

Socioeconomic Effects of Urban Transformation: The Case of Diyarbakır

Kentsel Dönüşümün Sosyo-Ekonomik Etkileri: Diyarbakır Örneği

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ÖNE ÇIKANLAN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The socio-economic impacts of urban transformation projects in the Sur and Bağlar districts of Diyarbakır have been examined.Urban transformation has had both positive and negative effects on social, economic, and physical changes in the region.While physical improvements were made, changes in the social fabric and economic balance were observed.
HIGHLIGHTS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Diyarbakır'ın Sur ve Bağlar ilçelerinde kentsel dönüşüm projelerinin sosyoekonomik etkileri incelenmiştir.Kentsel dönüşüm, bölgedeki sosyal, ekonomik ve fiziksel değişimlere olumlu ve olumsuz etkiler yapmıştır.Fiziksel iyileştirmeler sağlanırken, sosyal yapı ve ekonomik dengelerde değişiklikler gözlemlenmiştir.
ABSTRACT	<p>Cities experience changes over time due to various dynamics such as population growth, infrastructure deficiencies, spatial disorganization and economic transformations. This process leads to the physical, economic and social deterioration of urban areas, making planned interventions necessary. Urban transformation projects are comprehensive intervention processes aimed at renewing the physical structures of cities, improving the quality of life, ensuring economic sustainability and maintaining social balance. Like many cities in Türkiye, urban transformation projects are being implemented in Diyarbakır, particularly in areas of historical and economic significance. These urban projects in the Sur and Bağlar districts have significantly changed not only the physical structures but also the social and economic fabric of the region. This study evaluates the socio-economic impacts of these projects and the outcomes of the urban transformation process in the area. The existing literature on the topic is reviewed using a systematic review method, synthesizing data from various sources and interpreting the findings in a logical manner. Additionally the effects of urban transformation projects on urban planning, public reactions to the transformation process, and changing living conditions are explored using document analysis. These methods provide a comprehensive evaluation of the multi-dimensional impacts of the urban transformation process in Diyarbakır.</p>
ÖZ	<p>Kentler, zamanla artan nüfus, altyapı eksiklikleri, mekânsal düzensizlikler ve ekonomik dönüşümler gibi çeşitli dinamiklerin etkisiyle değişim geçirmektedir. Bu süreç, kentsel alanların zamanla fiziksel, ekonomik ve sosyal açıdan yıpranmasına neden olmakta ve bu durum, planlı müdahaleleri zorunlu kılmaktadır. Kentsel dönüşüm projeleri, kentlerin fiziksel yapılarını yenileyerek yaşam kalitesini artırmayı, ekonomik sürdürülebilirliği sağlamayı ve sosyal dengeleri korumayı amaçlayan kapsamlı müdahale süreçleridir. Türkiye'de birçok kentte olduğu gibi Diyarbakır'da da kentsel dönüşüm projeleri, özellikle tarihi ve ekonomik açıdan önemli bölgelerde uygulanmaktadır. Bu bağlamda, Diyarbakır'ın Sur ve Bağlar ilçelerinde gerçekleştirilen kentsel dönüşüm projeleri, fiziksel iyileştirmelerin yanı sıra sosyal ve ekonomik yapıyı da önemli ölçüde dönüştürmüştür. Bu çalışmada, söz konusu projelerin sosyoekonomik etkileri ele alınarak, bölgedeki kentsel dönüşüm sürecinin sonuçları değerlendirilmektedir. Çalışma kapsamında, sistematik derleme yöntemi kullanılarak konuya ilişkin mevcut literatür incelenmiş, çeşitli kaynaklardan elde edilen veriler sentezlenmiş ve bulgular mantıklı bir bütünlük içinde yorumlanmıştır. Ayrıca, doküman analizi yöntemiyle kentsel dönüşüm projelerinin kent planlaması üzerindeki etkileri, halkın dönüşüm sürecine tepkileri ve değişen yaşam koşulları ele alınmıştır. Bu yöntemler sayesinde, Diyarbakır'daki kentsel dönüşüm sürecinin çok boyutlu etkileri kapsamlı bir şekilde değerlendirilmektedir.</p>

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Introduction

Before the Industrial Revolution, the world population was growing at a slow pace. In 1800, the world population was about 1 billion, and by 1900 it had reached 1.6 billion. By 1950, the population had increased to 2.5 billion. Today, the world population is more than three times higher than it was in 1950 (World Bank, 2021).

The concentration of economic activities in cities has accelerated the urbanization process, but this rapid growth has led to the deterioration of cities in terms of social, economic, and environmental aspects. Urban transformation is seen as an important planning tool to make cities sustainable and livable.

Urban transformation aims to develop planned interventions to address the problems that arise over time in cities, renewing physical infrastructure, and improving social life. Like the rest of the world, Turkey also experienced rapid urbanization, particularly after World War II. According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (2025), in Turkey, a quarter of the population lived in cities in 1950, while in 2023, this rate reached 93%, and in 2024, it increased to 93.4%. On the other hand, the proportion of people living in towns and villages has decreased from 7% to 6.6%. However, rapid urbanization has also brought various socio-economic problems, such as unplanned urbanization, increased crime rates, poverty, and environmental pollution.

In this context, decision-makers have aimed to make cities more organized, safer, and economically attractive by implementing urban transformation projects in various cities. This study examines the socio-economic impacts of urban transformation projects implemented in Diyarbakır, which has attracted attention due to rapid population growth and migration movements in recent years. The transformation projects carried out particularly in the Sur and Bağlar districts are analyzed in terms of their economic, environmental, and social effects on the city.

The study has two main objectives: first, to assess whether the urban transformation projects have made these districts more livable; and second, to investigate whether these projects meet the expectations of the local population and businesses. Since urban transformation projects are largely financed with public resources, evaluating the success or failure of these projects serves as an important guide for future applications.

The study focuses on the effects of the transformation on security, infrastructure, and commerce while also addressing public satisfaction and the challenges encountered. As a result, the study found that while urban transformation provides physical improvements, it causes some changes in the social fabric and economic balances.

1. Urban transformation

Over time, cities grow, transform their relationships with other regions, develop technologies to create more livable urban areas, and build new economic centers. This process brings with it a constant need for renewal and change. However, urban regeneration is not a sudden transformation; it is a long and complex process (Tekeli, 2008, pp. 39-47).

In order to better understand the concept of urban transformation, it is essential to first examine this term in detail. The Cambridge Dictionary defines “transformation” as the process of making something or someone change dramatically in appearance or character, improving it (Cambridge, 2021). In this context, urban transformation can be viewed as the evolution of an existing city's structure into a different form.

However, the definition of urban transformation in the literature varies depending on the goals, vision, strategies, and implementation methods used. Kanlı et al. (2017, p. 145) suggest that urban areas, much like living organisms, are born, develop, become worn out over time, and may lose their functionality. In this context, worn-out and dysfunctional urban areas are considered spaces that should be redesigned and transformed from a systematic perspective. Donnison and Soto (1980, p. 221) define urban transformation as new methods developed to analyze and solve the increasing problems in cities. Couch (1990, pp. 2-3) argues that the concept of urban transformation provides a more comprehensive framework than urban renewal, redevelopment, and rehabilitation processes. Lichfield (2000, pp. 228-253) states that urban transformation emerged to better understand the processes of deterioration in cities. Thomas (2003, p. 15) defines urban transformation as a comprehensive vision and action process aimed at producing permanent solutions to the changing social, economic, physical, and environmental conditions of a region. Es (2012, pp. 55-67) emphasizes that political and administrative factors are determining in the urban transformation process, and these factors provide flexibility in the transformation processes. Mehdipour and Niab (2013, pp. 176-181) argue that urban transformation should include not only environmental sustainability but also social and economic development, highlighting the importance of sustainable urban policies in this process.

Based on these definitions, urban transformation can be expressed as the process of improving economically, socially, and environmentally worn-out and substandard areas by constructing new infrastructures (e.g., roads, housing, workplaces, parks, and commercial areas) or modernizing existing infrastructures to increase the livability of cities. Various methods are used in urban transformation.

Kanlı et al. (2017, pp. 152-153) have examined these methods in detail. Among these methods are urban renewal, rehabilitation, conservation, revitalization, redevelopment, improvement, cleaning, quality enhancement, and gentrification. Depending on the goals of the

transformation process, one or more of these methods may be applied together. For instance, urban planners may use methods of conservation and revitalization in an integrated manner when they wish to revitalize the city's historic center while preserving its historical and cultural areas. Kanlı et al. (2017, pp. 149-150) have identified five key dimensions to consider in any urban transformation project: social, economic, technical, legal, and administrative dimensions. The social dimension requires evaluating the impact of transformation projects on the demographic structure, socio-cultural characteristics, and social dynamics of the local population. The economic dimension focuses on stimulating economic activities by increasing commercial and human mobility in the transformation areas.

The technical dimension includes detailed analysis of the geographical structure, architectural features, and urban fabric of the transformation areas. The legal dimension requires a thorough examination of the legal framework that regulates the relationships among various actors involved in the transformation process (local governments, central government, private sector, and local population). Finally, the administrative dimension aims to ensure the effective management of transformation projects by involving all stakeholders in decision-making processes and ensuring the effective coordination of the process.

In this framework, urban transformation processes should be designed and implemented with a focus on key objectives such as economic development, social integration, and environmental sustainability. Therefore, considering the potential changes that cities may face in the future, long-term planning and interdisciplinary approaches should be adopted.

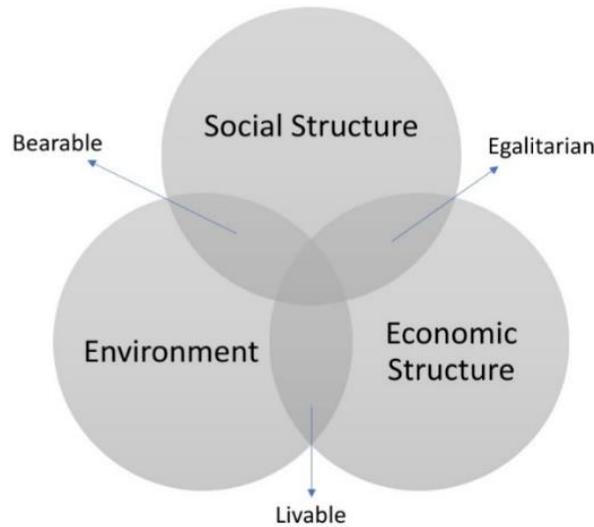
1.1. The Effects of Urban Transformation

Urban transformation cannot be viewed solely as a physical planning process, as it represents a multi-actor and dynamic structure with social, economic, and environmental dimensions (Kanlı, 2017, pp. 146-147). Therefore, achieving sustainable urban transformation requires a holistic approach that balances the social, economic, and environmental expectations of stakeholders (Rodney & Clark, 2000, p. 4). Urban transformation projects that focus on only one dimension may negatively impact the livability of cities by deepening social inequalities, failing to effectively preserve the natural, historical, and cultural environment, and hindering improvements in economic conditions (Gittell, 1992, pp. 224-225).

The model developed by Kanlı et al. (2017, p. 147), shown in Figure 1, illustrates the three core dimensions (social, economic, and environmental) of urban transformation and the interactions between these dimensions. For instance, if an urban transformation project targets only the social and economic structure, the resulting outcomes might be more equitable for society. However, ignoring environmental factors could jeopardize the long-term sustainability and livability of the transformation process. Therefore, the success of urban

transformation projects depends on the simultaneous evaluation of all dimensions (Kanlı et al., 2017, pp. 146-147).

Figure 1. The pillars of sustainable urban transformation



Source: Kanlı et al., 2017.

Urban transformation has significant economic impacts, as it directly influences the development of businesses, labor markets, and the living standards of urban residents. These economic effects can be summarized as follows (Docui & Dunarintu, 2012, pp. 47-52):

1. **Business Security and Efficiency:** Urban transformation can enhance business security and efficiency by facilitating access to new technologies and constructing more modern infrastructures.
2. **Creation of New Jobs and Business Opportunities:** New businesses can be established and employment opportunities increased through the diversification and expansion of commercial activities.
3. **Improvements in Transportation and Logistics:** Urban transformation projects can optimize the flow of goods and people by developing more efficient transportation infrastructure, thus increasing commercial mobility in urban areas.
4. **Income Increase and Improved Living Standards:** An increase in economic activities can directly improve the income levels and quality of life of the local population.

However, these economic effects may not always lead to positive outcomes. The expansion of economic areas during urban transformation may limit social life and negatively impact social dynamics. Furthermore, the increased flow of people and goods may lead to infrastructure issues, such as traffic congestion, which could have adverse effects on public health. Therefore, when planning the economic dimension of urban transformation, not only economic growth but also social welfare and environmental sustainability must be considered.

The environmental impacts of urban transformation are profound and extensive. These impacts occur in two main stages. In the first stage, construction activities, environmental

waste management, and recycling processes during the transformation process are of great importance.

If these processes are not managed effectively, the resulting waste may lead to serious environmental and public health issues. In the second stage, when the transformation is completed, the urban areas must be planned sustainably. In this context, the renewed areas should have a more effective waste management system, an increase in green spaces, and a reduction in gas emissions. Otherwise, excessive energy consumption, exhaust emissions from motor vehicles, and improper waste management could lead to pollution that negatively impacts human health (Bai et al., 2017). To prevent such negative consequences, the use of new and more efficient technologies in industrial waste processing and transportation is of utmost importance.

The social impacts of urban transformation are also a crucial dimension that needs to be considered. Social impacts can be defined as the changes resulting from transformation projects on individuals' lives and their surrounding environments. These changes directly affect individuals' daily habits, their relationships with each other and society, as well as their value judgments, belief systems, and cultural structures (Göksu, 2004, pp. 81-86). The positive and negative social impacts of urban transformation processes become more apparent over time. Therefore, it is essential for individuals residing in the area to actively participate in the planning and implementation stages of transformation projects.

For urban transformation projects to be successful, it is necessary to create social spaces where individuals from different cultural backgrounds can live together (Keleş, 2006). Renewed urban areas should include spaces that increase interaction among individuals and support social integration. Additionally, during the transformation process, attention should be paid to preserving historical and cultural heritage elements that connect local communities. Ignoring these elements can weaken the sense of belonging among urban residents and negatively affect the social fabric. Particularly, the impacts of the newly emerging urban fabric on traditional lifestyles and family structures should be considered. The renewed urban areas should contain spaces where people can come together and interact (Keleş, 2006). Furthermore, the preservation of historical sites within the district that bind the community together should also be emphasized during the transformation process. Urban transformation processes that overlook these important social dimensions may lead to additional problems. The rise of less traditional family structures can lead to the weakening of family bonds (Docui & Dunarintu, 2012, pp. 47-52). The weakening of family and community ties can decrease the sense of trust among individuals, resulting in a breakdown of social cohesion. This situation can lead to increased security issues and a decline in social solidarity, highlighting the need for careful consideration of social dynamics in urban transformation projects.

2. Analysis of the socioeconomic impacts of urban transformation in Diyarbakır

Diyarbakır, historically known as Amida or Amid, is a city with high strategic importance and a rich historical and cultural heritage. The city center, located on the right bank of the Tigris River, is surrounded by walls built from black basalt stones dating back to 300 BC, before Roman rule. In 350 AD, Roman Emperor Constantius II expanded and strengthened the city's walls. Diyarbakır changed hands frequently between the Romans and the Persians, and in 639 AD, it was conquered by the Arabs. With the weakening of the Abbasid Caliphate, the city came under the control of various Arab, Kurdish, and Turkish dynasties, and in 1514, it became part of the Ottoman Empire. Diyarbakır's proximity to the Persian and Arab borders has made it a strategically significant military base throughout history. After the Islamic conquests, the city and its surroundings were referred to as Diyarbekir, and in 1937, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk officially renamed it Diyarbakır. The city experiences hot and dry summers, with cold winters and frequent frosts. Spring and autumn are brief. Agriculture and textiles are among the primary economic sectors of the city (Diyarbakır MEB, 2019). Until the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Diyarbakır had a diverse demographic, including Turks, Kurds, Armenians, and Greeks. According to the 1914 census, approximately 20% of the city's population consisted of Armenians and Greeks (Mutlu, 2003, pp. 3-38). However, from the 1920s onwards, a significant portion of the non-Muslim population migrated to large cities or abroad. Despite this, the population of Diyarbakır has continued to grow steadily. In 1950, the metropolitan population was around 70,000, in 1990 it was 370,000, and in 2024, it surpassed 1.8 million (TUIK, 2025). According to the Turkish Statistical Institute (TUIK), Diyarbakır recorded the eighth highest population growth in 2024 (TUIK, 2025). Since the late 1980s, the city's rapid population growth has been largely driven by migration from neighboring provinces such as Batman, Bingöl, Mardin, and districts like Lice and Silvan, primarily due to security concerns.

Figure 2. Diyarbakır's map



Source: Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality 2013, Annual Report

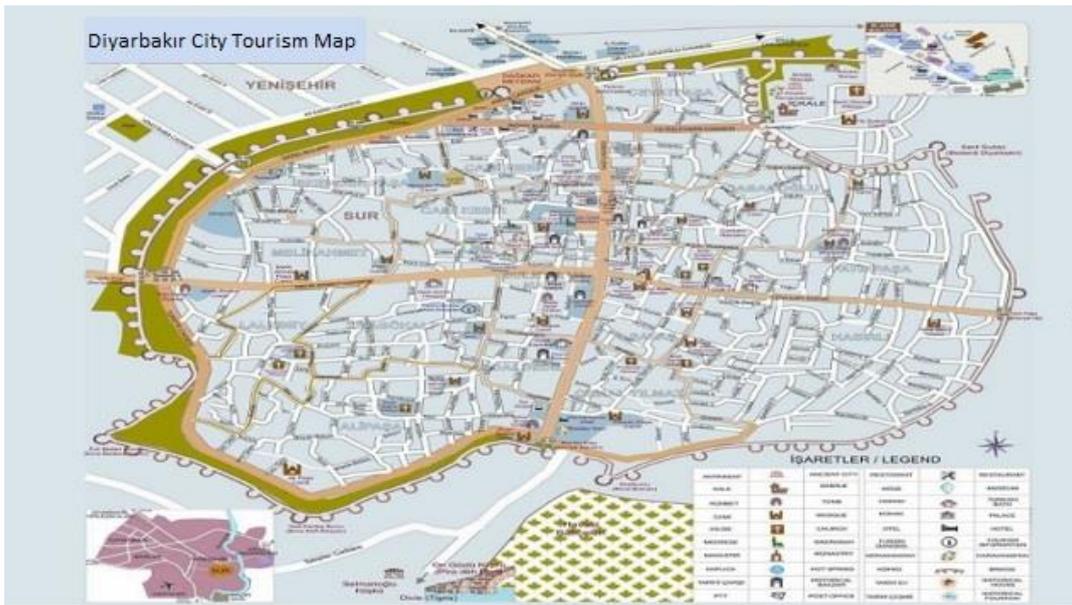
Diyarbakır is a city with metropolitan status, and as shown in Figure 2, it includes a total of seventeen districts within its provincial borders. The metropolitan area consists of four central districts: Sur, Yenişehir, Bağlar, and Kayapınar. The most densely populated district in the city is Kayapınar, followed by Bağlar. The rapid population growth in Diyarbakır leads to the continuous development and expansion of the city center. Despite the formation of new residential areas, it has become inevitable to carry out urban renewal projects in the older city areas. Especially, the districts of Sur and Bağlar are among the most affected central districts and have become focal points for urban transformation projects.

2.1. Urban Transformation in Sur

The Sur district, also known as Suriçi, is the oldest settlement area of Diyarbakır, taking its name from the historical walls that surround it. Located on a plateau formed by the Tigris River, Sur became one of the four central districts of Diyarbakır in 2008, after gaining central district status through Law No. 5747. The district's population is recorded as 98,938 (TUIK, 2024).

Sur is the most historically and culturally rich area of the city, hosting a large portion of the historical monuments and significant landmarks in Diyarbakır. Figure 3 shows all the historical sites and monuments in this area. However, the rapid population growth and intense economic activities have begun to threaten the historical and cultural fabric of the district. In the early 2000s, many historical buildings faced the risk of collapse. This situation raised concerns among city planners and authorities, leading to the development of various projects aimed at the renewal and preservation of the district.

Figure 3. Touristic sites in Sur, Diyarbakır



Source: Diyarbakır Metropolitan Municipality Travel Guidebook of 2011

In December 2008, a protocol was signed by various interest groups to implement an urban transformation project in the Sur district. The main objective of the project was to preserve the deteriorating historical sites and monuments while transforming the region into a tourism center and revitalizing economic activities. However, the initial efforts for the district's renewal could not be realized due to resistance from the local population (Önder, 2016, pp. 146-157). Particularly, property owners demanded higher prices for buildings to be restored, but these demands were rejected by the local government. The district suffered significant damage during the 2015-16 Sur incidents.

In 2015, the city's trajectory took a significant turn as several municipalities in the region, including Diyarbakır, demanded local autonomy. This demand was soon followed by the imposition of state of exception and state of emergency measures (OHCHR, 2017; Kaczorowski, 2016; Baser et al., 2017 as cited in, Taş, 2019, p. 39). Political tensions escalated, eventually leading to armed conflict, which was accompanied by prolonged curfews in numerous cities and towns across the region. Among these, Suriçi, a historical district, suffered the loss of almost half of its infrastructure and population due to military operations that lasted over three months (Taş, 2019, p. 39).

As a result of the security and terrorist incidents that began in late 2015 and ended in March 2016, many houses, businesses, historical, and tourist sites within the walls of Sur were severely damaged, and much of the district was left in ruins (Sami, 2017, p. 392).

The Ministry announced that, because of the emerging situation, a new urban transformation would take place, as stated in the Cabinet Decision No. 2016/8659, published in the Official Gazette on March 25, 2016 (Çiğın, 2022, p. 224). Due to the terrorism-related events, large parts of the region were severely damaged to the point that they became uninhabitable, with numerous illegal buildings, slums, and unplanned, irregular constructions. As a result, the region's deteriorating historical values, tourist attractions, and many religious structures require restoration and rehabilitation, necessitating an urban transformation project that encompasses the entire area (Çiğın, 2022, p. 225).

It is stated that more than 80 units were expropriated, over 50 units were demolished, and the expropriation process for 100 units was brought to the negotiation stage (Ministry of Environment and Urbanization, 2015' as cited in, Kayan, 2019, p. 776). Due to security and terrorism-related events, some neighborhoods within the Sur district were severely damaged to the point of being uninhabitable by the end of 2015 and the beginning of March 2016.

Additionally, due to illegal construction, slum development, and unplanned, irregular urbanization, an urban transformation covering the entire Sur district has been targeted, with the aim of restoring the region's historical, touristic, religious, and ancient structures to make them livable (Kayan, 2019, p. 776). In line with these objectives, urban transformation projects

in the Sur district, which had been awaited for years, were finally initiated, taking into account the needs arising from the recent events. The negative conditions and security issues in the region played a significant role in the commencement of these projects, and necessary steps were taken to restructure the area.

Around 20-25 years ago, people who moved from the rural areas of Diyarbakır to the Sur district had to leave their homes again in 2015-2016. This population, residing in Sur and forming the most disadvantaged socio-economic group in the city, has lost nearly everything economically. Having lost the social environment they had lived in for years, they have faced significant difficulties in adapting to new social environments they are unfamiliar with. Consequently, this situation has created not only quantitative issues related to population movement but also social and psychological problems (Yakut & Ceylan, 2019, p. 389).

Despite various challenges and setbacks, the Urban Transformation Project in the Sur District of Diyarbakır Province has been launched. This project not only focuses on building residential areas but also aims to establish Diyarbakır as a prominent destination for historical, cultural, and religious tourism. The initiative seeks to preserve the region's historical and cultural heritage, enhance the living standards of local residents, and position Diyarbakır as an appealing location for both domestic and international tourism (Kayan, 2019, p. 777).

The historic walls surrounding the Sur district, historical buildings, and other significant areas were put under protection for the renewal process. Illegal and substandard structures were demolished, and modern residential and commercial centers were built in their place. The restoration of historical sites was completed, and business center projects were largely finished.

As part of the urban transformation project, the goal was to renew main roads, facilitate access to commercial areas, and modernize the infrastructure. Narrow streets were widened, and pipelines and electrical distribution systems were completely renewed. Additionally, houses and businesses illegally built on historical sites were removed. Restaurants and cafes around the historical walls were also cleared, transforming these areas into public park spaces. The aim is to transform the redesigned city into a major center of consumption, tourism, and entertainment, featuring cafes, large stores, hotels, the fashion industry, shopping malls, and exhibitions (Arslan, Aydın, Sandal, & Yarkin, 2016, p. 8). Figure 4 shows Melik Ahmet Street – one of Sur's most important commercial areas – before and after the urban transformation project.

Figure 4. Melikahmet Street, before and after the urban transformation



Source: Diyarbakır Provincial Directorate of Environment and Urbanization, *Studies in Sur District 2019 reports*

The urban transformation project in Sur aimed to preserve historical sites and organize the city's structure. Within this framework, structures of historical and cultural significance were preserved, and illegal constructions around them were cleared to make the area more functional. For example, near the Ulu Mosque, one of the oldest mosques in the world, many illegal buildings had been constructed over the years. These structures were removed, and the roads were widened and extended to facilitate easier access to the mosque. Additionally, illegal shops around the mosque were cleared and replaced with information offices for visitors. This arrangement not only made the mosque's historical fabric more prominent but also provided a better experience for tourists and visitors. Another significant example is the area around Hz. Süleyman Mosque, which is known as Saraykapı. This area offers a stunning view of the Tigris River and the historic Hevsel Gardens. However, over the years, the region had become one of the most prominent examples of irregular urbanization and unplanned construction.

In summary, as part of the urban transformation process in the Sur district, the conservation plan applied in Suriçi is being implemented through point interventions and small-scale projects, which differs from traditional methods. During this process, conservation, rehabilitation, revitalization, and renewal efforts are carried out together. In particular, expansions have been made on main arteries such as Yenikapı Street to ensure that fire and ambulance services are not disrupted (Yakut & Ceylan, 2019, p.395).

While work in some areas of the project has been completed, progress in other regions is partial. The İçkale Culture and Tourism Area has been completed as the first renewal zone. Restoration work in the Ulu Mosque and Hanlar area has largely been completed (Yakut & Ceylan, 2019, p. 389). Most of the infrastructure work and restoration of historical artifacts in the Sur protection zone have been completed.

In the Alipaşa and Lalebey neighborhoods, many stages of urban transformation have been completed, while demolition and new construction are still ongoing in some small sections. This process continues with the rebuilding of structures and completion of infrastructure work

in the region. Health improvement efforts on Melik Ahmet Street are nearing completion, while work on Gazi Street is almost finished. Exterior renovations in commercial areas have also been largely completed (Yakut & Ceylan, 2019, p. 389).

The registered cultural heritage structures and examples of civil architecture have been reconstructed in accordance with their original forms, including their gardens, courtyards, and other auxiliary elements. As part of the project, multi-story unlicensed buildings have been demolished and replaced with traditional courtyard houses, not exceeding two stories, as well as some commercial spaces. Additionally, 2-3 story unlicensed buildings have been demolished and rebuilt in a manner that does not obstruct access in emergencies.

In the design of the buildings, planning elements such as courtyards, iwans, verandas, bay windows, stairs, passageways, and pools, as well as exterior features such as doors, windows, knockers, iwans, bay windows, and skylights, have been designed in alignment with the traditional Diyarbakır house type (Yakut & Ceylan, 2019, p. 396). All these elements have been designed to conform to the concept of privacy, which is a distinctive characteristic of traditional Diyarbakır houses.

The streets that constitute the traditional housing fabric of Suriçi are primarily designated for pedestrian use, except for mandatory service vehicle access (such as for infrastructure repairs, transportation, waste collection, and patient transfer). According to the decisions in the conservation plan, areas intended for use as roads are generally composed of existing streets and alleys, with no extensive widening undertaken in the inner streets.

In accordance with the transportation framework of the Suriçi conservation plan, roads leading from Dağkapı-Mardinkapı to Urfakapı, Çiftkapı, Tekkapı, and Yenikapı have been opened (Yakut & Ceylan, 2019, p. 396). Due to occasional street revitalization works, these roads are open to pedestrian use, while access for vehicles has at times been restricted.

Although significant positive developments have been made in terms of physical infrastructure and urban planning during the urban transformation process, it has had numerous negative impacts on the citizens. While the aim of improving living standards through the construction of new buildings and infrastructure has been achieved, many families have been displaced in the process. Citizens who lost their homes faced challenging situations such as relocation, resettlement, and adaptation to new environments. These changes have created not only physical but also social and psychological difficulties. Particularly, those who were forced to leave their long-established homes experienced significant emotional and economic hardships. Over time, these negative effects spread across the community, and their impact has been increasingly felt. This situation has highlighted that urban transformation should not be limited to infrastructure improvements, but should also adopt a more human-centered approach. One of the strongest emotions felt by individuals

who were displaced and forced to leave their neighborhoods due to urban transformation after the terrorist events and conflict process is undoubtedly sadness and unhappiness (Gürhan, 2024, p. 118).

Urban transformation often evokes positive associations, as it presents new opportunities for neighborhoods. However, it also carries negative connotations, as it leads to the displacement of local residents and the loss of their homes.

In his study, Gürhan (2024) found that one of the most common emotions experienced by the residents of the Suriçi area is nostalgia for the past. For many, Suriçi is a place filled with memories, where a significant part of their lives unfolded, and for some, it is the place where they were born and raised. Therefore, the thought of never being able to see this place again, which is irreversibly demolished, creates a deep sense of longing among the participants. In the interviews conducted by Gürhan (2024), participants frequently expressed their yearning for Suriçi.

In the same study, participants emphasized that what they missed most were the social relationships they experienced there. Especially the strong sense of community and familial bonds in Suriçi are often remembered with longing by the residents, as stated by the participants.

Gürhan (2024) also highlighted that, in their efforts to cope with the feeling of losing the sense of home, individuals preferred to be physically close to Suriçi to regain that feeling. Therefore, some participants, although no longer living in Suriçi, continue to visit the area regularly to alleviate their sense of longing, as they expressed in the study.

2.2. Urban transformation in Bağlar

The increasing population in Diyarbakır has led to the creation of a new settlement area just outside the Sur district. This new area, located between Sur and the railway station, is called Yenişehir. In Yenişehir, residential buildings, roads, commercial centers, municipal and government buildings have been constructed. City planners carefully planned the infrastructure of this area, and by the early 2000s, Yenişehir was considered the most modern and livable district of Diyarbakır.

Since the late 1960s, Yenişehir began expanding westward toward the railway, and this new area gradually came to be known as Bağlar. Bağlar district became a settlement for poor populations migrating from neighboring cities, towns, and villages. However, unlike Yenişehir, the urbanization process in Bağlar was irregular and problematic from the start. Narrow roads, poorly constructed buildings, and inadequate infrastructure made the district a prominent example of unplanned urbanization.

Bağlar's population grew rapidly, especially after the 1980s, with an influx of poor families from villages and towns due to security issues. In March 2008, Bağlar became one of Diyarbakır's central districts, and as of 2024, the district covers an area of approximately 450 km², with Diyarbakır's total population at 1.8 million, and Bağlar's population at 397,661 (Güler, 2025).

Starting in the mid-2000s, Bağlar began to expand westward, growing toward the area where the city's airport is located. This new Bağlar region, situated between the main road connecting Diyarbakır to Şanlıurfa and the airport, was initially developed by private initiatives. Modern urban spaces were created by building new apartment complexes. However, the local government seized this opportunity to initiate a more planned urbanization process in the region.

In this context:

- Wide roads were constructed,
- Specific restrictions were placed on new buildings,
- Two large public parks were created,
- A wholesale and retail trade area, which became one of the city's most active commercial centers, was opened,
- A women's hospital and several new schools were built,
- The city's new airport was relocated to this region.

Image 2 compares the old and new parts of Bağlar district. This transformation process has allowed the district to become a modern urban area while taking significant steps to address infrastructure issues.

Figure 5. Bağlar district before and after the urban transformation



Source: wow.turkey.com/t.php?p=tr457/bilalaranli_28283_420627199280_824559280_4051739.jpg

Interestingly, the urban development in Bağlar district has not been limited to new areas but has also had a transformative effect on the older parts of the district. Buildings and roads in

the older neighborhoods near the new development zone have gradually started to be renovated.

On September 25, 2020, Bağlar Municipality announced the launch of a TOKİ (Housing Development Administration of Turkey) project in Kaynartepe, the district's most populous neighborhood, with the approval of the President of the Republic of Turkey. This new housing project is expected to affect approximately 7,000 people and be completed in less than three years. The public announcement of the project led to an increase in property prices in the region. In September 2020, a decree was issued declaring Kaynartepe as a risky area. A total of 375 buildings and 1,365 property owners were identified in the area. The first phase of the urban transformation work is being carried out on a 54-acre site. In this phase, a total of 204 contracts were signed, and 37 buildings have been demolished (Amida Haber, 2024).

One of the main reasons for this development is the expansion of Bağlar district towards the new settlement area, initiated by private enterprises, and the coordinated planning and urbanization strategy developed by the city council from the outset. The imposition of specific restrictions on new housing projects, the construction of wide and accessible roads, modern electrical lines, and upgraded sewage systems have made the district more livable. This development is considered an important step in improving the district's socio-economic structure.

Bağlar's location at the intersection of the main roads connecting Diyarbakır to Elazığ, Şanlıurfa, and Mardin, coupled with the region becoming a new wholesale center, has significantly facilitated the flow of goods and services, accelerating commercial activities. As a result, sales in this area have seen a considerable increase, with city residents increasingly preferring this trade center for shopping.

The population mobility in the area mainly consists of residents from the older parts of Bağlar district and individuals migrating from the Sur district. As previously mentioned, this urban transformation project has had a spillover effect on the older sections of the district, where extensive renovation efforts have been initiated in neighborhoods close to the new development areas.

Slum buildings have been demolished, new housing has been constructed, roads have been widened, and infrastructure has been modernized. As the urban transformation progresses, it is expected that the long-neglected areas of Bağlar district will be integrated with the new developments, making the district more attractive to both residents and visitors.

Many residents of Sur, affected by previous urban challenges, have moved to Bağlar's developing regions in search of better living conditions and new opportunities. The urban transformation process has not only improved physical infrastructure but also revitalized the

local economy, creating new employment opportunities in construction, retail, and service sectors.

As the region continues to grow, the establishment of community centers and social programs is planned. These initiatives aim to strengthen the sense of belonging and unity among the residents, contributing to the social dimension of urban transformation. This positive momentum is expected to attract further investment, making Bağlar one of the most attractive districts in Diyarbakır.

The combination of advanced infrastructure, modern amenities, and a strong community structure creates an urban development model not only for Bağlar but also for Sur and other regions of Diyarbakır. This process serves as an important example of how urban transformation can be effectively implemented in terms of sustainable development and urban planning.

3. Findings and evaluations

The urban transformation process in the Sur and Bağlar districts has led to various changes in the social and economic dynamics of these areas. The key focus areas included the impact on residents' daily lives and the adaptation of local businesses to the transformation process. These changes have been felt across different sectors, with varying levels of influence on each group. Due to time constraints, the sample size was intentionally kept small. The results and evaluations from this assessment are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Findings and evaluations of the study

<i>NO</i>	<i>Findings</i>	<i>Evaluation</i>
1	Diyarbakır has been neglected due to repeated terrorist incidents over the years. The city has lost many of its historical buildings.	Since many parts of the city are in irregular and outdated conditions, large and long-lasting construction projects have been prepared. Repair projects were also carried out. As a result, the city has largely been rebuilt.
2	The rapid population growth and the revival of the economy have become damaging to the historical and cultural characteristics of the city.	City planners wanted to restore and preserve the area. Therefore, the idea of urban transformation emerged.
3	In December 2008, local people opposed the restoration and rioted. They overcharged for their place.	Therefore, no restoration work was carried out in the region from 2008 to 2015. The economy suffered more. Then, solutions were tried to be found for it.
4	In Diyarbakır, along with the urban transformation work, historical places in Sur and Bağlar districts were repaired. Also, shopping centers and workplaces were built. The number of residences has been increased.	Many people moved to the city. The economy revived and prosperity increased.
5	Illegal structures around the Suleyman Mosque and Ulu Mosque were demolished. Their surroundings were arranged, parks and gardens were built.	These previously unreliable places have been transformed into easy-to-reach, clean, and safe places because of urban transformation.
6	Problems such as water, electricity, sewerage have been solved. In addition, more attention is paid to environmental cleanliness.	By solving infrastructure and superstructure problems, sales of shop owners increased. The region attracts great attention from domestic and foreign tourists.

Analysis of the first finding, a contract was signed between the Ministry of Tourism and the municipality in December 2008 for the implementation of the urban transformation project in Sur. Its purpose was to save historical sites and revive tourism. Due to some of the local people, the projects could not be done, and the economy of the city was damaged for about eight years. Analysis of the second finding, Bağlar and Sur districts started to receive more immigration over time. The promotion of touristic places, social media and the airport had a great impact on this. But the capacity of the city was not enough for this situation. The increasing population of the city was damaging its historical and cultural elements. As a result, many arrangements were made, and they were successful. Analysis of the third finding, many projects were started for the renewal and arrangement of the city. In December 2008, some local people asked for more money to participate in urban transformation. As a result, innovations and restorations could not be made in that region. Changes were wanted to be

made in the region, but they could not be done. That part of the city remained that way for about eight more years. Analysis of the fourth finding, Sur and Bağlar districts have been renewed and gained the value they deserve. There has been a decrease in migration to different provinces from there. In this way, some cultural values will be preserved. In addition, unplanned migration is prevented. The revival of the economy in this region indicates that the importance of not only the city center but also other districts has increased. Analysis of the fifth finding, old and neglected buildings can be used by malicious people from time to time. These buildings themselves and their surroundings disturb the people living in that area. So were the surroundings of these historical mosques. This situation has been eliminated with urban transformation. Mosques were restored. The environment was also regulated, to make people feel safe. Analysis of the sixth finding, in places where there are infrastructure and superstructure problems, neither the public nor the shopkeepers can be comfortable and happy. The city is not clean and cannot develop. Therefore, this is one of the most important issues in urban transformation. These problems have been resolved in Bağlar and Sur. Since these problems are solved, the environment is kept clean more easily. As a result, these districts look more aesthetic and neater, attract attention and gain popularity.

Conclusion

Urban transformation projects are not merely limited to the renovation of physical spaces; they also deeply affect social and economic structures. The success of these projects depends not only on the construction of modern infrastructure and new buildings but also on the development of policies that consider the economic sustainability and social cohesion of local communities.

The urban transformation projects implemented in the Sur and Bağlar districts of Diyarbakır have led to significant changes in the region's historical and socio-economic fabric. Sur is one of the oldest and most culturally significant districts of Diyarbakır, known for its historical texture and traditional neighborhood life. However, past security issues, unplanned urbanization, and economic decline have made transformation necessary. Through urban transformation efforts, Sur's historical buildings have been restored, slum areas have been redeveloped, and new structures have been built. However, this process has had substantial social and economic consequences for the local population, as many families were forced to leave their neighborhoods, leading to a weakening of social bonds. The displacement process has exacerbated economic vulnerabilities, making it difficult for low-income groups to adapt to new living environments. Therefore, urban transformation projects should not be confined to physical space renewal but should also include policies aimed at preserving the social and economic integrity of local residents.

The urban transformation projects in Bağlar, on the other hand, have aimed to address unplanned urbanization and infrastructure deficiencies, leading to a modernization process.

New housing projects, wide roads, commercial areas, and social facilities have been developed to improve the district's living standards. However, rising living costs and changing economic dynamics have negatively impacted low-income groups, particularly in the older parts of Bağlar. Increased rent and property prices have forced some residents to relocate, altering the district's socio-economic composition. These processes indicate that urban transformation projects should not be solely focused on renovating physical spaces. Instead, they should adopt a comprehensive approach that considers both social and economic impacts.

To make urban transformation projects more sustainable and inclusive, it is crucial to ensure the active participation of local residents in decision-making processes, taking their needs and concerns into account. Participatory planning methods can contribute to making the transformation process more equitable and sustainable. Additionally, to ensure economic sustainability, transformation projects should include mechanisms that support local businesses and employment opportunities. Policies that enhance workforce participation and provide financial incentives for local enterprises should be implemented. For low-income groups, social assistance programs and financial support mechanisms should be introduced to facilitate economic integration.

Furthermore, urban transformation projects in historical districts such as Sur should not only focus on restoring physical structures but also develop strategies to preserve neighborhood culture and social cohesion. Policies should be formulated to enable displaced residents to continue living in their neighborhoods after the transformation process.

Long-term planning and sustainability principles should guide urban transformation projects, ensuring that they do not focus solely on short-term economic gains but also address environmental sustainability, social justice, and economic balance.

In conclusion, the urban transformation projects in the Sur and Bağlar districts of Diyarbakır have resulted in physical improvements while also causing significant shifts in social and economic structures. Future urban transformation projects should prioritize approaches that protect the quality of life of residents, support economic opportunities, and strengthen social cohesion. In this way, cities can be made sustainable and livable in both physical and social dimensions.

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