

actually teaches us new social data through the variety of user identities and storylines that have evolved as a result of the war and of the forms of resistance that have surfaced in its aftermath. The invisible forms of resistance that exist in this area where life is connected with nature, within a city known only for being part of a violence-torn region, are proof of the crucial necessity of reexamining the notion of resilience with the help of these women actors. The struggle given in the field, the struggle they give while selling what they harvest from the fields, the struggle they give dealing with the middlepersons, the struggle they give against the masculine ruling power, the struggle they give against the new normal, altered by the coronavirus pandemic.

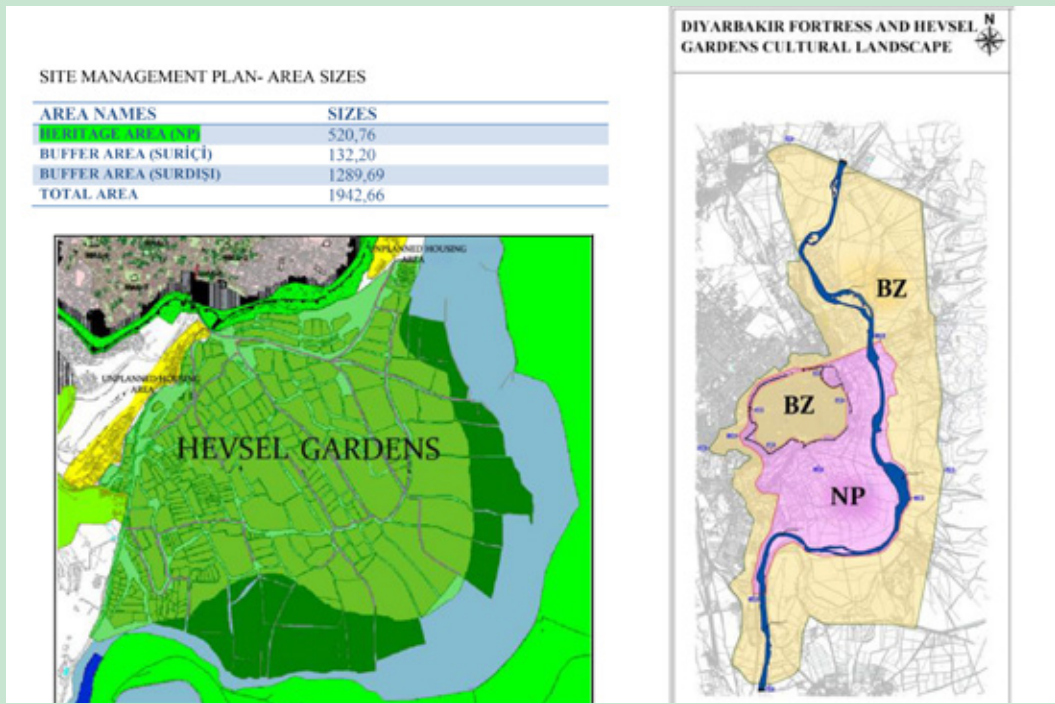
My aim is to produce a reading through the lens of ecofeminism, the synthesis of ecology and feminism, of the regime's women policies, implemented on the lost hoeing culture and the resistance sites, that the women who work in the Hevsel Gardens are faced with, be it in the garden or town, and fight against. It is also to voice what these areas that have witnessed so much history have to say to us, and, through art, to grant visibility to the hoeing women of Hevsel, who constitute some among the women actors of the town, and to their resisting practices.

To cast a look at the resilience of these actors, the women of Hevsel, who are in a constant state of resistance because of the destruction of the region's cities, the human tragedies, the disappearance of the inherited cultural and architectural values and the depredation of the Hevsel ecosystem, at the issue of women, one of the frailties of society, together with their ecological, political and spatial context, to propose a reading of the forms of struggle of these women actors in a town where struggle has become a culture, through their daily social practices and through space, at a time when the inhabitants of the intramural neighbourhoods of Diyarbakır were uprooted, had to abandon their home for inner migration because of the ongoing fighting.

To look at how poorly visible the struggle given in the field by these women actors living at the intersection between the city and nature is, at how crucial it is for this struggle

Nowadays, the Hevsel Gardens serve the purpose of urban agriculture. The landowners of the Hevsel Gardens are residents of the urban area, but the farming work is accomplished by people who are of rural origins and whose way of life has remained agrestic. Farming work in the Hevsel Gardens is performed on the basis of commensalism and crop sharing, or agricultural labour, by the population of such areas as the Ben u Sen, Hasırlı, Ali Paşa, Dicle, Feritköşk neighbourhoods, all situated in the Hevsel Gardens' vicinity. In this respect, the Hevsel Gardens remain a component of the city life. Still, the Hevsel Gardens remain an important asset, as they still allow cheap and direct access to food for the impoverished inhabitants of the areas and neighbourhoods close to Hevsel, especially Suriçi and Ben u Sen, in effect providing for the daily needs of the town's population.

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FIGURES 1 AND 2: LOCAL MANAGEMENT PLAN OF THE FORTRESS OF DIYARBAKIR AND HEVSEL GARDENS' CULTURAL LANDSCAPE
NP: HERITAGE ZONE
BZ: BUFFER ZONE

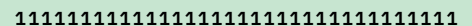
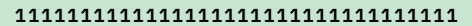
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Situated in Diyarbakır's Sur neighbourhood, Hevsel was included in the UNESCO's list under the designation Fortress of Diyarbakır and Hevsel Gardens' Cultural Landscape Area in 2015, thanks to the significant efforts of the Municipality of Diyarbakır and NGOs. According to the UNESCO's report, the Hevsel Gardens constitute one of the

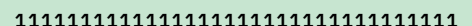
rare examples where nature and the city are so interlinked.

The area designated under the letters NP in the map above (Figure 1) corresponds to the Hevsel Gardens and their circumference. As for the area designated under the letters BZ in the same map, they correspond to Diyarbakır’s historic city, the Sur neighbourhood. As it appears in the same map, the 1000 ha area occupied by the Hevsel Gardens and its circumference, which extends from the Tigris River to the walls of the Fortress of Diyarbakır, is famous for its fertility ever since the antiquity. As I have already pointed out, this area is said to date back to more than 8 thousand years. This ecosystem, inhabited by countless species of birds and mammals, serves both as a living space and agricultural land.

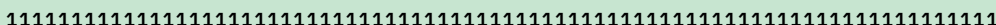
The area highlighted in yellow in Figure 1 above corresponds to the unplanned area occupied by the inhabitants of the outskirts of the Hevsel Gardens and its workers and keepers. The majority of the inhabitants of these neighbourhoods consists of people who were forced to flee their home and relocate in the city after the village evacuations performed in the 1990s. The area also hosted a number of inhabitants from the intramural part of the city, who fled their neighbourhoods after they were damaged in the 2015 Sur inner-city fighting. After the fightings of 2015, a high number of families who lived in the intramural neighbourhoods while working in Hevsel had to relocate further within the walls of the city.



THE HATUN KASTAL NEIGHBOURHOOD, BUILT ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE HEVSEL GARDENS AND INHABITED BY ITS WORKERS.



WATERING SYSTEM OF THE HEVSEL GARDENS



The Hevsel Resistance: 'From Hevsel to Gezi, The Tigris River is Resisting'

In 2015, in the part of the Hevsel Gardens that is situated within the campus of the Dicle University, on the bank of the Tigris River, the people who believed in an ecological and communal way of life opposed the attempt to cut down 7 thousand trees on the campus, which amounted to an ecocide in their eyes, under the slogan of 'Leave my tree, my land, my history and my future alone'. The university students, NGO workers and a high number of women joined in these large protests. As was the case in the Gezi Park Protests, jineology³, ecology history and community tents were set as part of this movement. The protesters set up watch camps against further tree felling in the region, and called the movement off when, after 20 days, the tree cutting attempts ceased.

3 TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: SELF-EXPLANATORY TERM RECENTLY FORGED WITH THE HELP OF THE KURDISH WORD *JIN*, MEANING WOMAN AND THE COMMON LATIN SUFFIX *-LOGY*.



ATEŞİN VE SÜRGÜNÜN GÖLGESİNDE: KENTSEL DÖNÜŞÜM (UNDER THE SHADOW OF FIRE AND EXILE: URBAN TRANSFORMATION - GÜLŞEN İŞERİ - 2018

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THE HEVSEL RESISTANCE

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The Women Labourers Working in Hevsel:

The Hoeing Women

The Hevsel Gardens occupy a fertile area covering roughly seven hundred hectares, situated on the bank of the Tigris River, between the Diyarbakır city walls and the river bed. The sources that highlight the important role played by the Hevsel Gardens on the city's daily life also stress how the "hoeing women" ("*aşefçiler*" in Turkish), in other words women labourers constitute the main part of the workforce employed in these gardens. Mehmet Mercan has compiled many pieces of information regarding these hoeing women from an array of sources in the following way:

"Sweet fragrant herbs would grow on the edges of the irrigation flumes that circle the gardens, colloquially known as Delibardağan, Naneçuçe, Kazayağı, Dereotu (dill), Ağbandır, Acice (watercress), Talık (mallow) and Pırpırım (purslane). These herbs that the hoeing women picked and sold on the market were used in a variety of ways in the local kitchen, cooked or raw, as a salad... The crops and herbs were picked by the labourer women who worked against a low wage, otherwise known as the hoeing women. These hoeing women would carry high loads of crops on their back before dawn and painstakingly climb the Mardıncapı ramp and deliver them to middlepersons at the market on behalf of the orchards' owners. Only then could they sell whatever spoiled, rejected crops and herbs they had been allowed to collect on mobile stands to the poorer inhabitants and hopefully make subsistence money. In the past, some 50 to 60 years ago, the hoeing women used to gather on the "Old Hay Market", right by the coppersmiths' bazar, between the Wheat Bazar and Melikahmet Avenue. However, when the area was transformed into commercial galleries, the hoeing women turned to the street where the Maliki Ejder mosque and shrine are located."⁴

Hoeing

In Turkish, the meaning of the word "*Aşef*" ("hoe") encompasses all the gardening operations such as sorting out the remainder from the sowed saplings or the sowing itself,

⁴ DİYARBAKIR AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN, MEHMET MERCAN (2011), THE DİYARBAKIR FOLK SONG, DİTAV PUBLISHING

and the women who perform these operations are called “Aşefçi” (“hoers”). Within this culture that took shape on the basis of the sale of the garden crops, this term is mostly used to designate the women who sell in the city the crops and herbs that they pick from the gardens. The hoeing women, who are paid a daily wage in return for their work, are also traditionally granted a right to pick up the remainder of the crops, those that are too spoiled for the garden’s owners to sell on the market. The crops that are left over unpicked after the harvest are also granted for the hoeing women to collect. These were called “Xerat”. As the hoeing women started to work in the early hours of the morning, their shift would end by noon and they would pick up the fruits and vegetables left for them by the owners as well as the herbs from the Hevsel gardens such as basil and purslane and carry them in baskets on their backs to the hoers’ market in the Balıkçılarbaşı district of Diyarbakır to sell in the afternoon.⁵

5 LOCAL MANAGEMENT PLAN OF THE
FORTRESS OF DİYARBAKIR AND
HEVSEL GARDEN’S CULTURAL
LANDSCAPE

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HOERS’ MARKET, JULY 2021

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Despite this market’s name stemming from the eponymous women farm labourer, today, these women are granted no space inside. These women now sell their products on trolleys which they set up here and there inside the city walls. Moreover, as if their having been deprived of their space was not enough already, they must face the constant fines and prevention from selling their products on the part of the city police. These women are fighting to perpetuate the hoeing culture, which gained the status of a tradition 50 to 60 years ago but is now under threat of disappearance.

*An Alternative Place for Liberation:
The Hevsel Gardens*

The more than 8 thousand years of history and many human and non-human archaeological layers that the Hevsel Gardens, on the outskirts of town, are loaded with hint at a multiplicity of historical events. This historical multi-layeredness has to do with how each and every one of the women farm labourers of Hevsel carries a different

sociological and cultural background. These women who were snatched away from their rural way of life during the village evictions are now trying to maintain their existence through agricultural practices within the system (in an urban environment). These precarious women earn their living from nature, through an agricultural practice based on the communisation of the Hevsel Gardens. These precarious women who build their economy and ecosystem with their own hands have had to struggle in the past against the eviction of women from agricultural activity and still have to struggle today against the difficulties of being alienated from their own cultural practises.

In her book titled *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet*, Anna Tsing places her focus on a wild species of mushroom that grows in damaged environments which do not provide rich nutrition for plants.

'Because this "living-in-ruins" mushroom has a high value in Japan, all kinds of people went into the woods across the northern hemisphere to search for this mushroom, to sell it to commercial buyers who export to Japan. Many of these people are displaced and disenfranchised minority groups –themselves survivors of the process of making frontiers. (...) These are people displaced by wars and unable to find what we used to think of as "standard employment". But in a world of ruins, work at the periphery of the capitalist system becomes exemplary. Many people live in ruins and must find a living scavenging from the remains. So too with other life forms. Human and not human, we are living in the remains of frontier violence. Our best way to know this dilemma, I would argue, is to pay attention to the friction in which new possibilities, as well as terrors, are produced from these ruins. (...) If we want to ask about liveability, we have to consider what forms of interspecies alliances we can build to create worlds. We need all those plants, animals and fungi to be part of it.

It is not just because we eat them, although we need something to eat too. But the fungi are producing the nutrients that allow the plants to grow, and the plants are producing the nutrients that allow the animals to grow: these processes are wrapped up with each other in any lively landscapes. This is what we see when we turn from the frontier as a space of violence to see what still lives there. '6

The struggle fought in town or over hours spent working in the fields by these women who were forced to abandon their homes and to try to found a life in the city after the wars, and who now live at the edge of town and nature, much resembles the economic and ecologic struggle of the *Matsutake* mushroom described by Tsing. It much resembles how this mushroom maintains its existence today, when the demand has plummeted, in depredated environments where harmony is broken between species and where they cannot exist without conquering one another ...

The current dominion and control which nature is growingly submitted to and urban growth, the threat of urban transformation, which is now knocking on the Hevsel Gardens' doors, these women's precariousness, the disappearance of a market where to sell their products, their cooperation to found one, such is their struggle to survive; a form of resistance highly evocative of that of the *Matsutake* mushroom.

'Globalization operated like an oil coating the world, dissolving everything as it flowed. Meanwhile, "big theory" discarded difference and heterogeneity. You could call this masculinist theory, theory in which difference doesn't matter.'7

The farm work performed by the women of Hevsel as micro politics against the macro politics of capitalist urbanisation is a great example of space communisation and self-management. These women's resistance practices against the homogenising powers shape an economic and ecologic resistance. In turn, this constitutes an opportunity to redeem

6 ÖZLEM ASLAN, AYÇA GÜNAYDIN, BURCU TOKAT, "AN INTERVIEW WITH ANNA TSING: ON GLOBALIZATION AND LIVING IN RUINS", KÜLTÜR VE SİYASETTE FEMİNİST YAKLAŞIMLAR, ISSUE 24, OCTOBER 2014, [HTTP://WWW.FEMINISTYAKLASIMLAR.ORG/EN/SAYI-24-EKİM-2014/ON-GLOBALIZATION-AND-LIVING-IN-RUINS-AN-INTERVIEW-WITH-ANNA-TSING/](http://www.feministyaklasimlar.org/en/sayi-24-ekim-2014/on-globalization-and-living-in-ruins-an-interview-with-anna-tsing/))

7 ÖZLEM ASLAN, AYÇA GÜNAYDIN, BURCU TOKAT, "AN INTERVIEW WITH ANNA TSING: ON GLOBALIZATION AND LIVING IN RUINS", KÜLTÜR VE SİYASETTE FEMİNİST YAKLAŞIMLAR, ISSUE 24, OCTOBER 2014, [HTTP://WWW.FEMINISTYAKLASIMLAR.ORG/EN/SAYI-24-EKİM-2014/ON-GLOBALIZATION-AND-LIVING-IN-RUINS-AN-INTERVIEW-WITH-ANNA-TSING/](http://www.feministyaklasimlar.org/en/sayi-24-ekim-2014/on-globalization-and-living-in-ruins-an-interview-with-anna-tsing/))

Woman Resistance against Neoliberal Politics
The food market as a communised place of encounter:
Perşembe Market, entrance of the Mardinkapı Cemetery



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