to achieve the desired results of GAP. We need to establish direct links between producers and industrial manufacturers. We must ensure that we integrate the investments made by the Ministry of Agriculture, especially through TKDK. Based on the progress of the project and statements made by DSİ, the construction of the Silvan Dam is about 95% complete and the project is expected to be finalized by the end of the year.

Integration into agricultural markets and fostering a culture of cooperation and specialization are essential for achieving the desired results of GAP. According to FAO 2020 data, the fact that Canada, despite its cold climate, is responsible for 44% of the world's lentil production proves Canada's competitive advantage gained through cooperation and specialization.

Figure 4: Lentil: Countries by Production In 2020



In identifying solutions for GAP, participants suggested that universities should actively participate in the field and support agriculture with scientific research and projects. Some universities have researched the positive effects of GAP-related crop production patterns. According to the studies, GAP doesn't hinder the production of our own seeds, but rather supports it. Studies also show that we

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can further investigate the agricultural opportunities of the 8 dams in Diyarbakır through field studies.

We should consider the use of academic research as a prerequisite for agricultural or agro-industrial development. The global agricultural opportunities are changing rapidly and economic agriculture is becoming more important every day. Where is the world heading to? What are the new developments in soilless agriculture? What are the current innovative livestock, smart farming, and irrigation practices? What progress have we made in improving climate and drought resistant seeds in the current extreme climate?

The answers to these questions will form the basis of the GAP-based agricultural development infrastructure. The Ministry of Agriculture's basin-based agricultural production models should be considered within the framework of GAP, and scientific studies should be conducted for the next agricultural product bundle.

Specific studies conducted by universities on the growth of seven different endemic varieties of lentils and common wheat, for which Diyarbakır has a competitive advantage, organic production and processing in viticulture, and the use of *Öküzgözü* and *Boğazkere* grape varieties in the development of new products are notable efforts for developing solutions.

Another opportunity that Diyarbakır has is the geothermal energy potential of the city. There are 4,000 oil wells around the 212-kilometer main canal through which the Tigris Kralkızı irrigation dam passes. These wells were at least 3,000 meters deep and were closed because little or no oil was found. However, hot water sources have been found in at least half of these closed wells at a depth of 2000 meters, which is a great opportunity for greenhouse cultivation. By opening these wells and using the hot water for greenhouse cultivation, Diyarbakır could generate significant agricultural value.

To develop an agricultural industry and reach a more competitive position, we must have a say in the market and the pricing power. Therefore, we should establish licensed silos as a tool to use the advantages of GAP. More grain silos will give Diyarbakır an advantage in terms of pricing and control power. Currently, there are 13 licensed silos in operation, each with a capacity of 30,000 tons. In total, Diyarbakır has licensed silos with a total capacity of 870,000 tons of grain. Although we are competitive in grain, we don't have enough silos for cotton despite the high quality cotton production in the city.

The necessary feasibility studies have been carried out. Currently, we are looking for international funding for licensed silos for cotton, with an investment cost of about EUR 11 million. Today, licensed silos function like a stock exchange in the marketing of agricultural products. Licensed silos allow classifying cotton according to its grade and quality. This allows suppliers anywhere in the world to buy your cotton from your silos at international market prices. Since the international prices are higher than the farmers' national price targets, the farmers can

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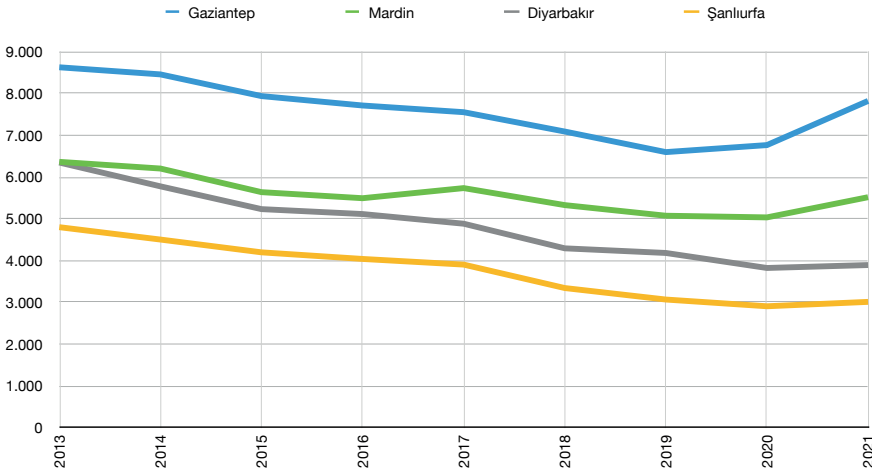
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earn a relatively good income. This method also allows the market to guarantee product supply. Although Diyarbakir is highly competitive in durum wheat, the prices are lower than those set in Konya. Having licensed silos will prevent price differences. The main reason for this is the fact that licensed silos provide long-term storage and logistical advantages. As a result, the certificates of the stored products come into circulation during the periods when the price movements in the market are at their peak, which is a significant advantage for the producer.

4.3.Sectoral Issues

We need to discuss how we can turn the tourism sector, an important subcategory of the service industry, into a strong development dynamic for the city. The following table can be used as a reference for the discussion:

Figure 5: Income Per Capita

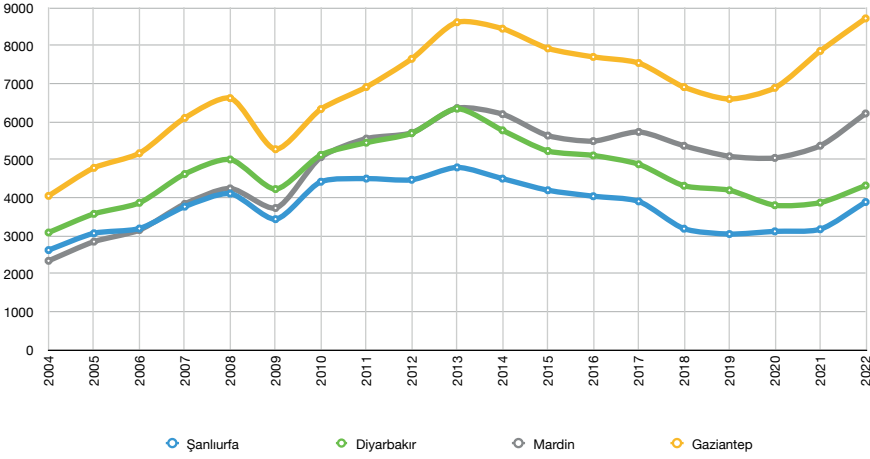


The table above presents a comparative analysis of per capita income for 4 cities. We can draw important conclusions from the dramatic divergence between Mardin and Diyarbakir. In 2013, the per capita income of both cities was calculated to be \$6,300. Therefore, the red line representing Mardin and the green line representing Diyarbakir converge at the same point in 2013. According to the table, which includes a 9-year projection and is based on TurkStat data, Mardin ranks 69th and Diyarbakir ranks 70th in terms of per capita income in 2013. By 2021, Diyarbakir has fallen to 77th place, while Mardin has risen to 56th place. The gap between the two cities, which were neck and neck in terms of per capita income in 2013, widened nine years later, with Mardin ranking 22 places above Diyarbakir. This indicator should be taken into consideration for tourism. We need to carefully study the income generation potential of the tourism sector and others and how this income would be returned to the people.

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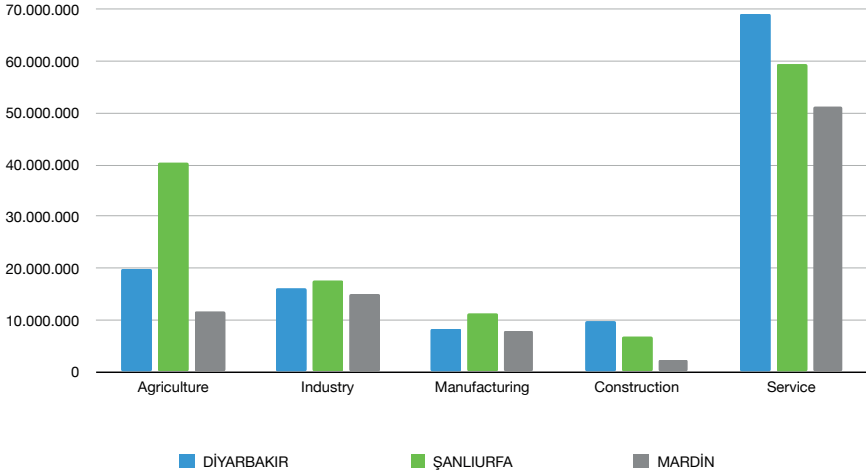
Figure 6: Con



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Diyarbakır is a service-producing city according to the shares of different industries in the GNP. According to 2022 TÜİK data, the service industry has a 56% share in the GNP distribution.

Figure 7: GDP By Sectors (TL)



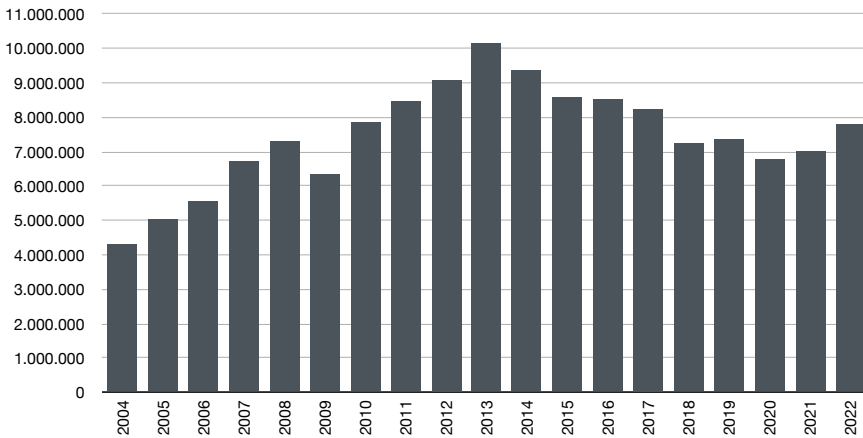
The table below shows the GDP for 2022 in USD. It shows that Diyarbakır produces goods and services worth nearly 8 billion dollars. The most important thing we can learn from these figures is that the peace process in Diyarbakır from 2010 to 2013 had a positive impact on the economy. In 2013, Diyarbakır's GDP exceeded 10 billion dollars and reached a record high. In 2014, the peace process started to

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suffer significant setbacks and the economy started to follow a downward trend, resulting in the GDP falling below 7 billion dollars. Thus, it is clear that political processes have a significant impact on Diyarbakır's economy and that the city suffered a serious loss of momentum during the conflict.

Figure 8: Diyarbakır GDP



Analyzing Diyarbakır from a logistics perspective to achieve social welfare was one of the most discussed topics of the meeting. In addition, analyzing Diyarbakır in terms of the value added by the service industry can provide insight into the city. 15 years ago, DTSO and Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality conceived and implemented a logistics zone project whose feasibility study and infrastructure works were carried out with the support of Karacadağ Development Agency. This project can be an important part of the city's development. Diyarbakır's advantageous and central location that provides easy access to Middle East markets indicates the importance of logistics for the city. Depending on the competitive structure of the agricultural industry, Diyarbakır can become an important logistics center. Transforming the city into a logistics center will also allow the city to become a strategic center that controls the supply chain. Providing value-added services such as warehousing, transportation, inspection and monitoring, cold chain, licensed warehousing, storage yards, insurance and customs procedures, and perhaps packaging in logistics centers will make the city stand out. Verona, Italy should be studied as an example of logistics zones. Verona is an inland logistics center and is therefore home to the management, shipping and supply of textiles, marble, mining and agricultural products. Due to its similarities with Diyarbakır, Verona can serve as a good model for Diyarbakır.

Diyarbakır's comparative advantage in tourism and export industries could provide a significant boost, especially in the South Kurdistan market. Although Di-

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Yarbakır's exports reached \$300 million in 2021, they fell below \$250 million by 2023. Let's make a comparison: Turkey's GNP is around \$900 billion, while its exports are around \$250 billion. This means that 30% of Turkey's GDP comes from exports. According to the same correlation, Diyarbakır's exports should have been around 2.5 billion dollars with a GDP of 8 billion dollars. However, Diyarbakır is 10 times behind the expected figures. Therefore, we should look into other export countries such as South Kurdistan and China.

One of the most important issues discussed at the meeting was that Diyarbakır's exports are cleared at the customs in Habur due to the advantages of its logistics infrastructure, and therefore Diyarbakır's exports are recorded in the inventory of Mardin and Şırnak. Participants stated that efforts to provide the logistical infrastructure for exports within the city and to record exports in the inventory based on the place of production rather than the place of customs clearance are finalized. From now on, export figures will be recorded based on the place of production. This change is expected to lead to a significant increase in export figures in 2024.

Trading with South Kurdistan was seen as both a problem and an opportunity. Exporters stated that exports are suppressed due to difficulties arising from legislation and customs procedures at the border. They also argued that maritime transport is preferred for trading with Iraq/Baghdad, which makes it difficult to reach Iraq via Habur. The initiatives and lobbying activities have started to yield results that will have a positive impact on the export figures for 2024. Diyarbakır has a significant export competition with Gaziantep and Mardin.

Despite Gaziantep's significant production and competitive advantages, we will soon see the results of the numerous efforts to develop trade, business, and cooperation on the Erbil-Sulaymaniyah-Diyarbakır line. Diyarbakır's lobbying efforts include not only efforts to accelerate exports, but also efforts to turn the competition between Erbil and Sulaymaniyah into cooperation. The competition between Erbil and Sulaymaniyah and the lack of cooperation mechanisms between the two cities lead to Iran's control of the market in Sulaymaniyah.

It was noted that not only Iran, but also Jordan and Lebanon have become active trading partners in the Kurdistan market in recent years, hence the need to study the trade portfolios and product diversification of these two countries. The main exports to Kurdistan are generally high tonnage products such as marble. There are no major problems in the marble trade as there is a strong workflow that has been perfected over the years, while there are certain challenges in the food and chemical industries that need to be addressed. There have also been improvements in the export of ferrous and non-ferrous metals. The requirements for food and chemical products have effectively become non-tariff barriers. The increased paperwork and cost of testing and calibration procedures at land borders is another factor forcing foreign trade to be conducted by sea. These are

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mostly requirements stipulated by the Baghdad government. However, Iran, for example, doesn't have to meet the same requirements for the same products. This is because the two countries have a close political relationship. We need to improve communication with Baghdad through government or trade channels to solve this problem.

4.4. Issues in the Industrial Sector

Although the share of industry in Diyarbakir's GDP has increased recently, it is still not at the desired level. According to TurkStat's 2022 revenue data shown in the table below, 13% of the city's revenue is generated by industry. The participants of the meeting analyzed the problems that prevent Diyarbakir from realizing its industrial potential at the desired level despite its geographical and logistical advantages.

PROVINCES (2022)	Agriculture	Industry	Manufacturing	Construction	Service	Total
DIYARBAKIR-TL	19.867.217	16.175.140	8.434.101	9.989.402	69.250.395	123.716.255
%	16,06	13,07	6,82	8,07	55,98	100

Participants identified the lack of adequate industrial infrastructure and the central government's negative attitude toward the city as the main reasons for the lack of industrial breakthrough at the desired level. Industrial infrastructure isn't just about highways, air transportation, or access to railroads and ports. Sure, these are all very important elements. However, as one participant put it, "allocating land for industrial activities" is crucial, because the ability to provide land for investors is a prerequisite for getting positive results from the existing incentive policies. The negative attitude of the central government and the attempts to make local administrations an extension of the central government lead to decisions being made against the will of the city. For example, the land that was supposed to be integrated into Karacadağ OIZ was given to TOKİ for housing projects. There have been 300 applications for investments in Karacadağ OIZ, which has only 178 industrial plots of land. This is a clear indication of the strong interest and demand for the industrial zone. The conversion of industrial zones into plots for housing projects in the face of such investment interest can only be described as a commitment to short-term benefits and profits rather than improving the future of the city.

Participants also noted that the lack of desired momentum in industrial investment is, in part, due to current incentive practices. They noted that although Region 6 should be a priority in terms of incentives, certain practices and policies have diverted incentives from their intended purpose. Strategic investments, such as investments in pharmaceutical production, can benefit from Region 6 in-

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centives regardless of the actual location of the investment. In other words, even if someone invests in Istanbul or Ankara, they can still take advantage of Region 6 incentives, which drives investors away from the region.

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We suggested that Mardin's dynamism in the tourism sector should be analyzed as a model for Diyarbakır. The cases of Gaziantep and Batman should be studied for the industrial sector. The share of industry in Gaziantep's revenue in 2022 was 45%, while the share of Batman was 35%. The share of industry in Turkey is calculated to be 26% in the same year. In comparison, Gaziantep had an increase by 60% of the national average, while Batman had an increase by 35%. Gaziantep, also referred to as "Little China", can be analyzed in detail as a model for industrial production. However, we suggest analyzing Batman's recent success in industrial production first, as it's demographically similar to Diyarbakır.

According to 2022 income calculations, the industrial income of Batman, with a population of 600,000, has increased three times from TL 6 billion to TL 18 billion compared to 2021, surpassing the TL 17 billion industrial income of Diyarbakır, with a population of 1,800,000. We should also develop strategies and lobby to prevent the diversion of incentives from Region 6.

There should be active policies to support the SIZs with OIZs and enable them to access financing opportunities provided by KOSGEB or similar institutions. We should adopt firm and resistant approaches similar to those implemented to recover industrial lands that were later converted into residential areas for TOKİ.

4.5. Issues with the New Economic Approaches

The city should be discussed through the lens of both classic and new concepts and approaches. In the early 1980s, Alvin Toffler said, "The Internet is not just a tool, it is an ecosystem. Now we live in and have become a part of the ecosystem predicted in those years. How can we transform this ecosystem into something that creates more value for our city? This question deserves our attention.

We have made assumptions and estimates based on agricultural and industrial societies, and now we have to consider the "information society". There are no longer valid and strong approaches that draw a clear line between the home and the workplace. Therefore, the classical "household" concept in economics has become practically useless. We live in a new world. We are part of the same universe as artificial intelligence systems that can pass the Harvard Law graduation exam with flying colors. The Internet has become a network of highways that runs through every home, and we are integrated into it. Discussing what's new should also be considered an important outcome of this meeting.

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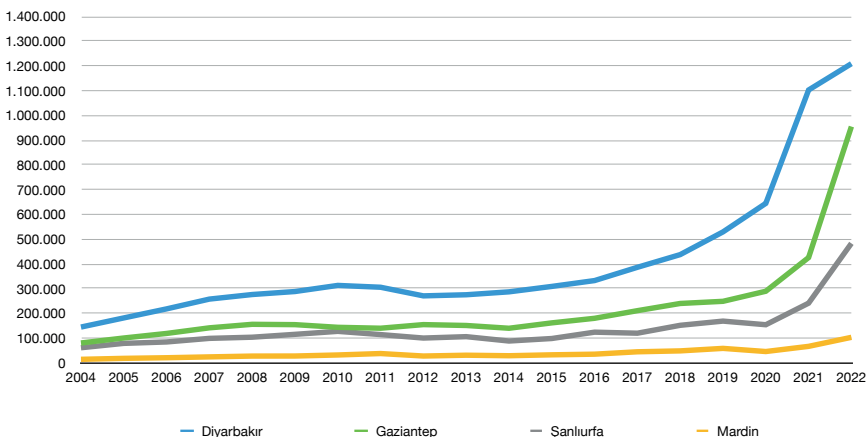
Demands, Expectations, and Recommended Solutions

A more detailed analysis of Diyarbakır's GNP figures shows that there has been a significant increase in revenue from information, communication and software. An analysis of "information and communication," "finance and insurance," and "real estate" shows that Diyarbakır stands out among other cities in the region and even had a significant proportional increase compared to the national figures. These developments indicate that Diyarbakır will integrate more rapidly into computer technology, Internet-based commerce and other applications. Supporting this potential and attracting software experts from countries like India that export software developers around the world could be an unexpected opportunity for Diyarbakır.

KOSGEB has created 13 new categories of instruments to support technology. Recent support policies have been divided into different categories based on the level of technology to be supported. The support for technology development has shifted from low technology to more medium and high technology areas such as machinery, energy, electronics, software, chemistry, pharmaceuticals, medical products and aromatics.

TurkStat's "Information and Communication" turnover data is presented below. The graph shows that Diyarbakır is highly competitive in this field. It is important to support companies that add value in the field of information and communication to further develop this potential. The analysis of information and communication revenue shows that Diyarbakır's added value is more than double that of Şanlıurfa and Mardin combined and 20% higher than that of Gaziantep. The fact that Gaziantep, an industrial and commercial center that invests heavily in innovation, added less value than Diyarbakır is a clear indication of Diyarbakır's competitiveness in this area.

Figure 9: Information - Cummunication



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YEAR	Diyarbakır	Antep	Urfa	Mardin
2004	144 933	80 572	61 353	14 598
2005	181 830	100 739	79 018	18 490
2006	218 349	119 129	84 707	20 994
2007	257 909	141 803	99 234	24 444
2008	276 380	156 049	103 949	27 694
2009	288 505	154 678	115 544	27 948
2010	313 196	143 924	127 616	32 143
2011	305 798	140 280	114 507	37 935
2012	270 936	154 834	100 524	27 891
2013	275 437	151 327	106 177	31 190
2014	287 222	140 109	88 483	29 115
2015	309 121	161 834	98 679	32 789
2016	332 772	180 358	124 295	35 395
2017	386 369	211 153	120 139	45 023
2018	437 670	240 234	152 018	48 652
2019	529 422	248 966	169 012	58 801
2020	644 714	289 661	154 332	46 074
2021	1 102 773	425 817	241 514	66 969
2022	1 209 063	955 083	483 076	103 446

4.6.Exclusion of Municipalities from the Economy

One of the main problems highlighted in all the focus group meetings is the fact that the municipalities have been completely disempowered by the trustee administration and have been pushed out of the social, political and economic spheres. Participants stated that it is very difficult to mobilize the city in the presence of administrative conflicts despite all efforts, since the economy has been left to the central government and the public.

Some participants believed that local administrations have a duty in economic development, while some argued that “municipalities don’t have a duty to achieve economic development”, therefore it is not right to hold them responsible, the main function of municipalities is to enrich the cultural and social structure of the city and the economic development is the responsibility of the central government. Another participant said that “a city without a municipality is an orphaned city” and therefore it doesn’t have access to power. They argued that denying them the power to play a role in the economy would mean endorsing the actions of the central government.

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Participants pointed out that İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality has 17 economic enterprises that engage in providing post-disaster housing and supporting cooperatives by purchasing products, while İzmir Metropolitan Municipality supports the development of women's cooperatives. Participants argued that the state's justification for appointing trustees is not really to sever the local administration's "ties with the organization," but rather to disrupt the city's economic dynamism and achieve economic assimilation.

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Participants argued that municipalities have a legal obligation to carry out economic activities, otherwise they would be considered as not fulfilling their duties. Participants pointed out that İstanbul Metropolitan Municipality has 17 economic enterprises that engage in providing post-disaster housing and supporting cooperatives by purchasing products, while İzmir Metropolitan Municipality supports the development of women's cooperatives. The participants argued that the state's justification for appointing trustees is not really to sever the local administration's "ties with the organization", but rather to disrupt the city's economic dynamism and achieve economic assimilation.

The vast majority of participants believe that municipalities should engage in economic activities. Law No. 5393 on Municipalities clearly states that municipalities can intervene in economy by establishing in-budget enterprises, or operating within one of the existing companies. Article 18 of the law gives municipalities some leeway, by stating

"Decisions on the establishment of in-budget companies and partnerships subject to the Turkish Commercial Code No. 6762, or the separation from these partnerships, capital increase and the establishment of real estate investment trusts" are among the duties of the municipal council. It is clearly stated that municipalities will intervene in the economy through companies if necessary. However, it's up to the central government to a certain extent, as the Ministry of Environment and Urban Planning has the final say on the establishment of in-budget companies. In the end, the best phrase to describe the purpose of preventing local governments from engaging in economic activities is "**economic assimilation**".

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Moderator – Sedat Yurtdaş – Vice President, DİTAM

We, as DİTAM, worked together with nearly 80 civil society organizations and prepared a roadmap that we will follow together with the public. Although we have tried our best to keep the work as short as possible, since it was only aimed at providing guidance, the presentations had to be long and extensive due to the importance, the number of issues, and nuances to address them.

Our guest Mr. Tunç Soyer is the Mayor of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality. He used to visit Diyarbakır from time to time. He is the Mayor of İzmir, a very special metropolis. We would like to give the floor to Mr. Tunç Soyer so that he can share his experiences with regards to what has been discussed here today.

5. The İzmir Metropolitan Municipality's Experience in Local Administration

Tunç Soyer – Mayor of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality

First of all, I would like to say that it was a spectacular meeting. Each and every presentation I heard was obviously the result of a sophisticated effort. I would like to thank all the valuable experts who gave these presentations.

When I first received an invitation, I thought, "What do I know about Diyarbakır's problems? What can I bring to the table?" Then I realized that I was asked to analyze the situation from a Western perspective. In other words, I will talk about the solutions we have come up with for similar problems in İzmir. Hopefully, I will be able to share something that can inspire and serve as an example for Diyarbakır.

Let me say this first: I believe that there is a strong bond between İzmir and Diyarbakır. I believe that İzmir is the Diyarbakır of the West and Diyarbakır is the İzmir of the East –and I believe they have a lot in common. Both cities refuse to surrender to the power of the government and both cities are paying the price. Both object to the price they have to pay. Both have a diverse and vibrant culture. Both have a strong culture of opposition and protest. Both have critical constituencies. Last

¹ The meeting entitled 'What Diyarbakır Lacks In Local Services' was held on February 27, 2024 in Diyarbakır.

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but not least, both have the curious and hopeful eyes of the rest of the country on them. Therefore, I believe that these commonalities should be supported by establishing a close relationship.

I would like to say a few things about the appointment of trustees. If I remember correctly, the first trustee was appointed for the Sur District. At that time, I was the mayor of Seferihisar, and I declared Sur and Seferihisar as sister municipalities. I also made a press statement at Konak Square that day and said: "The appointment of trustees is a political decision and its legitimacy is questionable". Not all legal decisions are legitimate. Yes, this was a legal decision, but I think it lacks legitimacy. For this decision to be legitimate, they should have appointed a member of the city council to replace the dismissed mayor. So if you don't do that, you throw away the legitimacy. In conclusion, the trustee issue warrants both a political and a legal struggle. Unfortunately, I don't think the struggle has been strong enough.

In other words, I believe that the appointment of trustees is a move of questionable legitimacy. As a result, we have witnessed serious problems in all the districts, provinces and metropolises where trustees have been appointed. Especially in Diyarbakir, the appointment of trustees didn't only cause economic problems. The fact that a city with an economic volume of 10 billion dollars 10 years ago has suffered a loss of almost 30% and has fallen to around 7 billion dollars is a proof of the very negative impact on the daily life of everyone living in this city. It has not only caused economic damage, but also damage to cultural life, social life, the daily lives of women, children and young people, which has been perfectly explained today.

So how will this whole ordeal be resolved in the end? This is a serious situation and it seems this will continue for a while. So what should be done? I think that you, the people of Diyarbakir, are doing very important things for the solution. And the solution is formed by the civil society. You are asking yourselves how you, as civil society, can overcome and compensate the consequences of the absence of the local administration. That is very valuable. These common sense meetings are very valuable. A lot of wisdom has been shared in this meeting to identify problems and solutions.

We need to continue this and think about how to expand it. How can we make it more widespread? How can we influence decision-making mechanisms? We should focus on that. This brings me to the definition of democracy. I think the biggest setback is the gaps in democracy or lack thereof.

Democracy, as we all know, is not just going to the polls every five years. Democracy is a way of life and one of the greatest innovations of humankind. Authoritarian and populist governments around the world are being used as leverage to move away from democracy. So what should we do? How can democracy be developed against these totalitarian and populist forces, and how can democ-

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racy be spread, especially at the local level? We have to work on that. First of all, we have to recognize that these processes around the world are not due to the weakness of democracy itself. We must first look at if there are any problems in the implementation of democracy.

Therefore, we need to open up new areas of democracy, such as ecological democracy. Up to now, people have only thought about nature, but now we have reached a point where we have to put nature itself on the table. Democracy is intertwined with nature and at peace with nature. Perhaps we are at a point where we need to talk about the rights of nature, just as we talk about basic human rights. Just as we observe the rule of law for humans, we need to put the rule of law for nature on the table. Likewise, we need to work on economic democracy and economic models that allow people to become the subjects of production.

Another thing that we can do, under the leadership of civil society, is to develop solutions that will spread social democracy and democratic practices to the grassroots and maintain democratic practices in favor of work and production.

In Izmir there was something we called 'circular culture'. Culture has 3 different meanings. The first meaning includes things like literature, art and music. The second is the sum of all values accumulated in a geographical area over a period of time. This definition of culture includes archaeology and history. The third is "the medium of life". So, like mushrooms or sea bass that are grown in farms. They are called cultivated (as in cultured or grown in a prepared medium) mushrooms. Why so? Because they are grown under ideal living conditions. In other words, the third category is the range of conditions suitable for life. We have defined circular culture based on these 3 meanings.

Circular culture is based on four pillars. The first is harmony with nature, the second is harmony with each other, the third is harmony with our past, and the fourth is harmony with change.

We coined this definition of circular culture in Seferihisar Municipality and then in Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. Somebody mentioned a strategic plan earlier. I think there should be 2 aspects to a strategic plan. First, the plan must be universal. You would miss an essential part of your plan if you only consider your own community. You have to make sure that your plan is universal. That's why the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals have been a great model for us. As you know, the United Nations declares its development plans every 15 years. The goals for 2000-2015 were called "Millennium Development Goals". Then they declared 17 Sustainable Development Goals for the period 2015-2030.

These 17 goals, which will remain until 2030, are for the entire humanity to strive for and achieve. So, as İzmir Metropolitan Municipality, we considered these sustainable development goals as the backbone of our strategic plan. We also looked at İzmir's specific needs, dynamics and shortcomings to develop addi-

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tional goals under the umbrella of circular culture. In a way, our strategic plan was universal. It was in line with the UN's development goals while reflecting the specific needs, dynamics and shortcomings of İzmir. We set goals based on this and in line with the circular culture. We wanted everything we did to be compatible with both the Sustainable Development Goals and the concept of circular culture. We have always taken or abandoned steps by first testing whether they meet these criteria.

That is why I think it is very important for Diyarbakır to have a strategic plan. All this work, these meetings, the identified problems and the proposed solutions should be put together in a strategic plan. This strategic plan can be transformed into a roadmap that can be monitored and controlled by civil society organizations, regardless of whether there is an acting municipality or not.

These efforts should be turned into a strategic plan. I believe such a plan will also serve as a road map that can be monitored and followed by everyone.

Civil society is perhaps one of the most important factors that has made Diyarbakır very resilient. You went on a remarkable journey to fill the gap created by these undemocratic processes. This needs to be expanded. Perhaps the civil opposition should be transformed into a composite opposition and perhaps more civil society organizations should become part of this journey.

I would like to draw your attention to these four areas: women, education, environment, and disasters. These four issues are the main determining factors for civil society organizations and political systems not only in Diyarbakır but in the whole country. I mean the platforms, associations, and foundations that are active in these four areas. Perhaps we could try to expand the scope of these efforts by uniting all the actors in these areas.

Let's take earthquakes and other disasters, for example. We all know that the effects of the climate crisis are no longer seen just in distant places. It has reached a point where we are all experiencing the consequences first hand in our daily lives. There are major floods, fires, and disasters, and they are all consequences of this global climate crisis. It's proof that we are living on a sick planet. No living thing can be healthy on an unhealthy planet. Therefore, we must create resilient cities, villages, neighborhoods, and countries.

Maybe we should make that our top priority. Again, regardless of government-municipality relations, the top priority of the people who live in this city should be to create a resilient city. To become a resilient city, we need to have disaster volunteers. We have done this in İzmir. There are 1293 neighborhoods in İzmir. In all 1293 neighborhoods, we formed teams of ten people together with the neighborhood mukhtars. Then we trained them and they started to train the residents of their neighborhoods. So if there is a disaster in one of the neighborhoods, we know what the mukhtar and the residents as well as other neighborhoods will do.

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There are three stages of disasters: before, during, and after. We have prepared for all three. We did a study to identify fault lines again as a pre-disaster preparation. It's called a seismic microzonation study. We worked with 84 scientists from 10 universities, and we tried to map the subsurface as 200-square-meter zones. We did this because the fault line surveys that the MTA had done were from the 1970s and were outdated.

Then we worked with the Chamber of Civil Engineers to prepare seismic safety reports on the buildings. We worked with young civil engineers and prepared seismic safety reports for 100 buildings. Then we expanded our work with disaster volunteers to 1293 neighborhoods and discussed what to do in case of a disaster. For example, we bought water tankers for forest villages. We installed small devices on these tankers to spray pressurized water. In this way, we have been able to extinguish dozens of fires before they spread, through the early intervention of volunteers.

Especially in cities where there is a lack of local government, civil society needs to work closely with universities and professional organizations. Because civil society needs to be informed by scientific knowledge. At the same time, we need to work with professional organizations that apply scientific knowledge to our everyday lives. This cooperation will allow civil society to create solutions on a scientific basis, to prepare roadmaps and to implement them in daily life.

Therefore, my first suggestion is to prepare a strategic plan. My second suggestion is to work closely with universities and professional organizations. These protocols and agreements are crucial. Because civil society needs scientific knowledge in all areas of life. Not only civil society, but also the municipality. We need it even more where the municipality is lacking. Therefore, my second suggestion is to continue to work by establishing stronger links with universities and professional organizations.

Let me make a few more small concrete suggestions, and then maybe we can go further with your questions. Mehmet Aslan explained economic democracy very well. He described the shortcomings of land consolidation and comparative advantages in agricultural production. Like lentil production. Lentil production is very valuable. I think there should be lentil restaurants in Diyarbakir. Lentils can be a good tool for branding Diyarbakir and creating a different perception of the city.

For example, we can make sure people think of lentils when Diyarbakir is mentioned. Or one of the seven endemic types of wheat, or bread made with these types of wheat... These are things that not many people know about, but when they do, they will realize how valuable they are. Or organic cotton... By correctly identifying the comparative advantages and turning them into positive public perceptions, Diyarbakir can find a new way forward. We shouldn't ignore these opportunities.

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Another interesting thing that was mentioned earlier is the city's comparative advantage in information, communication, and software. There are many great examples of this around the world, such as Ireland and India. Perhaps this is a result of the lack of local government and a way to increase the resilience of the city in this climate. So we need to address that. Yes, the youth and the children were able to push their abilities to get out of this oppressive and limiting life and come up with great things. This means that the wise people and civil society organizations in Diyarbakir should think about what else can be achieved with these young people. I believe that this will open our minds and broaden our horizons.

"A city without a municipality is an orphaned city."² Yes, this is a great observation, but it should not lead to despair. We know what orphans can do. Yes, a city without a municipality is an orphan, but it can also grow a spirit of resilience. You are already experiencing this. There is no need for me to say it, but this should not turn into despair.

As I said at the beginning, all cities in Turkey are watching Diyarbakir and Izmir with curiosity. You, as Diyarbakir, must raise this hope despite everything that is happening. Because we, the people who live outside Diyarbakir, look at Diyarbakir to look for hope. This is not only about you anymore. What you do will also affect our hope. Yes, a city without a municipality is an orphaned city, but being an orphan is not the end of the world. On the contrary, we must look for ways to create new opportunities. I'd like to conclude my speech here. If you have any questions, I'll try to answer them. Thank you very much.

Sedat Yurtdaş

Thank you very much, Mayor Soyer. You pointed out the similarities between Diyarbakir and Izmir, as well as how the two cities have contributed to each other in the past and will do so in the future. We will be able to discuss this further with the opinions and questions at the end of the presentations.

Now I would like to give the floor to Mr. Feridun Çelik, former mayor of the Diyarbakir Metropolitan Municipality. Let me remind you one of his actions during his term. He successfully cleared the area near the Diyarbakir city walls –which was an almost impossible task, but he managed to do it with dialog with the public. He also made a huge investment in the underground and it was kind of misunderstood. That's why I wanted to remind everyone. Without further ado, the floor is yours, Mr. Çelik.

2 Mehmet Aslan quoted this statement in his presentation at the focus group meeting on Economic Situation and Rural Development, which he moderated.

6. The Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality's Experience in Local Administration

Former Mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality Feridun Çelik

First of all, I would like to extend my greetings and respects to all participants. It's been a long time. It's been almost 20 years since I left office. 1999 was a very difficult year for us. We are, yet again, witnessing a test of democracy. As many of you would remember that in 1994, the actual owners of this city could not find representation in the municipalities due to political reasons, oppression, and attacks. Because at that time, we decided to boycott the elections with the party which Sedat Yurtdaş was a member of. It was a mistake against the will of the people.

Unfortunately, the process that was to start in 1994 started in 1999. Of course, many of you remember the atmosphere of 1999. Maybe some of our friends in younger generation may not remember, but we didn't even have the chance to present our campaign pledges to our people. We weren't even allowed to hold rallies.

Even under these circumstances, our people supported us with great devotion. The main thing that our community, the region, and the city expected to see was the resolution of the Kurdish question. People weren't interested in our promises about the local government. We had prepared for the process. Our motto was "we will be the ones who will govern our city and ourselves". I think this slogan was very meaningful. It reflected the basis of democracy. With great devotion, support, and contribution of our people, the Diyarbakır municipality of 1999-2004 started a new chapter terms of local government –from culture and arts, the protection and use of historical sites, to the solution of infrastructure problems.

Of course, the developing political process and atmosphere also played a role in this –including the ceasefire in 1999, the efforts to start a peace process, developments regarding a new future in Turkey, and hopes for democratizing Turkey through building local and central government relations. At the time, we paid visits to the central government, to president Süleyman Demirel. We also paid visits to several departments of the government. Think about it, even Mr. Bahçeli visited Diyarbakır at the time. There was a different political atmosphere. This showed people that rebuilding society was possible. This gave us, local administrators, an advantage. We managed to complete and realize many of our projects in a short period of time.

The support of our people was really great. We razed the streets of the city for many months during the infrastructure works, but we did not receive the slightest objection or reaction from our people. On the contrary, we received lots of support. Because infrastructure was the biggest problem for the people. At that time, people embraced these efforts. Our biggest assets, the city walls and Di-

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Yarbakır Fortress were occupied and under attack. We had to clean up the area.

Let me put it like this: When I went to see the city walls with a friend during my college years, my friend pointed his finger to the buildings around the walls and said "If I become the mayor one day, I will remove those buildings". Then I said to him "If I become the mayor, the first thing I would do is to clear the base of the city walls". Thankfully, we could make it. We had the support of the 90% of public and of civil society. For example, the Journalists' Association had a very nice establishment at the base of the walls. It wasn't even that invasive. But they took initiative and we had incredible success with solidarity. Diyarbakır has witnessed many collaborations between civil society, political parties, and local administrations since the 1990s.

We did our best to improve this work after 1999. One of our noteworthy efforts was the *Yerel Gündem 21* project. We partially had success in these projects. After my term in office, our friends from HEP, HADEP and others, who were constantly threatened with termination and lawsuits, took over. Until 2016, the city made incredible progress in transforming and renewing the city every day and opening up new areas where different communities of the city could participate. Then, unfortunately, the trustee administration came in 2016. Even though Selçuk Mızraklı was elected in 2019, there was nothing he could do for only 4 months in office.

The appointment of trustees destroyed the city's values, memory, and everything. It's an unprecedented practice. What was the end goal here? As Mr. Tunç Soyer also said, if a mayor is guilty of a crime, you would arrest them and put them on trial. The council would appoint a new mayor among its members. Instead, the city has been slapped with a freak, unprecedented trustee system. Unfortunately, the city has been under this administration for the last 8 years. This city doesn't deserve this. We can see how meaningful peace is from the case Mehmet Aslan mentioned about the 10 billion dollars.

Can a civil servant be in touch with the soul of this city? Can they really understand the language, memory and history of these streets? It is not possible. Unfortunately, this is the process we are about to begin. We are not hopeless though, Diyarbakır has always been resilient and always will be. Even if they attempt to implement something similar in the future, the city will still have the power and means to govern itself. This community is the proof of that. We have the power to handle 10 times more than this.

Thank you all again. If you have any questions, I will try to answer them. Thank you very much.

Sedat Yurtdaş

Thank you very much, Mayor Çelik. Now I would like to take opinions and questions from our valuable participants. There are many writers who write about the Ancient Diyarbakır, but our friend Şeyhmus Diken is perhaps among the first to

come to mind in terms of culture and Diyarbakır. There are also many writers and intellectuals who create in Kurdish, but we especially want to hear from Lal Laleş.

7. Contributions and Questions

Şeyhmus Diken

I was the culture and arts advisor for Mayor Feridun Çelik in between 1999-2004. 25 years later, I became an advisor, albeit indirectly, for Mayor Tunç Soyer. I was the advisor for the 1st and 2nd Izmir book fairs. I went from Diyarbakır to advise them. We also met at Ahmet Güneştekin's exhibition. I participated in the 3-day Yaşar Kemal Symposium as the guest of Yaşar Kemal's wife Ms. Ayşe Baban, and Mr. Tunç Soyer.

This is a historic event. When Feridun Çelik was the mayor in 1999, exactly 25 years ago, we were going through a very difficult time. Feridun Çelik was detained a while after he became the mayor. He was detained for 4 days. They actually thought they were going to keep him detained for a long time. The city showed incredible support. There was an intense reaction and demonstrations from the public in front of the prison he was kept in. There were thousands of people. At the end of the fourth day Feridun Çelik came out like a hero. A moment ago Feridun Çelik also talked about ownership. This was an example of that. In a strange twist of fate, we couldn't show the same support to Dr. Selçuk Mızraklı when the trustee was appointed. There was a very weak reaction. And that was due to severe oppressive policies in effect at the time.

Feridun Çelik and Tunç Soyer have something that I find interesting in common. They both act on brand with their cultural policies. Feridun Çelik's worked hard for allowing the people to lean back on the basalt stones to admire the beauty and splendor of the city walls, with all its history and cultural heritage. This was his brand identity.

The second thing Feridun Çelik started in the city is the culture and arts festivals. I'm sure he remembers that a few inspectors came to us to investigate the festival. They contacted me as I was in the coordination team. They asked "Okay, we get Turkish and Kurdish but why do you need all these languages like Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, English and so on?" I replied, "I think this is the worst question to ask. There used to be two local governments in the city. Imagine a line going straight through Suriçi, one half had an Armenian Mayor and the other had a Kurdish Mayor. This city has multiple cultures, languages, and identities. You should investigate us if we didn't include these identities and languages in such a diverse city, not the other way around." In the end, they decided that investigation wasn't necessary. We thanked them and offered them a cup of tea before they left. These were the types of civil inspectors we had at the time.

Now, years later in Izmir, Mayor Tunç Soyer tried to create a similar cultural identi-

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ty and has done a very good job at that. I think Mr. Tunç Soyer's statement about Izmir being the Diyarbakir in the east, and Diyarbakir being the Izmir in the west is a very accurate observation. We should also give a shout out to Abdullah Demirbaş for declaring Seferihisar and Sur districts as sister municipalities. There is a great quote from Amilcar Cabral, the leader of the Guinean revolution. He says national liberation begins with cultural existence. It is with that cultural existence that we gathered here today. Mine was not a question but an opinion. As a founding member of DİTAM, I think this has been a historic meeting.

Lal Laleş – Author (Spoke in Kurdish)

Hello everyone. I have often expressed myself in two languages in many parts of Kurdistan and Turkey. I don't express my opinions based on the thoughts, expectations, or potential reactions of listeners. I voice what I stand for and what I believe in. And I believe, first and foremost, the language of the city must be discussed within its own community. I have lived in this city, in Amed, for 30 years. Very few people in Turkey can think in their native languages. Ideas are ultimately formed through words, sentences, and the exchange of ideas. People express themselves through words and phrases. However, people who think in their native languages can't always express themselves. And no one raises concern about this. Of course, there may be some exceptions. But for the most part, civil society organizations, public officials, and political institutions do not care. Intellectuals, writers, or people in general express themselves best in their mother tongue. Our lives don't just revolve around the Kurdish question. The Kurdish question isn't the city's only problem. It has environmental, social, and other problems. I wanted to draw attention to it first.

The other thing is that I think Kurds don't talk about the real problems. Let's say a person is detained, arrested or sentenced. We share our opinions about these people and their situation. However, the main point we should discuss in such cases is the constitution. We have to say that particular article of the constitution is immoral, inhumane, and must be changed. But instead of doing that, we ask these people to be freed. It is not about individuals. It should be about changing the current state of democracy. Most of the time, we discuss people not the underlying issues.

Everyone here wants education in their mother tongue. But we need to focus on elective Kurdish lessons in public schools. It is essential for the children of this city. No matter how much we discuss this issue, most of the time we forget the reality because of our political views and opposing ideologies. We argue all the time. Meanwhile the city, children, and the language pay the price –and it's a very heavy price.

Let's talk about culture, for example. I'll be frank: We have writers who write in Turkish, who are known and recognized by everyone, with many readers. Enough is enough, we must tell each other the truth. Whenever the municipality organ-

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izes a literary event, since Feridun Çelik's administration, all writers who attend these events, including Iskender Pala, Orhan Pamuk, and others with different worldviews, express themselves in their native languages. Speakers at these events organized in anywhere in the country, whether it's İzmir, Bodrum, or İstanbul, should have the right to speak Greek, Kurdish, or Laz, just as they have the right to speak Turkish. So why don't the authors, civil society organizations, the writers' associations, including PEN and TYS, think about this? Why doesn't a Greek poet write poems in Greek? Why doesn't a Kurdish poet write poems in Kurdish? We, as writers, intellectuals and thinkers, must voice our concerns to the local government or the state libraries, and defend our right to speak in our native languages. Sure, literary work is important. But intellectuals have other responsibilities, too. We must follow our consciousness. We must take something from all cultures of the world like Noam Chomsky and Jean Paul Sartre.

I think, all intellectuals and thinkers in Turkey owe to Amed. This doesn't only concern the Kurdish freedom movement. It also concerns AKP, CHP, and MHP. No matter who you are, if we live together in this country, this is everyone's problem. It concerns religious and socialist writers. Because this is a moral problem. It would be strange for me to speak Turkish after speaking so much Kurdish. Thank you.

Sedat Yurtdaş

Thank you. Now I would like to move from culture and literature to economy and give the floor to Mr. Mehmet Kaya, President of the Chamber of Commerce, who is also the founding member of DİTAM.

Mehmet Kaya – President, Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry

First of all, I would like to thank DİTAM. While we prepared for the workshop, Mehmet Aslan, who is also our chamber's consultant in Ankara, has done a good job in his presentation about the economy. It was very good and fulfilling. Sometimes, in times of violence and intense political atmosphere, we neglect or are forced to neglect discussing the city's local governance, economy, and tourism. At the end of the day, Diyarbakır always ranks among the bottom 20 cities in Turkey, whether in terms of gross national product, the quality of life, or welfare. We should all discuss this and keep it on the agenda. Therefore, I'd like to thank DİTAM once more. We care about these works.

We know how important the municipalities are. The trustee administration harmed the life in the city, its development and resources more than it harmed democracy. The damage is irreversible. Repairing the damage caused by trustees is not easy, because there are countries and cities we have to compete with. I can give at least a hundred examples of mistakes and delays during the trustee period. This city had four trustees in five years. We had also one elected mayor, Selçuk Mızraklı, who remained in office for 4 months. Four trustees were appointed –trustees who don't even know Fiskaya is a place in this city.

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And every trustee brought a head of department with him. Mayors know what this means better than we do. Some of the heads of department were outsiders, too, which caused additional problems. I'm not even talking about corruption here, just the damage done by the trustees is extensive. We talk about this all the time. We have to keep discussing and exposing the damage caused by trustees in these empowering meetings. When you lose your right hand, you'll have a stronger left hand – it's something like that.

I would like to thank Mayor Tunç Soyer for something. We talk about cooperation and democratization of Turkey all the time. If you really want democratizing Turkey, wouldn't you want to keep in touch with the governing bodies in the cities where trustees are appointed? How many times have you tried cooperating with these cities since 2016? You won some of these municipalities with the support of the Kurds. If you want democracy, wouldn't you work with the cities under trustee administration? We tried reaching out to many cities but only İzmir gave a hand to us. We organize fairs together. This is not only out of mutual interest. If there was no municipality to support us, we could have established similar relations with the institutions and CSOs there. Now we have decided to organize joint fairs in Erbil and Duhok. We already have an agreement with İSFAŞ for organizing fairs. We also organize cultural events. Political relations have to be managed properly. This administration have done all of this but their successors may not do the same. If they ignore these relations and refuse to continue the process, that's the main problem. How much is CHP trying to establish relations with the Kurds? Couldn't they do it?

There is a lot of pressure from people to stop supporting CHP. We talked a lot about this. This was also discussed when the CHP leader Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu came to Diyarbakır for a meeting of DİTAM. We were told to build the right relations with civil society in Diyarbakır. Unfortunately, it didn't happen. In the end, there is a fragmented society where people and organizations don't trust each other.

That's why I'd like to thank Mayor Tunç Soyer. He is someone we, as DTSO, can easily work with. He opened the way to cooperation and improved the relations between the two cities. He visited Diyarbakır twice and has been open to suggestions about what to do. It's not just the Diyarbakır Chamber of Commerce and Industry. The representatives of civil society organizations here also witnessed this cooperation. CHP should take this as an example of how to establish a dialog with the Kurds. This cooperation between Diyarbakır and the İzmir Metropolitan Municipality represented by CHP should set an example. If we don't have these relations, fragmentation is unavoidable. Thank you very much.

Sedat Yurtdaş

We can take questions from the audience now. Then I will give the floor to the mayors and focus group moderators for answers.

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Ercan Akto – President, The Federation of Unimpeded Components

The presentations were very good and detailed. One of the most important issues that every organization that believe in and advocate for democracy should care about is the disability issue. People who are missing a limb are called disabled. If a democracy is missing a limb, that democracy should also be called disabled. From now on, we expect everyone, including local CSOs and mayors, to include an accessible democracy in all their plans, a democracy that includes disabled people and people with chronic illnesses. We want an accessible city.

Mahmut Özkeskin – Secretary, Diyarbakır Chamber of Urban Planners

I follow Mayor Tunç Soyer. I studied in Izmir, and graduated from the Department of Urban Planning at 9 Eylül University. As far as I have seen recently, you had an important study on how to best control the city water in Izmir. What's the progress of that study? What deficiencies have you found? I would like to know. Also, can you explain the 1994 process a bit more? Why didn't we go to the polls then? Thank you very much.

Sedat Yurtdaş

Thank you very much. Then let me answer the question about 1994. I was a member of the Party Congress at that time. I don't remember if there was something else that affected our decision. I actually voted in favor of participating in the election. However, our presidential candidate was threatened and arrested in Diyarbakır. Another candidate of ours was also arrested. Therefore, the consensus was to boycott the elections. We held the meeting in Ankara City Hotel. We decided to have such a political stance. I saw it as a loss on our part. The truth is, we lost an entire term in Diyarbakır, a city with great potential, for whatever reason. I think President Kaya meant this as well. Any other questions?

Suzan İşbilen – Rosa Women's Association

We've been talking about democracy since the beginning of the meeting but I'd like to remind everyone that democracy cannot exist without women. I think it is up to us, as the presidents of women's organizations, to complete the missing piece in democracy. The question "What Diyarbakır lacks in local services during the trustee administration" is a tough one. Diyarbakır has lost in all aspects. We participated in the women's focus group meeting and said this: The first thing the trustee did was to shut down all women's organizations, shelters, and departments that aim to protect women from violence. We shouldn't call trustee administrations municipalities anymore. Because they don't want to serve the people as they are an extension of the central government. They run things like an entirely bureaucratic institution. So, it's safe to say that women of the city lost the most.

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Violence against women intensifies every day. Poverty caused by the trustee administration and the lack of a solution to the Kurdish problem are the biggest factors that exacerbate violence. Mayor Tunç Soyer does a great job in democratic local governance. I'd like to thank him for that. I used to work as a teacher when Feridun Çelik was the mayor. I was in exile at the time. So, I could only follow the work of the municipality through the press and from other sources. It was the first term we won and it was very exciting for all of us. He really worked hard. I thank Mayor Feridun Çelik for his efforts.

Now there is a lot of talk about the trusteeship. DEM Parti reached an agreement with the government on condition that there would be no trustees. But the government has introduced so many restrictions that the mayor could only sit in the office and do nothing, while everything was under the control of the government. DEM Parti co-chairs organized a meeting with CSOs on February 26, 2024 to discuss how the cooperation between the municipality and CSOs should be. It was a very nice and productive meeting. We stated that trustees caused a lot of destruction and mayors don't have a magic wand that can fix everything. They can't possibly solve every single problem as soon as they take office, nor do they have the opportunity to do so. There are flyers everywhere that says "for sale from the Sur Municipality". The municipality sold everything that belonged to the people. Mayors have fewer resources for serving the city. Everyone explained the consequences of the trusteeship very well. I took the floor to show that democracy cannot exist without women and that women are also here. Thank you very much.

Duygu Berakatođlu – Clinical Psychologist / Secretary General, DİTAV

I have a question for both mayors. Mayor Tunç Soyer had opened a psychological support line within the municipality. How did it work? What was the feedback? I'd like to know.

Back in the day when Feridun Çelik was the mayor, we had a serious problem with teenagers and kids who inhale paint thinners and industrial adhesives. Purse-snatching was also rampant. These problems decreased significantly thanks to the efforts of the Mayor. Now, methamphetamine use is very common. How did you handle the drug problem at that time? What was the process like? I would appreciate if you could give some information about this for the record. Thank you DİTAM for the meeting.

Barış Avşar – Chief Editor, GazeteDuvar

The first time I heard Kurdish was in 1983-84 when I heard a Kurdish worker on the phone with his family at the post office in Bodrum. The Kurdish worker wanted to speak to his family and he spoke in Kurdish. The moment I met Kurdish was the moment I met a Kurdish worker. After that, throughout my childhood, I always met Kurdish workers, including construction workers and those working in the tourism sector.

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Here's the reason why Kurdish authors can't go to book fairs in Bodrum or İzmir as Lal Laleş mentioned earlier: Kurdish is the language of labor, sweat, and dirt. Kurdish is perceived in many places in the West in the same way as Arabic is perceived nowadays. Mayor Tunç Soyer is from the Aegean Region. He and I both know this perception has not fully changed yet. It's the responsibility of the people from the West but also of the people who live here. I believe the missing part is what's happening in the field of labor.

Yes, there are problems about the mother tongue, history, and existence but the vital point of everything is labor, or the working conditions of the lentil farmers. How did the trustee administration affect their lives or their communities? How was the industry able to survive? How could the industrial workers keep working? How were they affected? I would have liked to see that. That's the main thing missing in this project that we can make up for later.

I also have a question for Mayor Tunç Soyer. He talked about the relations between İzmir and Diyarbakır during his term. Mehmet Kaya also talked about it. Is there a guarantee for maintaining these relations in the future?

Cihan Ay – DİTAM Board Member and Lawyer

My question is to Mayor Tunç Soyer. There is a lot of concern here about the cooperation between local administrations and central authorities. I wonder if this is because of an ethnic problem? Is there any solidarity, cooperation or coordinated work between İzmir Metropolitan Municipality and, for example, ministries or provincial directorates? We are not satisfied with the level of cooperation in Diyarbakır. Is this also the case in İzmir?

Serhat Kaygısız – Mesopotamia Foundation

Our foundation focuses mainly on language studies. My question to Mr. Tunç Soyer is about language, then I will ask a question to Mr. Feridun Çelik as well. I also lived in İzmir for a while. A lot of Kurdish people live in İzmir. I would like to know a little bit about the municipality's work on language. Do you have any projects related to language? The population of Istanbul is over 20 million. Istanbul has a few institutions that provide language services. Many other languages can find a place in the city. But are there any facilities related to the native languages of different ethnic groups living in İzmir?

My other question is about communication. I wanted to mention this because I am a Communications graduate. My question is for Mr. Feridun Çelik. In 1994, we had some problems in communicating with the public. We also faced some obstacles. We still have a lot of serious problems. Compared to the former days of the Kurdish political movement, do you still see a problem in communicating with the public?

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Sedat Yurtdaş

I'd like to point out that the Mesopotamia Foundation was established for the purpose of founding a university where Kurdish would be the language of education. I'm also one of the founding members and I'm still on the board of trustees. They are doing very important studies on language and culture. They continue to do very important work despite all the challenges they face.

Öztekin Çaçan – İsmail Beşikçi Foundation

I am not here today on behalf of the organization. I would like to ask a question to Mehmet Aslan. We have to study the textile industry in Diyarbakır carefully. Agriculture is not the biggest potential of the city. We all know that. But the textile and manufacturing industries have significant sociological effects because of the high employment rates. For example, and this is not based on a study, but on my personal observation, workers in the textile industry are usually between 16 and 25 years old, and they are paid very little, often the minimum wage. They play music all the time in these workplaces to drown out the noise of the machines. This affects the health of the workers. These workers also don't regularly think or talk about the Kurdish question in their daily conversations. They succumb to conspicuous consumption. They spend all their wages on expensive shoes like Nike or luxury goods, mobile phones, etc. It is very interesting.

I have seen families almost renting out their children to textile workshops in the Bismil area. They take the child to the workshop and ask the owner to pay the child's salary directly to them, not to the child. I believe that changes in the textile industry will catalyze changes in other areas. We are witnessing a tragedy there. I think municipalities should work on this issue. Thank you very much.

Saliha Zorlu – Executive, Eğitim-Sen Diyarbakır Branch No. 1

I have two questions. DEM Parti had a similar study on how to prepare for the new term with civil society organizations. There are some examples of democratic, participatory and transparent municipal budgets in Turkey such as Bursa Nilüfer Municipality and İzmir Metropolitan Municipality. Transparent and participatory budgeting is very important. We want to have a gender-sensitive budget. Is it possible to have a budget that is democratic, participatory, transparent and gender-responsive? Are there any examples? What are your experiences?

Secondly, we have a climate crisis. We are also going through a world war. There is a massive migration movement that some right-wing actors are calling the Great Migration. There is a dynamic population all over the world. This leads to a cultural crisis where migration takes place. At the same time, it creates social and political problems such as the violation of the right to education, the violation of the right to health, and the escalation of violence against women.

İzmir, for example, has an experience with migration. In the 1990s, a Kurdish population went to İzmir. They experienced violations of their rights, including the

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right to education. In the Aegean region, which received an influx of seasonal workers, there were many rights violations. Access to multilingual education is already non-existent in Turkey. Even Amed has a migrant population. There are Syrian immigrants and so on. I think municipalities need to develop education and health services that also serve the local migrant population. I am curious to hear your experiences in this regard. Thank you very much.

Remzi Azizoglu – MED-DER (Spoke in Kurdish)

I would like to say that I think we neglected Hülya Alökmen. We should have mentioned her name as well. She was also one of our mayors and she is in prison.

Municipalities are not only there to make our lives easier and to provide services. They are also necessary for a peaceful and happy life. It also requires a strong identity. This conquest mentality has eroded our identity. And not everyone has fully developed their identity. Therefore, municipalities must work to develop and strengthen our identity, our consciousness, our self. This can be done by strengthening and developing our unity, language, history and culture. Municipalities should primarily work on these areas. This will strengthen our identity and consciousness. Amed already has successful civil society organizations working in this area. We will also contribute. Thank you.

Abdüllatif Meşe – President, Social Workers Association Diyarbakır Branch

I have been working in the field of substance abuse for 5 years. I have a question and I'd like to give some information to the mayors about drug abuse and youth. In the first session I talked with Meral Özdemir about this issue. I'd like to mention some of the interesting and serious cases we've come across, especially the cases from other cities in the eastern and southeastern regions.

After one of the meetings of the Children's Network in 2018, we wrote a report on child-friendly cities. Of course, when the trustees came to power, the report was left in limbo. I would like to ask Mayor Tunç Soyer about the process of creating a child-friendly city in Izmir. Is it still in progress or has it been successful?

Let me also say a few words about drug abuse. The previous municipalities did a lot of work for children and youth, including youth festivals. Unfortunately, there are no more projects for children and youth. For example, 15 years ago we used to say that young people were thundering onto the field. Now they are falling, going downhill.

Right now, drug addiction is at an all-time high, and it is still increasing. Drug use in Turkey has increased by 70% in the last 10 years and substance abuse has increased by up to 200%. Nothing is being done about it. Political and military-related factors are involved in some of the cases from other cities. Do you have any projects on addiction? There are none here at the moment and young people are in a very bad shape. Thank you.

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Mehmet Aslan – Economist

Your question was about informal employment, particularly in the textile sector. It is an important question about a very important problem. In Turkey, the ratio of informal employment to formal employment is still above 30% and it has not been reduced below 30%. The Ministry of Labor has a target to reduce the informal employment rate below 30% and they haven't reached this target yet. In 2023, the ratio of informal employment to formal employment was 32%. It is much higher in the textile sector. In the focus group meetings, we discussed the issue of informal employment, both in the textile sector and in agriculture. There is also a systematic and political aspect to this situation. Why is that?

Let me tell you two things. The first is that a member of parliament who is close to the government, a member of the government, made an unfortunate statement about Syrian refugees: "Yes, there is a backlash against Syrian refugees, but if we send them away immediately, the textile sector will suffer."

So the state set a target to reduce the informal employment rate below 30%. The state also has interesting incentive practices. Most cities in the region, including Diyarbakir, are in Region 6 for incentives. These incentives include personnel and social security premium support. If you benefit from these incentives, regardless of the sector, there is no difference between white-collar and blue-collar employees from the state's perspective. You only need to enter the number of employees and their social security details into the system and the state will support them based on the minimum wage. The state pays only the minimum wage premium support. Even if you employ an engineer and pay them 50 thousand liras a month, the state wants you to calculate the premiums based on the minimum wage, which is 17 thousand liras. Yes, the industrial sector has a high rate of informal employment. But so is agriculture and the service sector.

Moreover, the share of revenue in the gross domestic product has been declining for the last 10 years. According to my research, the share of revenue in GDP has gone down from 32% to 24%, which means a net loss of revenue by 25%. This is a big problem for us. In Diyarbakir, textile is one of the most competitive sectors. Batman, for example, has a significant textile industry, infrastructure and employment. We don't discuss the age of employment in the textile industry enough. We don't talk enough about the reward system either. We need to have a strategy and an ethical stance. We need to have a strong approach to employment and working conditions. It depends on how committed the parties involved are, but yes, there is a serious problem. I also noticed what you said about the textile workshops. There was loud music to drown out the sound of the machines. Most of the workers were women. There were also minors. It's a problem, you're right.

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Feridun Çelik – Former Mayor of Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality

In 1999, we had many organized political groups in the community. They became more active after we took over the local government. We quickly opened some centers for women and children. We implemented several projects like laundries and tandoori shops to help the community. We intervened in any social problems through the units within our party and neighborhood committees, and helped to admit people who needed treatment to hospitals or medical centers. We did our best to keep this process alive for the most part. But this is a recurring problem. That is the unfortunate reality.

They have concentrated all the public power in one place. I was in Adana recently and I saw the district governor, the governor and the police chief marching against drugs. It's ridiculous. It is unacceptable. We see the government turning a blind eye to problems. We see the problems with the government bureaucracy. This should be one of the top issues that we have to work on. Local governments have a great responsibility in this regard. We organized the first children's festival in Diyarbakır together with the Sur Municipality. We tried to create a different atmosphere for children and provide something for children from low-income households.

The Diyarbakır of today is not the same as the Diyarbakır of 1999. When we took power in Diyarbakır in 1990, the city had a population of 800 thousand. Today, with internal migration, the city's population has reached almost 2 million. Unfortunately, migration causes many problems in the social and demographic structure of the city. I even think that migration to the city has an impact on drug addiction and similar problems. Thank you.

Sedat Yurtdaş

Thank you Mayor Çelik. I will now give the floor to Mayor Soyer to answer the questions and share his perspective on today's discussions.

Tunç Soyer – Mayor of İzmir Metropolitan Municipality

What you said about kids and drugs reminded me of something. In the 1750s, Thomas Hobbes said, "In authoritarian societies, fear grows in two directions. The fear of incurring the wrath of power, and the fear of losing power." These two fears feed each other and cause the decay of society, social values and everything. Kids taking drugs at a young age is just one of the consequences of this decay. We can count dozens of other things, like the loss of humility, the loss of solidarity. Dozens of things that show the decay in our daily life. We are losing our values and our virtues. The use of drugs at a young age is just one of the ultimate indicators of this decay.

Therefore, we need to think about what can prevent this decay. We need to drain the swamp instead of wasting time on mosquitoes. There is much to be done, but we must act collectively. Neither the community alone, nor a civil society organi-

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zation alone, nor the state alone can do these things.

Nevertheless, we are focusing on what we can do on our own. As far as children's rights are concerned, we set up a shadow children's municipality. It was designed to empower children to claim their rights as children. They were elected, they set their agenda, held meetings and passed their decisions to the Seferihisar Municipality Council. Seferihisar Municipality gave them a budget. They spent this budget on the activities they deemed appropriate. This work then became more widespread in Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. The aim was for these children to know their rights, not only as the future adults of this city, but also as our current partners in life.

In fact, our motto was "The child's right, not the child's mind" and we have always followed this motto. This project has made children, especially those who live in the poorer regions, have more confidence in themselves and their family members. This self-confidence keeps them away from drugs and they are able to find other interests. As I said, this is just a step, a small step, but of course it is not a solution in itself.

One of our former mayors said that work on language and culture should be supported. I didn't understand him because he was speaking in Kurdish, but Sedat Yurtdaş summed it up for me. Our friend from the Mesopotamia Foundation said something similar. They are very right. We have had this concern from the very first day in office in Izmir Metropolitan Municipality. This city is creating wealth, but unfortunately only the people at the top are benefiting from it. We used to compare Izmir to an amphitheater because of its shape around the gulf. Those who are in the front rows of the amphitheater, those who are closest to the gulf, benefit the most from the city. But those in the back rows can't even see the stage. To change this, we created teams called Urgent Solution Teams to ensure a more equitable distribution of the city's wealth. The teams implemented projects that would produce quick results, especially in disadvantaged neighborhoods. Normally, these types of projects take years to complete because of the bidding process. But we were able to find quick solutions. Even though some people are at the back of the city, they should feel respected as citizens and individuals. That was the main idea of our project.

We believed that nothing we did would make these people happy if they didn't feel proud to be a part of this city. That's why we focused on work that would make people proud of this city. These Urgent Solution Teams didn't just focus on improving the physical conditions of these neighborhoods. We also opened youth centers, children's councils, and women's centers. We opened vegetable gardens. These neighborhoods are predominantly Kurdish. We were able to promote solidarity, encourage production and contribute to the household economy.

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I think it's safe to say that İzmir is ahead of many cities in terms of gender equality. We have very successful women in senior management positions. We have employed more than 200 female drivers. During my term, we trained and employed dozens of women to operate construction machinery. There are car mechanics in İzmir - women who change oil and tires of cars. We have trained and employed them all over İzmir. In other words, İzmir is still a women's city.

You asked how gender equality is reflected in the budget. We believe that one of the foundations of democracy is transparency. We can't talk about democracy if there is no accountability and transparency. It's not about broadcasting public contracts live on 162 datasets. You can find almost everything that İzmir Metropolitan Municipality does on its website in the most transparent way. You can see all tenders, all procurement processes, all projects, allocated resources, finished projects, ongoing projects and everything in full transparency. We are the top municipality in terms of sharing the most data in Turkey.

Duygu Berakatoğlu asked about the psychological support line. We had an earthquake during the pandemic. On the one hand, we told people to leave their homes because of the earthquake, and on the other hand, we told them to stay inside because of the pandemic. So there was a lot of confusion. People were faced with a terrible uncertainty. The most common question we got through the psychological support lines was, "Are we going out or are we staying in?" People wanted to know how to get through the trauma of the situation. So we created a database based on the questions and requests we received. Both our Citizen Communication Center and other relevant units were able to create solutions for the entire city based on this data.

I'd like to say a few more things. At the beginning of my speech, I talked about economic democracy. I realized that I didn't go into detail. Let me give you two specific examples. Economic democracy is about small producers becoming the subject of the economy. The easiest way to do that is through cooperatives. But cooperatives are not only applicable in agriculture. We can also create cooperatives in transportation and urban transformation.

Here's what we're doing in transportation. We announce that we are going to remove public transportation vehicles on some routes. Let's say in Ödemiş district there are this number of buses that make this number of trips every day. We gather the minibus drivers who work on this route to make a deal with them. We offer to withdraw our vehicles and provide the drivers with new vehicles of ESHOT (a bus company operating in İzmir) quality and standards, which they will pay for. In return, they will own the passenger potential on this route. The only requirement we have is that they have to provide the same standard of service as we do. So let's say passengers over the age of 65 are entitled to free public transport, they will have to provide the same service to them and we will compensate them for that. I won't go into detail, but in short, we were able to create transportation

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cooperatives and take the city's public transportation vehicles off those routes. We were able to save a lot of money and resources, including diesel fuel, vehicle maintenance, repairs, driver wages, and so on. It also created a great source of income for the minibus drivers who joined together as a cooperative. Our citizens benefited from traveling to remote destinations with quality vehicles. This is our cooperative model of transportation.

We used the same model for urban transformation projects. We gave citizens the opportunity to leave their condominium ownership and become cooperative land shareholders, so they could work with the municipal companies without bidding. In any case, I believe that cooperatives are essential. If the small producers, the ordinary citizens, cannot become the subject of the economy, then neither consolidation nor lentils will help the citizens in terms of welfare. People must unite under a cooperative to be able to take their share of the welfare. This is an important task for both municipalities and civil society organizations.

I'll end my speech by answering Barış Avşar's question about the guarantee for the future. There is no guarantee. However, in a way, the citizens themselves are the biggest guarantee because we have worked very hard to implement model projects within the framework of social peace and a culture of coexistence for 10 years in Seferihisar and 5 years in İzmir. We will claim this achievement by claiming and transforming the party I'm a member of. Our loyalty, love, devotion –or whatever you want to call it– to this country has nothing to do with title, or authority. We will continue to work with love and passion. I will try to do everything I can to help the party become better and stronger, to spread our achievements and ambitions, and to curb and rein in this rabid government.

I believe we all have the same concerns. I know that each and every one of you here has similar concerns. None of us are happy with the poverty, the misery, the oppression that we live in right now. None of us are happy about it. In the end, this is what we are all really looking for. What are we going to do to change this whole story, to get rid of it, to make a different reality possible? I think we are going to do it. We can't run away from it or stay away from it. We have to do it. Because we know that production, the good, and the labor are always stronger.

No matter what defeat we have face, we can overcome that. We can do this. As long as we focus more on what brings us together, not what divides us. Let's focus more on that and work on that.

Finally, I would like to say that the work of DİTAM is very valuable and I have learned a lot from it. Thank you to everyone who contributed. It was very useful. I'm leaving this meeting with hope. I have seen that somewhere in Turkey people are trying their best for their cities even if they don't have a municipality. They are identifying problems and creating solutions. I am happy to have contributed a little. Thank you very much.

WHAT DİYARBAKIR LACKS IN LOCAL SERVICES URBAN PROBLEMS AND RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS

Sedat Yurtdaş

Mayor Soyer, thank you very much for your valuable contributions. I would now like to give the floor to Mesut Azizođlu, Chairman of the Board of DITAM, to conclude this meeting.

Mesut Azizođlu

I won't go on for too long. I realized that we still have a lot to do to give hope to Izmir. I would like to thank all the guests, those who prepared the reports, all the participants, Mayor Tunç Soyer, and Mayor Feridun Çelik. I wish you all a good day.



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