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A historical–relational approach to governance through states of emergency: from spectacular to non-spectacular settings in Turkey

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Abstract

States of emergency are usually approached separately in social, political, and economic policy spheres while they are generally tied to a concrete time frame: security, disasters, and economic crises are portrayed as discrete emergencies occupying specific periods. This paper shows that seemingly different and sometimes contradictory processes of states of emergency often intertwine with each other despite their variegated domains, scales, reasonings, and political endeavors. Moreover, their legacies and origins are found in the broader history of articulation of new forms of governance and accumulation of wealth. The paper presents two cases in Turkey that differ in terms of the violence they entailed while both exploited the same emergency declaration against disasters and the new Law No. 6306 on land grabbing. The first is a series of spectacular incidents in the southeastern Kurdish city of Diyarbakır and the second is an ethnographic study from Eskişehir, a mundane setting in western Anatolia. The study develops a historical–relational framework to examine how emergency governance operates through dual, interwoven logics of ruling and capital accumulation. This allows us to move beyond ready-made, reductionist understandings of contemporary emergency governance. Discerning institutionalization of states of emergency also shows their fragility and blurs the line between spectacular and non-spectacular.

Keywords: states of emergency; emergency governance; accumulation by emergency; spectularity/non-spectularity; urban renewal; law; Turkey

Introduction

We take a holistic approach to terrorism. In the past, the state's efforts would focus solely on combatting terrorism while neglecting other [sociopolitical] dimensions. Or, the other dimensions would hinder counterterrorism efforts. Now, we are implementing a strategy that will address both simultaneously ... When Diyarbakır was already a city, Paris was not even a village ... We will renew Sur [district in Diyarbakır] in such a way that it will be like Toledo [Spain], where everybody wants to see its architectural and historical texture ...

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Ahmet Davutoğlu, the then Prime Minister, February 1, 2016¹

We have an urgency to renew this zone because we have to face the reality of earthquake risks in Eskişehir. Have you ever wanted to visit Paris? You don't need to go to Paris any longer because it comes to you. We are bringing Paris to you with the Risk Zone Urban Renewal Project.

Yılmaz Büyükerşen, former Mayor of Eskişehir, June 21, 2016 (Field notes).

The similarity between the statements of the then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu of the ruling Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi; AKP) and the then Mayor of Eskişehir's Metropolitan Municipality, governed by the center-left main opposition Republican People's Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi; CHP), is striking. Despite the presumed ideological differences and political opposition between the two parties, as well as the vastly different sociohistorical realities and needs of Diyarbakır and Eskişehir, both politicians used identical narratives to convince people of the urgency of an urban renewal project to create safer cities. Crucially, both urban renewal projects utilized emergency discourses initiated by the AKP government against disasters and used the recent Law No. 6306 – commonly known as the “urban renewal law” in public – as the legal basis in order to achieve longstanding goals of accumulation and “govern[ing] unruly populations” (Engels 1992 [1872], 74; Harvey 2008, 33).

I argue that emergency governance operates along a continuum that includes both spectacular and non-spectacular forms, which are relationally intertwined rather than oppositional. “Spectacular” emergencies – marked by visible violence, military intervention, and intense media scrutiny – function alongside more mundane, bureaucratic, or legally justified “non-spectacular” emergencies that receive little attention but operate with comparable dispossessive effects. Rather than understanding these as binary categories, the present paper conceptualizes them as mutually reinforcing modes of rule that serve accumulation and population control. By comparing the cases of Sur (a district in Diyarbakır) and Eskişehir, the paper shows how states of emergency – whether overtly violent or quietly legalistic – share a common infrastructure and logic, and are enforced by political leaders, regardless of political affiliation.

Here, the terms “spectacular” and “non-spectacular” are defined based on three characteristics: the degree of experience of violence; operation of racialized capitalism; and the ability to capture attention from the public, academia, or media regarding the dispossession process. Crucially, these designations of spectacular/non-spectacular do not map neatly onto political party lines; both the AKP and CHP employ similar legal tools for urban intervention. The distinction instead lies in how these interventions are framed, received, and rendered visible or invisible within public discourse.

The first characteristic refers to the degree of violence experienced in both cities. The spectacular case, Diyarbakır, has witnessed significant physical, social, and cultural violence and displacement during the urban renewal process, consistent with

¹ Translated by the author from Milliyet (2016).

the decades-long military and bureaucratic oppression imposed by the Turkish state due to its Kurdish identity. Conversely, Eskişehir and its urban renewal process have been subjected to a more insidious form of mundane violence, rather than such physical violence.

Second, the operation of racialized capitalism within a securitized geography contributes to the spectacular character of the Diyarbakır case. Following Fraser (2019), expropriation is not a residual phenomenon but a central feature of capital accumulation – particularly when it targets racialized populations. In Diyarbakır, decades of military governance, curfews, and bureaucratic emergency measures have produced both large-scale displacement and a cheap, precarious labor force, consistent with what Karataslı and Kumral (2019) describe as capitalist development under hostile conditions. This makes Diyarbakır a quintessential case of spectacular emergency governance driven by racialized logics of accumulation. Building on this approach, the paper also advances the argument that emergency governance encompasses broader biopolitical strategies that reorganize labor and livelihood.

By contrast, Eskişehir exemplifies the non-spectacular functioning of the same logic, albeit in a different register. Here, emergency declarations and urban renewal projects are implemented through disaster-risk discourse, without overt racialization or militarization. Nonetheless, dispossession and attempted labor displacement occur under the guise of modernization and earthquake preparedness. Thus, both cities show how emergency governance facilitates accumulation – through land, labor, or both – even if their levels of violence and public visibility differ.

Third, while the dispossession process in Diyarbakır has garnered attention from various academic and public circles, Eskişehir has not received much notice, despite displacements, dispossession, and inequalities resulting from the urbanization process. Eskişehir has noticeably drawn little attention compared to other western cities undergoing similar processes, especially larger cities like İstanbul, Ankara, and İzmir. One reason for this lack of attention has been the center-left CHP's governance of the metropolitan municipality since 1999, and its promotion of a so-called secular approach to urbanization compared to the AKP's urbanization model based on nationalist–Islamic values (Civelek 2024).

My aim is not to underestimate the attention given to Diyarbakır. The violence and dispossession it experienced have been far greater compared to many other cities (with the exception of other Kurdish cities). My goal, rather, is to reveal that despite the degree of violence and dispossession, both cases utilized the same laws and emergency narratives in order to achieve longstanding political and economic goals. As the discussion will reveal, accumulation and governing ambitions have been manufactured and operationalized regardless of party differences throughout the entire history of the Republic of Turkey and even earlier.

Moreover, the distinction I draw between spectacular and non-spectacular forms of emergency governance is meant as an analytical tool, not as an ontological claim. In reality, these categories frequently overlap, especially when considered through the prism of lived experiences, enduring historical patterns, and the interconnected workings of power. Scrutinizing the cases of Diyarbakır and Eskişehir relationally reveals the interplay between law, emergency declarations, and economic and political maneuvers of both central and local governments, regardless of the degree of violence and spectularity these cases experienced. In essence, the paper argues that

emergency declarations and related projects are not exclusive to spectacular, exceptional cases. Banal, mundane cases make use of same emergency declarations, laws, and rhetoric. To demonstrate the integrity of states of emergency in policymaking, this paper moves beyond analyzing only attention-grabbing, extraordinary cases and includes a mundane case to illustrate their coexistence.

Crucially, instead of rigidly framing the discussion based on a dichotomy between spectacularity and non-spectacularity, the paper attempts to show the blurring of the line between the two, thus presenting complexities in understanding the dynamics of states of emergency landscapes. Drawing upon two cases, the paper delves into the evolving relationship between spectacular and non-spectacular emergency governance. Diyarbakır facilitates an exploration of explicit processes of governance and accumulation through various emergency declarations characterized by diverse rationales, discourses, and legal foundations. Further, Eskişehir's non-spectacular character underscores the banality of states of emergency operationalized within a mundane setting. While spectacular and violent cases justly command attention, this paper contends that mundane cases, though often overlooked, unfold in the backdrop of such spectacular instances and frequently serve to reinforce the hegemony of the states of emergency within which they are situated.

Methodologically, the analysis of Diyarbakır is based on secondary literature research and ethnographic studies by other anthropologists and sociologists, whereas Eskişehir is investigated through ethnographic research that I conducted between 2013 and 2020 to observe the entire policymaking process of the Risk Zone Urban Renewal Project (Civelek 2023). Through the guidelines of anthropological and critical policy studies (Clarke et al. 2015; Shore 2011; Wedel et al. 2005) I scrutinized the real-world policy-making processes of both cases to demonstrate the relational and historical interconnectedness of states of emergency while addressing both the strengths and shortcomings of emergency governance.

Thus, the aim of this paper is twofold. First, I develop a relational approach to reveal how seemingly different types of states of emergency declared in various social, political, and economic policy areas – typically studied in isolation, such as those addressing terrorism, disasters, and economic crises – are in fact interconnected and often operate through shared rationalities. I argue that states of emergency in various policy domains and laws, nonetheless, share common agendas of consolidating political and economic power. A relational analysis enables us to explore the interconnectedness between states of emergency in terms of their accumulation and governing agendas.

Second, by tracing a historical genealogy, I situate the recent emergency declarations of the Turkish government within a historical continuum of states of emergency governance. In this historical analysis, particular emphasis is placed on how states of emergency are utilized for land expropriations in order to consolidate and distribute economic and political ambitions of national and local governments. In doing so, I contextualize the urban renewal efforts in Diyarbakır and Eskişehir within not only the recent emergency declaration concerning natural hazards but also the broader historical context of laws and policies that have invoked emergency declarations and consequent urgent expropriations in Turkey. This extends not only from the recent history of economic neoliberalization, but rather goes back to the establishment of the Republic and even to Ottoman law. Furthermore, the historical–

relational analysis of urban renewal attempts expands the scholarly discussion from disaster capitalism to, what I call, “states of emergency capitalism.”

Below, the paper initiates discussion with a relational analysis of the interlinking states of emergency across various policy domains. This is followed by a historical analysis of states of emergency and their relationships with land expropriations, with a particular focus on Turkey. The final sections will analyze Diyarbakır and Eskişehir, discussing the interconnectedness of spectacular and non-spectacular cases co-constituting each other.

Studying states of emergency relationally

In *State of Exception*, Giorgio Agamben (2005) shows that the regularization of emergency governance began during World War I, when exceptional legislation by executive decree became standard in European democracies. Crucially relevant to this paper is that this mode of governance merges economic imperatives with security concerns. Agamben (2005, 12) highlights the “implicit assimilation between war and economics,” noting that during the World War I, a dictatorship of the military high command was instituted across much of Europe, *blending military authority with economic control*. The economic aspect, according to Agamben, took the form of a general mobilization of men and resources.

Further, he notes that this practice was not limited to authoritarian regimes. In Germany, for example, the Social Democratic Party inherited and institutionalized the state of exception through Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution. This illustrates how emergency powers, though initially introduced by right-wing or military regimes, were quickly adopted by leftist governments when they assumed power. For Agamben, this bipartisan adoption signals that the state of exception functions as a foundational paradigm of modern governance, a dynamic I will illustrate through the emergency declarations issued by both the AKP and CHP.

Building on these insights, this paper explores how economic imperatives are embedded within emergency governance and how the capacity to declare a state of exception transcends party ideology. In doing so, I aim to move beyond some of the limitations in the existing literature on states of exception by advancing a historical and relational approach.

Scholarship on states of exception has grown significantly (e.g. Ralph 2009; Scheppele 2004), particularly in the aftermath of the attacks on September 11, 2001, and the ensuing US responses, including the war in Afghanistan and the invasion of Iraq. Often inspired by the works of Carl Schmitt and Giorgio Agamben, these studies have illuminated how executive power expands while legislative and judicial functions are suspended. They have focused on the effects of such expansions – surveillance, suspension of rights, and constitutional authoritarianism – especially in contexts of war, crisis, and civil unrest. These works have been instrumental in showing how the state of exception serves as a reaffirmation of sovereign power.

However, recent critiques – of which this paper is a part – have pushed against the dominant frameworks of this literature. First, as Adey et al. (2015, 3) emphasize, the state of exception is only one among multiple techniques of governing emergencies. Emergency governance does not rely solely on exceptionalist legal frameworks but emerges through shifting practices and problematizations of life, security, and

response. This calls for a closer examination of the diversity and nuances of emergency practices and the sociopolitical rationalities they mobilize.

Second, while most analyses center on sovereign actors, other forces – including humanitarian agencies, non-governmental organizations, and international bodies – have played pivotal roles in shaping states of emergency. Fassin and Pandolfi's (2010) work redirects attention toward these actors, emphasizing how interventions in the name of morality and ethics often depoliticize violence and override state sovereignty (Ophir 2010). Their notion of “humanitarian government” sheds light on how emergencies can be governed in non-sovereign yet deeply consequential ways.

Third, this paper argues that existing studies often isolate types of emergency governance – war, terrorism, economic crisis, disaster – as if they exist in separate policy silos. This obscures the entanglements between different domains of emergency. For example, while Fassin and Pandolfi (2010) focus on humanitarian intervention, Zizek (2010) identifies a permanent economic emergency characterized by austerity and precarity. Others have examined emergency regimes in relation to terrorism (Dillon 2007), natural and technological disasters (Murray 2009), epidemics (Nguyen 2009), and the COVID-19 pandemic (Halstead 2020). Rather than treating emergency declarations as discrete or siloed events, this paper traces their interconnectedness through a genealogy from Turkey, highlighting how economic, political, and security rationalities are deeply intertwined in the production and operation of emergency governance.

It is crucial to emphasize that relationality does not refer merely to the co-occurrence or resemblance of different states of emergency, but to the way they are co-constituted through shared infrastructures of rule and accumulation. A relational approach foregrounds how different modalities of emergency governance – whether spectacular or mundane – operate through legal mechanisms, administrative categories, and political logics that circulate across cases and institutional settings. In this sense, the post-conflict expropriations and violent curfews in Diyarbakır, and the bureaucratic designation of “risk areas” in Eskişehir, are not isolated episodes. They are linked by a common logic: the use of emergency powers to dispossess populations and reorganize urban space for capital accumulation and political control. Rather than treating security, disaster, and urban policy as separate domains, a relational approach asks how these domains are governed through overlapping legal rationalities and state techniques that reinforce each other across space and time. This perspective builds on my critique of exceptionalist literature, especially those that extend Agamben's insights without attending to the ways that emergency governance mutates across policy sectors and actors.

Importantly, the decision to analyze one spectacular case and one non-spectacular case is not incidental but intentional. While it would be possible to compare two spectacular instances, placing a highly visible, violent emergency next to a bureaucratic and largely unnoticed one better illuminates the shared logic and tools of emergency governance despite their overt differences. This juxtaposition exposes how seemingly different modalities are united by a common rationality of rule and dispossession.

Importantly, relational thinking in this paper does not only rest on a comparison between two settings. It also examines how, within each case, multiple logics of rule – security, urban planning, and population control – intersect and become

operationalized through overlapping policy mechanisms. This approach foregrounds the internal complexity of emergency governance, showing how different domains and rationalities of accumulation and ruling purposes co-produce emergency governance.

Finally, much of the literature focuses on the overreach of executive power, rarely addressing how emergency declarations may falter, be resisted, or generate unintended consequences. This paper centers not only on the rationalities and institutional mechanisms through which emergencies are declared and administered but also the practices of resistance playing a role in their scope. It is in these moments – where declarations are contested, defied, or redirected – that we see the relational and historically contingent nature of emergency governance most clearly.

Historical genealogy of states of emergency in Turkey

Studies of states of emergency have generally been event-based research fixed in a certain time frame. The discussion below, divided into three sections, will trace the historical foundations and legal bases of emergencies that have long existed in the Turkish state while emphasizing the interplay between various forms of emergency governance through a relational analysis.

From the Ottoman era to the Republic

Although the ideological foundations of the Republic – established in 1923 – differed from those of the Ottoman Empire, the new Republic inherited key legal traditions from its predecessor, notably the concepts of the state of siege and public interest (Lévy-Aksu 2016; Parslow 2016). The legal regulation of emergency governance, historically known as the state of siege (*sıkı yönetim*), can be traced back to the late Ottoman period. Under Sultan Abdülhamid II, *idare-i örfiyye*, equivalent to a state of siege, was defined in the 1876 Constitution (*Kanuni Esasi*) as a condition involving the suspension of political and legal order. Within a year, in 1877, *idare-i örfiyye* was issued as a bylaw (Üskül 1997). Furthermore, the 1876 Constitution was the first legal document to introduce another crucial notion called *menafi-i umumiye*, an equivalent of the public interest, another significant concept to be discussed further. Article 21 of *menafi-i umumiye* defined the limitations of property rights: “everyone has the right to own property and possessions. Unless it is necessary for the *public interest* and its value is paid in advance, no one’s property could be confiscated” (translation and emphasis mine).

Notably, *idare-i örfiyye* was “one of the few Ottoman legal notions to be adopted as is by the republican regime after 1923” (Lévy-Aksu 2016, 26), demonstrating the enduring Ottoman legacy on the legal structures of modern Turkey. Since the establishment of the Republic, successive governments have maintained the tradition of *idare-i örfiyye*, elevating it from an exceptional measure to a conventional principle of the legal system (Parslow 2016). Particularly significant is that the 1877 bylaw of *idare-i örfiyye* remained in effect for nearly the first two decades of the Republic until its legislative repeal in 1940, when Martial Law² No. 3832 was enacted (Üskül 1997, 35–85).

² For clarity, I will continue to use the term “state of siege” throughout the remainder of the paper, rather than “proclamation of Martial Law” as the Ottoman and Turkish legal tradition followed the

Article 86 of the 1924 Constitution stated that a state of siege could be declared for a month in the event of “danger or imminence of war, or of internal sedition or conspiracy or intrigues directed against the nation or against the Republic” (Earle 1925). Significantly, Article 86 marked the first restriction on property rights and land expropriations in relation to emergencies: “States of siege consist of the suspension or temporary restriction of the inviolability of the person, *the home*, freedom of the press, correspondence, association and incorporation” (Earle 1925) (emphasis mine). The 1924 Constitution used the notion of the public interest that was defined similar to the 1876 Constitution. Article 74 states that “No one may be dispossessed of his property or deprived of the possession of his property except in the public interest” (Earle 1925). Later, adopted in 1931, the principle of state interventionism – *étatisme* – also invoked the notion of the public interest in determining land values during expropriations (Parslow 2016). Enacted in 1939, Law No. 3634 “Obligations for the National Defense” empowered the single-party government to expropriate property in the name of the public interest during emergencies (Parslow 2016, 31). Subsequently, Law No. 6830, passed in 1956 as the “Expropriation Law,” provided more detailed articles on property expropriations in relation to emergency conditions and the public interest (Karaman 2015). The 1961 Constitution further defined these notions in the expropriation section (Article 38) and emergency section (Articles 123 and 124). As this legal genealogy demonstrates, the public interest has been codified through constitutional and legislative measures, becoming a central tool for emergency governance facilitating property expropriations.

Neoliberalization of economy, urgent expropriations, and dispossession

The 1980 military coup in Turkey ushered in a period of military rule under a state of siege, during which democratic institutions were suspended, political parties dissolved, and neoliberal economic policies initiated. The 1982 Constitution, drafted during this period, marked a shift in property rights, favoring the public interest and urgent land expropriations. Article 35 states: “[property] rights may be limited by law in view of public interest. The exercise of the right to own property shall not be in contravention of the public interest.” Article 46, titled “Expropriation,” similarly affirms the state’s authority to seize private property “fully or partially . . . where the public interest requires it.”

Crucially, the 1982 Constitution introduced a comprehensive legal definition of the state of emergency – a first in Turkey’s legal history.³ Emergency governance was separated into two categories: (a) state of emergency (Articles 119–121); and (b) state of siege (Article 122). A state of emergency could be declared in response to natural disasters, epidemics, economic crises, widespread violence, or serious public disorder (Articles 119–120). Article 121 provided that financial, property, and labor obligations during emergencies would be regulated through a separate law. Accordingly, Law No.

French system. For further discussion on how the state of siege and martial law are conceptualized, see Parslow (2016).

³ In fact, state of emergency governance was mentioned in one sentence for the first time in the 1961 Constitution. Article 123 stated that “Monetary, property, and labor obligations that may be imposed on citizens in cases of states of emergency and their procedures for declaration, execution, and abolition are regulated by law” (translation mine).

1935, the State of Emergency Law, was enacted in October 1983. From 1984 to 2002, a state of emergency (*Olağanüstü Hal*; OHAL) replaced the state of siege and was extended forty-six times – particularly across the Kurdish region. This reflects the deep institutionalization of emergency governance in Turkey’s legal and political system.

Returning to the discussion on land expropriations, land governance also shifted. Law No. 2942 on Expropriation, enacted in 1983, introduced the concept of “urgent expropriation” for the first time. Unlike regular expropriation, urgent expropriation suspends private property rights on the grounds of the public interest. Though framed as “exceptional,” its use has become widespread. Article 27 of the law – drawing from the 1939 Law No. 3634 on National Defense Obligations – permits urgent expropriation in cases of: (a) national defense; (b) Council of Ministers’ decisions; and (c) exceptional scenarios outlined in specific laws.⁴ This includes Law No. 6306, which is central to both case studies in this paper.

The law’s timing – at the onset of Turkey’s neoliberal turn – is critical. The Expropriation Law paved the way for urgent expropriations in the name of emergencies, facilitating the appropriation of land, water, and natural resources to serve the interests of both the public and private sectors. Ambiguities in the Expropriation Law have led to inconsistent, and often unlawful, applications. The law does not define what qualifies as an “emergency” or outline what losses might occur without urgent expropriation. As Karaman (2015, 152) notes, these decisions often lack justification for how they serve the public interest. This legal opacity has enabled both public and private actors to push forward speculative or politically motivated projects.

The surge in urgent expropriations since the 1980s reflects a temporality within neoliberalism, wherein land grabbing is justified in the name of emergencies. This neoliberal shift in the economy marked a pivotal moment for urbanization in Turkey, where urgency has become an integral aspect of the urban renewal process. Crucially, urgent expropriations surged during the 2000s, when the AKP came to power and particularly during its second term.

Urban renewal projects in the 1990s targeted squatter (*gecekondu*) settlements, framed as sites of illegality, crime, and extremism. Squatters were portrayed not only as “invaders” but also as contributors to urban instability – especially Kurdish migrants from the southeast (Türkün 2011, 65) that I will explore further. This narrative justified widespread demolition and displacement under renewal agendas.

The AKP’s rule, law, and dispossession

The year 2002 was a milestone in Turkey’s urbanization, marking the AKP’s rise to power under Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (Bayırbağ 2013; Civelek 2019; Kuyucu 2018; Türkün 2011). Construction became central to the AKP’s accumulation strategy, and urgent expropriations sharply increased, enabling a drastic expansion of urban renewal projects. Hundreds of legal amendments and policy interventions paved the

⁴ These are Tourism Promotion Law (No. 2634), Mining Law (No. 3213), Turkish Petroleum Law (No. 6491), Natural Gas Market Law (No. 4646), and the Law on Renovating, Conserving and Actively Using Dilapidated Historical and Cultural Immovable Assets (No. 5366).

way for the large-scale reproduction of the built environment across residential and non-residential zones, often through urgent expropriations. The Mass Housing Authority (Toplu Konut İdaresi Başkanlığı; TOKİ), founded in 1984, emerged as the key actor, empowered by extraordinary privileges under the AKP government to implement renewal projects.

In earlier research on a TOKİ-led gecekondu renewal program, I asked a planner in Eskişehir's Odunpazarı district municipality how the project was implemented so quickly. She said they used the Expropriation and Municipality Laws to initiate urgent expropriation "in the name of the public interest," swiftly demolishing the houses – "it was a *fait accompli*," she pointed out (Interview on August 12, 2012). As this example illustrates, discourses of urgency and the public interest have justified renewal efforts while generating significant rents for public and private actors. As observed, "the threat and pressure of urgent expropriation have made citizens feel powerless in negotiations with authorities" (Türkün 2011, 67), especially in gecekondu areas, leading to displacement and dispossession through emergency-like interventions (Civelek 2019).

After the 2011 Van earthquakes, which killed approximately 650 people, the AKP government began invoking the "risk of natural disasters" in urban policy. Speculation about future catastrophes helped frame renewal as a moral and urgent duty. The government promoted the need for "safe and secure" towns and granted new powers to public institutions to carry out renewals under the pretext of disaster prevention. This aligns with theories of disaster capitalism (Klein 2008; Schuller and Maldonado 2016), where fear and moral panic serve as justification for aggressive urban interventions. During a 2012 meeting in İstanbul, the Minister of Environment and Urbanism claimed that 40 percent of Turkey's nineteen million dwellings needed to be renewed. Such rhetoric concealed structural inequalities and the neoliberal logic underpinning renewal efforts.

Just six months after the Van earthquakes, in May 2012, the government passed Law No. 6306 – The Law on the Transformation of Areas under Disaster Risk. Despite criticisms from opposition parties, including the CHP, the law was enacted swiftly. It contained vague and ambiguous clauses and was drafted without consulting urban planners, professional chambers, or academics. After its enactment, even forest areas, cemeteries, coasts, and military lands were eligible to be declared "risk zones" subject to renewal. Urban experts, activists, and chambers argued the law's true aim was to stimulate the construction sector (Union of Chambers of Turkish Engineers and Architects [Türk Mühendis ve Mimar Odaları Birliği; TMMOB] 2012).

Due to its ambiguous language, the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization frequently issued bylaws to implement the law. When I interviewed a bureaucrat from the Ministry in 2016, he admitted that "four years after the law had come into force, we still don't know how to interpret those articles – not even the Minister knows" (Interview on March 19, 2016).

Notably, Law No. 6306 authorized the Ministry, TOKİ, and other public bodies to carry out urgent expropriations to foster urban renewals. Table 1, adapted from Karaman (2015), shows a sharp rise in urgent expropriations following the law's enactment.

When Law No. 6306 is implemented, the designated area is declared a "risk zone" requiring urgent renewal. All construction and demolition halt, and annotations

Table 1. Number of urgent expropriations following the enactment of Law No. 6306

1986	1987	1990	1997	2002	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
1	2	1	1	1	4	7	6	14	17	12	15	32	163	267	231

Source: Karaman (2015).

are added to land title deeds to flag the area as hazardous. The Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, TOKİ, and appointed local governments then assume full authority, unless challenged through legal action – as I explore in the Eskişehir case.

Despite claims of disaster preparedness, TOKİ's projects have often failed to deliver safe housing. Exempt from taxes and Court of Accounts audits, TOKİ operates through patronage networks (Civelek 2019). Its buildings frequently use low-quality materials and lack structural safety, undermining the very goals used to justify their construction. Meanwhile, TOKİ has failed to meet its obligations to disaster victims, and numerous designated emergency assembly areas – especially in İstanbul – have been converted into shopping malls or religious centers. Yet when buildings collapse or there is mismanagement, instead of taking responsibility, authorities tend to attribute the events to nature or divine forces, framing them as inevitable or beyond human control. This exemplifies how “capitalism as disaster” is manufactured in Turkey (Matthewman 2015).

A spectacular case and relationalities of emergencies: Sur, Diyarbakır

To explicitly demonstrate the simultaneity and entanglement of multiple forms of emergency governance – and their orchestration for accumulation and control – I begin with one of the most dramatic cases: Sur, Diyarbakır in southeastern Turkey. In Sur, overlapping emergency measures and legal instruments converged around three interlinked aims: (a) restructuring space for capital accumulation; (b) governing the Kurdish population; and (c) reorganizing the labor force.

Located in southeastern Turkey, Diyarbakır Province and its historic district, Sur, have long been home to diverse civilizations, cultures, and religions. With nearly twenty million Kurds in the country, Diyarbakır is often considered the “de facto capital” of Turkey's Kurdistan (Yıldız 2021). Throughout the history of the Republic, Diyarbakır and the surrounding Kurdish cities have epitomized overlapping of emergency regimes where violence and racialized capitalism intersect.

The structural entanglement of capitalism and racialized domination is evident in the state's treatment of Kurds. Drawing on Nancy Fraser's (2019) distinction between exploitation and expropriation, the Kurdish case illustrates how these logics are unevenly applied. While some are integrated into labor markets under exploitative conditions, others are subjected to expropriation through land seizure, displacement, militarization, and the denial of political rights. This dual process sustains ethnic hierarchies within capitalist development. As Fraser (2019) emphasizes, these configurations shift across historical regimes, reshaping Kurdish marginalization and forms of resistance. I build on this framework to trace a historical continuum of racialized capitalism and states of exception in the region.

Though often framed as responses to security threats, emergency rule in Diyarbakır has also served to reshape urban space and labor relations. The long-standing construction of Kurds as internal enemies has enabled policies of forced displacement, expropriation, and redevelopment. These dynamics reflect “expropriation as a mode of accumulation” (Fraser 2019), where dispossession and political subjection fuel capital expansion. Ayata and Yüksek (2005) show that the mass internal displacement of the 1990s produced a precarious and mobile labor force, absorbed into low-wage and informal sectors. More recently, Karatasli and Kumral (2019) examine how conflict-driven dispossession contributes to class formation, while Ercan (2019) analyzes the role of post-peace process urban warfare in legitimizing aggressive redevelopment under racialized securitization.

Complementing these accounts, Taş (2022) argues that the Kurdish region has become a laboratory for Turkey’s neocolonial governance strategies, where urban transformation serves not only economic but also ethnocratic and ideological ends. Through the deployment of military urbanism and symbolic architectural erasure, urban renewal in cities like Diyarbakır is instrumentalized to dismantle Kurdish political, cultural, and spatial infrastructures. These interventions reflect a mode of racialized capitalism in which expropriation operates through both material dispossession and spatial-cultural domination – recasting urban space in the image of a homogenizing national order.

These urban redevelopment projects have served not only to erase political opposition but also to reconfigure urban space for profit under the pretense of security. Emergency interventions have always created expropriable populations, shaped through dispossession, displacement, and disposability. The mentioned studies above suggest that emergency governance in Diyarbakır should be read not simply as repression, but as a political-economic project that combines control with extraction.

This political-economic logic can be traced back to the early Republican era: based on Article 86 of the 1924 Constitution, the first state of siege of the Republic with an aim to suppress Kurdish uprisings⁵ was proclaimed on February 23–24, 1925 and lasted until December 23, 1927 in fourteen Kurdish provinces, including Diyarbakır. In contemporary Turkey, particularly since the 1980s, the armed conflict between the Turkish army and the Kurdistan Workers’ Party’s (Partiya Karkerên Kurdistanê; PKK)⁶ has resulted in significant political and economic instability (Günay and Yörük 2019; Güneş and Zeydanlıoğlu 2014; Yüksel 2011). The conflict has claimed the lives of 45,000 people, led to the evacuation of 4,000 rural settlements, and resulted in the internal displacement of nearly four million people. The economic cost of the armed conflict for Turkey until only 2005 is estimated to be between US\$150 and 170 billion (Mutlu 2011).

Crucially, a state of siege was declared in Diyarbakır on April 26, 1979 and repeatedly extended until 1987. Despite the transition to civilian government under the Motherland Party after three years of military junta after the 1980 coup, the state of siege persisted in Diyarbakır, Mardin, and Siirt until July 19, 1987.⁷ After the

⁵ For a detailed legal history and lists of states-of-siege proclamations with their social and political consequences in southeastern Turkey until the 1980s, see Mat (2008), Yıldız (2021), and Yılmaz (2019).

⁶ The PKK was launched in 1978 and began armed insurgency in 1984.

⁷ Diyarbakır, Mardin, and Siirt were the last three provinces where a state of siege was applied. For more information about official declarations of states of emergency and siege, see Üskül (1997).

enactment of the State of Emergency Law (Law No. 2935), the state of siege was replaced by a state of emergency on May 20, 1987.⁸ This was renewed forty-six times across thirteen provinces and lasted until November 30, 2002, during which “super governors” with extraordinary powers governed the emergency zone.⁹ Thus, from the initial state of siege in 1979 until 2002, Diyarbakır was consistently subjected to the violence of emergency governance. In the absence of the rule of law, exceptionality gained a “prosaic” character (Yılmaz 2019, 730) and became the norm for the population (Bezci and Öztan 2016, 171).

During the 1980s and 1990s, state-enforced evacuations particularly in rural Kurdish settings led to massive forced migration to urban areas, not only to Kurdish cities like Diyarbakır but also to western cities. This contributed significantly to the rise of gecekondu settlements. Diyarbakır’s population grew drastically, exacerbating poverty and unemployment (Yüksel 2011, 443). Genç (2021, 1688) describes the massive migration to Sur as “traumatic urbanization” where traditional courtyard houses were replaced by multi-story apartments and new gecekondu zones.

As previously noted, Kurdish gecekondu settlers were often associated with political extremism and urban crime, justifying expedited urban renewal projects. However, amidst the “ceaseless terrorization of everyday life,” Sur emerged as a stronghold of the Kurdish movement, symbolizing “the city of struggle” (Genç 2021, 1688). Despite the enduring character of the state of emergency and accompanying violence, populations have not been passive recipients of OHAL governance. Instead, they have actively asserted their rights, challenging Agambenian notions of the absolute effectiveness of emergency states.

With pragmatic aims for political gain, the newly formed AKP government lifted OHAL in 2002 under banners such as “democratic initiative” (*demokratik açılım*), “national unity and solidarity” (*millî birlik ve beraberlik*), the Oslo process, and the Peace Process (*barış/çözüm süreci*) (Günay and Yörük 2019, 25), leading to a “relatively peaceful period” in Diyarbakır (Yüksel 2011, 447). During this post-conflict era, there was substantial capital accumulation through the construction sector and international trade in Diyarbakır (Genç 2021, 1689). The election of the pro-Kurdish People’s Democracy Party (Halkın Demokrasi Partisi; HADEP) to the metropolitan municipality “nationally and internationally opened up a space for ... political and intellectual networks” and contributed to Diyarbakır’s rebranding through urban projects (Yüksel 2011, 447).

In 2009, the Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality and TOKİ introduced an urban renewal project in four neighborhoods of Sur entitled “Sur’s Historical Protection Project.”¹⁰ In 2011, then Prime Minister Tayyip Erdoğan declared that the urban renewal projects would increase employment and make Diyarbakır an international tourism destination (The Guardian 2016). Finally, in 2012, Law No. 6306 provided the

⁸ The initial emergency zone included Diyarbakır, Hakkari, Mardin, Siirt, Elazığ, Bingöl, Tunceli, and Van.

⁹ The super governor model was initiated with Decree No. 285 “The decree on governorship of the state of emergency zone” published in the Official Gazette (No. 19517) on July 14, 1987. Yılmaz (2019) points to a large number of statutory decrees enacted by the executive branch that enlarged the scope of emergency power and the state of emergency.

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion on the complicated nature of collaboration among TOKİ, Diyarbakır Municipality, and the Governorship of Diyarbakır regarding the urban renewal projects, see Genç (2021) and Yüksel (2011).

opportunity to resume the halted renewal program in Sur, which was declared a risk zone. Yet, public opposition continued to stall progress. Contrary to Agambenian thinking, this demonstrates that states of emergency and their asserted absolute authority can be challenged – a theme further explored in the Eskişehir case. Meanwhile, in July 2015, Sur was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site (UNESCO 2015) under the title “Diyarbakır Fortress and Hevsel Gardens Cultural Landscape.”

A real opportunity to restructure space – and manage the Kurdish population – emerged after the June 2015 general elections, when the AKP lost its parliamentary majority. In the aftermath of the elections and the suicide bombing in Suruç, the so-called peace process collapsed, leading to renewed armed conflict between Turkish military forces and Kurdish fighters in southeastern Turkey. Starting in August 2015, Turkey imposed indefinite curfews in seven southeastern provinces, including Diyarbakır, compounded by electricity and water cuts. During brief reprieves between curfews, many families were forced to flee. On December 11, 2015, just before a final curfew was imposed (lasting approximately five months), police announced that residents would be displaced. This curfew marked a state of emergency in which all freedoms and rights were effectively suspended, and violence encapsulated the area for an indefinite period. As a result, 24,000 Sur residents were displaced.

The then Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu in February 2016 declared that the operations and curfews that began in July 2015 were the right decision:

Our aim was to eliminate terrorism in this region . . . Yet, when we started the operations, we also began to plan already what we would do after the operations [in terms of urban renewals] . . . These cities [Diyarbakır, Silopi, Nusaybin] were developed in unplanned and uncontrolled ways in the 1990s and they urgently need urban renewal. Even without terror operations, this region would need urban renewal projects (Milliyet 2016).

In his speech, the interlacing of different forms of states of emergency was strikingly articulated. Davutoğlu further justified “urgent expropriation” as a purely legal step that would not endanger property rights but rather guarantee them. On March 25, 2016, the Council of Ministers declared urgent expropriation of 80 percent of Sur’s lands. The remaining 20 percent was already publicly owned, mostly by TOKİ. The legal basis of this decision was the risk-zone declaration under Law No. 6306. Since then, widespread displacement and demolitions continued. The aftermath of displacement in Sur not only enabled land expropriation and speculative urban renewal but also contributed to the formation of a precarious labor force. The 24,000 residents expelled during the curfews re-entered labor markets characterized by informality, discrimination, and insecurity – often joining other internally displaced Kurds in western cities.

Emergency measures in Sur – curfews, forced migration, and redevelopment – functioned not only to control territory but also to restructure labor: expelling politicized residents, centralizing property under state control, and facilitating capital-intensive redevelopment that relies on cheap labor pools (Ercan 2019; Karatasli and Kumral 2019; Taş 2022). In this sense, the dispossession caused by emergency rule feeds directly into labor expropriation, revealing another dimension of what Fraser (2019) calls “accumulation by expropriation.” Yet this labor dimension

remains largely unaddressed not only in official narratives, which focus solely on land, legality, but also in critical urban scholarship. Reframing emergency governance to include the biopolitical reconfiguration of labor opens the way for a more holistic understanding of how racialized capitalism operates through overlapping logics of control and extraction.

On the path toward rule and accumulation, Sur presents a spectacular case of layered imposition of states of emergency under different names and justifications, all propelled by undeniable violence. Its history demonstrates interventions across multiple policy domains and the mobilization of military power to achieve domination. This dramatic case helps us understand how emergency declarations, disaster capitalism, governance, and dispossession are deeply intertwined. At the same time, numerous less dramatic – yet equally consequential – cases show that states of emergency continue to be applied with overlapping purposes, albeit more subtly. In the next section, I turn to a non-spectacular case from Eskişehir to expand this analysis.

Instrumentalization of the emergency by a non-spectacular case: Eskişehir

Eskişehir, a city in northwestern Turkey with a population of 800,000, has been governed by center-left parties since 1999 under Yılmaz Büyükerşen's leadership.¹¹ Since then, the municipality has launched several urban transformation projects¹² under the banners of modernization and Europeanization, promising economic revitalization, increased tourism, and public benefit. One recurring focus has been the renewal of the Porsuk River banks in the Köprübaşı zone, initiated in 2001 and pursued through successive projects – all of which were annulled by court decisions following lawsuits from local residents and shop owners. I describe this pattern as Russian doll-like urbanization, where each failed project gives rise to a new one (Civelek 2023).

Project cancellations were based on varying legal grounds, including lack of public participation, disregard for ownership rights, vague urban plans, misuse of the “public interest” concept, and insufficient scientific justification (Civelek 2023). During the court process, experts concluded that the “public interest does not mean to defunctionalize the current usage of the entire built environment and open it for new consumption areas” (Field notes, July 12, 2017). For the first two projects, therefore, the Expropriation Law and the Municipal Law were not powerful enough for activation of the renewal plans, which meant that the municipality needed to invent new strategies for the next renewal attempt. Despite the CHP's parliamentary opposition to Law No. 6306, Eskişehir's municipality seized the critical conjunctural moment (Clarke 2014) to declare the area a risk zone. Echoing national disaster narratives, the mayor stated that the law had “rescued the municipality” (Field notes, June 20, 2016).

A 56-hectare area along the Porsuk River, home to 15,000 people, was declared an earthquake risk zone – despite contested risk levels. Following the declaration,

¹¹ He did not run in the 2024 local elections. The current mayor is Ms Ayşe Ünlüce from the CHP.

¹² These projects were: Porsuk's Banks, Springwater Area, and Prior Central Bus Station Urban Design Project (2001–2010); Mustafa Kemal Paşa Urban Renewal and Development Project (2010–2012); The Risk Zone Urban Renewal Project (2012–2019); and Porsuk I and Porsuk II Urban Renewal Projects (2019–).

construction was banned, title deeds were annotated, and property transactions became nearly impossible. The area entered a prolonged state of waiting, leading to notable physical decay.

Furthermore, the emergency declaration also acted as a “political technology” (Collier and Lakoff 2021) to suppress local opposition. After two failed attempts – halted by residents’ legal challenges – the municipality leveraged Law No. 6306 to override dissent, particularly from previous complainants. At the Communication Center, the mayor expressed gratitude to the national government for the law’s timing while criticizing earlier opposition:

If the 1999 earthquake had been stronger, our bridges on the Porsuk would have collapsed. That was my first year in office. Since then, I’ve worried about earthquake preparedness. We had prepared the Köprübaşı projects, but due to a few rebellious people, we couldn’t implement them. Finally, the central government’s new law rescued us. Thanks to it, we began work on a new riverfront project ... I thank the central government and especially the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization (Field notes, June 20, 2016).

Some members of the Chamber of Civil Engineers, Chamber of Architects, and journalists criticized the center-left municipality for making use of the draconian new law, particularly taking the CHP’s parliamentary opposition to the law into account. A bureaucrat within the Provincial Directorate of the Ministry of Environment and Urbanization in Eskişehir emphasized that the mayor has wanted to renew this zone for a long time, but he could not achieve his plans because of the court cases. “Finally, he wanted to use this very strong law to try his chance again” (Field notes, July 18, 2015).

With the Risk Zone Project, the municipality’s discourse shifted from its previous focus on the “public interest” towards the risk of disasters and the emergency of urban renewal. Perhaps one of the clearest examples of how the municipality made use of emergency discourse is what I observed at the Communication Center¹³ of the Risk Zone Project in July 2016. During a meeting with the municipality’s planners and a real estate valuation company, the mayor put emphasis on possible questions and challenges that might come from property owners. To reply to such challenges, the mayor ordered the officers to “follow the earthquake and emergency path.” He said: “Just warn people about earthquakes. Emphasize that an earthquake is coming, and we can’t take risks, we don’t have time to wait, we have to do something” (Field notes, July 21, 2016).

Meanwhile, the riskiness of the zone has been disputed. The head of the Chamber of Geological Engineers who is also a professor of Geology at Anadolu University in Eskişehir explained to me that after the 1999 Marmara earthquake the university and chamber started a detailed project to prepare the earthquake map of Eskişehir. According to this map, there are riskier zones that need intervention. Therefore, he guessed that since the zone is very valuable, there will be huge amounts of rent-seeking. He continued: “If their main motivation was to avoid the risk of earthquakes,

¹³ The Communication Center was opened in July 2016, where the municipality displayed the urban renewal plans for the first time.

they would have chosen riskier zones. The mayor was obsessed about renewing this zone and now he's found a way to do it with claims of disasters" (Field notes, March 18, 2016).

The municipality was not attentive to such criticisms. While it claimed that İstanbul Technical University (İTÜ) had conducted research on the zone, those research results, scientific data, or risk maps were not provided to the public, which raised doubts about the existence of any such research. The head of the Chamber of Geological Engineers further highlighted that he asked the municipality several times to provide him with the data that they claim they use. However, the municipality only answered that they took İTÜ's data without sharing any further details. Ironically, in times of such critiques, the municipality hid behind the law and criticized its draconian features which reflects the characteristics of a "cunning state" (Randeria 2003). For instance, during the opening ceremony of the Communication Center, the mayor portrayed the law as one of the most powerful in history and insisted that they had no choice but to apply it, effectively framing their actions as passive enforcement (Field research, July 16, 2016).

Finally, although Law No. 6360 has been the strongest law in terms of restrictions on property rights, the emergency declaration could not display an absolute power to decide for the future of the zone. In 2017, residents of the risk zone applied to the court to annul the project. The Council of State appointed three experts from the Departments of Geological Engineering and Civil Engineering at the Middle East Technical University in Ankara to conduct research about the decision of the zone's riskiness. I interviewed those experts to learn about their decision. One of the geological engineers explained the lack of research and data showing what kind of methods and research they used regarding the land and buildings to be declared at risk. "The municipal officers explained a few simple methods and tests without providing further data," the expert claimed (Field notes, April 10, 2019). This supports the claim of the head of the Chamber of Geological Engineers mentioned above. Moreover, another expert highlighted that he examined many other risk-zone projects and, in almost every case, "there is mostly a rent-seeking logic or some kind of political benefits behind them" (Field notes, April 10, 2019).

Although the municipality did not expect cancellation of the project, on October 3, 2018, the Council of State granted a motion of suspension of the execution of the Risk Zone Project while the annulment decision arrived on May 9, 2019. The suspension created disappointment within the municipality and the mayor commented on the suspension as "black humor" (Esgazete 2018). More significantly, he mentioned the need for a new urban renewal project regardless of any decisions of the Council of State. He said: "It is clear that we need to replace the Risk Zone Project with another urban renewal project. I do not know how exactly we will proceed with it, but our staff will think about it from now on" (Esgazete 2018). The municipality showed confidence that a cancellation would not lead them to abandon their ambitions for the next project. Based on the Zoning Law and Expropriation Law, in 2019, the municipality declared the Porsuk I and II Projects on the banks of the Porsuk River, becoming the newest units of the municipality's growing pile of urban renewal projects since 1999. Although the Risk Zone Urban Renewal Project was cancelled, the designation and boundaries of the 56-hectare risk zone remain unchanged.

The Eskişehir case shows that states of emergency are not omnipotent or uncontested. As highlighted by the conflicting and challenging views surrounding the designation of risk zones, emergency governance remains a fragile yet functional tool – its effectiveness dependent on political timing, institutional alignment, and the ability to neutralize resistance. By recognizing these frictions, we can better understand both the power and the limits of states of emergency as instruments of rule and accumulation.

Conclusions

In recent years, there has been growing scholarly interest across disciplines in understanding states of emergency globally. While much of this work focuses on contemporary declarations of emergency, it often treats them as temporally and thematically bounded events. This paper has argued against such reductionism by taking a historical-relational approach, tracing how states of emergency operate across time, space, and policy domains. Rather than viewing them as isolated or episodic, the analysis foregrounds their entanglement with longer trajectories of political rule, legal transformation, and economic restructuring.

By investigating the “genealogical tree” of emergency governance in Turkey (Yılmaz 2022), the paper disentangles the sociopolitical, legal, and economic infrastructures that have enabled the institutionalization of emergency powers. In this context, urgent expropriations emerge as both a historical and contemporary mechanism – one that links land seizure to capital accumulation and political domination. From the Ottoman legal tradition through the foundation of the Republic to the present-day neoliberal order, states of emergency have been deeply embedded in processes of dispossession and rule.

Further, the relational approach that I present allows us to go beyond comparative thinking. I show how, within each case, multiple forms of governance – urban planning, labor regulation, security management, and racialized control – intersect and co-produce each other. States of emergency are thus not confined to a singular logic (e.g. security), nor do they function solely through spectacular violence. They operate through a continuum of techniques that range from overt military interventions to quiet bureaucratic maneuvers – each reinforcing the other.

To illustrate this, the paper examined two cases distinguished by different intensities of violence and presence or absence of racialized capitalism. The Sur case represents a spectacular mode of emergency governance, combining armed conflict, forced displacement, and the destruction of urban space – all underpinned by a neocolonial logic aimed at dismantling the Kurdish political and cultural infrastructure. Eskişehir, on the other hand, demonstrates how the same legal tools and rationalities can be deployed in mundane, bureaucratic settings through narratives of modernization, disaster risk, and public safety – without the need for overt violence or racialized discourse, yet still aiming to suppress dissent.

The goal of juxtaposing these cases is not to flatten their differences or minimize the cruciality of violence in Sur, but to show how states of emergency persist and normalize through their mutual entanglement. Non-spectacular forms of emergency governance are not exceptions or outliers – they increasingly define everyday life. While Sur exemplifies the spectacular in all its political, historical, and emotional

dimensions, Eskişehir reveals how ruling unfolds quietly. Crucially, while I distinguish between spectacular and non-spectacular forms of emergency governance, this distinction is analytical, not ontological. In practice, the boundaries between these forms often blur, particularly when examined through the lens of lived experience, historical continuity, and the relational dynamics of power.

In the case of Diyarbakır, although the 2015 curfews, military operations, and violent displacement mark it as a “spectacular” event in the public imagination and scholarly discourse, for many local residents, the experience of state violence and emergency rule is deeply routinized. The long history of racialized governance, military interventions, and legal exceptionalism in the Kurdish region has rendered the state of exception a lived ordinary, embedded in everyday life. In this way, the spectacular overlays a history of the mundane – emergency governance that is no longer perceived as exceptional by those who endure it repeatedly.

On the other hand, in Eskişehir, emergency governance unfolds through quiet legalism, bureaucratic tools, and risk discourse – with no military presence, visible destruction, or media spectacle. However, for many residents, the declaration of a risk zone is novel and disruptive, triggering surprise, contestation, and political anxiety. What appears non-spectacular from a legal or institutional standpoint may still be experienced as a rupture in everyday life, particularly when emergency tools are applied in a context historically unaccustomed to them.

Thus, Diyarbakır is embryonic of Eskişehir in the sense that the normalization of emergency governance in the former helps to legitimize its expansion in the latter. The techniques, legal instruments (such as Law No. 6306), and rationalities piloted in conflict zones are refined and repurposed for seemingly mundane governance in other parts of the country. Conversely, Eskişehir engenders Diyarbakır in that it illustrates how the mundane infrastructures of dispossession – technocratic planning, risk framing, and legal abstraction – can stabilize and extend the logic of emergency beyond spectacular sites. This mutual shaping complicates any simplistic binary between “spectacular” and “non-spectacular.” It suggests that these modes are not fixed categories but relational positions, whose salience shifts depending on institutional context and the sociopolitical history of the affected population – an insight I hope future studies of states of exception will take into account.

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