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Crafting Symbolic Geographies in Modern Turkey:

Kurdish Assimilation and the Politics of (Re)Naming

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List of Acronyms

AKP	Justice and Development Party
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party
CHP	Republican People's Party
DDKO	Revolutionary Cultural Society for the East
DTP	Democratic Society Party
HADEP	People's Democracy Party
OHAL	Emergency Rule Region
PKK	Kurdistan Workers' Party
TBMM	The Grand National Assembly of Turkey
TIP	Workers' Party of Turkey
TKDP	Turkish Kurdistan Democrat Party

Abstract Place is a social site of meaning and memory. The critical appreciation of place and its link to power in toponymic studies involves the identity politics of place naming. This paper discusses the relationship between the naming of places and identity construction in Turkey. First, conceptualized as a hegemonic practice, the Turkification of toponyms in the Kurdish region of the country is argued to be part of a broader system of assimilation. Supported by the imposition of particular ethno-nationalist narratives on the past, and conducted with concomitant processes of linguistic and demographic design, top-down and centralized engineering of the country's toponymic order has two sides; the construction of symbolic Turkish spaces and the cultural erosion of Kurdishness. Later, the research examines the act of naming places as a Kurdish strategy of resistance and a cultural right. As an attempt to remove spatial and linguistic injustice, Kurdish toponymic practices aim at re-asserting the 'self' and reclaiming memory, space and identity through the re-introduction of former place names or new alternatives that are conducive to the reparation of the Kurdish identity. The discursive and material struggle over space and the clash between the Turkish and Kurdish discourses on naming places reflect the overall structure of social and political power relations in Turkey.

Keywords

Critical human geography, toponymy, Kurdish assimilation in Turkey, identity politics.

For power to 'speak' socially, power must 'speak' with space.

Constantin (1987: 219)

Just as there are no purely spatial processes, neither are there any non-spatial social processes.

Massey (1984: 52)

1   INTRODUCTION

As part of the on-going peace process between the Kurdish guerrilla group, the PKK, and the Turkish state, a democratization package was announced by the government in September 2013. While it lacked a clear legal and political infrastructure for the implementation of presented reforms, the package introduced the renaming of Kurdish villages whose names had been Turkified by the state. The official acknowledgement of the country's toponymic heritage has led to a popular consciousness on the spatial and linguistic dimensions of identity. Recent debates on Turkey's pre-nationstate toponymy highlighted 'place' as more than a point on the map.

"Without naming, identification, or representation by ordinary people, a place is not a place". (Gieryn 2000: 465) Places are sites of memory and representation, rather than mere physical spaces[1]. The meaning attached to them is a crucial part of collective memory and identity. A place embodies values, cultural norms and social categories. The acknowledgement of place as a social force and a consequence of social interactions, is particularly significant in Turkey, a monolithic post-empire nation-state. In modern Turkey, since the establishment of the nation-state in 1923, there has been a state-directed project of standardization and homogenization. The naming of places has been a tool in the construction of a uniform Turkish identity, which at the same time has meant the destruction of the 'other', Kurds in this context. By intervening in the processes of meaning and memory production in non-Turkish regions through the Turkification of toponyms, the Turkish state has rendered particular visions and narratives inevitable and natural. The focus of the Kurdish op-

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[1] 'Place' and 'space' are used interchangeably.

position on the expansion of freedoms and cultural recognition is significant since it involves reclaiming Kurdish spaces from the Turkish state on a symbolic level through the act of renaming the landscape. In this paper, I argue that naming places is a process of identity construction , and as political declarations, Turkish and Kurdish toponymic practices reflect the overall social and political relations of power in Turkey.

1.1 Research Question

This research mainly aims to answer the following question:

To what extent has the (re)naming[2] of places played a role in the construction and appropriation of identities within the contexts of the Turkish nation-state and the Kurdish struggle for cultural recognition?

1.2 Methodology and Limitations

The main objective of this research is to explore the politics of place naming in Turkey. As an attempt to explain the link between toponymic practices and identity construction, the study aims to investigate hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses on language, memory and space. In doing so, the research utilizes both qualitative and quantitative data. However, since the question at hand is a topic that needs to be carefully situated within particular political and social contexts, the study rests mainly on a qualitative basis. Data collection consists mostly of secondary data, such as literature reviews, and primary evidence, such as government documents and archives. A great deal of empirical input in this research is drawn from document analysis. Online databases of the Republican Archives, the Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey and the Parliamentary Archives were scanned and relevant documents, such as legislative acts, proposed parliamentary bills and ministerial decrees, are

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[2] In this paper, 'naming' refers to the act of assigning Turkish names to places by the Turkish state in the context of nation-building and the assimilation of non-Turks. 'Renaming' on the other hand is used in the sense of assigning back the original Kurdish names to relevant places or giving alternative names to new Kurdish settlements.

reviewed. The interpretation of evidence only makes sense within a historical context of Turkish and Kurdish politics, which is framed based on a comprehensive review of literature on Turkish and Kurdish nationalisms.

While the toponymic practices of the Turkish state have recently been in the spotlight, the topic has been largely ignored in the literature. In addition, the study of Kurdish claims on place names and the analysis of the Kurdish renaming strategies remain untouched by the academic scholarship. Since the process of Kurdish renaming is a recent phenomenon, the cases discussed in this research are mostly drawn from online newspapers. My intent was to conduct semi-structures interviews with local officials in the Kurdish region in order to overcome the lack of literature on Kurdish renaming. However, my requests to discuss the issue via phone or e-mail were unattended by three municipalities and I was explicitly refused by a governorate. As a consequence of limited literature and significant lack of cohesive quantitative evidence, which is drawn mainly from academic sources, the data is handled with skeptcism in this research. Due to incoherent data on the numbers of settlements and places that have been given Turkish names, I avoid giving exact numbers. However this should not mean that the study is based on insufficient or inadequate evidence; the numbers add up to yield coherent percentages that are explanatory and meaningful within the context of the research.

1.3   Relevance and Justification

Traditional geography studies space as a phenomenon detached from social relations of power, failing to capture it as a site of power contestations. On the other hand, most literature on nationalism approach space as a tool of advancing nationalist discourses through spatial practices and policies, implying that the act of naming is a hegemonic practice. Building upon, yet going beyond these perspectives, in this paper, I argue that the political act of (re)naming is a spatial and linguistic strategy, used by the both sides of the spectrum. While it is a tool for nation-building and assimilation for the sovereign state in the case of Turkey, it is a form of resistance for the excluded or assimilated minority. While arguing that space is socially and politically produced, following Massey (1984: 54-55), this paper acknowledges that "social

processes are constructed over space." In this regard, resistance refers to the contestation of hegemonic impositions and the re-assertion of the 'self' through spatial and linguistic means. Therefore, when studied in relation with the cultural erosion of the Kurdish identity in Turkey, 'renaming' emerges as a means for toponymic justice. Reclaiming Kurdish spaces through the renaming of the landscape and the introduction of Kurdish meanings point out to the act of assigning names to places as a right. Thus, in this paper, Kurdish toponymic practices are thought of as a struggle for social justice.

1.4   Organization of the Paper

This research has two main parts located on the same timeline from two different perspectives. In the first part, I explore the process of Turkish nation-building, covering from the early 1920s to the 1940s, and the practices of Kurdish assimilation, by paying particular attention to spatial and linguistic policies of the state. Building upon this analysis, I then examine the Turkification of place names, which I refer to as 'toponymic engineering', and its role in the cultural erosion of the 'other', Kurds.

In the second part, I explore the Kurdish political opposition since the establishment of the Turkish nation-state and by going through particular phases of the movement, I try to highlight its discursive shift, which had led to the adoption of renaming as a resistance and opposition strategy. Finally, I elaborate on the Kurdish attempts to redesign the space by renaming it and the relation of this strategy to the struggle for cultural recognition and identity construction.

2   THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Traditional geography considers 'space' as a geographic location in terms of quantitative measures with a focus on its geometrical dimensions. Analytically, it is excluded from the understanding of social change along a time-axis. The equation of time with 'becoming' and change, while space is associated with 'being' and stasis, is the basis of conventional social and cultural geography (Gambetti and Jongerden 2011: 375). Yet the perception of space as a

reactive and passive object has been replaced by a spatial consciousness in social thought (Lefebvre 1991, Massey 2005, Soja 1989). Since the 1990s, the emergence of the idea of "space as socially produced" (Unwin 2000: 12) has pointed out to its relationality with memory, meaning and identity (Kearney and Bradley 2009). The perception of space as a physical entity, detached from cultural interpretation and value attachment, has been succeeded by the realization of the interrelationship between space and human practices (Casey 1996). In the context of space-sensitive social thought, place is conceptualized beyond objective and physical boundaries, as an "interpreted, narrated, perceived, felt, understood and imagined" (Gieryn 2000: 465) product of social practices. Consequently, the introduction of 'place' as a socially constructed and contested site of interpretation, identification and representation, indicates "complex constellations of power knowledge" (Berg and Kearns 1996: 104) as the sphere of place formation. Thus, taking account of the "power structures that embed social phenomena within sets of spatial relations" (Gambetti and Jongerden 2011: 376) is crucial for the study of toponyms[3] in a critical way.

In this perspective, place names are "documents of power" (Matthews 1995: 456). As "symbolic texts, embedded in larger systems of meaning and ideology that are read, interpreted, and acted upon socially by people" [Duncan 1990 (cited in Alderman 2008: 199)], place names are more than spatial references on the map of landscapes: "they [toponyms] are active participants in the construction and perception of social reality." (Azaryahu 1997: 481) Hence the study of toponyms needs to involve a critical appreciation of power and take account of their embeddedness in social and political power relations. Within this frame, the central focus of this research is less on the semiotic meaning of particular place names and their sociolinguistic analysis than their symbolic meaning and the act of naming itself.

Most literature focus on the interconnectedness between place naming and power within the context of nation-building, by mainly arguing that changing toponyms according to particular world views and ideologies operates as a means to enforce a tailored adaptation of the past and selected aspects of national identity (Azaryahu 1997, Gill 2005, Light 2004, Azaryahu and Golan

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[3] Place names.

2001, Cohen and Kliot 1992, Guyet and Seethal 2007). Naming in this sense represents the reproduction of power relations through "claims of national ownership" (Berg and Kearns 1996: 100) by the political authorities of the emerging nation in order to "erase signs of earlier political and ideological regimes and to advance new notions of national identity." (Alderman and Inwood 2013: 213) However, by putting great weight on the constructive aspects of nation-building and the aspirations of state ideologies, most research in the field neglect "the dimensions of resistance and how place naming is open to social negotiation and debate as marginalized groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, struggle to redefine what is considered worthy of public remembrance." (Alderman 2008: 208) In this study, the act of assigning names to places is conceptualized as a claim of territorial and symbolic ownership, embedded in social and political power relations. Nevertheless, in order to analyse naming practices as power strategies, "exercised both by those having a great deal of [social] power and by those who comparatively lack it" (Myers 1996: 244), toponymic changes in Turkey are examined within two different analytical frameworks: on the one hand, as a state-directed nationalizing and homogenizing strategy by the Turkish nation-state, which will be called 'naming', on the other hand, as "symbolic reparation" (Alderman and Inwood 2013: 216), a form of resistance and a right on the part of marginalized and silenced Kurdish population of Turkey, which will be referred to as 'renaming'.

2.1   Place Naming as a Nationalist Project

The study of nationalism and nations mainly evolves around the distinction between the ethno-symbolist and modernist views. According to ethno-symbolists, nation is a historical community as a continuity of pre-modern ethnie (Hutchinson 2005, Smith 2009). The ethno-symbolist focus on the appropriation of symbols, memory and myths, through which loyalty and attachment to the nation are achieved, identifies nations as ancient phenomena having pre-modern ethnic communities as their predecessors. While ethno-symbolists put great emphasis on ethnic past and the reinterpretation of shared historical elements, the modernist approach argues that nations are modern artefacts. The birth of nation as an invention of modernity is explained

through particular processes, such as industrialization (Gellner 1983), secularization (Anderson 1991) and the rise of the bureaucratic state (Breuilly 1982, Mann 1993). However, the common denominator of the modernist view is that nation is a modern construction as "primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and national unit should be congruent." (Gellner 1983: 1) Thus, the attachment to the modern nation, an "imagined political community" in Anderson's (1991) words, is accomplished based on a sense of belonging, conscious consent and perceived common interests of the members.

Calhoun (2007) acknowledges the theoretical limitations of studying nation as either an ancient or modern phenomenon and distinguishes between three phases of emerging nations having claims both in the past and the future. The first phase refers to the collective imagining of peoples' aspirations within the context of a common national identity that is constantly promoted by a nationalist rhetoric. In the second stage, Calhoun identifies policies or social movements that aim to pursue the nation's interests either by strengthening loyalty to an existing state or moving towards independence by exercising the right to self-determination, as the pillars of nationalism as a political project. Finally in the last phase, the nationalist discourse acquires a moral basis: what is right and expected from the members is defined with references to the national character, while those who do not conform to the national moral high ground are excluded. Besides going beyond the distinction between the definitions of nation as a "reinterpretation of cultural motifs and the reconstruction of earlier ethnic ties and sentiments" (Smith 2001:83) and as a modern political community created by "the construction and deliberate invention of national imagery" (Oktem 2004:563), Calhoun's elaboration on the birth of nations points out to the discursive reproduction of nationalism as the ideological, social and political basis of belonging. While the nationalist discourse determines the cultural elements, ethnic components and future aspirations of a nation, it also inscribes a certain identity. Therefore, nationalism becomes a project in terms of constant reproduction and engineering of national identity.

Hobsbawm (1990) notes that nation-building inherently involves social and political engineering strategies in order to implement social cohesion and concretize the national identity. According to Oktem (2004), social engineering tends to dominate the nation-building process in the case of a detachment be-

tween the dominant ethnie and the territory. In order to achieve the congruence between the national and the political units, in Gellner's terms, social and political engineering policies become essential in the formation of nation-states out of multicultural empires (Hobsbawm 1990). Thus in the case of the transition from the heterogeneous Ottoman society to the uniform Turkish national identity and nation-state, the acknowledgement of nation-building as a modern form of socio-political engineering, which is at the same time greatly informed by the appropriation of the past and national symbols, would be the appropriate analytical framework. In this respect, state-directed systematic naming of Kurdish spaces by the Turkish state should be studied as a project of homogenization, aiming at imposing a certain ethno-nationalist discourse and a particular national identity through spatial and linguistic control.

2.2   Toponymic Practices as Systems of Inclusion and Exclusion

The naming of places, as a spatial and linguistic strategy "claiming ownership" (Berg and Kearns 1996: 100) of space in the context of nation-building, operates as a means to incorporate space and time, and to re-appropriate geography and history on material and discursive levels (Oktem 2004). The naming of the immediate past through toponymic practices in order to homogenize and nationalize the territory, introduces a particular canonized version of history as the definite representation of the past (Azaryahu 1996: 319). Thus, in order to examine the mutual constitution of society and space through toponymic practices, the conceptual framework has to expand beyond the conventional approach to geographical space and articulate an "understanding of 'active space', which is not a merely a backdrop or a container of social change, but exerts a vital influence on group identities and nations." (Yiftachel 2002: 220) In this perspective, the naming of places as a strategy to directly intervene in the collective memory of territories and to institutionalize the official translation of history needs to be understood as a means to design the national identity and to control the reproduction of meaning within the boundaries of a particular nationalist rhetoric.

As in the case of the Turkish nation-state, in the context of regime change and revolution, state-directed place naming represents "an unequivocal

political declaration" (Azaryahu 1997: 481) operating both on symbolic and material levels by introducing new ways of meaning-making and by intervening in the direct relationship between people and their landscape. The new regime asserts a new form of spatial organization and new toponyms through which a particular worldview is imposed. Entrikin [1991 (cited in Azaryahu 1996: 312)] notes that "the ability to control the meaning of such settings is an important expression of power" and states that the transformation of space into a national homeland is mainly secured by the fusion of heritage, memory, place and identity into one particular national character (Alonso 1994). Lefebvre (1991: 54) explains the spatial concerns of new regimes by pointing out to the power of space in crafting the socio-political order and argues that a revolution is only complete after successfully producing its own space and changing life itself more than it constructs political structures and institutions: "A social transformation, to be truly revolutionary in character, must manifest a creative capacity in its effects on daily life, on language and on space – though its impact need not occur at the same rate, or with equal force, in each of these areas."

Within this analytical framework of space and its naming, belonging and collective identity are "related to the discourses and practices of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion" [Antonsich 2010 (cited in Alderman and Inwood 2013: 219), which necessitates a closer look at the role of toponymic practices in sustaining binary oppositions of identity. According to Alderman (2008: 196), "naming as symbolic capital" is a strategy that delivers "distinction and status to landscapes and the people associated with them", while on the other hand it subordinates and disadvantages certain identities and alternative forms of meaning-making. Since naming places is an effective strategy to produce and preserve the discursive space of self-identity, it simultaneously defines and allocates internal 'others'. By incorporating the space and the time of the 'other' into homogenized and nationalized space, the naming of places leads to the "discursive erasure of the other." (Jongerden 2009: 33) Therefore, the acknowledgement of the destructive aspects of nation-building and toponymic engineering on culturally, historically and socially diverse territories is central for this research. As part of a wider range of assimilative hegemonic discourses and state policies, "the construction of a system of place names reflecting the nascent national order of time and space" (Oktem 2008: 1) needs

to be examined not only as a constructive force in the making of nation, but also a destructive effort to silence the 'other'.

2.3   Renaming as Resistance and the Right to Rename

Gambetti and Jongerden (2011: 382) suggest that the struggle over space is in hegemonic and counter-hegemonic forms, aiming at controlling the visibility of signs and symbols, including place names. While the enforcement of a national identity through the homogenization of toponyms during nation-building processes, social and national imaginaries can be re-appropriated and cultural assimilation can be reversed by the act of renaming. Azaryahu (1996) notes that the renaming of places introduces an alternative version of what is to be remembered, and inserts cultural and symbolic meanings that are conducive to the reparation of the marginalized identity. As a means to reclaim the place and the past, renaming promotes identification with an alternative set of cultural meanings and memory to those endorsed by the hegemonic political authority. In cases where state-led naming is associated with "practices of erasure and identity politics" (Rose-Redwood 2008: 433), the renaming of places serves as a strategy to contest and challenge hegemonic spatial practices. "The return of the other" (Jongerden 2009: 33) relies on renaming as a "cultural arena for racial and ethnic minority struggles to reshape the identity of landscapes, the contours of social memory, and the larger sense of political membership." (Alderman and Inwood 2013: 213) While critical human geography represents a political shift in the study of place names by introducing renaming as a form of resistance, a limited literature goes further to address the 'right' to rename. In this perspective, defined as the "right to participate in the production of space" (Alderman and Inwood 2013: 224) and the "inalienable right to know and call into being the places that define identity" (Kearney and Bradley 2009: 81), renaming refers to a strategy of 'spatial justice'[4] that is the empowerment of historically and culturally marginalized communities in their claim for visibility in public sphere, political legitimacy and identity (Schein 2009).

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[4] Spatial injustice evokes Bourdieu's (1991) "symbolic violence" through spatial terms, which refers to the systematic domination and marginalization of groups in society by the imposition of cultural meanings and classifications.

3   NAMING PLACES AS A HEGEMONIC PRACTICE

Turkish nationalism was born in the first half of the 19th century, promoting Turkishness on cultural grounds until its transformation into a political project of the 1923 Kemalist[5] revolution. The establishment of the Turkish Republic constituted a fundamental transformation from a culturally heterogeneous Ottoman Empire to a monolithic Turkish nation-state. As a "state in search of its nation" (Kadioglu 2005) the Republic relied heavily on the politicization of the culture and the symbols in the creation of a uniform Turkish national identity out of the remnants of the Ottoman past. Kemalist political elite directed four concomitant processes of transition;

- from decentralized imperial administration to Weberian rational-legal state

- from religious socio-political order to highly secularized political domain and public sphere

- from Ottoman 'millets'[6] to a monolithic Turkish identity

- from traditional to modern, which refers to 'Western' in the Turkish case, based on a linear understanding of progress and the enlightenment thought (Yildiz 2007).

During the World War I, the Turkish War of Independence and the first years of the new regime, Islam remained the strongest component of loyalty to the nation and attachment to the patrie; Turkish-Kurdish alliance of the time was mainly based on shared Muslimhood.[7] In the Ottoman Empire,

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[5] Kemalism refers to the founding ideology of modern Turkey and is associated with Mustafa Kemal Atatürk (1881-1938), the founder of the Turkish Republic. Its main principles are republicanism, secularism, statism and Turkish nationalism.
Based on Skocpol's (1979) classification, Kemalist revolution of 1923 represents a top-down, elite-led revolution as in Germany and Japan, as opposed to the French, Soviet and Chinese cases.
[6] 'Millet' is originally an Arabic word, meaning 'religion'. The Ottoman society was organized around religious affiliations that formed different millets. Although religion was the main social category of identity, Turks were the dominant people within the empire, which later became the founding *ethnie* of the Turkish nation-state.
[7] In the World War I, the Ottoman Empire fought against the Allied Forces (the United Kingdom, France and the Soviet Empire) alongside Germany and Austria-

Kurdish provinces functioned as buffer zones due to their strategic locations, which gave them a relatively autonomous status (Bozarslan 2002). Following the regime change and the establishment of the Turkish nation-state, not only did the Kurds lose autonomy, but the alliance was broken as a result of greater ethnic emphasis on the Turkish national identity. The Kurdish population in Turkey, concentrated in the eastern and southeastern regions, became the object of ethnic, cultural and linguistic assimilation.

3.1   Building the Turkish Nation-State: Modernization and the Internal Colonization of the Kurdish Periphery

Modernization, defined strictly in terms of Westernization in the Turkish context, provided the main rationale for the Kemalist nation-building project. Considered as a linear process of inevitable socio-political transformation, "Turkish modernity, in its Republican movement arrogated to itself enlightenment values of rationality, progress and universality." (Houston 2001: 89) The equation of Western civilization to the source of all knowledge and development led to a series of reforms[8] in the following decades after the revolution. Seen as an obstacle in the adoption of the Western principles, religion was eliminated from the political and social realms. Aiming at the institutional secu-

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Hungary. Following the defeat, the empire was partitioned and invaded by the Allies, Italy and Greece, which led to the Turkish War of Independence (1919-1923). The Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM) was founded in 1920, during the war of independence. Until the proclamation of Republic in October 1923, the parliament introduced a constitution in 1921 and abolished the Sultanate in 1922, which officially meant the end of the Ottoman rule.

[8] Relevant political, social, legal and cultural reforms implemented in the 1920s and 1930s are as follows:

- The Caliphate, religious courts and madrases (schools of Islamic education) were abolished, and the national education system was unified under the monopoly of the state in 1924.
- Gregorian (Western) calendar was adopted and Islamic calendar was outlawed in 1925.
- The Swiss Civil Code was adopted in 1926.
- The constitutional article stating Islam as the religion of the state was withdrawn and Latin script was adopted in 1928.
- Women's suffrage for local elections was granted in 1930, for national elections it was introduced in 1934 (Unsal 1979).

larization, the Kemalist modernization project excluded religion from political and public spheres by confining it to the private sphere.

Although the Ottoman Empire had not had a colonial past, the Kemalist elite was similar to Fanon's (2004) colonized intellectual in their understanding of progress and their aspiration to Westernize their culture in order to liberate it (Yildiz 2007: 117). In this context, Turkish modernization, inspired by the Western civilization, emerged at the same time as a reaction to the Western depiction of Turkishness as backward and underdeveloped. Interestingly, the Kemalist project of modernization, led by the Turkish ethnic core of the nation was fostered by the same "value-laden binary oppositions: modernity/tradition, civilization/savagery, us/them, centre/margin, civilized/wild, humanity/barbarity, progress/degeneration, advanced/backward, developed/underdeveloped" (Houston 2001:10) in the domestic sphere. ''The assimilation of non-Turks and the construction of an excusionary state ideology were made possible by state-led production of knowledge relying on European Orientalist principles (Zeydanlioglu 2008). The Republican project of civilization, referred to as "internal colonization" by Jongerden (2009:10), mainly targeted the Kurdish periphery: as prospective Turks, the Kurdish population was categorized as inferior, backward, primitive and to be civilized by the Turkish nationalist discourse. ''The white Turkish man's burden'' (Zeydanlioglu 2008: 159), taken on by the Kemalist elite, aimed at the "social transformation of the backward into the modern, of the tribal to the state, of Kurds into Turks." (Gambetti and Jongerden 2011: 376) Thus, the 1920s were marked by increased politicization of the culture, a total transformation of the socio-political order through reforms, a radical secularization project and the emergence of a de facto strategy of colonization of the Kurdish periphery, while the 1930s witnessed further ethnicization of Turkishness and the systematization of assimilative policies.

3.2   Turkification of Populations and Territories

The 1930s were marked by the emergence of systematic policies of Turkification of territories and populations. Rather than a political ideal of a supra-identity, Turkishness took a political turn to be an ethnic construction.

The equation of the nation to its ethnic core and the transformation of the post-Ottoman heterogeneous territory into a mono-ethnic homeland were aimed at through strategies of ethnocratic regimes[9] (Oktem 2004: 564). Religion, excluded from the socio-political realm, was replaced by Turkishness, increasingly defined in ethnic and linguistic terms, as the main informant of identity and a requirement for belonging to the nation. Non-Turkish, mainly Kurdish territories, were targeted by ethno-nationalist centralization policies and the processes of "deterritorialization and re-territorialization of state power" (Gundogan 2011: 392). The official version of the past of the core ethnie was legitimated and imposed by the Kemalist regime through the selective reinterpretation of history. In addition, the ethnicization of Turkishness was simultaneously regulated by a process of linguistic homogenization. In the 1930s, the Turkification of public sphere, religion, daily life, language, history and internal 'others' appeared to be the main concern of the Republican elite. A speech by Ismet Inonu, the then prime minister, given in 1932 in the National Assembly, pointed out to assimilation as a state policy:

> "We don't expect anything extraordinary from any individual, living in this country, who wants to become a Turkish nationalist and a Turkish citizen. Choosing and accepting to be a Turk is enough for possessing all the rights, granted to the members of the Turkish nation." (Yildiz 2007: 290) [my translation]

The equation of citizenship to becoming a Turk indicates that assimilation was a condition for having and exercising the citizenship rights. In this context, assimilation of non-Turks was regulated through three concomitant state-led strategies, namely spatial regulation, the creation of a hegemonic historiography and linguistic engineering, which later accounted for the basis of the systematic policy of toponymic changes.

State-directed systematic policies of spatial regulation of the 1930s were mainly concerned with the "geographical nationalization" (Ulker 2008: 2) of

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[9] Yiftachel (1999: 368) defines ethnocracy as a "regime, which attempts to extend or preserve disproportional ethnic control over a contested multi-ethnic territory. Ethnocracy develops chiefly when control over territory is challenged, and when a dominant group is powerful enough to determine unilaterally the nature of the state."

the territory and the transformation of the demographic structure, especially of Eastern Turkey, where the Kurdish population had been concentrated. On the micro level, the Republican space was designed in a way that symbols of the new regime and the national identity were promoted: "[A] main street would run to Republic Square with a statue of Ataturk in the middle emphasizing the centrality in the new social order, while at the head of the square there would be a People's House, the (CHP) party building."[10] (Jongerden 2009: 14) The public space in the new regime was designed by power geometries, reinforcing the visibility of hegemonic Republican symbols and materially strengthening a certain social imaginary (Gambetti and Jongerden 2011: 382). On the macro level, policies of demographic engineering[11] in the first half of the 20th century, had three essential purposes; assimilation, modernization and security. While the employment of spatial measures, such as the resettlement and deportation of Kurds to appointed regions, served as a means for their ethnic and linguistic assimilation, spatial regulations also aimed at weakening the tribal ties in the Kurdish region. Lastly, the redesign of Eastern Turkey was crucial in order to craft a 'modern' Turkish nation: the Eastern space was seen as a social and cultural barrier against modernization.

The first resettlement policies[12] emerged in 1925, yet the assimilative design of the territory took a systematic and planned form in the 1930s: the Settlement Act was passed in 1934. The law divided the country in three zones as the following:

"Zone 1: Places where the concentrating of populations of Turkish culture [was] desired.

Zone 2: Places set aside for the relocation and settlement of

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[10] People's houses [Halk Evi], founded in 1932, were state-sponsored institutions of adult education. By offering programs on Western literature, music, history and fine arts, they functioned as official academies of modernization.

[11] Oktem (2008: 11) defines demographic engineering as "the state-directed removal or destruction of certain communities from a given territory in order to consolidate power over that territory and prepare the conditions for the nation-state project its vision of space and time."

[12] The Reform Plan for the East was declared in 1925, introducing special administrative measures. The plan banned the use of Kurdish in both public and private realms and prohibited the appointment of Kurdish-speaking civil servants to eastern provinces. Muslim Turks, migrating from Russia and Western Thrace, were settled in Kurdish provinces.

populations whose assimilation into Turkish culture [was] desired.

Zone 3: Places that [would] be inhabited, and where settlement and residence [would] be prohibited due to spatial, sanitary, cultural, political, military and security reasons." (Ulker 2008: 19-21)

The act gave the Ministry of Interior the authority to manage the country's new demography based on the 'Turkishness' of populations. Turkishness was defined in terms of "adherence to Turkish culture" (Ulker 2008: 17) and speaking Turkish was a condition of belonging to the nation. Zone 1 referred to the Eastern provinces where the overwhelming majority of Kurds in Turkey resided, while Zone 2 indicated the appointed regions, mostly in Central and Western Anatolia, where part of the Kurdish population was forced to move.[13] Finally, Zone 3 referred to the centres of Kurdish opposition to the Kemalist regime.[14]

As part of the official attempt to assimilate Kurdish provinces, the Settlement Act of 1934 was the legal basis of demographic engineering as a movement both in time and space: while populations were moved physically from their lands to state-appointed provinces, they were also moved 'forward' on the linear understanding of Kemalist progress. Until the transition to multi-party democracy at the end of the 1940s, policies of demographic engineering served as a direct intervention in the relationship between the Kurdish population and their land, thus their collective memory, and a manifestation of state ownership of the territory. Systematic and long-term policies of demographic and geographic design assisted the creation of Turkish spaces and the homogenization of all identities and social phenomena as 'Turkish'. The crafting of Turkey's demography went hand in hand with the construction of a canonized version of history, which served as the legitimation of the assimilative state ideology.

The state's claim of ownership on populations and space during the 1930s and 1940s coincided with the attempt to align the past and the future on

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[13] According to Tekeli (1990), approximately 3000 Kurds were sent to Central and Western Anatolia between 1920 and 1932. By the end of the decade the Kurdish population, forced to migrate, increased sharply: during the 1930s, around 25,380 Kurds, 5074 households, were forced to leave.

[14] The Settlement Act was revised in 1947 and Zone 3 was expanded. The ban of settlement in these provinces was rescinded in 1951.

the grounds of a particular ideology. By re-appropriating history in line with the vision of the dominant ethnie, selective representation of the past, promoted as the only and official way to see the history, aimed to "appropriate and transform local and regional histories and the memories of subordinated groups." (Alonso 1994: 389) Kemalist imagination of the 'heroic' past functioned as a source of legitimacy for the Republican regime, while it targeted the Kurdish cultural and historical memory by devaluating it. By rendering the 'other's heritage invisible, the nationalist discourse proclaimed the ethnic core of the nation, Turks, as the rightful owner of the territory through the construction of a hegemonic narrative. The superiority of the dominant ethnie was built upon the representation of the other groups as historically or culturally inept or unworthy to control the territory (Yiftachel 2002). The task of re-appropriating the past was given to the Society For the Study of Turkish History, founded in 1931, which later became the Turkish Historical Society in 1935. In 1932, at the First Turkish History Congress, the Turkish History Thesis was presented. The main purpose of the thesis was to claim Anatolia as the Turkish homeland (Yildiz 2007: 162). According to the thesis, the Turkish ethnie originated in Central Asia and through massive migration waves Turks moved to Anatolia where they built great civilizations (Yildiz 2007: 180). The introduction of Central Asia as the geographical origin of the Turkish ethnie marked a clear break from the Ottoman and Islamic past. References to Central Asian history and great emphasis on pre-Islamic past helped the Kemalist regime label the Ottoman history as religiously backward and uncivilized, and legitimize the Republican version of the past. Most importantly, the declaration of Turkish territorial and discursive ownership and the manifestation of ethnic hegemony served as a means to devaluate the 'internal other', "conservatively religious Turk, non-Turkish speaking Muslim and non-Muslim" (Oktem 2004: 568). The hegemonic Turkish historiography, as a product of the Kemalist commitment to positivism, scientific knowledge and progress, shared pre-Ottoman references and the ideal of Westernization with the project of linguistic engineering.

Starting in the second half of the 1930s, the construction of a certain historical narrative and aggressive language policies mutually reinforced each other in close relation with greater emphasis on an ethnic definition of Turk-

ishness. Language, as one of the most important pillars of the nationalist ideology, served as a justification of the nation-state and the basis of the Turkish national identity. Linguistic practices of the regime were mainly implemented and legitimized as part of modernization and Westernization efforts (Fernandes 2012: 76); they aimed at transforming the Ottoman language into a unified and standardized Turkish by eliminating linguistic diversity. As Ucarlar (2009: 120) remarks, "the diversity in languages in Anatolia was an obstacle to the construction of a homogeneous cultural identity that would become the basis of the national one. Thus, the imposition of Turkish language became the most significant instrument of the state for creating a Turkish national identity." Since the Turkish language was the main component defining the socio-political content of the national identity, linguistic practices and policies became the basis of assimilation. While in 1925, the public use of Kurdish and its teaching in public schools was banned, as part of the Eastern Regions Reform Plan, the use of any other language than Turkish was prohibited in certain provinces in Eastern Turkey (Bayar 2011: 116).[15] In 1928 the Law on the Adoption and Application of Turkish Letters was passed. The adoption of Latin alphabet, phonetically aligned with Turkish language, instead of the Ottoman Perso-Arabic script, had two main functions: it was "introduced not only to undermine the power of religious leaders … but also to break ties with the Ottoman past in order to accelerate the reforms in favour of Westernization." (Ucarlar 2009: 120)

In 1930, a secret government circular appealed the governors of provinces populated by non-Turkish speaking communities, to "incorporate *Turks with foreign dialects* into the Turkish community by making Turkish their mother tongue." (Bayar 2011: 116, my emphasis) The circular provided an official guideline on the spatio-linguistic regulations of the following decades:

- The names and populations of the villages, inhabited by Turks with foreign dialects shall be determined.
- Only Turkish speaking civil servants shall be sent to the provinces, inhabited by non-Turkish speaking populations.

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[15] Even though the plan did not explicitly state, the targeted languages were Arabic and mostly Kurdish.

- Non-Turkish place names shall be determined and listed (Bayrak 1993: 506-509).

The nation was equated with the dominant ethnic core chiefly on the basis of language during the 1930s; the definition of Turkishness took a shift from cultural references towards ethnicized motives based on the Turkish language. Rather than an instrument to facilitate political participation and social cohesion, language became a mechanism of assimilation and a requirement for belonging to the nation. In this respect, it is important to note the close link between language and nationhood: language did not emerge as a category of populations, yet it appeared as the main informant of the Turkish national identity. In fact, the Republican regime "redefined the contours of the language question so that it became inextricably linked to issues pertaining to the nation-building process, such as the state of minorities, citizenship, national unity and achieving Westernization." (Bayar 2011: 112) Language was politicized and ideologically framed to the extent that linguistic assimilation of non-Turkish speakers became the core of the nation-building process. A Turkish citizen was officially considered to be a Muslim whose mother tongue was Turkish, which excluded non-Muslim minorities and non-Turkish speaking Muslims, mainly Kurds, from the nation (Ulker 2008: 12). By the 1940s, the elimination of linguistic diversity in Turkey laid the groundwork for future language policies. While the Turkish language established the main pillar of nationhood, linguistic homogenization led to the erosion of the Kurdish language. Perceived and delegitimized as a pre-modern resistance, Kurdish existence became the main target of the Kemalist regime.

3.3   Towards Systematic Place Naming

The political shift in the definition of national identity towards ethnic references, greater spatial concern of the state and assimilative language policies were manifested in the toponymic design of the country. In line with the institutionalization of the regime through the setting of a nationalist framework

within which the official version of history and the linguistic ideology of the state were conceptualized, settlement policies, targeting mainly Eastern and Southeastern Turkey, were implemented in order to demographically homogenize the territory. Based on ethno-nationalist narratives on memory, language and space, the 1930s witnessed increased spatial concern of the state towards the Eastern provinces of the country, which coincided with the official rejection of Kurdish existence. The creation of a hegemonic Turkish historiography, the transformation of Turkish language into the main pillar of national identity and state-led demographic design of the territory established a material and discursive infrastructure that would justify future toponymic changes (Oktem 2008). While the 1930s witnessed minor and arbitrary changes in place names, the scientific and ideological basis for the Republican toponymic engineering was built. In 1940, a circular, issued by the Ministry of Interior, signalled the emergence of planned and long-term toponymic policies (Tuncel 2000: 27). The circular ordered the governors to determine and report place names with foreign origins for a detailed investigation. In 1946, the General Directorate of Provincial Administration published a directory specifying around 67,000 names of provinces, towns, villages and hamlets to be given Turkish names (Oktem 2008: 33). Following the publication of place names to be replaced, in 1949, the Provincial Administration Act[16] was passed, indicating the beginning of full-scale Turkification of the country's toponymy. The law stated that;

"village names that [were] not Turkish and [gave] rise to confusion [were] to be changed in the shortest possible time by the Ministry of Interior after receiving the opinion of the Provincial Permanent Committee." (Jongerden 2009: 34)

Thus, by the end of the 1940s, along with the construction of a linguistic, historical and demographic infrastructure, the establishment of a legislative and bureaucratic framework for long-term toponymic strategies was achieved, targeting primarily Kurdish provinces.

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[16] The Provincial Administration Act No. 5442 (1949) Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey, 7236, 18 June 1949.

3.4   Creating Symbolic Turkish Spaces: Toponymic Engineering

While the Provincial Administration Act provided the legal basis for future toponymic engineering strategies, it also recognized the authority of the local administration by setting the approval of elected officials as a condition. Until the establishment of the Expert Commission for Name Change in 1957, toponymic practices were conducted on the local level, often leading to inefficiency for the Republican regime. The Commission, operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Interior, had the task to "examine Turkey's toponyms and suggest Turkish alternatives." (Oktem 2008:35) Its members included the representatives of the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry of Education, the General Command of the Armed Forces, the Faculty of Letters, History and Geography of Ankara University and the Turkish Linguistic Society (Jongerden 2009: 37). With the establishment of a special commission, toponymic policies of the state took a systematic and planned form. Finally, in 1959, the Provincial Administration Act was amended[17]; the only authority on name changing was transferred to the Commission so that the resistance from the elected local authorities could be bypassed.

The coup d'état in May 1960 did not cause any strategic decline in the toponymic practices of the time. Furthermore, right before the re-introduction of multi-party politics, in January 1961, The Committee of National Front, the military-appointed government, issued a circular prohibiting the "use of any foreign word for which a Turkish equivalent exist[ed]." (Lewis 1999:157) Although the use of Kurdish in public and private realms had already been banned, the circular implicitly addressed the use of the language at a time when cultural expressions of the Kurdish identity and symbols were harshly targeted by the state. In 1968, the Commission published a report on the toponymic changes of the period: according to the directory, by 1968, the Commission had Turkified around 30% of all village names in the country (Jongerden 2009: 37, Gundogan 2011: 401, Oktem 2008: 40). The cities with the largest Kurdish populations underwent large-scale toponymic changes; in Mardin 91% of all

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[17] Law on the Amendment of the Article 2D of the Provincial Administration Act No. 5442 (1959) Official Gazette of the Republic of Turkey, 10210, 21 May 1959.

settlement names and in Siirt, Bingöl, Mus, Bitlis, Van and Hakkari 75% of all toponyms had been replaced (Oktem 2008: 44).[18] Until its dissolution in 1978, the Commission reviewed an estimated number of 85,000 rural settlement names and replaced around 30-33% of them (Jongerden 2009, Oktem 2008, Tuncel 2000). Even though toponymic engineering strategies of the time targeted the Turkey's landscape as a whole, disproportional distribution of place naming is significant; name changes mostly occurred in the eastern third of the country (Jongerden 2009: 37). The proportion of Turkified village names in Western and Central Turkey remained around 30%, while in Kurdish provinces in the eastern and southeastern regions it drastically increased to an average of 80% (Oktem 2008: 44). It is also important to note that the majority of the Turkified names did not have any commemorative purposes and significant political references. They were neither direct translations from the original names. Instead they appeared arbitrary, having "effectively de-historicized references to a general category from nature, evoking, if anything, an unspecified sense of timelessness." (Jongerden 2009: 40) Mainly aiming at incorporating space into the Republican time by disrupting the "continuous accumulation of place-specific memories that are meaningful beyond generational differences" (Azaryahu 1996: 317), full-scale engineering of the country's toponymy was directed by a highly centralized bureaucracy. Leaving almost no room for Kurdish political representation, state-led place naming as a tool in suppressing the Kurdish memory, was designed to limit cultural and spatial expressions of the Kurdish identity. In 1980, Turkey's toponymy was largely uniform and Turkified.

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[18] Although the mentioned provinces have been populated mainly by the Kurdish population since the establishment of the Republic, historically eastern and southeastern Turkey was also inhabited by Arabic, Armenian and Syriac-speaking Christian communities. A comprehensive scientific research on the origins of toponyms in Turkey would require the knowledge of several languages, such as Persian, Armenian, Arabic, Assyrian, Kurdish and their dialects. Due to the significant lack of research in the literature on the topic, this research does not intend to distinguish between ancient origins of toponyms. As it is mentioned in the previous chapters, the purpose of this study is the analysis of the act of naming itself in identity politics, rather than a linguistic analysis of place names. What is important to note is that starting from the 1940s, the Turkification of toponyms in eastern and southeastern regions of the country primarily targeted the Kurdish identity.

3.5   Cultural and Toponymic Cleansing of the Kurdish Periphery

During the military junta (1980-1983), toponymic campaign of the state ceased. However in 1983 the Expert Commission for Name Change was re-established, although by then, up to 90% of toponyms in certain eastern and southeastern provinces had already been replaced (Jongerden 2009: 39, Oktem 2008: 58). In 1983, the General Command of Mapping was founded under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence, with the task of inspecting the printing and selling of maps of Turkey. The same year, the use of non-Turkish toponyms on maps, even in parenthesis, was banned (Nisanyan 2011: 13). The Symposium of Turkish Toponyms, held in 1984, set the agenda for future toponymic changes as the following:

- "Names that are not Turkish, whose pronunciation and structure is incompatible with the vocal harmony of Turkish, which are contrary to the common sense of the people shall be changed.

- Names, which are Turkish, yet corrupted by local dialects, shall be restored according to the correct orthography.

- Foreign place names shall not be substituted by their translation in Turkish. However, if the old name refers to a natural or topographic characteristic of the village, a translation may be considered.

- When foreign place names are replaced, no names shall be given, whose pronunciation may evoke the old name." (Oktem 2008:51)

Even though the symposium set the goal of resuming the changes in Turkey's toponymic order, since the early 1980s the number of changed village names had remained relatively low: 280 village names were replaced (Tuncel 2000: 25). The main reason of decreased intensity of the Commission's work was the fact that by the time, an overwhelming majority of place names in targeted regions, mainly Eastern and Southeastern Turkey had been already changed.
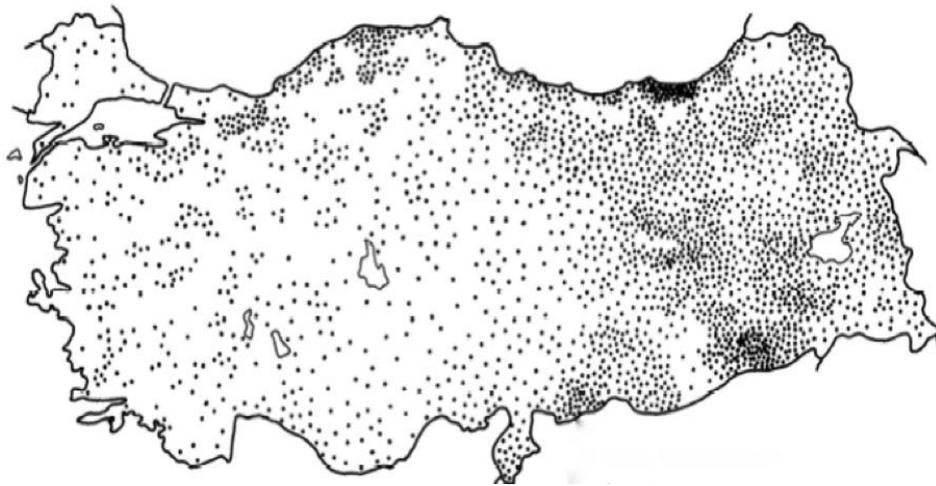
Figure 1 Geographic distribution of villages of which the names have been changed by 2000

Each point on the map is equal to an average of 5 villages.

Source: Tuncel 2000: 30.

As a direct intervention to the sense of continuity, toponymic practices meant to cause a rupture in memory and identity in certain regions of the country. By targeting the heritage of the 'other' in a way that a certain historical and political narrative is privileged, toponymic policies were designed to produce particular ways of giving meaning and remembering. Since "remembering is at once an act of identity enforcement, land, place and ancestor articulation" (Kearney and Bradley 2009:83), toponymic changes represented an attempt to geographically redistribute identity and meaning by modifying collective memory, and enforcing scripted understandings of identities specific to particular places (Price 2004:31). The construction of a Turkified and uniform toponymic order was achieved by the 1980s to a great extent: 1/3 of the country's topography has been renamed. The period following the 1980s was marked by the elimination of any residual elements of symbolic, linguistic, spatial and toponymic representation of the Kurdish identity. By the 2000s, overall around 33-35% of all village names in the country had been Turkified, with a considerable concentration in the eastern and southeastern regions (Nisanyan 2011, Tuncel 2000: 27) (Figure 1). However, the state policy of asserting and imposing particular meanings through place name changes has always been challenged in Eastern and Southeastern Turkey; especially since mid-2000s, the act of assigning names to places has been claimed by the Kurdish political

movement as a crucial strategy in the struggle for cultural and ethnic recognition.

4 RENAMING PLACES AS A COUNTER-HEGEMOMIC STRATEGY

The Republican space, designed and imposed to demographically and linguistically control the nation, has always been contested at the local level. Yet the renaming of places as a strategy to "reclaim the region from the state and its assimilative policies" (Gambetti and Jongerden 2011: 386), has recently been adopted by the Kurdish political movement in Turkey. Linked to memory and collective identity, the strategies of using Kurdish pronunciations for Turkified place names, re-introducing the original names of rural settlements and deploying alternative names in urban settings have recently been the core of the Kurdish resistance to Republican naming. The current emphasis on renaming is significant as, starting from the 2000s, the Kurdish movement has been increasingly concerned with freedom of cultural expression, linguistic revival and social recognition. Greater concern of the movement with 'the cultural' in the last decade and the transformation of Kurdish liberation from secession to socio-cultural recognition have developed a focus on the 'Kurdish space'. While critical approaches within the field of toponymic studies highlight the act of renaming as a form of resistance, in cases of discrimination through spatial and linguistic measures, it is important to understand it as a right within the context of social justice. This section covers the transformation of the Kurdish struggle in Turkey and discusses the Kurdification of place names as a strategy to remove spatio-cultural injustice.

Kurds are an ethnic group in the Middle East, primarily concentrated in Turkey, Syria, Iraq and Iran. Kurdistan, the geo-cultural Kurdish region, is divided among four sovereign states where the Kurdish peoples are minorities. Therefore, the Kurdish identity is shaped in relation to particular hegemonic national identities, namely Turk, Arab and Persian, in respective states. As a non-national language, Kurdish is marked by considerable regional variations between its many dialects. The main three are Sorani, which is spoken mainly in Central Kurdistan (parts of Iraq and Iran), Zaza, spoken in Northern Kurdi-

stan, and Kirmanji, particularly used by Kurds in Turkey (Entessar 1992: 4). The exact number of the Kurdish population in Turkey is unknown, however it is estimated to be 20% of the total population, around 15 million, concentrated mainly in the eastern and southeastern parts of the country (Casier et al. 2003: 136). The establishment of the Turkish nation-state in 1923 inevitably affected the Kurdish population, the biggest non-Turk group in modern Turkey, transforming their socio-political and economic orders. The Kurdish geography in Turkey has become the target of the Kemalist state ideology.

4.1   Kurdish Nationalism: From Local Uprisings to a Mass Movement

In response to the rise of Turkish nationalism as a project of modernization and homogenization, Kurdish nationalism emerged as a highly politicized movement in the 1920s. The Republican reforms, especially the process of radical secularization and regime change, were the main reasons behind the emergence of the first waves of the Kurdish resistance. The abolition of the Sultanate and the Caliphate, the institutions from which Kurdish tribal and religious leaders derived their authority, in the second half of the 1920s, eradicated the basis of their legitimacy and damaged feudal power structures of the Kurdish region (Yildiz 2007: 241). In addition to the collapse of the Ottoman socio-political structure, the loss of autonomy and regional power as a result of Republican centralization further politicized Kurdish nationalism. Finally, the Kemalist project of 'Eastern modernization' created a framework in which the existence of the Kurdish ethnic identity was officially rejected and the Kurdish population was defined as a feudal community of uncivilized and backward prospective Turks. Although the Kurdish opposition could not formulate a cohesive and unified movement during the 1920s and 1930s, these decades were marked by a series of Kurdish uprisings[19]. Emerged mainly as a reaction to the collapse of traditional socio-political structure of the pre-Republican era and the abolition of the Caliphate, the Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 was first

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[19] Out of 18 rebellions, occurred in Turkey between 1924-1938, 17 took place in the Kurdish region. See Turkiye Cumhuriyeti'nde Ayaklanmalar [Revolts in the Republic of Turkey] (1972) Ankara: Genelkurmay Basimevi [General Staff Publications].

to explicitly call for Kurdish independence, which led to the adoption of harsh measures by the state against any form of Kurdish cultural and political expression (Entessar 1992: 84). The rebellion was followed by the declaration of Kurdish independence in Agri in 1927. The Kurdish attempt to assert independence as a political motive was responded by "mass deportation of Kurdish villages, the exiling of sheiks and aghas, and the forceful recruiting of young Kurds into the Turkish army." (Entessar 1992: 85) The last major revolt occurred in Dersim, today's Tunceli, in 1937-38 as a reaction to the Settlement Law of 1934. Severely responded by the state, Dersim revolt led to the depopulation of entire villages and mass extermination of Kurds. The response of the regime was justified as a "march of civilization" (Yegen 1999: 560), and the Kurdish resistance was perceived by the Republican state "in terms of reactionary politics, tribal resistance or regional backwardness, but never as an ethno-political question." (Yegen 1996: 216) This period, marked by Kurdish uprisings having not only nationalist but also religious concerns, coincided with the processes of Republican linguistic and demographic engineering, along with assimilationist policies in every sphere of life.

Following the suppression of the resistance and harsh measures taken by the state, the Kurdish movement focused on the production of an intellectual and ideological basis until the 1960s. Similar to the re-appropriation of the Republican Turkish historiography, Kurdish intellectuals aimed at reviving historical narratives and myths. Rather than questioning the Turkish (official) version of history, they chose to Kurdify the past as much as they were excluded from it. Imagining the Kurdish community and constructing a collective consciousness were to be done through the reinterpretation of Kurdish myths in a way that they refuted the Turkish nationalist narrative. As in the case of the hegemonic Turkish history, the Kurdish historiography distinguished the 'self' as civilized and the 'other', the Turk in this case, as barbaric through the reinterpretation of four main Kurdish myths. First, the myth of ethnogenesis linked modern Kurds to the oldest indigenous habitants of the region, pointing out to Kurdishness as an ancient ethnicity. Second, the homeland myth claimed Anatolia as the Kurdish homeland and directly confronted the Turkish historical narrative. Later, the myth of resistance called for an 'eternal opposition to foreign rule' and struggle for national liberation, and finally the myth of

national character emphasized Kurds as the builders of civilization in the Middle East (Hirschler 2001: 152-153). The re-appropriation of Kurdish history and the creation of a Kurdish historical narrative during the 1940s and 1950s paved the way for the Kurdish political struggle to transform itself into a cohesive movement in the following decades.

4.2   Pathway Towards Radicalization

The coup d'etat in 1960 not only marked a turning point for the Turkish democracy but also for the Kurdish movement. Although the expansion of democratic freedoms in the constitution of 1961 provided new channels for Kurdish political representation, limitations on cultural expression remained on the one hand, while on the other, as a result of the intellectual production in the previous decades, Kurdish nationalism turned into a mass movement by reaching and politicizing Kurdish youth and urban university students.   In 1965, the Turkish Kurdistan Democrat Party (TKDP) was founded as a representative of the 1961 Barzani movement in Northern Iraq. The establishment of the Revolutionary Cultural Society of the East (DDKO) in 1969 was significant in defining a new ideological path for the Kurdish movement. The DDKO, an anti-imperialist organization with strong references to Kurdishness and a critique of Kemalist modernization, was founded by a coalition of urban Kurdish students, Kurdish intellectuals and the Turkish Left, while the Turkish Right identified the movement as a threat to the national unity, along with communism. The Kurdish movement re-situated itself within a Marxist-Leninist framework, based on an anti-imperialist discourse in the context of 'colonized Kurdistan' (Bozarslan 2002). Urbanization and increased level of education, which according to the Kemalist modernization project would foster homogenization and assimilation of the Kurdish population, instead contributed to the construction of Kurdish national consciousness.

The re-orientation of the movement towards the Left highlighted new requests, such as economic reconstruction of the Kurdish region, the approval of Kurdish as a broadcasting and instruction language, and the transformation of hierarchical social structures into horizontally distributed power relations (Entessar 1992: 91) In 1971, the statement, issued at the congress of the Work-

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ers' Party of Turkey (TIP) openly recognized the existence of Kurds as an oppressed and intimidated minority that had had to face policies of assimilation (Nezan 1980: 97). However, following the military memorandum in 1971, the Kurdish movement began to detach itself from the Turkish Left on the grounds that, in spite of its anti-imperialist stance on Turkey's relations with the West, the Turkish Left had not recognized the colonization of Kurdistan by the Turkish state. While the Left found that the Kurdish focus on ethnic recognition was increasingly divisive for the overall anti-imperialist struggle, it was criticized by the Kurdish intellectuals of not questioning its Kemalist heritage (Casier and Jongerden 2012: 5). During the 1970s, the Kurdish movement moved away from the broader leftist discourse and class-based politics towards the expression of demands exclusive to the Kurdish people. It created its own political space on the basis of further radicalization, evolving around the critique of Kemalism as a de facto anti-Kurdish regime, and the idea of Kurds in Turkey as a colonized nation that had to fight for liberation. In 1977, the TKDP was divided into fragments, leading to the formation of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) in 1978 under the leadership of Abdullah Ocalan, with the aim of national liberation and the establishment of a sovereign Kurdish state through use of arms (Bozarslan 2002: 859).

4.3   The PKK and the Armed Struggle

The last coup d'etat in modern Turkey took place in 1980, hitting especially the Left and the Kurdish movement. The killing and mass imprisonment of Kurdish leaders and activists, and the adoption of extremely severe policies against any form of symbolic and cultural representation of the Kurdish identity, in addition to the suppression of any Kurdish political activity, pushed the PKK underground, which gave rise to a guerrilla movement. Even though the expression of Kurdishness had been limited and suppressed by the state in the past through legislative acts, the Constitution of 1982, written by the military junta, replaced all enactments in a decisive way:

Article 26: No language prohibited by law shall be used in expressing thought. Any written or printed document, videotapes and other media items in violation of this article shall be confiscated.

Article 28: No language prohibited by law shall be used in any kind of publication. [20]

While there was no mention of Kurdish language in the constitution, the 'Law on Publications in Any Other Language than Turkish'[21], adopted in 1983, explicitly banned the use of Kurdish in broadcasting and publishing, and became a reference to the related constitutional articles. Lastly, during the same period, the Article 141 of the Turkish Penal Code[22] was revised, prohibiting communist and separatist movements and banning the propaganda of communist and separatist ideas.

The reintroduction of multi-party system in 1983 did not seem to change the political and cultural pressure on the expression of the Kurdish identity. During the 1980s, the Kurdish movement began to be increasingly dominated by the PKK. Emerged from the revolutionary left, the group gained huge popular support in the Kurdish region and launched its first guerrilla attack in 1984. While the Kurdish armed resistance reflected the shift of the movement from the left towards Kurdish nationalism, asserting secession as the liberation of the 'colonized' Kurd, greater politicization of Kurdish cultural elements and the use of arms increased the severity of the state response. Liberalization policies of the 1990s, which considerably enlarged democratic spaces in Turkey, were not reflected on the relationship between the Turkish state and the Kurdish citizen. In 1987, the OHAL (Emergency Rule Region) was established, covering most of the southeastern part of Turkey. The 'super-region' was ruled under emergency legislation until the dissolution of the governorate in 2002. According to the official numbers, during the 1990s, 3,215 settlements in 14 Kurdish provinces (approximately ¼ of all rural settlements in the region) were evacuated and destroyed by the Turkish army. Estimated numbers suggest that the army's settlement policy forced around 1-1,5 million people to migrate (Tezcan and Koc 2006, Aker et al. 2005). The last decade of

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[20] Both articles have been abolished in 2001.
Republic of Turkey Ministry of Justice, The First and the Last Transcript of the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey of 1982.
http://www.adalet.gov.tr/duyurular/2011/eylul/anayasalar/1982ilkson.pdf. Accessed 25 August 2013.
[21] The law has been abolished in 1991, however its de facto implementation remained.
[22] The article was abolished in 1991.

the 20th century was marked by escalating violence, further shrinking space for Kurdish politics and severe military responses by the state. Increased restrictions on political channels for Kurdish representation and the perception of Kurdish demands strictly within a security-oriented context led to a self-reproducing cycle of violence (Aydinli 2011, Bacik 2002). In 1999, the capture of Abdullah Ocalan signalled significant policy transformations on the part of both the Turkish state and the Kurdish political movement.[23]

4.4   Democratization as Kurdish Liberation

In 1999, the capture of Ocalan led to a decrease in the PKK's military strength and a loss of organizational orientation. While the group declared unilateral ceasefire, another significant development in the same year took place in Helsinki; Turkey was declared a candidate member by the European Council. Political pressure from the EU on human rights issues and democratization, and the decline in the PKK's military activity created a favourable environment for addressing the Kurdish issue. In 2002, the Law on Teaching of Foreign Languages was amended and the ban on teaching Kurdish in private schools was abolished (Aslan 2009: 34) The same year, the AKP's (Justice and Development Party) huge electoral victory marked a turning point for the Kurdish political movement. The Kurdish support for the AKP was based on two main factors. On the one hand, the PKK's nationalist discourse and it reliance on violence had not been able to suggest answers to political, economic and cultural aspirations of the Kurdish population, while on the other hand religiously conservative AKP emerged as a possible ally for the Kurdish movement on the grounds that conservatives and Kurds had been "the 'other' of the Republican hegemony of Turkish secularism." (Casier et al. 2013: 149) Consequently, the efforts for the EU membership and the emphasis on shared Muslimhood helped the government make inroads into the Kurdish region. During the first AKP government, legal measures were passed in order to align Turkey's legislative framework with the EU requirements and democratic spaces were en-

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[23] Ocalan, arrested in Kenya in 1999, is serving a life sentence at the Imrali island prison.

larged. At the same time, the government aimed at ideologically attacking the PKK and its leftist roots by putting great emphasis on Islam as the common basis of identity. The Kurdish support for religiously conservative and economically liberal AKP government was particularly motivated by increased expectations for democratization, Islam and hope for the future (Casier et al. 2013: 139). Yet the nationalist state discourse was still present in practice and continuous military operations to the PKK bases were approved and supported by the government.

On the other hand, on a post-Marxist, non-state and post-nationalist basis, the Kurdish movement redefined its goals and strategies. In the post-2000 period, as a result of enlarged legal and cultural spaces and increased visibility in the international arena, Kurdish activism transformed its focus from state formation to cultural contestation and symbolic creation of Kurdish nationhood (Aslan 2009: 37). Aiming at the total transformation of socio-political power relations and the reconceptualization of democracy, the Kurdish aspirations have shifted from the idea of secession towards Ocalan's 'democratic triangle concept'. Based on the reconsideration of liberation as deepened democracy, rather than the formation of a Kurdish nation-state, the concept identifies three interrelated projects: "The *democratic republic* seeks to redefine the Republic of Turkey, by disassociating democracy and nationalism; *democratic autonomy* refers to the right of people to decide on their own priorities, to determine their own future; and the project of *democratic confederation* is to serve as a model for self-government." (Casier and Jongerden 2012: 15) The Kurdish focus, shifting towards deepening democracy, achieving cultural freedoms and increased Kurdish activity, placed the Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) at the centre of not only the Kurdish movement but also Turkish democratization process. Within this context, reclaiming space and meaning through the renaming of Kurdish places whose names had been Turkified, has become a significant Kurdish strategy. While renaming, as a "proclamation of cultural politics" (Kearns and Berg 2002: 283), represents a place-oriented consciousness from which the Kurdish existence is derived, it goes beyond a mere linguistic exercise and points out to a process of identity reparation.

4.5   Reclaiming Space, Memory and Identity: Semiotic

Construction of Kurdish Spaces

       First as a DTP (Democratic Society Party) deputy in 2008 and later as a BDP member in 2011, Hasip Kaplan introduced a bill in the parliament, proposing an amendment to the Provincial Administration Act of 1949. Kaplan's proposal stated that;

> "Settlement names that [had] been changed based on this law shall be used and written together with the old names."[24]
> [my translation]

Although Kaplan's proposal of dual naming policy could not make it through the parliament, it has been recently adopted by BDP-led municipalities. In 2010, upon the decision of Diyarbakir city council, 91 village names were bilingually used on road signs.[25] Following the governor's objection, referring to the Article III of the Turkish Constitution[26], a legal investigation was launched.[27] Finally, the State Council appealed the decision of the municipality on the grounds that changes in place names required the approval of the Ministry of Interior, and the use of the letters 'w, q and x', banned from use in the Turkish alphabet in 1928, constituted a violation of the law.[28] Similarly, in 2013, the

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[24] The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Legislative Drafts and Proposals http://www2.tbmm.gov.tr/d24/2/2-0106.pdf.

[25] "Diyarbakir'da 91 Ile Kurtce Isim" [91 Village Names in Kurdish in Diyarbakir] http://www.ntvmsnbc.com/id/25134483. Published: 24 September 2010. Accessed: 11 September 2013.

[26] The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Constitution. http://global.tbmm.gov.tr/docs/constitution_en.pdf.
Article III: The State of Turkey, with its territory and nation, is an indivisible entity. Its language is Turkish.

[27] Provinces and their districts are governed by municipalities (elected) and governorships/governorates (appointed) in Turkey. Since elected officials in Kurdish provinces are mostly locals of the region, and appointed authorities are representatives of the state, cooperation between the two levels of government has always been hard to accomplish.

[28] The Article 222 of the Turkish Criminal Code states that those who violate the Law on the Adoption and Application of Turkish Letters of 1928 are punished with imprisonment from two to six months.
The democratization package, announced by the government in September 2013, lifted the ban on the usage of the letters w, q and x in public services and education, however as of November 2013, no legislative measures have been passed.
The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, Legislation, Laws. http://www.tbmm.gov.tr/kanunlar/k5237.html.

municipality of Hakkari decided to use dual naming on road signs in rural areas. The proposal was rejected by the city's governorship on the basis that the municipal government had no authority to change place names.[29]

As these cases indicate, despite loosening official discourse on place names in Eastern Turkey, elective office has no authority in toponymic practices. The lack of prerogative over place names in the region is the main obstacle for Kurdish municipalities that have been struggling for stronger local government. The unequivocal balance of power between Kurdish-led provinces and the state, and the gap between highly centralized Turkish bureaucracy and local administration, in terms of their sphere of authority, explain the Kurdish insistence on dual naming, rather than the replacement of given Turkish names in the rural. Bilingual usage of toponyms on road signs clearly aims at introducing a cultural and political Kurdish sensitivity into the public sphere, and reclaiming meaning and memory through the visibility of the Kurdish language. However, given the lack of power vis-à-vis the state, the strategy of bilingual use of place names seems to be carefully calculated, focusing on introducing Kurdish names alongside the Turkish ones, instead of calling for a total Kurdification of toponyms. The Kurdish approach to the renaming of places is realistic when considering the data on granted former names in Turkey. Since the 1990s, around 110 villages and towns have been given back their old names, mainly based on purposes of tourism. While the process has been arbitrary, far from being a systematic policy of recognition, it has also represented an inequality in terms of distribution; the villages are evenly distributed across country, except for the eastern and southeastern regions where only 3 villages have been given their old names (Nisanyan 2011: 63).[30]

While dual naming on road signs has been rejected by the state authorities, in recent years Kurdish place names have been bilingually used on legal documents by the bureaucracy. In 2009, the names of 20 villages in Ağrı, Kars,

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[29] "Valilikten Kurtce Koy Isimlerine Red" [Governor's Rejection of Kurdish Village Names]
http://www.zaman.com.tr/gundem_valilikten-kurtce-koy-isimlerine-red_2109656.html. Published: 12 July 2013. Accessed: 8 September 2013.
[30] Edremit in Van and Harran in Sanliurfa have been given back their former names by a parliamentary decree on the grounds that they have touristic and historical significance. Gayda in Bitlis, where three ministers of the decade were from, has also been renamed.

Iğdır and Ardahan were listed in two languages on the official website of the General Directorate of Land Registry and Cadastre.[31] Likewise, in the same year, the official website of Hasankeyf District Governorate used 18 Kurdish village names in parenthesis alongside the Turkish ones.[32] As seen in these cases, the state response to Kurdish renaming requests has been arbitrary and incoherent. In explaining the lack of cohesion in policy making, it is important to note that the Turkish-Kurdish dialogue is a relatively new phase where the attitudes of the actors are shaped and conditioned by their already existing beliefs. As Ross (2007: 25) emphasizes, ambiguous nature of certain political events and stages leads to a variety of interpretations, and "to deal with this ambiguity, groups turn to readily available interpretations and narratives that then shape subsequent behaviour." Therefore, in such cases, mistrust between the parties and failure to generate coherent and uniform policies result from the selective interpretation of events, which strengthens existing beliefs. Thus, it is important to take account of the specific context in which Kurdish requests and policy making attempts are perceived and interpreted by the state actors. In this regard, the dissonance between state institutions and actors is mainly due to two factors. On the one hand, despite the fact that cultural and political reforms have been recently introduced on a symbolic level, there is a significant lack of legal basis for Kurdish demands to be responded cohesively. The lack of legislative unity leads to disintegrated state responses, and consequently controversy in implementation gives way to uneven recognition of Kurdish rights. On the other hand, non-monolithic nature of the state and the lack of a legal and political guideline highlight existing narratives as references. The reluctance of appointed state officials, such as governors and public prosecutors, to answer Kurdish requests that are reflective of the Kurdish identity, can be explained by the perception of Kurdish struggle as a threat to the unity of the Turkish state by the bureaucracy. Within the boundaries of nationalist and ex-

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[31] "Tapu Kadastro'dan Kurtce Acilimi" [Kurdish Opening from Land Registry and Cadastre] Published: 23 August 2009. Accessed: 8 September 2013. http://www.radikal.com.tr/turkiye/tapu_kadastrodan_kurtce_acilimi-951110.

[32] "Kaymakamlik Sitesinde Turkce ve Kurtce Köy Isimleri" [Village Names in Turkish and Kurdish on Governorship Website] Published: 18 August 2009. Accessed: 8 September 2013.
http://gundem.milliyet.com.tr/kaymakamlik-sitesinde-turkce-ve-kurtce-koy-isimleri/gundem/gundemdetay/18.08.2009/1129557/default.htm.

clusionary state discourse on Kurdishness, Kurdish visibility in the public sphere is equated to separatism, which consequently creates confrontations between state actors and institutions.

While the Kurdish strategy to rename the rural and introduce dual naming has been facing arbitrary state responses, the renaming of the urban setting has had comparatively more predictable answers, mainly due to the fact that renaming the urban spaces has different aspirations. As opposed to bilingual usage of place names, toponymic redesign of the Kurdish urban space through the replacement of street, park and neighbourhood names, stands out as a direct attempt of commemoration and identity manifestation. By asserting commemorative names, municipalities aim at introducing Kurdish symbolic meanings and historical narratives into the public sphere. The incorporation of the Kurdish history into the realm of social life and the city, serves as a tool in the proclamation of Kurdish consciousness; renaming the urban becomes the reclamation of "the right to determine what is remembered (and forgotten) publically and officially."(Alderman and Inwood 2013: 216) In this regard, what makes the state response predictable and cohesive is that the names proposed in the cities have clear intentions as references to the Kurdish history and identity. Based on the selective interpretation of Kurdish aspirations by local officials, the majority of commemorative street and park names, proposed by the municipality of Diyarbakir in 2007 were rejected (Jongerden 2009). As a reference to the Kurdish history in Turkey, '33 Kurşun Parkı' (33 Bullets Park) referred to the 33 Bullets Incident of 1943, where villages were extrajudicially killed on the order of a Turkish general in the Kurdish province of Van. Another proposed name, Çarçıra Parkı commemorated Chahar Cheragh Square in Iran where Qazi Muhammed attempted to declare the independent state of Kurdistan in 1946. Finally, a street was named 'Zeynel Durmuş', the name of a young woman who died while being chased by the police at a HADEP[33] demonstration in 2001. These names, commemorating the Kurdish political struggle and the victims of violence were rejected by the governorship of Diyarbakir on the grounds that '33 Bullets Park' was a direct accusation towards

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[33] People's Democracy Party was a Kurdish nationalist party, founded in 1994. The party was closed down by the Constitutional Court in 2003 on the grounds that it supported the PKK.

the state, any reference to an independent Kurdish state was separatism and 'Zeynel Durmuş' was associated with the PKK (Jongerden 2009).

In addition to names with commemorative purposes, in the construction of symbolic Kurdish spaces and new geographies of memory, names with cultural and ideological references have been introduced. 'Gerzan', 'Botan', 'Lales□' (names of historically significant Kurdish regions) and 'Zilan' (the name of a large Kurdish tribe) were proposed by the municipality of Batman during the 2000s. They were all rejected by the governorship on the basis that they encouraged rebellion against the Turkish state (Jongerden 2009). In the same decade, the municipality of Diyarbakir proposed '1 Gulan' (Kurdish for 'May 1st' International Workers' Day), 'Asiti' (Kurdish for 'peace'), 'Azad' (Kurdish for 'freedom') and 'Jiyanan Azad' (Kurdish for 'free life') as street and park names. While these names were not accepted, 'Ciwan' (Kurdish for 'youth') was approved as 'Civan'. Reflecting the leftist orientation of Kurdish politics and the transformation of Kurdish aspirations from secession to freedom in Turkey, they were denied since they belonged to a 'foreign' language, Kurdish. Besides, in the same period, the majority of approved names in Diyarbakir were in Turkish. Giving expression to Kurdish aspirations in Turkish, 'Baris□' (Turkish for 'peace'), 'Özgür' (Turkish for 'free'), '8 Mart' (Turkish for 'March 8th' Women's Day), 'Kardes□lik' (Turkish for 'brotherhood'), 'Özgürlük' (Turkish for 'freedom') and 'I□nsan Hakları' (Turkish for 'human rights') were approved by the authorities. As seen above, proposed names, in both Kurdish and Turkish, not only refer to cultural and historical elements of Kurdish identity, but also they introduce references to ideological orientation and aspirations of Kurdish politics. Transformed into a post-nationalist movement, Kurdish opposition aims at redesigning urban space with variety of toponymic references, invested with Kurdish symbols and meaning, which translate spatial struggle into the struggle for cultural recognition.

5   CONCLUDING REMARKS

This research has discussed place naming from two different perspectives in one particular case. First, following traditional toponymic studies, the naming of places is examined as a hegemonic practice in Turkey. Since "modern

forms of state surveillance and control of populations…have depended on the homogenizing, rationalizing and partitioning of space" (Alonso 1994: 382), the concern of the Turkish state over space, especially during the process of nation-building in a post-Ottoman cultural setting is significant. As a product of social practices and a dynamic that shapes social relations and identities, space has undergone a top-down, centralized process of engineering. Aiming at homogenizing populations through the construction of both physical and symbolic Turkish spaces, spatial practices of the Turkish state have claimed ownership over territory. Spatial design of the landscape was supported and contributed by the creation of hegemonic narratives of history and identity. Discursive, demographic and linguistic design of the Kurdish east and southeast went hand in hand with the exclusion of Kurdish cultural and political elements from the public sphere. As an attempt to transform memory and meaning, state-led toponymic engineering of the Kurdish 'periphery' targeted place attachment of Kurds by controlling identity boundaries and by imposing a timeless sense of space. The Turkification of Kurdish place names within the context of a particular nationalist rhetoric designated a disconnection between the name of the place and its historical origin, which would also mean the appropriation and transformation of the Kurdish identity.

As mentioned earlier, the scope of this paper is to explore the politics of (re)naming in Turkey. In examining state-led Turkification of toponyms in eastern and southeastern provinces, this research acknowledges Armenians, Arabs and Syriac communities as historical inhabitants of the region. Therefore, the toponymic heritage of the landscape should not be reduced to a monolithic entity or be associated with one particular culture. With this being said, it should be noted that the politics of toponymic changes are discussed around the act of naming itself rather than historical meanings or linguistic analysis of place names. In this regard, this research is more concerned with the purpose of Turkish toponymic practices in eastern and southeastern provinces as a direct intervention to the Kurdish identity, and the re-introduction of pre-nationstate names in rural settings by the Kurdish movement (which is de-Turkification of place names rather their Kurdification) than the origins of toponyms in the region. As a declaration of ownership and authority, the political and ideological act of assigning names to places in this sense appears as a

hegemonic act by the Turkish nation-state, aiming at the cultural erosion of the Kurdish identity as part of a wider system of exclusion.

On the other hand, following the main approach of critical human geography on toponymy, giving names to places is also conceptualized as a counter-hegemonic practice. As an attempt to overturn spatial and toponymic hegemony, 'renaming' indicates the act of place naming as a form of resistance. In recent years, Kurdish claims on space and toponyms have been vocal in Turkey. Greater concern of the Kurdish political movement over space is significant when taking account of its ideological transformation. The shift of Kurdish aspirations from an independent sovereign state towards political autonomy, cultural recognition, stronger local government and further democratization in Turkey helps explain the focus of the movement on 'the cultural'. The assertion of the legitimacy of the Kurdish history, language and space through the re-introduction of pre-nationstate rural toponymy of the eastern region and the deployment of new names, invested with Kurdishness, in the urban setting, interacts with the overall discourse of Kurdish politics on cultural and political freedom. As a resistance to the Turkish toponymic design, which "destroyed the meanings of the former, obfuscated historical connections and ethno-religious patterns, but failed to replace it with an alternative sense of meaning" (Oktem 2008: 65), renaming involves re-asserting the 'self' and reclaiming space, memory and identity. Therefore, conceptualized as identity reparation in this study, renaming represents a cultural right. Based on the notions of restoring the Kurdish identity, re-asserting discursive and material ownership of Kurdish spaces and symbolically constructing the Kurdish nationhood, the act of renaming is thought of as a right to remove spatial and linguistic injustice, whose outcomes include cultural inequality and discrimination, beyond geographical consequences.

Increased visibility of the Kurdish language, signs and culture is on the agenda of the political movement, while the Turkish government is at the negotiation table with Ocalan, the jailed leader of the PKK, and the representatives of Kurdish politics in the parliament in order to put an end to almost 30-year old low density war. The process of disarmament has been accompanied by the expansion of Kurdish political and cultural freedoms. Lastly, the government's democratization package announced that former village names in

the Kurdish region would be given back and the ban on the use of the letters x, q, w would be lifted. While the current state of the dialogue between the two parties on expanding freedoms has been positive, the official response to the renaming policies of local Kurdish administrations has been incoherent. In addition to the present lack of legal basis for the reforms to be implemented, state response to Kurdish toponymic practices has been fraught with contradictions and inconsistencies. As an example of "toponymic warfare" (Kadmon 2004: 85), the current situation reflects the clash between the hegemonic and counter-hegemonic discourses on space and place names. The political struggle over toponyms in Turkey mainly evolves around spatial and linguistic dimensions of identity, thus the prospects for democracy, peace and justice involve the politics of visibility and recognition.

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