

THE STORY OF A TRANSITION: THE ORGANIZATION AND THE  
RECEPTION OF THE BERGAMA MOVEMENT

by

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This study scrutinizes the way of organization, the demands, the conflicts and the dynamics of the Bergama Peasant Movement which started fifteen years ago and has been amortizing after 2003. Not the movement itself, but “how the movement was reflected and perceived by the other groups” is the basic subject of this study. Considering the economic, political and juridical agenda of Turkey, how the popular media interpreted the movement and the transformation in the reflections of the media about the movement and its implications will be analyzed. Bergama Peasant Movement – thought to have a social basis –inspired and guided following environment and peasant movements methodologically. However, the popular media articulate the movement different development discourses according to the agenda of Turkey. The press first confirmed and attempted to articulate the movement with modernization and democratic development discourse in Turkey. But then, popular media initiated to criminalize the movement since it was believed that the movement hindered economic development. The mass media both gave place to and reflected the movement according to both the socio-economic conditions and the reactions of the actors to these conditions. Yet, it reduced the movement to only an environmentalist one and tried to articulate this struggle to the politics of democratic development and then sustainable economic development, thus ignored the villagers’ struggles for their basic rights such as right to live and protection of habitation. This study is thought to underline a period of economic, political, and juridical tensions in Turkey.

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**Başlık: Bir Değişimin Hikayesi: Bergama Hareketi'nin Örgütlenmesi ve  
Alımlanması**

Bu çalışma, yaklaşık on beş yıl önce başlamış ve 2003'te sönümlenmiş olan Bergama Köylü Hareketi'nin örgütlenme biçimini, taleplerini, çelişkilerini ve dinamiklerini incelemektedir. Hareketin kendisi değil, "bu hareketin farklı gruplar tarafından nasıl yansıtıldığı ve alımlandığı," bu çalışmanın temel konusudur. Türkiye'nin ekonomik, politik ve hukuki gündemi göz önünde bulundurularak, popüler medyanın bu hareketi nasıl yorumladığı ve medyanın bu hareketi yansıttığı biçimindeki değişimler ve bunun anlamları analiz edilmektedir. Toplumsal bir tabanı olduğu düşünülen Bergama Köylü Hareketi kendisinden sonra gelen çevre ve köylü hareketlerine yol göstermiş ve örnek olmuştur. Fakat popüler medya, hareketi Türkiye'nin farklı gündemlerine göre kalkınma söylemlerine eklemiştir. Başlangıçta hareketi olumlu ve modernleşme ve kalkınma söylemlerine eklemiştir. Daha sonra ise, bu hareketin ekonomik kalkınma önünde bir engel teşkil ettiğini düşündüğü için, hareketi kriminalize etmiştir. Kitle medyası sosyo-ekonomik durumlara ve aktörlerin bu duruma verdiği tepkilere göre, harekete yer vermiş ve yansıtmıştır. Ancak hareketi sadece çevreci bir harekete indirgeyerek, onu önce demokratik kalkınma, daha sonra sürdürülebilir ekonomik kalkınma politikalarına eklemeye çalışarak, köylülerin yaşam hakkı ve yaşam alanını koruma gibi temel mücadelelerini göz ardı etmiştir. Böyle bir çalışmanın, Türkiye'de bir dönem ekonomik, politik ve hukuki gerilimlerin altını çizeceği düşünülmektedir.

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*For my mother and father*

## CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER I POLITICS OF RESISTANCE TO GLOBALIZATION.....	11
The Story of “Resistance versus Globalization” .....	11
The Bergama Movement as a Social Movement .....	19
Local Place-Based Movements: Habitation versus Improvement .....	25
CHAPTER II THE DYNAMICS OF THE BERGAMA MOVEMENT .....	33
“What Makes Us Successful is Unity, Who Wants to Divide Us is Eurogold” ....	33
“‘We always are in the Same Line’: Collective Representation .....	35
“‘It is a Monster, It will Eat Our Country’: Remembering the Past .....	39
“‘Do Not Dig Our Graves’: Regional Belonging.....	42
“‘Everywhere Bergama, All of Us Are from Bergama’: Spatial Expansion .....	48
CHAPTER III THE CONFLICTS OF THE BERGAMA MOVEMENT .....	52
The Perception of the Mine.....	53
“‘The State Knows Better Than the Villagers’: The Cultural and Economic Necessities.....	53
“‘Turks Know the Turks Better Than Foreigners’: The Policy of Philanthropy and Local Capital .....	60
“‘Turkey Enters into the Gold Age’: Counter-Nationalist Discourse .....	63
The Perception of the Government .....	71
“‘If the Government Does Not Respect Us, We Also Would Not Respect It’: Civil Disobedience.....	72
“‘What Made Us Demoralized Was the Violation of the Court Decisions’: Loss of Confidence.....	78

CHAPTER IV THE RECEPTION OF THE BERGAMA MOVEMENT: DIFFERENT MODES OF POLITICS OF RESISTANCE.....	84
Being Seen: The Visibility of the Bergama Movement.....	85
The Story of a Transition: From “The Lives of Our People Are More Valuable Than a Piece of Gold” to “the Inferiority Complex in Bergama” .....	89
The Bergama Movement as an Environmental One .....	102
Environmentalism of the Poor .....	107
CONCLUSION .....	116
APPENDIX .....	122
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	139



## INTRODUCTION

No one could have imagined that a peasant movement in a Turkish town would create a strong impact fifteen years ago, but it has spread to a largest scale and become one of the most long running ecological and peasant resistance movement.<sup>1</sup> The Bergama Peasant movement highlights the general conditions and tensions in Turkish politics. That is to say, it brings to mind the questions of what the politic and socio-economic determinants that were raised that provided momentum for the movement throughout almost fifteen years. In order to be able to answer this question, we need to ask what the basic economic and political structural transformations that shaped such a specific movement were. While the years after the 1980s refer to some transformations in the economic policies of Turkey, such as the introduction of neoliberal policies, global economic policies and changes in the practices of foreign investments that determined the specific conditions and demands in Turkey, the fact that specific resistances against the applications of the state policies in Turkey increased after the 1990s cannot be ignored. But now, the discussions on political and socio-economic transformations in Turkey will be left aside. I aim to discuss these topics in detail in the next chapter. In this chapter, I only wish to propose a framework in order to discuss the interactions between the political and socio-economic applications of a government and the dynamics and conflicts of a local specific movement.

Bergama has a population of approximately 50,000 citizens and 116 villages. 15,000 citizens inhabit seventeen villages. These seventeen villages consist of people

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<sup>1</sup> Aykut Çoban, "Community-Based Ecological Resistance: The Bergama Movement in Turkey," *Environmental Politics* 13, no. 2 (2004).

from different religious sects and religions; there are Alevi and Sunni; Çepnis and Yuruks; immigrants from Yugoslav and Bulgaria. The region is characterized by fertile lands. The main source of income in the villages is agriculture. The major crops of the area include cotton, tobacco, olives and tomatoes. They especially raise first and second industrial plants; wool and tobacco are the main products grown in the region.<sup>2</sup>

In the year 1991, the Eurogold Company<sup>3</sup> came and bought the lands from the villagers without saying that it would extract gold with cyanide. Eurogold, at first, did not come across negative reaction to the mine because the villagers thought that the gold that would be extracted from their lands would be beneficial to their country and they would be rich. However, at the beginning of the 1990s, with the appearance of the word “cyanide” they feared that the water they used for agriculture would be contaminated. Since the main sector is agriculture this would mean the loss of their livelihoods,<sup>4</sup> and a threat to the health of the inhabitants. That is why the villagers of Bergama began their struggle which lasts fifteen years with the discourse of the “right to live,” the “protection of habitation” and the “right to a healthy environment.”

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<sup>2</sup> According to State Planning Agency, Bergama is 14<sup>th</sup> district that has fertile lands in 858 districts and covers 35 percent of İzmir’s agricultural need. See, Burcu Gezgör, "Spillover Effects of Environmental Consciousness: The Bergama Movement in Turkey" (M.A., Bilkent University, 2001), 30.

<sup>3</sup> “Eurogold is a joint venture between Mine Or SA (66.7 percent) and the Inmet Mining Corporation of Canada (33.3 percent). It was established in Turkey to explore, form and process metals and minerals. Mine Or SA is the gold mining arm of La Source partnership, a joint company that operates between the Normandy Mining Group of Australia and France BRGM. The company operates in Turkey under Law No. 6224, the Law on Encouragement of Foreign Capital and Law No. 1567, the Law on the Protection of the Value of Turkish Currency. The company was given the licence for mine exploration and excavation by the Ministry of Energy and Natural Sources on August 16, 1989.” Ibid., 31.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 42.

The movement established in Bergama drew the attention and support of groups throughout environmentalists, lawyers, artisans, professors, university students and musicians. In a short time it came to be called the “Bergama Peasant Movement.” One of the significant elements of the Bergama Movement has been the organization of the movement throughout this process. When the villagers and the local administration learned that the mine would extract gold with cyanide, they tried to organize panels and seminars in order to inform the public about the process of gold-extraction with cyanide. The academics constituted a network to make the local people of Bergama conscious of the dangers of gold-extraction with cyanide, they had them watch documentary films on the condition and problems of other places that had experience the gold-mining process. Musicians came and gave support concerts to the villagers, university students came and stayed in Bergama for a week and participated in panels, concerts and discussions held on the policies of the government and, in general, the socio-economic and political problems of Turkey. Moreover, the mass media provided for the spread of the thoughts on Bergama by bringing up the questions on the mine. All of these different groups supported and tried to participate in the movement in order to struggle for a common aim from their perspectives: to win the right to live, the right to health, the right to a clean environment.

The villagers underwent the most important transformation in their lives; the emergence of the mine and the struggle given against the mine, changed the living conditions of the villagers. The villagers created a space in which they could discuss and decide on their own future. They used the coffee-houses as open universities where they organized panels and seminars, and which constituted a communications network that made every villager informed about the changes in the process. They

organized demonstrations against cyanide mining. What is noteworthy here is the way that the villagers chose to represent themselves. They always behaved in a legal manner against violence, within the limits of the law in their acts of civil disobedience.

In addition to the organization of the movement and representation of the villagers themselves, one of the most crucial elements that shaped the movement is the style of the reflection of the movement by the mass media. Since I consider that the basic element which made the movement continue for a long time is the support given by outsiders who had never seen Bergama. The favor of the mass media shown to the movement created a common sense about the movement at the beginning of the process.

Except from the movement itself and the reception of the movement, I also want to emphasize the legal process of the movement in order to contribute to the framework of the movement. For more than fifteen years, many court decisions against the mine company have been taken because it has threatened the life and health of the villagers. Furthermore, the decisions have depended on the decision stated in the Bergen Report that it is necessary to obtain the approval of the inhabitants of that region if the industries of the companies wished to operate in that region. Yet, most of the court decisions have not been put into practice since almost all the decisions have been sent to appeal and it has been decided that the mine could carry on working. The fluctuations in the applications of the decisions continue. What is conspicuous here is the government favors the operation of the plant. For example, the Ministry of Environment, continually, approved mining by Eurogold in Bergama on the condition that the company complied with the conditions of their

contract; that a commission was established by İzmir province to supervise the operations before, during and after the process; and the company complied with the environment laws and took the necessary precautions in accordance with the regulations. However, after a period, the Bar of İzmir arrived at a decision that the mine had not been operating in acceptable conditions and was risking the lives of the inhabitants. The most important example of this fluctuation was the decision that was given by the European Court of Human Rights in 2006, but the company continues to operate. Turkey accepted to pay compensation to the region people who had filed the court case.

I especially mention the conflicts in the legal process since it is directly related to the global capitalist practices or neoliberal policies in Turkey. Even if we could not say that the “Bergama Movement” is opposed directly to the neoliberal policies of Turkey and the movement is anti-global, we could realize easily the relation between the neoliberal policies of the government in which foreign investment is the basic element and the Bergama Movement, which is a local place-based movement that wants to interfere in the decisions and practices that affect and change the destiny and the life of that region. Moreover, the laws on multinational corporations and arbitration, which give new rights to the multinational corporations in order to operate the other countries and decrease the taxes that they have to pay to the countries in which they operate, also indicate the manner of the government to the globalization of capital and foreign investment. Although it was known that gold-extraction with cyanide did not favor the interests of the Turkish government, and it persistently was emphasized that the mine threatened the life and health of the villagers, the government favored the operation of the plant and also put into practice

the law on multinational corporations and arbitration.

Contrary to the Law of Arbitration that facilitates the operation of the plant, the Law of Protection of Nature and Environment proposed the closure of the mine since it was thought that the plant would destroy the health of the people and environment, annihilate the vegetation and harm the agricultural products, which meant a loss of livelihood for the villagers. It also introduced the facts that the approval of the people in the region was not taken, the mine operates in a seismic belt, and the operation of the plant despite these conditions does not come into line with international agreements.

The demands of both the multinational corporations and the Bergama Movement will be examined in order to draw a big picture in which such a local specific movement as the movement in Bergama only constitutes a small part of that. According to this picture, the socio-economic and political conditions that raise the Bergama movement have been related to global policies in Turkey and to the trends in foreign direct investments and multinational activities since the 1980s.

When I started my research, there were some academic discussions on the Bergama movement, but in the last and a half year, it seems that the academic interest on such a local movement has increased to such a degree that academic articles have begun to appear on this movement. Three main academic tendencies have formed in the interpretation of the Bergama Movement. The first is to indicate the transformation of public sphere in the villages that came with the period of the formation of consciousness about the gold-mining and the need for systematic organization. Specifically, this approach discusses the role of women in the

formation of the public sphere.<sup>5</sup> The second approach is the legal process within the movement that has brought the question of democratic citizenship to Bergama and of Turkey as a state of law.<sup>6</sup> The last approach is to analyze the movement as an environmental one which proposes that the Bergama Movement opens new doors and transforms the style of environmental movements in Turkey. The movement in Bergama, unlike the intellectual movements, has to be thought of as a local environmental movement in which the inhabitants of the region try to take decisions on their environment and determine their future. This is not a movement pioneered by some intellectuals; different groups from Turkey who supported the movement have been added throughout the process.<sup>7</sup> Needless to say, it was difficult to separate these topics as every article I came across focused on each of them, and I tried to benefit from these sources.

Aiming to place the Bergama Movement in the context of the socio-economic and historical transformations in Turkey, I prefer to evaluate the movement as a local place-based social movement against the practices of global capitalism and neoliberal policies of a state. What is noteworthy in this study is the way the villagers are represent themselves and how the villagers perceived in this historical and socio-economic context. This study will point out different ways of seeing such a

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<sup>5</sup> See, Çoban, "Community-Based Ecological Resistance.", Gezgör, "Spillover Effects of Environmental Consciousness".

<sup>6</sup> Aykut Çoban, "International Arbitration, Sovereignty and Environmental Protection: The Turkish Case" (paper presented at the 2001 Berlin Conference on the Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change and the Nation State, Postdam, 2002), S. Ozansoy, *Bergama'da Bir Yurttaş Hareketi* (İzmir: Bergama Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 1997), Ahmet Öncü and Gürcan Koçan, "Democratic Citizenship Movements in the Context of the Case of the Bergama Movement," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, no. 26 (2002).

<sup>7</sup> Ecehan Balta, "Ekolojiyle Uyumlu Bir Toplumsal Yaşam Projesinin Temel Taşları," in *Küreselleşmenin Ekolojik Sonuçları*, ed. Göksel Demirer and Tezcan Abay (Ankara: Özgür Üniversitesi Kitaplığı, 2000), Gezgör, "Spillover Effects of Environmental Consciousness".

movement by rethinking the local, both as a site of resistance and as a site of fundamental contradictions. It will also investigate the forms of economic and cultural domination, taking into consideration the western Anatolian agricultural economy in the process of globalization. Related to how we perceive the concepts of resistance, globalization, anti-globalization, environmentalism, ecologic imperialism, this study will look at the signifiers of these concepts rather than the concept itself and, rather than the Bergama Movement, what this movement symbolizes, since almost for fifteen years, this movement has become an agenda builder aimed at influencing the formal political system.

Focusing on the Bergama Movement as a local place-based movement, I will discuss the characteristics, the dynamics, the demands and the conflicts of the movement in four chapters. In Chapter One, the theoretical discussions on the literature of “globalization” and “resistance” are summarized and the meanings of the social movements in the context of globalization are discussed. These arguments on globalization, resistance and social movements explain why I prefer to call the Bergama Movement a local place-based movement. In the last part of the chapter, a framework is drawn on in which the conditions the Bergama Movement arose. The neoliberal policies of the government and the place of the Bergama Movement in this political arena, the meaning of gold-mining in this socio-economic context are discussed.

In Chapter Two, the dynamics of the movement and the way the local people represent themselves are argued. The basic threat of the mine is to annihilate the right to life and to a livable environment. And this threat helped the villagers to build a collective identity which has led them to live in solidarity. The collective



representation of the villagers, which they use as a vehicle to defeat the multinational corporations thought as an enemy and to reach their goals, will be indicated and analyzed. The formation of a collective identity based on a territory and the types of remembrance are the basic topics of this chapter. In addition to the formation of the collective identity and the types of remembrance, the spatial expansion of the Bergama Movement, which is thought to have significant consequences for other local oppositions that have arisen at other mining sites, will take place in this chapter.

The movement not only has built new identities in Bergama, it also has built new divisions and conflicts. Chapter Three focuses on the conflicts of the movement. What the mine means for some villagers in Bergama and why it should be opened will be examined. Arguing the importance of the cultural and economic dimensions of the perception of the mine, I analyze the aims of the philanthropy policies of the mine. The second half of the chapter explores the way and the rules the villagers used in organizing their activities and their means of civil disobedience. This chapter also includes a brief methodological discussion related to the research techniques used for the examination of the movement and due to the policies of the government against the villagers, the loss of confidence to the government is discussed.

The last and the most significant part of this thesis will be the reception of the movement by the mass media. How the movement has been represented and perceived in the mainstream written and visual mass media is one of the most important reasons that has allowed the Bergama Movement to flourish for such a long time and has led to such public support. This chapter examines the view of the mass media, especially print one, to the Bergama movement and question the meanings of different kinds of representations; namely, the representation of the

villagers in the first half of the process and the representation in the second half of the process, especially the newspapers *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet*, and also the local agents of these publishing corporations. Besides how the mass media has interpreted the movement, the significance of “being visible” in public is to be highlighted because “visibility” is thought to be the challenging factor that shapes the movement itself.

Primary sources like in-depth interviews both with villagers and people outside the village such as lawyers, journalists, environmental activists and politicians form the basis of the study. I preferred to conduct most of the interviews without a voice recorder in order to create an intimate atmosphere.<sup>8</sup> Secondary sources such as local publications, company brochures, newspapers, government and non-governmental organization documents and court reports and decisions were also used.

The intention of this study is not only to discuss the basic demands, problems, and conflicts of a specific movement. The process of fifteen year experienced in Bergama sheds light on general trends in world economy and politics.<sup>9</sup> As such, the analysis of the Bergama movement helps us to understand and evaluate the common problems and solutions offered in the world politics, especially in the context of economic and political transformations of Turkey.

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<sup>8</sup> I conducted six interviews in Bergama. Some of the villagers I wanted to talk refused to interview for basic reasons, such as the possibility of the closing of the mine. Since the relatives of them have been working in the mine, they did not want to talk anything about the mine. So I, to a great extent, used the interviews made by Üstün Bilgen Reinart in 2003.

<sup>9</sup> For instance, various struggle was experienced or still have been going on different parts of Turkey; Eşme İnayköy, Havran Küçükdere, Gümüşhane, Artvin, Erzurum are some of them. Not Eurogold but the other multinational corporations found gold-mines on these areas.

## CHAPTER I

### POLITICS OF RESISTANCE TO GLOBALIZATION

This chapter situates the Bergama Movement in the discussions of social and economic literatures that allow us to conceive the demands, concerns, dynamics and conflicts of the movement better. Structured in three parts, the first part examines what the concepts “globalization” and “resistance” refer to in the Bergama Movement. The second part offers a summary of “social movements” literature and tries to explain the significance of such movements in the context of global capitalism. The third part defines the Bergama movement as a local place-based movement.

#### The Story of “Resistance versus Globalization”

In the last twenty years, we encounter the concept of “globalization” has become commonplace global practices have come to determine our life practices to a great extent. However, the width of the concept of “globalization” and its practices make it difficult to analyze both the social and economic policies of globalization and the reactions that occur to those global practices. It is not only a part of our daily experiences; “globalization is a frequent topic of commentary in the media,” emphasizes Harvey and continues, “it is now one of the most hegemonic concepts for understanding the political economy of international capitalism, and it uses extend far beyond the business world to embrace questions of politics, culture, national identity, and the like.”<sup>10</sup> Inspired by Harvey, the basic questions should be where this

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<sup>10</sup> David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000), 13.

concept came from and whether the concept “globalization” describes something essentially new.<sup>11</sup> Since 1970, the term globalization inevitably has come to refer to more than meanings than it did at first. Chin and Mittelman conceptualize “globalization as a buzzword or catchall which is not only about a series of intensifications in the dynamics of capitalism, but also fundamentally about interactions –changes in different spheres of social activity, the ways that they compress time and space, and their varied impact on strata in zones of the world economy.”<sup>12</sup> Different from Chin and Mittelman, Harvey considers that “much more politically loaded words like ‘imperialism’ colonialism or neocolonialism have increasingly taken a back seat to globalization as a way to organize thoughts and to chart political possibilities.”<sup>13</sup> Since, the choice of the concept of “globalization” is crucial due to the economic and hegemonic intentions of the global policies which are perceived as totalizing or homogenizing forces. Whatever the definition would be, we can conclude that globalization is an uneasy correlation of economic forces, power relations, and social structures.

It is important to keep in mind why “global policies” became important. Harvey relates the deployment of global polices to the financial deregulation in the USA,

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<sup>11</sup> Harvey explains the origins of the concept globalization: ““Globalization” seems first to have acquired its prominence as American Express advertised the global reach of its credit card in the mid 1970s. The term then spread like wildfire in the financial and business press, mainly as legitimation for the deregulation of financial markets. It then helped make the diminution in state powers to regulate capital flows seem inevitable and became an extraordinarily powerful political tool in the disempowerment of the national and local working-class movements and trade union powers...” And he claims that “so many of us took the concept on board so uncritically in the 1980s and 1990s, allowing it to displace the far more politically charged concepts of imperialism and neocolonialism, should give us pause.” Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Christine Chin and James H. Mittelman, "Conceptualizing Resistance to Globalization," in *Globalization and the Politics of Resistance*, ed. Barry K. Gills (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), 30.

<sup>13</sup> Harvey, *Spaces of Hope*, 53.

technological change, and product innovation. Furthermore, he considers that the improvements in media and communication systems facilitated the deployment of global policies all over the world and provided the facilitation of moving of commodities and people.<sup>14</sup> Although the reasons above that led to the deployment of globalization seem innocent, to a great extent, the global policies brought about the uneven geographic developments in the world.

Since the hardships and conveniences of the global policies can not be discussed here because such a discussion is beyond the scope of this study. It should be noted that that the discussions in this thesis will be concerned with and question the attitudes of the political authorities, the representation of the collectiveness or individualities, economic and social hardships, the exploitation of natural resources and the violation of human rights caused by the global policies.

Similar to the concept of globalization, the concept of “resistance” is used in many different ways, sometimes as a “synonym for challenges, protests, intransigence, or even evasions.”<sup>15</sup> However, exploring the question of how “resistance” was practiced against the threats of global policies will be the main concern of this chapter. How the different types of resistances can be interpreted and the significance of the politics of resistance in the context of globalization which encompasses multiple changes in economic, political and cultural areas by taking the concerns, demands, dynamics and conflicts of the Bergama Movement as a specific example will be discussed. Needless to say, it is almost impossible to delimit the effects of globalization only in considering certain aspects of the movement;

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Chin and Mittelman, "Conceptualizing Resistance to Globalization."

therefore, I aim will underline the importance of the connection between economic, political and cultural practices in the case of Bergama.

In order to understand the basic concerns of both collective and individual resistances better, we the resisting policies must be evaluated with the general economic, social, and political tendencies of the power authorities; global neoliberal policies. Since the social structures and economic forces have been changing in recent years, the types and demands of the resistance movements, based on human rights, women rights, peasant movements, working class movements, religious movements, gendered movements, national movements, have been showing great variety due to this transformation.

“The politics of resistance is not merely reactive or defensive, or representing a minority interest. Rather it is a form of political action which should represent the general and societal interest and with the potential to transform the political situation.”<sup>16</sup> Here I mean, the resistance movements seek alternative political and economic solutions to the changing conditions in the world. However, these movements cannot be understood as a political, economic reaction to globalization; on the contrary, they constitute and give shape to cultural practices as a way of representation of individualities and collectivities.<sup>17</sup> That is to say, however powerful or overall the resistance movement, examining the subtexts of political, economic

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<sup>16</sup> Barry K. Gills, ed., *Globalization and the Politics of Resistance* (London: Palgrave, 2000), 4.

<sup>17</sup> The movement in Bergama is not an armed or oppositional force and has different characteristics from that of the resistance movements of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) of the Chiapas against the Mexican government’s neoliberal reforms, the confederations of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE) in Ecuador against the local administration, the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) of Colombia, and the Landless Rural Worker’s Movement (MST) in Brazil. Although the Bergama Movement has different characteristics that the open opposition’s movements as mentioned above, in order to grasp the meaning of resistance to globalization, we need to understand both the hidden cultural practices, such as everyday forms of resistance, and open opposition forces’ struggles.

and cultural life, and the possibilities and potential for structural transformation is necessary.

Thus, what we need is to analyze not only the socio-economic and political condition but also cultural necessities that gave rise to the movement in Bergama. While contextualizing a movement like that in Bergama, the elements such as forms, agents, sites and strategies may help us categorize a movement in terms of their interactions so as to delimit durable patterns and the potential for structural transformation.<sup>18</sup> However, this interaction between forms, agents, sites, and strategies will be discussed in the next chapters in relation to the social and local place-based movements. This chapter only aims to identify and formulate the way in which we can look the Bergama Movement.

Before analyzing the movement itself, since we are investigating a resistance movement against the neoliberal policies of the government which has lasted for sixteen years, the logic of neoliberal policies and the attitudes of the government policies have to be understood. The logic of neoliberal policies is “deeply opposed to social public sector expenditures devoted to welfare, job creation, environmental protection, health care, education, and even the alleviation of poverty.”<sup>19</sup> It is well-known that the main problem in globalization policies is the withdrawal of the

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<sup>18</sup> There have always been different analyses of resistance to globalization in different historical periods. For example, Gramsci’s resistance as counter hegemony, Polanyi’s resistance as counter movements and Scott’s resistance as infrapolitics triangle “calls for conceptual frameworks that link different levels of analysis. Integration of the local with the global can bring to the fore the conditions in which different forms, agents, sites, and strategies of resistance emerge from the conjunctures and disconjunctures in the global political economy.” Chin and Mittelman, "Conceptualizing Resistance to Globalization," 44.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Falk, "Resisting 'Globalization-from-Above' through 'Globalization-from-Below'," in *Globalization and the Politics of Resistance*, ed. Barry Gills (England: Palgrave, 2001).

government and, accordingly, the increase in neoliberal policies.<sup>20</sup> Most the social movements organize in order to keep these rights or possibilities. The most motivating power of the neoliberal policies is to increase foreign investment as in the case of Turkey, as should be understood in the process of gold-mining.

Promoting foreign investments in general and gold mining in particular has been part of the neoliberal policies pursued in Turkey since the 1980s, to attract capital inflow regarded as an effective device for economic growth and societal welfare. Eurogold, the multinational corporation holding permits for gold extraction in 119 different areas of the country was promising wealth and had the backing of the state. The state's public support for the corporation provides the evidence of the relationship between the state and the corporation.<sup>21</sup>

Aiming to participate in international capital and improve the opportunities of foreign investment, Turkey has increased its neoliberal policies not only in the usage of natural resources but also into privatization of state commodities and applications in agriculture. The important point is not the policies involved per se, but how they have been implemented, since the governments almost all the time have ignored the rights of citizens who live in that area and would be affected by the threats of these corporations for the sake of attracting foreign investments. The important motivating power that has led Bergama Movement is one of these policies that ignore the interests of the local people: the right to live, the right of health, although these people have international rights that are protected by Environment Agreements.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Chris Harman, Peter Morgan, and Roni Margulies, *Küreselleşme ve Direniş*, trans. Bernar Kutluğ and Roni Margulies (İstanbul: Z Yayınları, 2001).

<sup>21</sup> Çoban, "Community-Based Ecological Resistance," 446.

<sup>22</sup> The right of environment, first, took place at the United Nations Environment Conference in the Stockholm Report in 1972. In the World Nature Provision in 1982 and the Paris Agreement in 1990, there were concrete articles on the right of the environment. The 1990 Bergen-UN Europe Economic Commission Environment Development Conference, brought on an important improvement on the right of the environment. From then on, it was necessary to consult local people in any case on environment and the local people were opposed these managements would not open. Moreover, by



Furthermore, the government policies have not only ignored the existing international agreements but also created new legal spaces facilitating the entrance of multinational corporations and so foreign investments. For example, treaty of arbitration which facilitates the activities of multinational corporations and allows them to pay very low taxes is a recent device of neoliberal policies. Moreover, the Law on Encouraging Foreign Investments, No: 6224 (*Yabancı Sermayeyi Teşvik Kanunu*) in 1954 and the Law on the Protection of the Value of Turkish Currency, No: 1567 (*Türk Parasının Kıymetini Koruma Kanunu*) facilitate the integration of the foreign investment.

Obviously, it seems that there is a silent consensus between the government and the multinational corporations. While governments trust to multinational corporations to expand its industry, corporations also depend on the government to calm the market,<sup>23</sup> and governments are encouraged to create new legal spaces for the activities of multinational corporations. Nonetheless, it becomes inevitable that multinational corporations practice violence, which endangers people's life and health by using heap leaching and creating ecologic dangers, or that they seek cheap labor and employ unhealthy working conditions in order to survive and compete with other corporations.

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reconsidering the concept of "risk," it was discussed that any amount of risk would cause these managements close. And then the Environment Agreement was signed in Rio in 1992; in this agreement, local people were thought to be at the center of the sustainable and moderate development and it is emphasized that the people had the right to live in a healthy and productive nature.

<sup>23</sup> What the people expect from their country are policies which take care of their health, improve their living conditions of the people, save the environment. In short, to keep the interest of its people. However, it is not generally materialized in this way; the only thing which a government is to keep the interests of its people is to prepare convenient economic conditions in order to attract foreign investments to the country: low taxes, flexible labor markets, powerless trade unions, cheap arrangements.

Unfortunately, the threats caused by the cooperation between the governments and multinational corporations that have been increasing will not diminish since these policies are related with capitalist logic itself. Accordingly, we can conclude that the ideological aspects of globalization are much related directly to the way “transnational market forces dominate the policy scene, including the significant cooptation of state power.”<sup>24</sup> The studies of resistance to globalization should take into account and underline the transformations in state structures and their policies to ascertain, whether or not strategies of resistance manifestly engage the government while analyzing a resistance movement.

The other point that has to be emphasized before analyzing the Bergama Movement is that the neoliberal policies, integration of foreign investments and the process of integration to the European Union also have affected respectively on the peasantry and agriculture policies. While fifteen years ago the agricultural resources had an important place in the Turkish economy, the significance of agricultural policies has taken a backseat due to the transformations in the economic and social policies.<sup>25</sup> Therefore, claiming that the disregard for human rights in Bergama is related also to the changing perspective on the peasantry is due to the transformations in the economic and social spheres would be true.

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<sup>24</sup> Falk, "Resisting 'Globalization-from-Above'," 49.

<sup>25</sup> Şevket Pamuk and Zafer Toprak, eds., *Türkiye'de Tarımsal Yapılar* (Ankara: Yurt Yayınevi, 1988).

## The Bergama Movement as a Social Movement

Before concentrating on the Bergama Movement specifically, a look at theoretical discussions on social movements is necessary. We could define a social movement as a collective, organized, sustained, and non-institutional challenge to authorities' power holders or cultural beliefs and practices. Due to the increase of neoliberal globalization policies, the main themes of social movements have become much areas as human rights, the social responsibilities of government, the environment, the role of women, population pressures, the problems of urban life and habitat.<sup>26</sup>

A broad discussion on the definition of social movements has still been going on. One of the pioneers of social movements' literature, Charles Tilly, defines a social movement as:

[A] sustained series of interactions between power holders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation, in the course of which those persons make publicly visible demands for changes in the distribution or exercise of power, and back those demands with public demonstrations of support.<sup>27</sup>

Social movements have to be called an effort to give meaning to the economic and politic transformations in the world by improving a new system of language instead of the language which the social order utilizes to control or organize our daily practices.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup>Zafer Yenal and Biray Kolluoğlu Kırılı, "Distopyalar ve Ütopiyalar Arasında Karşı Küreselleşme Hareketleri," *Birikim*, no. 197 (2005).

<sup>27</sup> Charles Tilly, "Social Movements and National Politics," in *State Making and Social Movements*, ed. C. Bright and S. Harding (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1984), 309.

<sup>28</sup> I will not put a difference between old and new social movements. But the common thought on old and new social movements has to be mentioned here: The differences between new social and old

In addition to Tilly, Touraine and Melucci make contributions to the literature of social movements. "A social movement is a confrontational movement which leads to the cultural models of social class, defined with the domination and dependence on the form of history, cultural investment and modes of knowledge and morality,"<sup>29</sup> writes Touraine who claims that social movements are new since these movements have arisen in and against post-industrial society. The space in which these struggles are given is not the government or the market, it is in civil society where the borders of private and public spaces become cloudy. While I agree that the social movements struggle in and against the post-industrial society, I believe that we should not abstract social movements from the spaces of government policies and the market economy; the motivating reason for the social movements has always been and will be the injustices and inequalities that take place in the political and economic spheres.

Agreeing with Touraine that the postmodern world has been creating new types of social control mechanisms and new types of conflicts, Melucci emphasizes the symbolic side of social movements. He considers social movements a network of social relations in which a collective identity has been constructed through the

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social movements are stated as: the agents of new social movements do not have an open relationship with their social roles, new social movements are thought outside the Marxist ideology which draws a complete frame to the working class movement and collective movements, the complaining and mobilizing factors contain not economic problems which characterize the working-class movement, but concentrate on the cultural and symbolic problems on identity, the cloudiness of the individual and symbolic relationships between the actors of these movements, the reflection of individual sides of a person's life, perform more radical mobilization tactics than the working class performs, and lastly, contrary to the leader centered mass parties, these movements have a tendency to be scattered and individual. See Hank Johnston, Enrique Larana, and Joseph R. Gusfield, "Kimlikler Şikayetler ve Yeni Sosyal Hareketler," in *Yeni Sosyal Hareketler*, ed. Kenan Çayır (İstanbul: kaknüs, 1999).

<sup>29</sup> Alaine Touraine, "Toplumdan Toplumsal Harekete," in *Yeni Sosyal Hareketler*, ed. Kenan Çayır (İstanbul: kaknüs, 1999).

struggles and dialogues.<sup>30</sup> The reason the symbolic side of social movements arises I consider depends on the fact that the threat we have been face to face with is a global one. The symbolic side of the movements has formed a universal and common language against the global threats. What is problematic here is widespread idea that the social movements after the 1980s have had symbolic importance, that is to say, these movements have become culture-centered movements expressed in symbolic representations as the process of the formation of collective identity.<sup>31</sup> What has to be criticized here is the ignorance of the political and economic determinants of the social movements. The unevenness of political and economic conditions, to a great extent, affects local, regional or national social movements. For example, it is not possible to analyze the Bergama Movement without referring and highlighting the economic and political transformations in Turkey.

Accordingly, while analyzing the Bergama Movement, four elements can be taken as remarkable: the way the actors represent themselves; the theme of the conflict; and the relationship between the groups in the conflict, the cultural and structural factors that cause the conflict; and how the outsiders conceive and interpret the movement, especially the mass media.

What makes the movement in Bergama a social movement? First and foremost, the movement has a social base which constitutes different kinds of people; villagers,

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<sup>30</sup> Alberto Melucci, "Çağdaş Hareketlerin Sembolik Meydan Okuması," in *Yeni Sosyal Hareketler*, ed. Kenan Çayır (İstanbul: kaknüs, 1999).

<sup>31</sup> Besides, the increase in the forms of cultural representations is related to the way in which increasing neoliberal globalization organizes itself. The existence of cultural practices in every part of our life necessitates these practices organize itself in a hegemonic way. The reason that resistance forms of social movements prefer the cultural and symbolic representation is that the width of cultural and symbolic can easily explain almost all kinds of societies. This will be understood in the discussions on the "global" and the "local" in the following sections.

region people, lawyers, environmentalists, activists and the people who own and support the movement. The question of how we should evaluate the Bergama Movement occupies an important place since this movement has both some common and dissimilar properties with the other movements in the world. The demands, dynamics and conflicts of this movement could provide us new perspectives for the other movements.

The movement was not a direct reaction to the opening of the mine. Instead, it has been a process in which the villagers have developed an oppositional discourse to the mine and the subtexts of the working of the mine. "The opening of the gold mine and meeting a multinational corporation dislodge the villager's style of life depend on land which they have been carrying on and also the meanings and identities depend on these land."<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, the villagers have emphasized the necessity of struggle and resistance when they have faced to the risk to losing their land. Although the sequence for each person was unique, the motivating power of the people in Bergama and the surrounding seventeen villages was a necessity of choice between life and death. They struggled with the fear of displacement and the disappearance of the environment in which they produced their social relations and reproduced their traditional life and lastly, the fear of losing the fertile lands and of coming to health of agricultural activity which was their basic means of living.<sup>33</sup>

What has to be emphasized here is the way social movements organize themselves. Social movement groups often use "litigation" specifically to create

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<sup>32</sup> Hayriye Özen, "Toplumsal Hareketler: Kimlik Oluşumu" (paper presented at the Kimlik ve Kültür, Koç Üniversitesi, 14-17 June 2005).

<sup>33</sup> See also, Balta, "Ekolojiyle Uyumlu Bir Toplumsal Yaşam."

formal institutions in order to achieve state power as well as to apply to pressure to make that access consequential. “In this way legal resources often provide a series of a more refined tools- basic procedures, standards, and practices- along with blunt leveraging tactics for shaping the structure of ongoing administrative relations at the remedial stage of struggles over policy.”<sup>34</sup> The Bergama Movement also has carried out its struggle legal grounds, depending both on the international agreements and the Constitution.<sup>35</sup>

The legal action of the people in Bergama have depended on two laws: In paragraph 17 of Constitutional Law, No. 2709, the following rules are set out: “Every person has the right to live, as well as to protect and develop assets and non-assets,” and in paragraph 56, it is written that,

“Every person has the right to live in a healthy environment that is in equilibrium and that the government and its citizens are obliged to develop the environment, protect the health of the environment and avoid polluting the environment. The government plans health institutions from one source and organizes related services, so that people’s lives are protected, people can continue to live in physical and mental health, saving human and material energy, increasing efficiency and bringing about co-operation.”

However, in the case of Bergama both human rights and court decisions had been violated by different governments ruling at that time.<sup>36</sup> The case in Bergama

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<sup>34</sup> Michael McCann, "Law and Social Movements," in *The Blackwell Companion to the Law and Society*, ed. Austin Sarat (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 517.

<sup>35</sup> See footnote 14. The Bergen Report in 1990 said that the enterprises that could affect the environment should consult with the region people and if the region’s people did not want the enterprises, they would not allow them. It would be necessary if 51% of people in Bergama did not affirm the opening of the plantations. However, these agreements and decisions were ignored.

<sup>36</sup> There were different governments during the Bergama Movement: If we think the movement began at the first half of the nineties, in sequence the governments of Tansu Çiller, Mesut Yılmaz, Necmettin Erbakan, Mesut Yılmaz again, Bülent Ecevit, Abdullah Gül and Tayip Erdoğan came into power. Although these different parties brought into action different state policies, no conspicuous change

epitomizes to the other social movements in Turkey, even in the world while considering the violation of the human rights. We could take these movements as reactions to the economic and political changes and a tension between citizens and government policies and market economy as experienced in Bergama.

Previous studies on Bergama have not touched on the relationship that this movement has had with the social structure. Nor have they questioned why the government has overlooked the extraction of the gold with cyanide is not questioned although it is very well known that the benefits of agricultural production in the area are much greater than the gold mine in the long run. Another crucial point is the negative effect of the gold extraction with cyanide on the productivity of the land in the medium and the long term, accordingly the agricultural lands are diminishing and this means that the living space for some particular groups is diminishing. In order to discuss all of these issues one should consider the socio-political and socio-economic variables together with the cultural representations.

It could be said that much of the literature on social movements generally discusses either the political and economic sides of globalization or the cultural sides of that depending upon the categories of identity, space and time. My purpose in this project is to explain a social movement taking into consideration the political, economic, and cultural implications of global policies. In this context, the Bergama Movement will be analyzed as a local-based people's movement and a place-based movement without concentrating on the categories as "old" or "new" social

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occurred in the case of Bergama; however, I have to add that The Bergama Movement especially became a current issue during the governments of Mesut Yılmaz and then Bülent Ecevit.



movements. The characteristics of local place-based resistance movements are able to provide theoretical tools in the analysis of the Bergama Movement.

#### Local Place-Based Movements: Habitation versus Improvement

After discussing the general factors that gave rise to the movement and the way that the movement chooses to organize as a social movement, why we prefer to call the Bergama Movement a local place-based movement will be discussed.

While analyzing the movement, I preferred to use Arif Dirlik's theoretical framework. Once again we need to start our analysis with trying to understand a social structure that Dirlik intends to draw. According to Dirlik, global capitalism considers the benefits of the capital rather than labor that causes the glorification of the accumulation of capital. In order to achieve the accumulation of capital, the global capitalist policies emphasize the importance of landlessness and abstractness due to the deployment of capital. Dirlik claims that the centre of capitalism disappears and determining any region or any nation as the centre becomes difficult; with the disappearance of the centre, international markets and corporations start to play a crucial role in the world arena. And thus, contrary to the domination of a global abstractness that excludes the historical and geographical context, local resistance movements which struggle against the global policies and include the historical and geographical context gain importance.<sup>37</sup>

The point that needs to be noticed here is what "local" and "local resistance" mean. Recent theoretical discussions could not separate the concept of "local" from

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<sup>37</sup> Arif Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1998).

the concept of “global;” these concepts could not be discussed without referring to each other. While “local” refers to some concrete meanings, “global” symbolizes abstractness. Against the neoliberal policies of global capitalism, the “local” as a site of resistance and liberation comes to the fore. However, here, “local” does not have a meaning of “local” traditionally, which is associated with conservatism or traditionalism; it is the “local” which serves as a site of struggle and solution to the basic conflicts of the age.<sup>38</sup> Since the concept “local” connotes a place-based fixity that has the potential to struggle for a new life and transform the existing meanings, the actors of the social movements put a strong emphasis upon the interaction between place and social struggle.

Dirlik, who claims that place-based movements are closely interrelated to nature and social relations, states that the subjects of a community, who live on the same land and share a common destiny, inevitably have to organize a collective identity in the case of a crisis. Therefore, he suggests investigating the relationship between the global practices and place-based consciousness. Imagining a place politically will strengthen social relations. When social relations are produced as place-based, the actors of resistance movements bring in a concrete meaning to both the place itself and these relations and this will become a style of life.<sup>39</sup>

Place is not neutral since it is a carrier of ideological and political relations. While it refers to a site of resistance and liberation when we consider it as a political arena against the global policies, it could also hinder a veiled expression of unequal

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Roxann Prazniak and Arif Dirlik, eds., *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000).

power relations. Harvey also points out that “the social transformations of space, place, and environment are neither neutral, nor innocent with respect to practices of domination and control. Indeed they are fundamental framing decisions, replete with multiple possibilities that govern the conditions over how lives can be lived.”<sup>40</sup> However, we have to remember that for almost twenty years place-based or “territorial” defense mechanisms have been increasing because we are face to face with a global threat. And place-based resistances<sup>41</sup> are the ways to highlight the veiled unequal power relationships, as in the case of Bergama where the villagers tried to protect their habitatus and struggled for right to live, but then were ignored by the Turkish government for the sake of economic development and foreign investment.

While evaluating place-based policies, it is necessary not to remember that places are not given; they are produced by human activity. Namely, how we construct and perceive “places” is a historical problem. At the same time, while our practices can transform places, places also change and organize our lives. The important thing is that politics of place provide us with new ways of seeing and the potential of changing the world. In addition to Dirlik and Harvey, Massey describes geography as a political site as the constitutive of social relations.<sup>42</sup> While taking the Bergama Movement into consideration, what we should notice is whether the actors

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<sup>40</sup> David Harvey, *Spaces of Capital* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 186.

<sup>41</sup> Here I need to remind the differences between the places, called the “Third World” and the “First World.” While social movements in “third world” are thought as grassroots movements which are thought as traditional and shaped especially the local people of these countries, social movements in “first world” are known as the movements non-governmental organizations pioneered, and thought as organized and modern.

<sup>42</sup> Dorothy Massey, "Politics and Space/Time," in *Place and the Politics of Identity*, ed. S. Pile and M. Keith (London: Routledge, 1993).

of the movement are able to transform the relations and meanings based on that place, in short, whether they are able to produce a political and social place for their struggle.<sup>43</sup>

When we take a look at the movement from a bird's eye-view, we can see said that is a case of habitation versus improvement in the struggle of the villagers. That is to say, the villagers and the supporters of the movement struggle for the protection of habitation and the right to live against the gold-extraction with cyanide that would provide economic improvement. Although the movement has been unable to gain a position against the government's neoliberal policies, the movement has created a political agenda and shaped the other local movements in Turkey. Generally in all countries, mining is thought of as a criterion of the development of a country; mines provide the basic raw materials of the production of industry and energy. Moreover, natural resources play an important role in the development of a country due to the increase in foreign investment and the creation of employment. Nonetheless, like in every field, there is a problem that has to be diagnosed in the mining industry: who has the right to use these natural resources. While indeed the right of natural resources has to belong to all society, but especially the people who live in the environment of the natural resources, these natural resources are under the service or the control of the dominant classes and also multinational corporations due to the relations of property.

When we examine the period in which gold mining became a current issue in Turkey, we see the significance of mining better. After the 1980s some changes in

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<sup>43</sup> The basic properties of the place-based movements and the Bergama movement will be discussed in the next chapter.

mining law gave priorities to the foreign investments and monopolies. In 1985, with Constitutional Law, No. 3213, the Mining Investigation and Exploration Institute (*Maden Tetkik ve Araştırma Enstitüsü*) became the sole institution to issue licenses to corporations. Furthermore, it is thought that with Constitutional Law, No. 3996 the build-transfer-operate model caused the foreign investments to rule over the market in 1994.<sup>44</sup> These innovations can be seen as examples of neoliberal policies in Turkey.

The developments in and against global capitalism are, to some extent, the products and the results of social movements. The Bergama Movement will be evaluated as a place-based movement whose actors are the local people of that region, the villagers in social movements. Before describing local people's movement, it is necessary to emphasize that local collective opposition movements to global capitalism also differ from them to a great extent.<sup>45</sup> The important point in the Bergama Movement is the way the actors have organized the resistance independent from political parties or other organizations. The most significant

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<sup>44</sup> Similar to these changes, Etibank, which was established with the Mining Investigation and Exploration Institute in 1932 and financed the mining generations under the service of the state, was divided into various holding companies in the mid 1990s.

<sup>45</sup> Speaking of peasant movements, especially Latin America comes to mind. It is possible to point out three different social and political movement waves against the capitalist system, especially, peasant movements which are known as the third wave. In the 1990s, a new social and political powers wave came on the scene in Latin America. At the same time, the labour movement were scattered, it was eliminated by a silent revolution performed by the capitalist class which got help from the state. Even in the 1980s the new social movements which dominated the political arena faced elimination by the capitalist system and the forces they mobilized became scattered. Yet, in this same conditions, there appeared a new wave; a rural actionist which peasant-centered socio-politic movement head. The Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) of Chiapas against the Mexican government's neoliberal reforms, the confederations of Indigenous Nationalities (CONAIE) in Ecuador against the local administration, the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FARC) of Colombia, and the Landless Rural Worker's Movement (MST) in Brazil; these movements dominate the political arena and counter-system populist movements in sociological changes after the 1990s. See, James Petras, *MST'nin Toplumsal Dinamikleri* (2002 [cited 15 May 2006]); available from [http://www.sendika.org/yazi.php?yazi\\_no=265](http://www.sendika.org/yazi.php?yazi_no=265).

characteristic of this movement has been that it has determined a socio-political agenda; it has been concerned not only with rural problems, but also it has created a national agenda. These kinds of movements like in Bergama have participated in local, national, even international campaigns, such as the struggle against the violation of the human rights, for national mobilizations and international solidarity. These resistance movements aim to challenge political power by taking into consideration national problems.

What is notable in peasant movements is the linkage that the peasants construct with the land. Land, for both political and economic reasons, plays an important role in these local-based resistance movements. While the expulsion from the land alienates the villagers from their past and traditions, the disappearance of the bonds of community and family as an experience means the loss of the social relations which make them survive in a cultural environment.<sup>46</sup> The notion of land will be discussed detailed in the following chapters.

Neoliberal globalization policies, from agricultural production to the natural resources in a country, create the opportunities for a country to become an area of rent of capital. Due to the need for development and progress, the governments try to participate in the international market mechanisms.

Above a summary of the general discussions on the meanings of globalization and resistance, the relationship between the neoliberal policies of the governments and multi-national corporations, and the importance of social movements and the categorization of these movements was given. Moreover, in identifying theoretical

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

frame of local place-based movement the concepts of global and local in relation to global capitalism were discussed. The emergence of place-based consciousness and where the “peasant movements” stand in these social movements were also examined. These concepts and analytical tools will help us throughout this study and will be referred to in the subsequent discussions.

Specific movements such as the movement in Bergama should indicate that there can be different kinds of resistance in different heterogeneities, in different historical and geographical contexts. These movements struggle to find true moral spaces and invent new concepts of political justice as Chatterjee emphasizes.<sup>47</sup> We should look at such specific movements as a little part of the big picture. Without understanding the dynamics, demands, and conflicts of these movements, we are not able to grasp and explain the big picture.

The struggle in Bergama is not only a struggle over neoliberal policies, multinational corporations, property rights, the right to live, the right to environment. As Scott states, “It is also a struggle over the appropriation of symbols, a struggle over the past and present shall be understood and labeled, a struggle to identify causes and assess blame a contentious effort to give partisan meaning to local history.”<sup>48</sup> We should seek the concern of academic studies that concentrate on such specific movements in these produced meanings and solutions.<sup>49</sup> The disregard for

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<sup>47</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed: Reflections on Popular Politics in Most of the World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

<sup>48</sup> James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).17.

<sup>49</sup> Although the people in Bergama are citizens of Turkish Republic, they have not behaved as Turkish citizens and therefore, they have tried to determine their rights, owned them, and have intervened political and social society. See Chatterjee, *The Politics of the Governed*.

human rights and the exclusion of the villagers from the practices of citizenship in the case of Bergama has made the actors of the movement produce new alternative meanings and solutions.

This study aims to investigate the elements of the Bergama Movement; the principles of the struggle, the demands, the strategies, and also the tactics of the movement. Since the Bergama Movement has significant consequences for other local opposition groups, I will also try to analyze how these elements are incorporated into a political project. Singular movements are essential in order to perform the structural transformations; however, to seek different ways of seeing a social movement is also essential in order to produce more beneficial approaches.



## CHAPTER II

### THE DYNAMICS OF THE BERGAMA MOVEMENT

“What Makes Us Successful is Unity, Who Wants to Divide Us is Eurogold”

What a cosmopolitan place are those seventeen villages! Alevi are there. Sunnis are there, Yugoslav immigrant, Bulgarian migrant, Yuruks and Çepnis are there. To gather these people in solidarity is all by itself a sociological matter. We tried to unite them with the concern of life. I always proposed that. I do not have such complexes as becoming a leader. I believe the movement of people. I know that in such environmental movements, the political party has no importance. We said, “What makes us successful is unity, who wants to divide us is Eurogold.”<sup>50</sup>

The people involved in the Bergama Movement have struggled for a common interest, the right to live; the protection of habitation that consists of socio-economic, political and cultural implications. It is socio-economic because those people depend on agricultural production; political because the villagers perceive that they are the citizens of a country and have some rights; cultural because they struggle for their lands which form their livelihood and social relations and which hide their common experiences and meanings.

As Sefa Taşkın stated above, what is noteworthy in this movement is what makes this solidarity. Not only do villagers from different religious sects take part in this movement, but also lawyers, activists and local politicians. The main thing that preoccupies them in solidarity is the threat of the emergence of an enemy: Eurogold. Different agencies have a common reason to struggle against this enemy which

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<sup>50</sup> *O 17 köy o kadar karışık kozmopolit yerlerdir ki. Orada Alevi vardır Sünni vardır, Yugoslav muhaciri vardır, Bulgar göçmeni vardır, Yörük vardır, Çepni vardır. O insanların bir arada tutulması başlı başına sosyolojik bir konu. Biz yaşama kaygısıyla onları birleştirmeye uğraştık. Ben hep bunu önerdim. Önder olma kompleksim yok. Halk hareketine inanan bir insanım. Böylesine çevre hareketlerinde siyasi partinin önemli olmadığını biliyorum. Bizi başarılı yapan birliktir, bizi bölmek isteyen Eurogold'dur” dedik. See, Üstin Bilgen Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor* (İstanbul: Metis, 2003), 53.*

threatens the lives of the villagers and their environmental conditions. The villagers leave their ethnic differences aside; local politicians evaluate the multinational corporations as new faces of imperialism; environment activists gather in order to prevent a common risk that would threaten the ecologic balance; and lawyers struggle in order to make the government carry out the courts decisions as a necessity of the state of law.<sup>51</sup> They all have united against an external target. Thus, the struggle in Bergama has been set on common meanings, memories, expectations for the future, and collective representations.

This chapter evaluates the formation of the collective identity, a very significant element and basic characteristic of local-place based movements. And then, related to the collective identity, the question of belonging somewhere; the importance of land for the villagers, will be discussed. Last, the spatial expansion of the movement will be analyzed; the agencies that take part in the movement have struggled not only for their local area against the possible dangers of the mine, but also they have participated in other activities in Turkey.

While analyzing the basic properties and the conflicts of the movement, it would be meaningful to look at the interviews conducted with the local people of Bergama, but especially those made with the villagers. Although interviews have disadvantages related to reliability, as James Scott argues, it is necessary to concentrate on the narratives of the ordinary people, “not to refer to the made of representation or the traditional story-telling of historians.” Scott defines ontological narratives as “stories that social actors tell, and in the process they come to define themselves or to construct their identities and perceive that promote and mitigate the

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<sup>51</sup> Özen, "Toplumsal Hareketler".

possibility for change.”<sup>52</sup> I consider this definition describes properly the conditions of the local people in Bergama and the process of the movement.

#### “We always are in the Same Line”: Collective Representation

As discussed in the previous chapter, the movement in Bergama could be thought of as a local place-based movement, if we take note of the process and the dynamics of the movement. The basic properties of place-based movements are the formation of a collective identity, which consists of cultural nationalism, disregard of ethnic differences and the indigenist policies.<sup>53</sup> Taking into consideration these categorizations, how the social and cultural properties of the movement should be considered in this theoretical background will be discussed.

The rural nature of the Bergama Movement made the villagers develop the collective identity in daily communal spaces through direct, face to face relations.<sup>54</sup> The problematic of collective identity takes centre stage in order to reach the common aim in the movement. The process in which collective identity is raised indicates that the formation of collective identity is not a planned process but raises as a necessity by coincidence. This is to say that collective identity is used as a vehicle unsystematically in order to reach the common aim. In the case of Bergama, “a shared identity and the cultural and symbolic processes through which it finds expression, means that a movement can offer participants a new, or different, sense

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<sup>52</sup> Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

<sup>53</sup> Dirlik, *The Postcolonial Aura*, Prazniak and Dirlik, eds., *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, 11.

<sup>54</sup> Gezgör, "Spillover Effects of Environmental Consciousness".

of collective belonging.”<sup>55</sup> When the villagers encounter the possible risks of the mine, we can also say “enemy” or “other,” the necessity of the feeling of unity emancipates. And then they seek meaningful alternatives in the path of changing the present conditions which threatens their lives. “It is inevitable for the local people in Bergama to develop an activist identity different from the peasant identity.”<sup>56</sup> Different from the peasant identity, an activist identity brings the question of communicating, negotiating, producing meanings and making decisions on a particular social field or environment to the life of the villagers themselves.

What is noteworthy in this movement was the beginning, when the managers of the plant came and said that they would extract gold from Ovacık. At first, the local people of Bergama were excited since gold meant prosperity, affluence and magnificence for centuries. Moreover, they believed that gold would bring wealth to their villages and create new employment areas for the young people and those who were employed in the mine would supplement the agricultural incomes of their families. However, when they learned that the gold would be extracted with cyanide-leaching, they started to become conscious of the methods of gold-extraction and developed a discourse against the dangers of cyanide. One of the villagers, retired teacher Yusuf Kaya, describes the process:

The old mayor, Sefa Taşkın, told the people what a dangerous thing this cyanide is. Well-informed lecturers and professors from universities came with him. They started to give knowledge to the villagers. They stated that this procedure would be very dangerous and affect the environment and when the environment was poisoned with cyanide, the life here would come to an end. They wanted us to struggle with it and oppose to it. The information was taken from various sources. From Ege University, the bar

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<sup>55</sup> Michael Kenny, *The Politics of Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), 112.

<sup>56</sup> Özen, "Toplumsal Hareketler".

of İzmir, the people came and helped us. University students came. In order to support and make the villagers conscious, people from various branches came. Seminars, panels, discussions took place in the village and the people gradually became conscious.<sup>57</sup>

After learning about the dangers of cyanide and the results of the cyanide-leaching in other areas, the local people of Bergama organized some activities thanks to the local administration. The villagers welcomed all the groups that come to support the movement; however, the ones who come from universities were more reliable for the villagers since they supported their ideas with lots of concrete knowledge, give examples and watched documentaries on the method of cyanide-leaching. The violation of the every day life of the villagers, the possibility of a risk to their lives and environment created a new space systematically for the local people in order to communicate, negotiate and produce new questions and meanings. One of the villagers, Polat Bektaş, who is the owner of the coffee house in Çamköy, tells of this awareness process with these words:

We started to examine everything carefully in order not to do something wrong. The issue was whether the mine would benefit the country or not. The villages' coffee houses became an open university. Professors from the universities visited us. We are not against gold! We are against cyanide! ...Our country does not need such a poison. There should be a faculty of agriculture instead of the mine. It should be for the public good. Will we live with the risk of cyanide for a hundred years!<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> “Eski belediye başkanı Sefa Taşkın bu siyanürün ne tehlikeli olduğunu halka anlattı. Yanında da bilgili öğretim görevlileri, üniversite profesörleri geldi. Artık köylüleri bilgilendirmeye başladılar. Bu işin çok tehlikeli olacağını, çevreyi etkileyeceğini, çevre siyanürle zehirlendiğinde burada yaşamın son bulacağını söylediler. Bununla mücadele etmemizi, halk olarak karşı çıkmamızı istedi. Çeşitli kaynaklardan bilgi alınıyordu. Ege Üniversitesinden İzmir Barosu’ndan, Türk Tabipler Birliği’nden insanlar geliyorlardı, yardımcı oluyorlardı. Üniversite öğrencileri geliyorlardı. Çeşitli branşlardan insanlar, köylüleri desteklemek bilinçlendirmek için geliyorlardı. Köyün içinde seminerler oluyor, paneller oluyor, konuşmalar oluyor, halk gittikçe bilgileniyordu.” See, Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*, 49.

<sup>58</sup> Gezgör, "Spillover Effects of Environmental Consciousness", 34. I will not discuss the appearance of a public space in the villages detailed. See Çoban, "International Arbitration, Sovereignty and Environmental Protection", Öncü and Koçan, "Democratic Citizenship Movements."

How the local people, especially the villagers, conceive the process of gold-mining and how they express themselves throughout the demonstrations are the main concerns of this chapter; that is to say, which methods they prefer to use on purpose or not in order to achieve their common goal. As mentioned above, the creation of a space in which all the people take part and discuss is the first step that shapes the perception of the local people against gold-mining. The process of consciousness also allows the local people and the outsiders, university students, professors, lecturers, activists, lawyers, to listen to and understand each other in the path of achieving a common goal. Such solidarity in the village makes people understand the collective representation.

The collective representation was important not only for the local people of Bergama, who were influenced by the risks of the mine, and the outsiders, but also for the villagers from the other villages of Bergama. Despite the presence of ethnic differences (Alevi, Sunni, Yugoslav immigrants, Bulgarian migrants, Yuruks and Çepnis), almost all of the villagers in Bergama united against this common danger, as mentioned in the first quotation. One of the villagers, Nevzat Duran, states that, “we never discriminated religion, race, or sects. We always are in the same line.”<sup>59</sup> Since the relationship of these villagers was set on common meanings, memories, and expectations for the future, they ignored the ethnic differences in the beginning of the struggle although it gradually changes with the social activities of the mine and the insistent but illegitimate government policies.

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<sup>59</sup> “Biz hiç din, ırk, mezhep farkı gözetmedik –alevisi sünniisi olarak. Hep bir safta yer aldık.” Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*.

## “It is a Monster, It will Eat Our Country”: Remembering the Past

“Most of the people in this region fought in the War of Liberation. The memories which people listened to from their fathers and grandfathers are still alive. For that reason, a fundamental nationalism has a strong influence,” says Hasan Yıldız, the director of Pınarköy primary school.<sup>60</sup> The emergence of an enemy or the other, Eurogold, which threatens the traditional life of the villagers and the feeling of the possibility of losing the land makes people remember the common experiences in the past shared with the other villagers. Not only do they remember the past, but also they build their struggle on these past experiences. Which is to say, they associate their struggle against the multinational corporation, Eurogold, with the past experiences of the War of Liberation. The words of Yunus Kiray, aged 82, illustrate this:

We demonstrated because we had to. How do you go to war when the enemy occupies the land? When the enemy occupies the land, we have to defend it until we die. It is a monster, it will eat our country. The one who extracts gold is the giaour (*gavur*). It takes away, nothing remains in our country. We know this; I am surprised at how some do not know this.<sup>61</sup>

Taking into consideration the types of practices in Bergama, such as the march of *Kuvayi Milliye* or remembering the War of Liberation, the villagers give their struggles in representations of cultural nationalism. Since the most of the population consists of old people, such an association or demonstrations does not, to a great extent, surprise us. Even this nationalist discourse becomes the most significant

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<sup>60</sup> “Pınarköy ilkokul müdürü: bu yörenin bir çok insanı Kurtuluş Savaşı'nda savaşmıştır. İnsanların babalarından, dedelerinden duydukları anılar hala canlıdır. O nedenle köklü bir ulusçuluk ağar basar.” See, Ibid., 64.

<sup>61</sup> “Mecbur olarak eylem yaptık. Düşman işgal edince harbe nasıl gidiyorsun? Düşman işgal ettiği toprağı, mecbur savunacağız ölünceye kadar...canavar o, yiyecek memleketi. Altını çıkarana da gavur. Götürüyor memlekete kalmıyor zaten. Bunu biz biliyoruz da bazı insanlar nasıl bilmiyor şaşırıyorum.” See, Ibid., 118-19.

factor that motivates and brings the villagers together. That is why the classic question of “how they remember what they remember” occurs as a basic question to be answered.

As Dirlik and Prazniak discuss, cultural nationalism is a way to represent collective identity in place-based movements since the people who live in that place not only are the inhabitants of that place who benefit from economic and social factors of it, but also reproduce their social relations considering the common past experiences related to that place. It means that the relationship established with the place also consists of spiritual factors different from the economic and social factors. For example, Ayşe Yüksel from Yenikent tells of the experience of the march of *Kuvayi Milliye*:

In the march to Çanakkale, we women walked with the flags on our chests. We were carrying the *Kuvayi Milliye* photograph of Atatürk with kalpak. We were always aware that we were fighting a war of independence and life.<sup>62</sup>

This villager also associates the struggle with the War of Liberation and fights against the same power, against to the “other” which threatens the independence and the right to live. Due to the past experiences and the feeling of belonging somewhere, they have developed a cultural nationalist discourse in relation to the discourse of other. “We have difficulty in our work, but we had tranquility until this infidel came. This evil mine has taken our peace. It seems that we have become activists in our old age. Any one knows?” states Süyet Ünek from Ovacık village, aged 75.<sup>63</sup> Since the

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<sup>62</sup> “Çanakkale yürüyüşünde biz kadınlar göğüslerimizde bayraklarla yürüdük. Mustafa Kemal Atatürk’ün kalpaklı Kuvayi Milliye resmini taşıyorduk. Bir bağımsızlık ve yaşam savaşı verdiğimizizi bilincindeydik hep.” See, Ibid., 163.

<sup>63</sup> “Zordu işimiz ama bu gavur gelene kadar gene de huzurumuz vardı. Bu maden belası bütün rahatımızı aldı götürdü. Yaşlılıkta eylemci olmak varmış meğer. Hiç bilir miydik?” See, Ibid., 39.



routine but peaceful lives of the villagers have been violated by the plant, the villagers have taken shelter in past experiences or defined an enemy which has to be accused.

Even the priorities of this movement are the right to live, the right to health and protecting the environment in healthy conditions, the details of the interviews indicate that the movement also struggles against the imperialist powers and could be called, indirectly, an anti-globalization movement. For example, the spokesperson of the movement stated the following about the March of *Kuvayi Milliye*, “We got started a march of mobilization against the violation of our environment, the suffering of our people, the antidemocratic practices in the country. We are walking to a place where imperialism was expelled, to Çanakkale.”<sup>64</sup> As can be seen, the demonstrations had an anti-imperialist discourse in relation to the nationalist discourse. Not only was it a march commemorating the *Kuvayi Milliye*, but also the shows of “*Altıncı Filo Defol*”<sup>65</sup> or “Turkey will not become Africa,” indicate this anti-imperialist propaganda.<sup>66</sup> The region’s people were articulated to the “anti-global discourse,” as well as the practices of anti-global movements have collided with the daily aspects of the villagers.

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<sup>64</sup> “*Kuvayi Milliye Yürüyüşü: biz de topraklarımızın kirletilmesine, insanlarımızın acı çekmesine, ülkedeki antidemokratik uygulamalara karşı bir seferberlik yürüyüşü başlattık. Emperyalizm’in ülkemizden kovulmasını simgeleyen bir yere Çanakkale’ye yürüyoruz.*” See, *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>65</sup> This slogan was used by the left-wing movement in the late 1960s in order to protest against the visit of the 6th fleet of the American Navy to İstanbul; but the slogan, written thus, actually means ‘gold fleet get out’. See, Zeynep Kadirbeyoğlu, “The Transnational Dimension of the Bergama Campaign,” in *Transnational Social Spaces*, ed. Thomas Faist and Eyüp Özveren (England: Ashgate, 2004), 44.

<sup>66</sup> It is thought that Africa is a very poor country and the multinational companies have been operating with environmentally harmful practices. See, *Ibid.*

To conclude, due to the common experiences, meanings and memory, a cultural nationalist discourse was one of the basic characteristics of the movement and was articulated to the discourse of regional belonging.

### “Do Not Dig Our Graves”: Regional Belonging

The lands that you step on to the villagers of Alacalar, Aşağıkırıklar, Bozköy, Çamlıbahçe, Çamköy, Eğrigöl, Küçükkaya, Kurfalı, Narlıca, Ovacık, Pınarköy, Soğancı, Sarıdere, Süleymanlı, Tepeköy, Yalnızev and Yeniköy. These lands are bountiful. In its plains, cotton is like snow, wheat is like gold, tobacco is like amber. On its mountains, solemn pine and oak trees, in its streams’ shadows of cool plane trees lie. The olive trees on its skirts are as old as history.

You cannot get enough of its pomegranates and grapes. Do not return without tasting. If you hit your heel on the ground, water comes out with a gurgling sound. It is healing, it improves the mind, it gives health to the body. If you hit the heel some more; all sorts of minerals scatter around the earth. It is richness.

There is this place’s mud in Kleopatra’s beauty. Pergoman paper is native of this place, it went around the kings and sealed the treaties, and it carried the love words and is hidden in the silver boxes. Alexandrians read their library for centuries, their theaters, statues, sculptures.

The people living here are honest and hardworking. They do not discriminate against religion, language, race, gender and nation. They forget neither their friends nor their enemies. They are peace loving. They have heard about the things that the greedy Europeans did to the American natives for gold. Now, every night, they say goodbye to their lands, animals, trees and each other before they go to bed but they can not sleep. They do not love those Europeans who prefer gold to life. They do not consider them as guests. But consider the other westerners as their fellows. They had known about the gold but they just learned about the cyanide. When they learned about the cyanide, they threw the gold that they carried with care to the ground. They know that their grain, sunflower, tobacco is yellow, wool is white and olive is black gold.

They do not want to go away from their land or to die here. In recent times, they have become very angry. They are annoyed with the indifferent attitudes of political hope merchants. They are hurt by the insensitivity of hard days’ friends. Recently, they have become very sensitive. Through a quick look, they can distinguish friend from enemy. If you come as a friend, meet with them, listen to them and speak with them. If you are not friend, leave here quickly. These people love life and nature, which is their life. They know that death does not wear gold. We saw these people like

that, knew, understood and wrote.

You, the person who comes here, fit into yourself and listen to these people carefully. In this way, learn and teach.

*Episode of the Seventeen Villages (On Yedi Köy Hitabesi)*

About 3,000 people attended in a picnic called “Before Cyanide is Mixed with Water” on May 18 in 1997. After the picnic the base for the monument of *Episode of the Seventeen Villages (On Yedi Köy Hitabesi)* was opened in Çamköy square. The monument not only symbolizes the struggle of the seventeen villages against the operation of the gold mine using cyanide, but also it represents the common meanings, past experiences and also collective memories of a community.

The episode above indicates that the people in Bergama, who recognize a common destiny, not only have social and economic ties to the place in which they live; such as to improve their social relations or to make use of the agricultural income, but also spiritual and historical ties that make them belong somewhere where they feed with local ontological narratives or produce new meanings against the problems of life.

The villagers who participate in the movement identify themselves on a strong territorial base. The local people of Bergama call into being their social relations, experiences, identities considering the place, which they feel is their home. In the words of the villagers, the expression “place” sometimes has the same meanings as “land” or “environment,” which will be discussed in the last chapter. “Land” denotes the cultural, economic and political practices of individual or collective actors within territories or places. Which is to say, that “land” not only pertains to the physical characteristics of a geographical understanding, but raises the question of solidarity, collective identity, social relations and also the group of meanings dependent on the

experiences of that land. They emphasize that they are the heirs to the lands that belonged to their grandparents.

The feeling of loss of the meanings that they attribute to the land is realized better in the style of protests of that people. For example, on November 1996, thousands of people from Bergama with coffins in their hands and with the slogans “do not dig our graves,” and “the gold of Bergama is cotton and tobacco,” walked in the rain through the streets of Bergama, to the accompaniment of Chopin’s funeral march.<sup>67</sup> In this demonstration, called “fed up with the mine” (*yetti gari*), the coming of the mine was associated with death. Since the gold extraction with cyanide also brings the risks of death, the villagers wish to tell the case in a pucky way. One of the villagers, Nevzat Duran describes the protest:

We held a demonstration on 25 November 1996, called “fed up with the mine” (*yetti gari*) a demonstration with coffins. We understand that our nature has been killed. Our olive trees are gone. Pine trees, too. We are villagers... We are the one who protects the environment and attends to it. We walked to the accompaniment of the band under heavy rain.<sup>68</sup>

When faced with the risk of losing the most essential things such as olive trees or pine trees in their lives, the villagers felt the necessity to change the existing conditions in order to protect and save the environment. They turned the demonstration into a ceremony of death with the funeral march. While they were trying to protect their habitation, they also wished to protect the meanings they associated with that habitation.

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<sup>67</sup> Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*, 61.

<sup>68</sup> “25 Kasım 1996’da Bergama’da “yetti gari” mitingi yaptık. Tabutlu eylem. Baktık doğamız katlediliyor. Zeytin ağaçları gitti, çam ağaçları gitti. Biz köylü insanız... Çevremizi koruyacak, sahip çıkacak olan bizleriz. Şiddetli bir yağmur altında bando eşliğinde yürüdük.” See, Ibid.

“We could not book an expense to our home. Because we have a fear. The fear of moving at any moment. Where we go, what happen to us. Even we do not feel like buying a plate to our house. We are waiting,”<sup>69</sup> states a woman villager with the fear of displacement. Due to the feeling of being in the abyss; the abyss of waiting, she experiences the symbolic threat of the mine.

As discussed earlier, they compared the coming of the mine to the War of Liberation. Since they equate the coming of the mine as the occupation of the land, they understand the mine as a threat to their existence. Through the mediation of the



ceremony of death, they wish to protest the occupation and the managers of the mine, whom they refer to as infidels, too.

In addition to demonstrations with the coffins on 23 October 1996, hundreds of villagers in Bergama distributed announcements in the rain, half naked. The period between 1990 and 1996 saw the process of becoming conscious of the gold extraction with cyanide and the risks of the gold mining. The local people organized panels and seminars headed by university professors and they watched documentary films. They tried to bring up the case in the mass media. After 1996, however, as

Tahsin Sezer notes they decided to do something else:

<sup>69</sup> “Evlerimize istediğimiz masrafları yapamıyoruz. Çünkü içimizde bir korku var. Her an bir taşınma korkusu, acaba ne oluruz nere gideriz gibi korkular var. İnan evimize bir tabak dahi almıyız istemiyoruz. Her an beklemedeyiz.” Ibid., 173.

Anyhow, panels, panels, an impatience started for the people. We wanted to do something. One day, “anyone who has the heart in the right place, come” said brother Oktay. “We will demonstrate, a naked demonstration.” First, he undressed topless. We were surprised. He said, “You also undress.” O God, we looked at each other. We did not undress at first. It was a shameful thing. You break with tradition. Some said I will, some said I can’t. At last, the majority undressed, we rushed into the streets.<sup>70</sup>

One of the other villagers, Münir Aldaş, interprets the demonstration thus, “That is not a shameful thing; it is a way of seeking a remedy. We do not always have to seek remedy with guns! This is the way: democratic. Then we went to hundreds of demonstrations.”<sup>71</sup>

On the one hand, to undress is a difficult activity for those people, because those people even hesitate to undress in front of their acquaintances. Yet, on the other hand, landlessness equals nakedness for the villagers; their survival economically and culturally depends on the land. Moreover, as Sezer points out, “becoming undressed” also means “breaking with tradition.” Nakedness is not acceptable for the traditions of the villagers. However, the nakedness under the rain indicates the determination of these people against the cold weather; namely to the cyanide.

Due to the coming of the mine, many changes have materialized in the lives of the villagers; the routine lives of the villagers have changed, they have become aware of the values of their land and environment, have had to become involved in the activities against gold mining with cyanide, started to behave like citizens in the path

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<sup>70</sup> “Artık panel panel, halkta bir sabırsızlık başlamıştı. Bir şey yapalım istiyoruz. Oktay abi bir gün yüreği olan gelsin, dedi. “Eylem yapacağız, çıplak eylem.” ...önce kendisi soyundu belden yukarısını. Biz şaşırдық. “Siz de soyunun” dedi. Allah Allah birbirimize bakmalar falan böyle. Daha evvel hiç soyunmamıştık. Ayıp bir şey. Bir tabu yıkıyorsun bununla. Kimi soyunurum diyor, kimi soyunmam. Sonunda soyundu büyük çoğunluk ve doğru caddeye fırladık.” See, Ibid., 61.

<sup>71</sup> “O ayıp bir şey değil, o bir hak arama yöntemi. İlla silahla hak aranmaz ki! Demokratik böyle de aranır. Ondan sonra yüzlerce eyleme gittik.” See, Ibid., 64.

of seeking solutions and experienced becoming a community. However, perhaps for the villagers, the most important transformation is “breaking with tradition.” Since the possibility to change provides the villagers with perceiving the world from different perspectives and producing new meanings in order to interpret the world.<sup>72</sup>

With regard to what Aldaş points out, one of most the significant things is the way to become undress. According to Aldaş, to undress is a way of seeking remedy legally, without violence. If we take into consideration the other demonstrations that the villagers organized, we realize that there is a humorous but legal style of the demonstrations that makes the villagers and their struggle meaningful for everybody. According to them, it is a way of seeking democracy.

The local people of Bergama also organized picnics at which they dramatized the case in the minds of people, like a Turkish folk play (*ortaoyunu*) was effectively used to improve public awareness. The villagers went on their symbolic activities throughout the process. They planted fig saplings in front of the mine. According to Gezgör, “their act was a reflection of a popular idiom “to plant fig on the source” which means “to ruin the source or do away with it” symbolizing the closure of the mine.”<sup>73</sup> One of the other activities which symbolizes the death is that the villagers cooked lokma, which has been a tradition performed in Anatolia after someone died. As understood, the villagers referred to the experiences, myths, symbols, myth and narratives that they could associate with their struggles. All of these protests are a

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<sup>72</sup> The discussions on public space in Bergama and the change in the routine life of the people, especially the women, in Bergama has discussed the previous works, that is why I will not concentrate on these topics. See, Çoban, "Community-Based Ecological Resistance.", Gezgör, "Spillover Effects of Environmental Consciousness", Petra Holzer, "Bergama ve 10 Yıllık Direniş Hareketi," *Cogito*, no. 15 (1998).

<sup>73</sup> Gezgör, "Spillover Effects of Environmental Consciousness", 38.

way of drawing attention of the public authorities in a humorous but in an effective way.

Dirlik and Praziak reassert the priority of place-based practices for any democratic resolution of problems.<sup>74</sup> In the case of Bergama, people enter into open protest not to seek the total overthrow of the social order. On the contrary, they seek to change a decision that threatens their right to live in a healthy environment. They declared a manifesto that they would not be strangers in their land. The formation of collective identity and cultural representations play a pivotal role in the formation and maintenance of social protest in Bergama. They can also have an important influence on struggles for rights to land, environment and health.

#### “Everywhere Bergama, All of Us Are from Bergama”: Spatial Expansion

The movement in Bergama consists of different groups that take part in the movement and support the movement. Villagers, local elite people from Bergama, lawyers, environmentalists and local politicians have actively participated in the movement, while professors and students from universities, people from different backgrounds and musicians have supported the movement by organizing picnics, concerts and making the villagers watch documentaries on gold-extraction with cyanide and also give information on gold mining around the world. What is noteworthy here is that the people who participate in the movement and support the movement have not only struggled for their local area against the possible dangers of the mine, but also they have participate in other activities in Turkey; such as against the other mines that will operate in the other parts of Turkey, nuclear plant

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<sup>74</sup> Praziak and Dirlik, eds., *Places and Politics in an Age of Globalization*, 11.



organizations or against the dam construction in Hasankeyf or against the U.S invasion of Iraq. Moreover, the movement in Bergama has encouraged the other peasant movements in Turkey and supported these movements. In short, the slogan “everywhere Bergama, all of us Bergama” was implemented; the opponent discourse of the movement was transformed into other opponent discourses.



Figure 2. A Demonstration in Ankara against the War in Iraq (Source: Üstün Bilgen Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik*, İstanbul: Metis 2003.)

At first glance, such a transformation seems meaningful and admirable. Birol Engel considers that the wish to spread the opposition discourses into other protests is not surprising that it indicates the success of the movement. Nonetheless, contrary to Engel, Özay and Taşkın claim that the spatial expansion of the movement saps the energy of the movement and divides it. They also point out that a local movement has to stay local and represent the local problems.

The Bergama Movement represents the basic characteristics of

place-based movements; such as the feeling of solidarity, the formation of collective identity and using the collective representation as a vehicle to achieve the common aim, remember the common experiences, the feeling of belonging to a region. The ways that the villagers represent themselves are applying cultural nationalist policies and legal humorous demonstrations. In almost all the activities, the spiritual bonds that the villagers have established with the land are different from the economic and social bonds. During these protests, as the main goals and the scope of the movement were expanded, both a national discourse and territorial based discourse have mixed with each other. Taking into consideration the dynamics of the Bergama Movement, “every step in the process involves the creation and diffusion of cultural meanings, at every step, historical events create new social conditions within which these meanings deploy.”<sup>75</sup> Throughout the movement, the actors of the movement have produced new ways of interpreting the world, new meaning and solutions. What is conspicuous here is how the actors of the movement describe the subjective experiences that situate them in a perspective.

From these subjective experiences, we have to catch “not the formalized narrative of identity, but the tamed memory or encoded oral history,” writes Navaro-Yashin and adds “more revealing of the experiences of Janus faces of suffering are the passing comments, exclamations, statements made out of despair, sighs, interrupted sentences, ironic phrases, laughter and the like.”<sup>76</sup> The main reason for choosing the subjective experiences in both this chapter and the next chapter is to

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<sup>75</sup> Richard G. Fox and Orin Starn, eds., *Between Resistance and Revolution: Cultural Politics and Social Protest* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

<sup>76</sup> Yael Navaro-Yashin, "'Life is Dead Here': Sensing the Political in 'No-Man's Land,'" *Anthropological Theory* 3, no. 1 (2003): 117.

prioritize the experiences and reactions of common people against the power mechanisms that shape their livelihood.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CONFLICTS OF THE BERGAMA MOVEMENT

The opening of the mine was not only provided some unification points such as struggling against a common aim, right to live, right to environment and health for all different types of people in Bergama; such as villagers, lawyers, local politicians, environmentalist activists, but it also caused some conflicts. Distinctions between those who work, do not work or have to work in the mine and their experiences or the loss of confidence to the government coming with the opening process of the mine constitute some of these conflicts. The conflicts experienced in the process of the operation of the plant and the changes in the perception of the government through the end of the movement become determining factors while receiving the movement and should be taken as different balances that need to be discussed.

In the first part of this chapter, discussing the perception of the mine will lead us to understand the cultural and economic dynamics of the reasons for working in the mine. Here I mean, the necessities for the villagers to work or not to work in the mine will be evaluated using their own statements and exclamations. Related to the position of the villagers, the position of the company and its philanthropic activities in Bergama will be examined. In addition, the importance of local capital replacing the foreign capital will also be discussed since it is thought that local capital could change the minds of the villagers who opposed the mine.

After discussing how the people reacted to the mine, the changes due to the given value of the gold will be discussed, since the value given to the gold is composed of the exterior effects which shaped the people's mind, such as cultural

and economic importance of gold.

How the actors reacted to the government policies and the government itself in this movement will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. As mentioned in the other chapters, the form of the activities of this movement, civil disobedience, has had a significant place for the legitimation of the movement in the political arena. And since civil disobedience as a political way is in relation to the perception of the government -which is to say, the Bergama Movement does not seek to intervene in the system, they struggle against a problem which is very imminent to their every day life and so they chose the way of civil disobedience, which means within the limits of the policy of the law- we need to discuss the practices of civil disobedience and how the actors have reacted to the government policies together.

### The Perception of the Mine

#### “The State Knows Better Than the Villagers”: The Cultural and Economic Necessities

Why or why not the mine should open are the basic questions that have determined the course of the movement and the attitudes of the people. The reasons why the mine should be closed can be summarized like this: the possible risks of the mine threaten the lives and health of the local people and also the waste materials produced by the plant would upset the balance of ecologic materials in the soil; therefore, it is thought that the mine directly would affect the agricultural areas in Bergama. Therefore, in order to survive or sustain the area of livelihood, the region's people struggle against the mine.

In addition to these concrete reasons (a life or death matter in the words of the villagers), which threaten the existing conditions, there are some symbolic threats

came through the mine. The opening of the gold mine and getting acquainted with multinational corporations have dislodged the formed meanings of the villagers. Their style of living and their identities depended on the land.<sup>77</sup> In accepting the mine they set up a new way of livelihood, according to the villagers. As discussed in the previous chapter, first and foremost, the territory based on daily experiences shaped the perception of the mine. Since the local people express themselves through the relationships established with the land, they call the entering of the mine to their lands as an “occupation” and the company an “enemy.” The feeling of belonging to the lands also has led them to remember past experiences such as the War of Liberation, the soul of the *Kuvayi Milliye*, the power of Mustafa Kemal. They prefer to associate their struggle with the experiences of with the first years of the struggle of Turkish nation-state. The possibility of these physical and symbolic threats was because of the wish for the mine to be closed. However, there is the other side of the coin that brings the conflicts together; the ones working in the mine.

Let’s come to the presuppositions as to why the mine should open. The Ovacık Gold mine employs almost 460 personnel and about 80% of them come from the villagers nearby and the others come from the center of Bergama, Dikili, Ayvalık and some other parts of Turkey. The common explanation of the workers is that some basic economic, cultural and social reasons has brought them to work in the mine. Since the villages around the mine were not composed of rich villagers and only some parts of these people have big agricultural fields and some only engage in subsistence farming, the poor villagers feel it a necessity to work in the mine even for short periods. It is clear that the most crucial reason compelling to them work in

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<sup>77</sup> Özen, "Toplumsal Hareketler", 93.

the mine is economic despair. For instance, a young man expressed his feelings in these words:

I am 26 years old. We held demonstrations for years. I was just 14-15 years old, was a child, when we went to Çanakkale on foot. We went to Ankara. We always encountered the gendarmes, but they are doing their jobs. The economic crisis in Turkey has affected the villages, too. They did not give value to the labor of the villagers. The people cannot subsist on it. When the economy of the people gets worse, they start to work in the plant. Currently, there are 35-40 people from Narlıca who work in the mine. The people were hungry. They did not realize the value of tobacco, cotton and olives. There are many educated people, graduated from universities, in the end; they started to work for the plant.<sup>78</sup>

It seems that the economic crisis in Turkey and agricultural methods in Turkey also increase the risks to the living conditions of the villagers. The most important agricultural crops in Bergama are tobacco, olive and cotton. When the government decreased agricultural prices, the possibilities of livelihood also decreased and created a big problem. Thus, the ones who work in the mine thought that they could find a temporary solution to their economic problems through working since the mine offered employment to a huge number of villagers.

One of the basic properties of the personnel in the mine is that they had resisted the mine at the beginning of the movement. What made them yield is the manner of the government, which did not support this movement or at least did not prefer any solution. Veysel Akçit, a worker in the mine, explained his position by referencing to the government policies: “We resisted the cyanide because of its danger, but the

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<sup>78</sup> “Ben 26 yaşındayım. Eylemler yaptık, yıllardır. Daha 14-15 yaşlarındaydım. Çocuktuk, ta Çanakkale’ye yürüyerek gittik buradan. Ankara’ya gittik. Jandarma karşımızdaydı hep, ama onlarda görevini yapıyor. Türkiye’deki ekonomik kriz köylere de geldi. Çiftçinin alın terinin, emeğinin karşılığını vermediler. İnsanlar geçinemez oldu. İnsanların ekonomisi bozulunca, artık onlar da madende çalışacaktı. Şu anda 35-40 kişi var Narlıca’dan madende çalışan. İnsanlar açtı. Tütün, pamuk, zeytin değerini alamıyor. Bir sürü okumuş insan var, üniversite mezunu insanlar, sonunda madene girdiler.” Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*, 151.

government decided to operate the plant. If it were harmful, the government would close it. I decided to work there, since the government did not close it... The state knows better than the villagers.”<sup>79</sup> As mentioned above, the common explanation was always cultural and mostly economic reasons. However, what is interesting is not the common explanations, but the emphasis put on exterior reasons to work in the mine. Almost all of the workers tried to explain the reasons that caused them work in the mine by seeking an exterior reason such as economic crisis, government policies, the necessity of supporting a family or blaming of the other villagers. None of them said he worked there as a choice. For instance, Ali Topuz tried to legitimize his position as follows:

I have been working in the mine since mid-2002. I am now a driller... I had a business before. I was organizing “Blue Journeys.” I was not working in the field. I participated in the resistance; I was even taken into custody while going to Çanakkale. But I have struggled in order to work in the plant. I said for one and a half year: “Let’s go and work.” We are not stronger than the Turkish government. We could not get any help from the other villages. A very small number of the villagers participated in the demonstrations... I am now working in the plant. We are always under control. They are always testing us and once in a month, we are vaccinated.<sup>80</sup>

First, he emphasized the powerlessness of the villagers against the Turkish government and then he tried to describe the healthy conditions of the mine. He added: “If a person deals in politics, participates in demonstrations and organizations

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<sup>79</sup> “Biz siyanür zararlı olur diye yıllarca direndik, ama devlet madeni çalıştırmaya karar verdi. Eğer zararlı olsaydı devlet kapatırdı. Devlet kapatmadığı için ben de orada çalışmaya karar verdim. ..Devlet köylülerden daha iyi bilir.” Ibid., 149.

<sup>80</sup> “2002 ortasından beri madende çalışıyorum. Şu anda sondajcıyım. ...daha evvel ticaretle uğraşıyordum, Mavi Tur’a çıkıyordum. Tarla da çalışmıyordum. Direnişe katıldım, gözaltına bile alındım Çanakkale’ye giderken. Ama bir buçuk seneden beri de madende çalışılması için çok mücadele ettim. Köylüye bir buçuk seneden beri söyledim, “Gidelim, çalışalım,” diye. Biz Türkiye Devleti’nden daha güçlü değiliz ki. Çevre köylerden bir yardım alamadık. Köylerin çok azı katılır oldu eyleme. Biz toplu olarak katılıyorduk. Şimdi ben çalışıyorum orada. Devamlı kontrol altındayız. Muayeneler oluyor, tahliller oluyor, aşımız oluyor ayda bir kere.” Ibid., 151.



and does not care of his family, he can not make himself useful for the state. In my opinion, these are meaningless things. When I was resisting, I could not take care of my family, but now, perhaps I can.”<sup>81</sup> He tried to legitimize his position by the politics of looking after his family and furthermore, he described his previous struggle against the mine as a negative one. The reason for working in the mine is apparently the power of the authorities and powerlessness of the region’s people.

Contrary to the other villagers, Halil Etfal who seemed as if he was experiencing these conflicts very personally described the process with feelings of guilt:

Since we got angry at the other villages, we entered into the mine. The villages in the south part of Bergama said us: “You are dealing in politics.” They leave us alone...

If it is harmful or not? The government worries about it. The people who gave signatures for the opening of the mine have to worry about it. The mine will operate, even if I work or not, does not make any difference. The ministries of the Turkish government gave permission for it. The cyanide affects all the people who work and do not work. There is no value of our resistance... The demonstrations availed only one thing: without these demonstrations they do not engage the people here. They bring the workers from outside. Now they engage people here since they wish to finish the work soon. Our government brought the company here. The mine has no guilt; the guilty one is the government. I cannot tell the feeling of working in the plant, after resisting so many years. I do not want to tell.<sup>82</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> “Ailesine bakmayıp da siyaset yapıyorsa, eylem yapıyorsa, örgüt yapıyorsa, ailesine sorumluluğu olmayan bir insanın devlete hiçbir yararı olmaz. Bence bunlar boş şeyler. Ben direnirken aileme iyi bakamıyordum belki-şimdi daha iyi bakıyorum.” Ibid., 152.

<sup>82</sup> “O aşağıdaki köylülere kızdığımız için girdik sonunda madene. Aşağı köyler bize “Siyaset yapıyorsunuz” dediler. Bizi yalnız bıraktılar.”Zararlı mı değil mi? Onu devlet düşünsün. Madenin çalışması için imza verenler düşünsün. Ben orada çalışsam da çalışsamda işleyecek bu maden. TC’nin bakanları imza vermiş. O siyanür orada çalışanı da etkiler, çalışmayı da. Bizim direnişimizin hiçbir faydası yok... Eylemler belki bir şeye yaradı, onlar olmasa buradan işçi alamayacaklardı. Dışarıdan getiriyorlardı adamlarını. Şimdi buradan da alıyorlar ki bu iş bitsin. Buraya bu madeni devletimiz getirdi. Madenin suçu yok ki suç varsa devletin. Yıllarca madene direndikten sonra girip orada çalışmanın duygusunu size anlatamam. Anlatmak istemiyorum.” Ibid., 153.

But again he found an exterior reason; he accused the other villagers, the government policies and the other people who supported the opening of the mine. The expression “the mine has no guilt, the guilty one is the government” explains that since he had a chance to earn money, he would use that possibility. If he was not working, some one else would work, so nothing would change for their struggle. However, we felt the guilt from the tone of his words. He thought he was betraying the struggle of the villagers after resisting for so many years.

In addition to the economic necessities, there are cultural necessities that cause people to work in the mine. The villagers started to work in the mine as diggers, chauffeurs, and tea men, which is to say they were not high grade workers. However, the conditions of the workers were not important for the villagers, in order to be respected by the villagers who had been supporting the mine; it was enough to be working in the mine. If one was working in the mine, taking a bride from the other villagers would be easy because one had not only an economic guarantee contrast to the villagers who were busy with agriculture, but also the respect of the other villagers.

Nonetheless, all these conflicts, thoughts and practices have lead to some corruptions in the social relations of the villagers. The opening of the mine and its creation of new possibilities of employment set persous by the ears. The villagers who opposed the mine decided to exclude those who were working in the mine. Polat Bektaş from Çamköy thought that since the mine had lots of money, it bought people and turned the villagers against each other. He stated that although it was difficult to

exclude these people and not talk with them, they had to struggle in order to live in a healthy environment.<sup>83</sup> A villager described this situation as follows:

After the first demonstration of closing the road, we took some decisions. Every body said, “it is enough.” We do not take home the miners. We do not invite them to our death or our birth. This time I do not talk with my closest friends. We were always together, we had breakfast, went to picnics but I did not talk with them because there are people who work in the mine in their families. The villagers took this decision.<sup>84</sup>

Although excluding the miners would not be a solution to the struggle of the villagers, the corruption between the villagers changed the atmosphere of the villages. Even the coffee houses had separated into the one that opposed the mine and that supported the mine. Even sisters and brothers stopped speaking because of the mine. Some of the people who worked in the mine moved to the central parts of Bergama because of the worsened relations.<sup>85</sup> Nowadays, the course of the events is a bit different from the conditions of four years before since a local company bought the shares of the oldest multinational company. Before discussing the changes that came with this local company, I wish to discuss the philanthropic activities of these companies which have created some conflicts from the point of view of the villagers and also have allowed the company to legitimize its position in Bergama.

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>84</sup> “İlk yol kapatma eylemimizden sonra biz aramızda kararlar almıştık. Herkes dedi ki artık yeter. Biz köydeki madencileri evimize sokmayalım. Ölümüne dirimize getirmeyelim,” dedi. Bu sefer ben en yakın arkadaşlarımla konuşmadım. Cancığer her gün bir yerdeyiz, birlikte sabah kahvaltısı yapardık, pikniklere giderdik, ailelerinde madende çalışan biri olduğu için ben onlarla bir daha konuşmadım. Köylü bu kararı aldı.” Ibid., 58.

<sup>85</sup> Here it is also possible that the conditions of the people who work in the mine get improved and they decided to move to the central part of Bergama.

“Turks Know the Turks Better Than Foreigners”: The Policy of Philanthropy  
and Local Capital

The opening of the plant not only destroyed the culturally, economically and socially established meanings of the villagers, but also it suggested creating new meanings. Philanthropic activities are one way that companies try to legitimized their practices in a place. And in the case of the Bergama, the philanthropic activities called “social responsibility” were one of the main elements that made the villagers confused about how to react to the mine.

Although the owner company of the mine in Bergama changed three times, all of the companies have pretended to regard the benefits of the villagers; thus, they also intended to legitimize the operation of the plant. The philanthropic activities of these companies, Normandy, Eurogold, Newmont were all to fill needs; such as building mosques, paths and a wedding salon, distributing animals for the religious festivals and food in the fasting month. However, it is observed that the foreign companies especially carried out religious aid policies in contrast to the local company, Koza, which will be mentioned later. For example, a villager from Çamlıca told of a conversation with one of the managers of the mine:

Now, they sat close to us, they are translated. This guy delivers some promises. I asked, “which property is important for you in Çamköy, I mean why our village?” “We,” said he, “like Turks very much.” “If you like very much,” said I, “there is no water in Bozköy, go and take water there. We have a mosque, maybe for a hundred people, ten people perform the namaz, I mean there is no need I said.”<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>86</sup> “Şimdi, bizim yanımıza oturdular tercüme ediliyor, bu adam bir takım vaatlerde bulunuyor. Ben de dedim ki Çamköy’ün ne özelliği var sizin için, yani ille de bizim köy?” “Biz” dedi Türkleri çok seviyoruz” “Çok seviyorsanız” dedim “Bozköy’ün suyu yoktu, gidin oraya su götürün. Bizde bir cami var belki yüz kişilik, on kişi namaz kılıyor yani ihtiyaç yok.” dedim.” Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*, 44.

Interestingly enough, the villages most potentially affected by the dangers of the mine were Alevi rather than Sunni and other religious groups. Although Çamköy has a Sunni population, the other villages, to a great extent, have Alevi populations. Therefore, the intention of building mosques or distributing food in the fasting month excluded a huge number of people in Bergama. Most of the activities they carried out had Islamic features; but they ignored the different religious traditions in the sects of Alevi and Sunni. The foreign companies, most probably, worked to legitimize their policies considering religion as a connective factor. To what extent the philanthropic activities of the foreign companies succeeded or formed hegemony to be accepted by the villagers were significant; however, what is more significant is that the philanthropic activities created some conflicts in the perception of the mine.

In discussing the philanthropic activities of the foreign companies, we need to illustrate what changes the local company brought to the perception of the mine. As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the motivating powers in the movement was the companies being foreign capital, since the villagers perceived the opening of the plant as the occupation of their lands and associated their struggle with the struggle given at the outset of the Republican Era. Thus, how the villagers, who had a nationalist discourse throughout the movement, reacted became a central issue.

When the lawyer Senih Özay was asked, whether the local capital had changed the perception of the villagers against the mine or not, he answered that nothing changed due to the local capital and added that “the movement was not something related to local capital or foreign capital. The primary aim of the villagers and the local people in Bergama was to defend ‘right to live in a healthy environment and protection of habitation;’ therefore, the local capital did not make any difference for

the villagers.”<sup>87</sup> Here, we conclude that the movement in Bergama was opposed indirectly to the foreign investment since they had produced their nationalist discourse against the foreign capital in order to legitimize their struggle while struggling to achieve their aim “right to live in an healthy environment or protection of habitation.” The villagers had opposed the foreign capital as long as the risks of foreign capital were related to their daily aspects and practical struggle.

But again, Senih Özay claimed that a Turkish company would know Turkish better than a foreign company. Therefore, the goals of the local company have to be examined. For example, Koza Gold Company, on the first hand, changed the high level personnel and employed Turkish personnel, who were thought to understand the problems of the local people better. Since 2004 there have been no foreign personnel. There are 465 people working in the mine, 82% come from the region. The difference of the local company from the foreigners is that the philanthropic activities of the local company are aimed to reach every kind of people. They do not only reach and flatter the religious aspects of the people, but provide individual economic help and alleviate the poverty in Bergama.

The local company makes efforts to organize policies of housing, education, sports, and culture. For example, the company built 50 two storey houses to compensate for Ovacık village houses near the open pit and delivered them to the owners. They have repaired the schools of nearby villages and provided some educational materials for the students. Moreover, they have repaired wedding hall, *mukhtar*'s (village headman) building, mosque, *cem* house (meetinghouse for Alevis), and the Narlıca village road and the bridge on that road. The company has

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<sup>87</sup> Interview with Senih Özay, 10.02.2006

organized some health and sports facilities by sponsoring the traditional Bergama Festival and opened a four year programs in electronics, mechanics, and land rehabilitation training in order to provide occupational opportunities to the youth of the region.<sup>88</sup>

In contrast to the foreign companies, the philanthropic activities of the local company are aimed to be more encompassing for the people of Bergama. They not only have tried to repeat the religious aspects of the villagers, but also have provided new areas of shelter, created possibilities for education, and organized cultural facilities to which the people give historical importance.

To sum up, the companies, whether they have succeeded or not, have tried to develop a hegemonic space in order to legitimize and include the people and make them a part of the gold-extraction process indirectly. In addition to the socio-economic and cultural necessities of accepting the mine, the philanthropic activities have affected the opinion of the villagers and the local people while struggling against the gold-extraction with cyanide.

#### “Turkey Enters into the Gold Age”: Counter-Nationalist Discourse

One of the basic elements that has shaped the people’s mind in Bergama has been exterior effects such as the recent economic changes and the pressure of the media that suppressed the Bergama people. The time “gold mining” brings into question and multinational corporations come to Turkey befit the same time with the economic and legal innovations occurred in Turkey. I will offer a short summary of the gold-mining process in Turkey again in order to explain the process of how the

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<sup>88</sup> <http://www.ovacik-altin.com/koza/koza/anaara.htm>

gold mine was reacted to first but what then changed. Eurogold, the multinational corporation in Bergama, obtained exploration in 1989 and managing license in 1992 from the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources. Interestingly, throughout the country, 562 different points were determined for the extraction and production of gold by multinational corporations. Bergama-Ovacık was one of the first places where these corporations wished to establish a gold mine.

One of the founders of the Green Party, Birsal Lemke, said that, "Pilot projects were close to Küçükdere, Bergama and Truva. Then word spread that gold would be extracted with cyanide in 560 fields in Turkey. This is a terrible huge amount and we understood that if we gave permission for Bergama and Küçükdere, these guys would spread everywhere."<sup>89</sup> It is possible that Eurogold and the other multinational corporations, which have been waiting for the gold-extraction, saw Bergama as the beginning of gold mining process, as a Trojan horse,<sup>90</sup> to establish a gold mine in Bergama was a necessity for these corporations. Nonetheless, such a stroke as the Bergama Movement prevented gold-mining and made people throughout the country think about gold-mining, the style of that and gold as well.

It is known that there are 200,000 tons of gold in the world and it is estimated that three percent of it belongs to Turkey. Although there is enough gold for the needs of all the countries in the world, the desire for continues unabated gold-extraction. Needless to say, 85% of this gold is used only for jewelry and the rest is

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<sup>89</sup> Birsal Lemke: " *Pilot projeler Küçükdere, Bergama ve Truva'nın yakınındaydı. Sonra Türkiye'nin 560 yerinde siyanürle altın çıkartılacağı söylendi. Bunlar korkunç boyutlardı ve anladık ki, Küçükdere ve Bergama'ya izin verirse bu adamlar her yere yayılacak.*" Tahir Öngür, "Siyanürle Altın İşletmeciliği ve Halk Sağlığı," (2004).

<sup>90</sup> It is thought that imperialist powers would enter into Turkey with such a valuable mine; gold, thanks to the multinational corporations.



used for technological instruments. If gold were only used for technological reasons, there would be enough for the world for the next thousands year.



Figure 3. The advertisement of “Turkey enters into the Gold Age” (Source: *Altın Bergama Demokrasi*, TMMOB)

However, when ideas such as “Turkey will enter a Golden Age” or “Turkey has the second biggest gold reserve” spread, the point of view of the movement started to change. As emphasized in the previous chapter, one of the basic properties of the movement was its nationalist discourse. The people in Bergama believed that they were fighting for their country while struggling against the gold mine. But from the moment the ideas of a “Golden Age” spread, the struggle in Bergama was accused of obstructing the “development” of Turkey since it was thought that new gold mines in different areas would improve the economic conditions of the country and create employment possibilities. For example, a media institution gave the following news report:

According to the satellites, we have the second biggest gold reserve in the world. But Turkey does not produce anything from this value, which is

worth 400 billion dollars! One of the projects of the government, which seeks permanent alternatives in order to be rescued from economic crisis, is to gain gold reserves for the economy.<sup>91</sup>

This new “gold project in Turkey is considered as a solution to the economic crisis, since it is said that these new mines would create employments to 25,000 people and also the government would settle its debt since Turkey imports 100 tons of gold each year. One of the conspicuous headline titles of the written and visual media was “The Gold Importer Turkey Will Become Gold Exporter.” The director of Eurogold Roger Craddock stated in the news as follows:

They will insure the nature and the people who live in the environment for 800 milliards. The Ovacık gold-mine costs 250 milliards. It is the biggest investment that made in Aegean side. Due to this mine, Turkey will go up into a higher class; from the class of traditional industrial mine producer to the class of valuable strategic mine producer. She will be gold-exporter...<sup>92</sup>

The Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit thought that the gold project presented him with a strong and permanent economic resource and that is why he sought to open and gain gold reserves for the economy for the sake of sustainable development. Even if we have difficulty in understanding how such an individual interest in a gold mine affects a country’s development, it is very apparent that the spread of gold mines was in relation to the desire for foreign investment in Turkey’s condition.

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<sup>91</sup> 30 June 2000, HaberTürk. “Uydulara göre dünyada ikinci büyük altın rezervine sahip ülkeyiz. Ancak Türkiye 400 milyar dolar değer biçilen bu değerden hiç üretim yapmıyor! Ekonomik krizden çıkış için kalıcı alternatif kaynaklar arayan hükümetin üzerinde durduğu projelerden biri de Türkiye deki altın rezervini ekonomiye kazandırmak.” See, Tahir Öngür, “Türkiye'nin Altın Rezervi Dünyada İkinci İmiş!,” (2004). According to the information that was presented to President Bülent Ecevit Turkey has the second largest gold reserve after South Africa. It is estimated that South Africa has 20,000 tons of the 43,000 tons of gold reserve in the world. Turkey is the second with 6,500 tons and USA is the third with 4,770 tons. Consequently, the gold reserve in Turkey was evaluated as an economic liberation project.

<sup>92</sup> “Çevrede yaşayan insanları ve doğayı 800 milyara sigortalayacaklar. Ovacık altın madeni 250 milyar lira. Bugüne kadar Ege bölgesine yatırılacak olan en büyük yatırımlardan. Bu maden ile Türkiye madencilikte sınıf atlayacak geleneksel endüstriyel maden üreticisi sınıftan değerli stratejik maden üreticisi sınıfına geçecek. Türkiye altın ihracatçısı olacak...” Ege Express.

One of the members of the administrative committee of Eurogold, Orhan Güçkan, described the situation:

We determine 24 tons of gold and 24 tons of silver here. We could extract three tons golds and silver per year, its period is 8 years. If we did not extract gold from Turkey, we would have to import it from abroad. Think taxes and the place of employments that will be created in Turkey. Gold-mining will be useful for Turkey.<sup>93</sup>

In addition to increase the amount of the foreign investment, the spread of gold-mining promised new employment areas. Moreover, the profit gained from the mines would help Turkey pay its foreign debts. The mine were valuable but also important is that a part of the income of the mine would have to be given to Turkey; however, the income is not been known yet. In addition to sustainable development, it was thought that the mine also would provide the regional development, since this industrial innovation would bring other investments to the region. Nonetheless, all these optimistic views ignored the fact that this mine could also lead to a decrease in the demand of agricultural productions because of cyanide poisoning, the death of animals, the decrease in the number of the tourists who visit Bergama these are only the economic sides of the danger.<sup>94</sup>

For almost a century, mining has been an important resource for the economic development in Turkey. However, when talking about gold mining, it is necessary to keep in mind the risks of gold extraction with cyanide. Gold extraction with cyanide

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<sup>93</sup> “Burada 24 ton altın olduğunu saptadık. Yılda üç ton altın ve üçton gümüş çıkartabiliriz, bunun süresi 8 yıldır. Eğer altını Türkiye’de çıkarmazsak dışardan satın almak zorunda kalacağız. Vergileri veya Türkiye’de yaratılacak işyerlerini düşünün. Altın madenciliği Türkiye’ye fayda sağlar.”

<sup>94</sup> The experience in Bergama indicates the clash between gold production and the law of the protection of nature. People who experience the capitalist system establish relations with nature in a more technological and instrumental way due to the rational understanding of capitalism; however, the local people in Bergama oppose that the multinational corporations damage the environment in which they live.

became a common method of gold mining in the 1980s, but its dangers were realized in the mid-1980s and there established managements congenial to the environment after 1990. In a report presented by the Chamber of Turkish Doctors (*Türk Tabipler Odası*) on 13 July 2000 against the Bergama-Ovacık report TÜBİTAK had written, cyanide is defined as

Cyanide is a poisonous material that when taken in great amounts can cause people die or go into a coma. And also the diseases which could be seen in people who are exposed to cyanide in small amounts but over a long time are anemia, cardiodynia, headache, difficulty in respiration, vomiting, goiter, fatigue, failure in seeing and hearing and also failure in neural system. Except cyanide, the other heavy metals which appear during the gold extraction will cause most of all cancer and other illnesses.”<sup>95</sup>

Taking into consideration the risks of gold-extraction with cyanide, it is necessary for us to ask what is the meaning of the natural “resource” and who uses it and for whom it is useful? When we pronounce the word “resource,” we have to understand “the objects instrumentally useful for human beings.” However, in the case of Bergama, these natural resources bring risks in their train, usefulness as well, and the useful one is not for the sake of the common local people who live in that environment, but for the use of multinational corporations.

Such pressure, especially reflected by the media (that the villagers valued); indeed I want to call it as “counter-nationalist discourse,” to a great extent shaped the

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<sup>95</sup> “Siyanür büyük miktarlarda alındığı takdirde koma ve ölüme neden olan zehirli bir maddedir. Uzun süre ve hissedilmeyecek miktarlarda siyanüre maruz kalan kişilerde ise kan bozuklukları, kalp ağrısı, baş ağrısı, solunum güçlükleri, kusma, tiroid bezinde büyüme, yürüme bozuklukları, görme ve işitme bozuklukları ve diğer sinir sistemiyle ilgili bozukluklara rastlanabilir. Siyanür dışında çevreyi kirlilecek ağır metallerin de başta kanser olmak üzere pek çok sağlık sorununa neden olduğu bilinmektedir.” Öngür, "Siyanürle Altın İşletmeciliği ve Halk Sağlığı." These results were taken from the studies on other gold-mines: Batu Hihau in Indonesia, Minahasa Region, Zaratşan Field in Uzbekistan, Ynaocoha Mine in Peru, Philippines...

thoughts of the region's people. They were being accused of obstructing the development of Turkey while they were struggling for the sake of Turkey.

Certainly, there occurred different thoughts on gold production with cyanide in Bergama. For example, there is a part which are not against the gold production and so the gold mine; however, they wish producers or engineers to do it in healthy ways without cyanide since it is known that the technology of mining has been improving for 15 years and it will be possible to extract gold with improved healthy technology in 20 years. On the other hand, the other group opposes the extraction and production of gold, since the world has enough gold to carry out its technological studies, and they find the desire for jewelry ridiculous and unnecessary. It is also stated that the laws of mining carry some properties related to nationalist and militarist ideas since gold has been a material very characteristic to wars and relations of power and throughout the history, the management of mines and the production of metals have been determining factors between countries; therefore, continuing to appreciate "gold" reproduces the nationalist and militarist ideas.<sup>96</sup>

As the extraction of gold is a chemical process that necessitates more dangerous and difficult procedures, not mineral ones, it is thought that the multinational corporations seek - ways to obtain licenses according to the laws of mining, which seem suitable not only for their goals but also the discourse of sustainable development. For example, according to metallurgy professor İsmail Duman, "the production of gold is like anything than an activity of mining. The concept of gold

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<sup>96</sup> The important thing is not the place where gold is extracted but the place where gold is produced since gold production, which is thought of as a chemical process, not a mineral process, is very difficult in the First World countries or been done in very controlled healthy conditions. However, the multinational corporations choose especially Third World countries for some "rational" reasons. This relationship in mining between First and Third World countries also reproduces the uneven relations between the periphery and the dominant center.

mining appears misleading and is used in order to escape the laws which control chemical activities by the multinational corporations who wish to produce gold.”<sup>97</sup> All of these conflicts and manipulations bring to mind the question of what the local people think about “gold,” and what “gold” means.

As said above, there have occurred different thoughts on the gold mine. One part of the people has wanted to extract gold, but in improved healthy technological conditions, while the other part considers the given value of gold meaningless. It can not be ignored that “gold” represents feelings of safety; a sign of wealth and representative of power as well. However, we can easily say that people do not seek gold because they need but they seek it for other artificial socio-cultural factors. For example, Sefa Taşkın, the mayor of Bergama during the period of the movement, described the first impressions:

First, we felt glad when Eurogold came and informed us that we had gold. We gave them chocolates and presents. Because gold means magnificence and wealth, we thought that this gold was a favor for us. Yet, when the people heard that the the gold would be extracted with cyanide, they started to think. Because cyanide means death and 30mg of cyanide is sufficient to die immediately. And here 4 tons cyanide would be used.<sup>98</sup>

The Bergama Movement did not cause in direct opposition to the gold mine. There was a period when the local people tried to understand the process, and then, after having learned the style of mining, there started to appear an oppositional discourse to the mine. The attractiveness and possibilities of gold impressed the local

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<sup>97</sup> İsmail Duman, *Bergama ve Siyanür*, vol. 42 (İzmir: Bergama Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 1998).

<sup>98</sup> “İlk başta 1989’da Eurogold Bergama’ya gelip toprağımızda altın olduğunu söyleyince çok sevindik. Onlara çukulata ve hediyeler verdik. Çünkü altın ihtişam ve zenginlik demektir, biz bu altının bizim için bir lütuftu olduğunu düşündük. Ama insanlar altının siyanürle çıkartılacağını duyunca düşünmeye başladılar. Çünkü siyanür ölüm demek, 30 miligram siyanür bir yetişkini derhal öldürmeye yetiyor. Ve burada 4 ton siyanür kullanılacaktı.”German Bavyera TV, "Altına Hücumun Ardından," (2000).

people; however, they consider that they had to move taking into consideration the risks of the mine. For example, an old man said that, “As I heard, there are olive trees more than one thousand years old here. What can gold give me, olives serve humans so much? But you can make art of gold only ornaments to use hang on your neck.” One of the other villagers from Narlıca expressed his anger:

Listen, if we the villagers took a load of wood from the mountain or cut pine trees for a load of wood, the state would imprison us for ten or fifteen years. These guys cut 400-500 pine trees in one night, they cut thousands of olives trees. We got acquainted with injustice here. That’s why we are shouting. We will march. Do not leave that mine there!<sup>99</sup>

To sum up, due to the socio-economic and legal changes in Turkey, the economic crisis, foreign investment policies and new innovations for the multinational corporations, the supporter of the government policies such as journalists, the visual and written media and the authorities accused the Bergama Movement of preventing sustainable development. Those exterior ideas also shaped and affected the reactions of the villagers; they never intended to oppose to government. The intention of the movement basically was to protect their habitat, to live in a healthy environment, and to save their traditions.

### The Perception of the Government

The movement in Bergama was not one which had radical discourses and wishes; on the contrary, a very nationalist discourse was a dominant factor in the movement. If we have to summarize, we could describe it as the villagers who

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<sup>99</sup> “Duyduğuma göre bizim burada bin yıldan yaşlı zeytin ağaçları var. Altın bana ne verir ki, zeytin öyle çok insana hizmet ediyor. Altını ise sadece süs yapıp boynuna takabilirsin,” the other Yusuf Kurhan: “Bak, bu köylü bir yük odun alsak dağdan, çam kessek bir yük odun için, devlet bize on yıl, on beş yıl hapis veriyor. Bunlar dört yüz beş yüz çamı bir gecede kestiler. Binlerce zeytini kestiler. Biz haksızlığı burada gördük. Onun için biz haykırıyoruz. Yürüyeceğiz. Bırakmayacağız o altın madenini orada!” Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*. 52.

trusted immensely their state and their demand for right to live in a healthy environment. However, the government policies upsetted and baffled such a confidence; rather, almost each government that has ruled during the movement, has supported the multinational corporations and, foreign investment and according to the villagers, disregarded their rights. The violation of the court decisions has made the villagers, who considered Turkey as a state of law, disappointed. Since the participants in the movement gave their struggle on legal grounds with non-violent activities, they always tried to give meaning to the incomprehensible manner of the governments. In this part, the concept of “civil disobedience” will be discussed taking into account the activities of the movement and then the reasons for the loss of confidence will be analyzed.

“If the Government Does Not Respect Us, We Also Would Not Respect It”:  
Civil Disobedience

Governor: Let’s ask, what are they doing?

Oktay Konyar: We are making (practicing) civil disobedience

Police: Sir, they are making civil disobedience

Governor: What does it mean, son? Let’s ask!

Police: What does it mean?

Oktay Konyar: The citizen tests all the ways and wins, but cannot make them carried out. There remains only one democratic right, resisting. We are using this right.

Police: Sir, the citizen wins all the rights but cannot make them carried out. There remains only one right, this is resisting, that’s why they came here. This is civil disobedience.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Vali: Sorun bakalım ne yapıyorlar.*

*Oktay Konyar: Sivil İtaatsizlik yapıyoruz*

*Polis: Efendim, sivil itaatsizlik yapıyorlarmış.*



The event above perfectly illustrates the incurableness of the people who resort to the “civil disobedience.” As mentioned before, the Bergama people perceive their activities as “suitable to the jurisprudence and within the borders of the law.” The practices of civil disobediences hand in hand with the law. If we support the idea that “the law shapes our lives in ways that are rarely recognized and it invests us with identities and subjectivities, it shapes the physical and material world we live in,”<sup>101</sup> as claimed by Patricia Ewick, the process of the civil disobedience and its advantages to the Bergama villagers have to be illustrated.<sup>102</sup> The movement planned for the law to operate as a terrain of struggle. It was a way of both struggling for its rights on legal ground and legitimizing the activities of the movement. Most probably, the best examples of civil disobedience were when the villagers refused to participate in the population census and when they refused to send their children to schools.

In the population census of 30 November 1997, the people of eight villages (Pınarköy, Çamköy, Narlıca, Ovacık, Yalnızev, Tepeköy, Süleymanlı and Aşağı Kırıklar- about 10,000 people) declared that they would not be counted. With the slogan “If the government does not respect us, we will not respect it,” they said that, “if the government does not recognize us, we will not recognize it.” “If the government behaves against us in spite of us being its citizens, the rights not to fulfill

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*Vali: Oğlum ne demekmiş o? Sor bakalım.*

*Oktay Konyar: Yurttaş yasal bütün yolları dener, kazanır ama bunu uygulatamazsa bir tek demokratik hakkı vardır, direnmektir. İşte o hakkımızı kullanıyoruz. Polis: Efendim, yurttaş bütün haklarını kazanır, uygulatamazsa, bir tek hakkı kalırmış, o da direnmekmiş, onun için buraya gelmişler. Bu sivil itaatsizlikmiş. Ibid., 96.*

<sup>101</sup> Patricia Ewick, "Consciousness and Ideology," in *The Blackwell Companion to Law and Society*, ed. Austin Sarat (Malden: Blackwell, 2004).

<sup>102</sup> During the movement, it is thought that the villagers became aware of their rights and they struggled in order to get the citizenship rights. See, Çoban, "Community-Based Ecological Resistance.", Ozansoy, *Bergama'da Bir Yurttaş Hareketi*.

our obligation to the state, such as not to go to the military service, not to pay taxes appears for the people. We will use these rights.”<sup>103</sup>

The slogans above clearly summarize the relationship between the Bergama villagers and the government. The wish of the people to be recognized as citizens and to secure their rights was the one of the main goals of their struggle. The reciprocal relationship between the state and its citizens can also be understood in this kind of expression which first wishes to have rights and then to perform the responsibilities of the government. But what if the state does not recognize you? The basic problem of the movement was that the government ignored the existence of these people. To whom the movement was talking remained uncertain; so it is possible to talk about the absence of reciprocity here. The violation of that kind of reciprocity not only gives us hints about the style of the movement but also shows how the balance or silent consensus between state and its citizens is threatened. Although the threats such as not participating in the population census, not going to the military service or not paying the taxes did not affect the government policies –since the mine kept on operating despite the court decisions- the way of activities created public opinion in Turkey. The activities in the movement were always under control and they were always against violence. The fact that the movement did not include violent practices made the movement legal. The importance of legal practices can be understood in the description of Oktay Konyar:

For seventeen days, until the early hours of the morning, we thought “How can we occupy the mine? How can it be the first occupation of Turkey? And seventeen days later, we occupied the mine in the morning at five

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<sup>103</sup> Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*, 109.

o'clock. We practiced no violence. This was one of the most beautiful experiences of my life.<sup>104</sup>

While one of the villagers described his own experiences as if he were occupying an "other" place, and added the importance of non-violent practices, such as "Brother Oktay said 'You will not destruct anything. We will enter correctly, occupy there and then turn back.' We did everything he wanted. He always tells us not to practice violence. There is no time that he made us practice violence,<sup>105</sup> the other one expressed his anger about the mine and the prevention of it by Konyar: "When we entered the mine, we had mazout tins in our hands. 'Chief, let's set fire to the mine,' we said. 'No,' he said, 'We could destroy, raze there. But we trusted in the law.'"<sup>106</sup> One of the villagers who did not participate in the movement described the movement in statements below:

The resistance grew in a covert way. They were gathering at night and organizing. Since we were civil servants, we could not participate in the organizations. A resistance organized by Oktay Konyar and the people. But I have to add: I think that all the things they did, without destroying anybody else, practicing violence is in order to emancipate the state and nation. They never fought anybody else. I realize it as a public resistance that must be taken as an example.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> "Oktay Konyar: On yedi gün hiç uyumadan, sabahlara dek, "Madeni nasıl işgal edebiliriz? Türkiye'nin ilk işgali nasıl olabilir? Diye kafa yorduk. Ve on yedi gün sonra, yedi koldan, sabah vakti sabah beşte madeni işgal ettik. Hiç şiddet yaşanmadı. Bu benim hayatımın en güzel olaylarından biridir." 22 Nisan 1997. Ibid., 69.

<sup>105</sup> "Nevzat Duran: Oktay abi bize dedi ki "Kırma dökme yok. Adam gibi gireceğiz orayı işgal edeceğiz, sonra da adam gibi çıkıp gideceğiz." Biz de onun sözünden çıkmadık. Bunu her zaman söylemiştir bize. Hiçbir zaman kırıcı dökücü eylem yaptırmamıştır bize." Ibid., 70.

<sup>106</sup> "Yusuf Kurhan: Binlerce kişi madene girdiğimizde ellerimizde mazot tenekeleri vardı. "Başkan yakalım şurayı dedik. Hayır çocuklar dedi. Biz binlerce insan orasını yerle bir edebildik. Ama hukuka güvendik yapmadık." Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> "Direniş gizli gelişti. Geceleri gidiyorlardı. Kendileri örgütleniyorlardı, biz devlet memuru olarak olayların içine giremiyorduk...Oktay Konyar ve halk tarafından örgütlenilmiş bir olay. Yalnız şu var: Bütün yaptıklarının hiç kimseye zarar vermeden, şiddet yapmadan, devleti milleti uyandırmak için yapılan eylemler olduğu kanısındayım. Hiç dövüş kavga olmadan yapıldı- gerçekten örnek gösterilebilecek bir halk direnişi olarak görüyorum." Ibid.

We conclude that even when the villagers intended violence, their practices were prevented by someone else since they knew that they had to trust in the law.

The expressions and the imagination of Konyar again illustrate the situation:

We needed comprehension; without violence but resisting, without violence but organized, without violence but impressive something nourishes togetherness... I had thought this for years. It was necessary to find solution ways in order to hold the whip hand against the police without provoking the police. We needed to be likable and gentle.<sup>108</sup>

Konyar always thought of non-violent practices as something that nourished togetherness. It actually succeeded in order to make not only the villagers but also people outsider of Bergama support the movement. He identified the police as a big problem, but he was also seeking ways not to provoke them. When he was telling of the importance of being likable and gentle, he referred to his past experiences and emphasized rights of citizenship.

There are different ways of opposing. In the past, in my youth, the car of the American ambassador was set on fire. We always said to them “Yankee go home.” I think that these kinds of reactions are out of date. Because, now, we have a global power on the other side. Against a global power, we need an organized power. And we have to do it without committing an offence, practicing violence; we practice it freely in terms of our citizenship. With whom will we organize it? With the real owners of the country.<sup>109</sup>

Since the threat was a global power, the counter-power had to be an organized one and the only way to achieve this was to demand the rights of citizenship (behave

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<sup>108</sup> “Şiddetsiz ama direnen, şiddetsiz ama örgütlü, şiddetsiz ama ses getiren, birlikteliği besleyen bir anlayış lazım...bunu aylarca yıllarca düşündüm. Polisi tahrik etmeden polis üzerinde egemenlik sağlayacak yöntemler bulmamız lazımdı. Sempatik ve kibar olmamız.” Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> “Karşı çıkmanın demokratik yöntemleri vardır. Eskiden gençlik yıllarında amerikan büyükelçisinin arabası yakılmıştı. Hep onlara “yanki go hom” derdik. Böyle tepkilerin modasının geçtiğini düşünüyorum. Çünkü artık karşımızda güç küresel bir güç. Küresel bir güce karşı örgütlü bir direniş gerekir. Bunu suç işlemeden şiddet yapmadan , provakasyona gelmeden, yurttaş kimliğiyle özgürce yapmak lazım. bunu kimle yapacağız? Ülkenin gerçek sahipleri ile.” Ibid.

as citizens). The use of the term “global power” here is noteworthy. As the leader of the movement, Konyar always described the process of globalization and conceived of the opening of the plant as a part of global practices. In contrast to Konyar, the villagers did not express or practice an anti-globalization movement directly. They only struggled against a power which threatened their daily lives.

The other important thing mentioned the statement above is the discourse of “the real owners of the country.” The villagers, in any case, expressed the ownership of the lands. They even claimed that they were protecting the country against the infidels. Therefore, they did not understand why the security forces were against their struggle. One of the villagers accused the government of selling the country, “My god, I said. I wish you took my life, but do not bring the infidel here. You are punishing us with this infidel, said I. Atatürk saved Turkey with blood, these sold the country with money, dollars.<sup>110</sup> However, the turning point of the movement would be the clash with the villagers and the gendarme. Since the villagers saw the gendarme as their children, they were disappointed with the violence of the gendarme. They had thought they were struggling against the same threat.

We were only saving our homeland there. This time they gathered the soldiers, in the afternoon the number of the soldiers increased. Some of the people were afraid. We almost collided with the soldiers, we felt our breath. We felt that the soldiers were weird.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> “Allahım dedim. Keşke canımı alsaydın da bu gavuru buraya getirmeseydin dedim. Sen bu gavuru bize ceza getirdin,” dedim, Atatürk kanla Türkiyeyi kurtarmış, bunlarda parayla dolarla geri sattılar,” dedim.” Ibid., 71.

<sup>111</sup> “Maden işgalini anlatan bir köylü: Rahime Özyaylalı: Biz sadece vatan kurtarıyorduk orada. Asker yığıldı bu sefer, öğleden sonra asker kum gibi oldu. İnsanların bir kısmı korkuyor. Askerle burun burunayız, birbirimizin soluğunu hissediyoruz. Hissediyoruz ki askerler tuhaf.” Ibid., 72.

Not only the clash but also the manner of the gendarma also disturbed the villagers because the gendarma were conducting training in these villages. And they were doing this semi-naked in the villages, trying to indicate their power symbolically to the villagers. The gendarme demanded the villagers identity cards when they were going from one village to another. One of the villagers, Neslihan Teyze, who was disturbed by this power show wrote a letter to the Chief of the General Staff in order to complain about the soldiers. Once again, they sought the solution from the security forces of the government.

“What Made Us Demoralized Was the Violation of the Court Decisions”: Loss of Confidence

In October 12 1997, a referandum was held. Some large chests (*sandık*) were set up in seventeen villages under the control of the gendarma. Despite the fact that there were both “yes” and “no” choices, those who had wanted the mine did not vote and so all of the votes were “no.” Nonetheless, neither the mine not the government recognized the result. The denial of such an opinion was be one of the factors that made the villagers act peevishly. Since the activities of the movement had tried all the legal means, nobody could explain why the mine was still operating. The humorous and controllable reactions of the villagers and so the feeling of loss of confidence gradually took on a peevish tone and produced a discourse that criticized and accused the government policies. One of the woman villagers wanted the government and its soldiers to take side with them. She described her confusion as follows:

In order to frighten us, more than once a day, the gendarme jeeps pass this way raising such a cloud of dust that you would think we are enemies. We

are not. We defend our right to live in terms of our countries' law. How did the gendarme become the watchman of the infidel; the mine.<sup>112</sup>

The villagers tried to rationalize the policies against them, but when the moment came that they could not do anything against the mine, they could not gain a position against the government's neoliberal policies, they started to attack symbolically. With the increase of dangerous elements in the reactions of the villagers, the government produced a politics of suppression especially with its security guards. Oktay Konyar explains the situation as such:

After we had occupied the mine, the government develop a political understanding: politics of suppression. They established a police station in the area of mine. They established a file. It located there almost two or three hundred soldiers. The company took care of them and the soldiers were waiting for the mine. And every morning they came and in Çamköy, Tepeköy, Pınarköy, and Narlıca, they took off their clothes, took up the rifles and began military training: "Yaylalar Yaylalar..."<sup>113</sup>

The demonstration of the power of the gendarme by undertaking training exercises in the villages explains the politics of suppression clearly. The example above created both a physical and spiritual suppression since the actors of the movement had always thought of the gendarme as their sons and as their soldiers, not as the protector's of the "enemies." Therefore, they lost not only the lands but also power and confidence in the gendarme. Most of the villagers perceived the training as disrespect towards their women and children. The relationship between the government's security powers and the actors of the movement was always a

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<sup>112</sup> "Bizi korkutmak için günde birkaç kez jandarma cipleri bu köyden tozu dumana karıştırarak hızla şöyle bir geçiyor ki, sanırsın biz düşmanız . Biz düşman değiliz. Biz ülkemizin yasalarına dayanarak yaşama hakkımızı savunuyoruz. Nasıl oldu da bizim jandarma, gavurun madenin bekçisi oluverdi."

<sup>113</sup> "Biz madeni işgal ettikten sonra, hükümet bir politika geliştirdi, sindirme politikası. Madenin içine bir karakol kurdu. Tabur kurdu. Aşağı yukarı üç yüz dört yüz tane asker yerleştirdi. Onlara şirket bakıyor yediriyor içiriyor. Asker madeni bekliyor. Ve her sabah da geliyorlar, Çamköy'de, Tepeköy'de, Pınarköy'de Narlıca'da, çıplak üstlerini soyuyorlar, ellerine tüfeklerini alıyorlar, askeri eğitim yapıyorlar: "Yaylalar, yaylalar..." Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*, 85.

determinant factor in the course of the movement. Another significant event was experienced in Balya, as another villager explains:

The procedure that we came across in Balya on the liberation day of İzmir on 9 September 1997 was difficult for us. Yes, that procedure mobilized the stability of the villagers. We always encountered with soldiers but we never threw stones at them or never said anything to them. But when we saw that the soldiers clubbed us and our women who are 70 years old with a rifle butt and hit our old men, we got rather angry with them.<sup>114</sup>

Both of these experiences injured the feelings of the villagers since they had always based their relations on the traditional past; therefore, the changing attitudes of the gendarma and the government, in a great extent, made the actors of the movement disappointed and astonished. However, for some other villagers, the denial of the court decisions had a great deal to do with the process of the loss of confidence. “But nothing frightened us, neither the gendarma nor the police, neither this nor that. What made us demoralized is that the government did not apply the court decision. That made us despair. We won exactly seven court decisions. Exactly seven,”<sup>115</sup> said a villager from Çamköy. As mentioned before, the experiences lived in Bergama are a good example of the discussion that if Turkey were a state of law or not. We could easily conclude that the neoliberal policies forestalled the discourse of being a state of law; the process in Bergama was a time when the law was suspended. Of course, in addition to the manner of the gendarma, the perception of the state of

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<sup>114</sup> “9 Eylül 1997, İzmir’in kurtuluş gününde Balya’da gördüğümüz muamele çok zorumuza gitti. Evet o muamele köylünün kararlılığını kamçladı. Biz askerle hep karşı karşıya gelirdik ama biz kolumuzu kaldırır askere ne bir taş atar, ne bir söz söylerdik. Baktık ki asker orada bize ve bizim 70 yaşındaki kadınlarımıza dipçik salladı. 80 yaşında sakallı dedelerimize vurdu. Bu sefer daha çok hınçlandık.” Ibid., 107.

<sup>115</sup> “Ama bizi hiçbir şey sindiremedi. Ne jandarma ne polis, ne şu ne bu. Bizi sonunda yıldırın, devletin yargı kararını uygulamaması oldu. İşte bizi umutsuzluğa düşürdü. Biz tam yedi mahkeme kararı kazandık. Tam yedi tane.” Ibid., 83.



law also created confusion for the villagers. One of the villagers from Narlıca expressed his feelings as such:

Turkey is a state of law. The law decides here. The Council of State decided against the mine. I have a copy of that decision. But again the plant is working. If Turkey is a state of law, and the law takes such a decision, how the mine is working, we do not understand.<sup>116</sup>

Against the denial of the court decisions, the actors of the movement began to perform radical activities. The counter-reactions were not to participate in the population census and not to send their children to the schools. They refused to use the civic rights and the education institutions against the denial of court decisions. They thought that if the government did not recognize them, they also would not carry out their obligations to the government. The movement gave its struggle on very legal grounds; civil disobedience the actors tried to legitimize the movement since the legitimization and rationalization of the movement were very important factors making outsiders support the movement.

What is interesting here is that the remembrance of past experiences and the loyalty to the authorities produced a kind of narrative. The villagers always preferred to present their experiences in the form of stories: “depictions of the world are embedded in plots that unfold in a particular and inevitable chain of events leading to a moral claim about meaning.”<sup>117</sup> As Scott argues, these were ontological narratives which are stories told by the social actors. Throughout the process, these narratives

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<sup>116</sup> “Türkiye bir hukuk devletidir. Hukuk burada karar verdi. Danıştay da maden aleyhine karar verdi. Bir nüshası var bende o kararın. Gene burası çalıştı. Türkiye bir hukuk devletiyse, hukuk buna karar veriyorsa, maden nasıl çalışır anlamıyoz biz.” Ibid., 93.

<sup>117</sup> Austin Sarat, ed., *The Blackwell Companion to Law and Society* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004).

of subjective experiences made the actors of the movement perceive the possibility of change.<sup>118</sup>



Figure 4. "The State of Law is violated" (Source: Birgün, 21 May 2005.)

In summary, the experiences above explain the relationship between the actors of the movement and the power mechanisms such as government policies or security powers. The physical and symbolic violence of the genderma disappointed and injured the villagers. Moreover, the violation of the court decisions made the activities and the reactions of the movement more peevish and harsh. This would lead to politics of suppression by the government, whereupon the actors started to accuse the state of illegitimate policies. We see how the negative change in the discourse of the villagers against the government would affect the reception of the movement in the next chapter. As we can conclude, the previous chapters indicate that the actors of the movement struggled against a "common enemy" or "the other" and fought for a common aim thanks to the collective identity. However, the

<sup>118</sup> Scott, *Weapons of the Weak*.

dynamics and conflicts of the movement also made it divisible and powerless. The movement tried to gain position against the power of the government during the process, but since the equivalent of the movement (the government or the mine) disregarded the rights of the villagers, the struggles of the actors in the movement were proved as an abortive effort. In addition to the connective factors, the conflicts due to the interior and exterior reasons were the constituent elements of the Bergama Peasant Movement.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RECEPTION OF THE BERGAMA MOVEMENT: DIFFERENT MODES OF POLITICS OF RESISTANCE

One day, we saw that in one of the headlines of a newspaper İmren Aykut said “The Bergama people tastes like squash (*kabak tadı verdi*).” Then we gathered seventeen different types of squash, called the press, chose examples from all types of squashes, packed it and sent them to them. The squash is a product that is produced with labor. It was our labor. “That metaphor was wrong,” we said. Then she made an explanation more: “The Bergama people had mistaken me. I mentioned old buffer,” said she. A week later, from Narlıca the wife of Ali Kuruga made old buffer desert with plentiful walnut, we also sent it to her.<sup>119</sup>

As emphasized in the previous chapters, the movement chose humorous way of activities in order to express their wishes or concerns. Different types of reactions, such as the one above emerged during the movement. What is significant is how these activities appeared and how the actors of the movement was informed about themselves. The actors always preferred to hear their voices through the popular media. They considered that the more voices meant the greater the support.

The most important reasons that have allowed the Bergama Movement to continue for such a long time have been how the movement has been represented and perceived in the mainstream written and visual mass media. Taking into consideration the effects of the mass media and its role in forming public opinion, we arrive at the following question: “how has the mainstream media affected the

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<sup>119</sup> “Bir gün baktık ki bir gazete manşetinde İmren Aykut, “Bergamalılar kabak tadı verdi” diyor. Biz de Bergama da on yedi tane kabak modelini topladık, basını çağırdık, bütün kabak çeşitlerinden örnekler seçtik, paketledik ve kendisine gönderdik. Kabak emekle üretilen bir üründür. O bizim emeğimizdi. “O benzetme yanlış” dedik. Sonra o, bir açıklama daha yaptı: “Bergamalılar yanlış anladı. Ben balkabağından bahsettim,” dedi ondan bir hafta sonra, Narlıca köyünde Ali Kuruga’nın eşi Resmiye abla kabak tatlısı yaptı, bol cevizli, onu da gönderdik.” Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*, 92-93.

representation and perception of the movement?” The main purpose of this chapter will be to discuss the view of the mass media, especially the written one, to the Bergama Movement and to question the meanings of different kinds of representations; namely, the representations of the movement in both first half of the movement and the second half of the movement.<sup>120</sup> The newspapers *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* and also the local agents of these publishing corporations are chosen especially to be examined since these newspapers are the most widespread and well-known ones.

In addition to the analysis of popular media, the other aim will be to highlight the significance of “being visible” in public since “visibility” in this movement shapes the movement itself. Last, in order to understand the representation of the villagers by these newspapers and the effect they want to create, the concept of environmentalism and the place of environmental practices in the discourse of “development” will be discussed.

### Being Seen: The Visibility of the Bergama Movement

A conspicuous element of this movement is that a great amount of the population has supported this movement. Not only the opposing leftists or intellectuals but also people identify themselves as being on the rightist political side have supported this movement. It seems as if there is a table around which everybody gathers and is able to touch a common problem and solve it. Upon investigating the newspapers, this common problem is seen; however, we are also able to see the creator of this common problem, the mainstream media. Our experience of the visual

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<sup>120</sup> It is considered that this movements and its dynamics; the form of activities, the legal process, and separate into two: before 1997 and after 1997.

and written media first occupies our consciousness that means it, to a great extent, shapes the world and our understanding it. If we take into consideration the circulation of these newspapers and their power to create public opinion, it is not possible to ignore their importance.

Faye Ginsburg states that, “film, television, newspapers together with their cultural counterparts in painting, ritual performance, radio, music and theater occupy a key place in indigenous self affirmation and political development.”<sup>121</sup> In our case, not only the local newspapers but also the mainstream newspapers include this movement on the first pages and reflect the dynamics of the movement sometimes in a positive and sometimes in a negative manner. Nonetheless, it is really necessary to keep in mind that being visible in the newspapers is a critical point for the local people of Bergama. For example, Sefa Taşkın states that,

In order to create a public opinion, it is really necessary to have a place in the newspapers. This movement started in 1991, but when the press came! I called them in 1994. Until 1994, nobody was interested in this problem but then they came rushing and surging in crowds, to interview, to photograph... I called them because it is important for us to let the others hear our voice.<sup>122</sup>

It is not only a way of communicating with people you have never seen, but also as Taşkın states, being seen in the newspapers also means letting others hear their voices and perhaps attracting more support to the movement. One of the villagers, a taxi drivers in the town named İrfan, stated that “the villagers are happy

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<sup>121</sup> Faye Ginsburg, "From Little Things, Big Things Grow," in *Between Resistance and Revolution*, ed. Orin Starn and Richard G. Fox (London: Rutgers University Press, 1997), 187.

<sup>122</sup> “Kamuoyu yaratmak için, gazetelerde yer almak gerçekten gerekliydi. Bu hareket 1991 yılında başladı, ama basın ne zaman geldi! 1994’te ben çağırdım onları. 1994’e kadar, hiç kimse bu sorunla ilgilenmedi ama daha sonra akın akın geldiler, görüşmeler yaptılar, fotoğraf çektiler... Onları çağırdım bizim için sesimizi duyurmak önemliydi.” Interview with Sefa Taşkın, 07.02.2006

when they see themselves in the newspapers or on television and then we motivate and hold on to each other and our struggle in a stronger way.”<sup>123</sup> It is known that how we represent ourselves brings up the problem of recognition by others and in the case of Bergama, a villager behave according to the reaction of others in order to form his or her self-image or identity. The mass media is the basic vehicle of the villagers; that is to say, when the villagers appear in the newspaper, they felt the affirmation of their struggle, and after the moment they felt self-affirmation they began to constitute themselves in relation to local, national and also international politics. By locating themselves and their activity in a fixed context such as not wanting gold extraction with cyanide, they make people consider their problems. Furthermore, with the “awareness of the connection between political enfranchisement and the need to control their own images in the public sphere,”<sup>124</sup> they try to tell their problems and make people share their problems.

In addition to hearing voices, communicating with other people and feeling self-affirmation, the other significant side of the media is its prevention of violence for both the villagers and the police or gendarme in the case of Bergama. “If there were no media, they could hit us. We are making our protests before the media. If the villagers are 5,000, there are 2,000 police,”<sup>125</sup> says Konyar and added that the police could not practice violence because of the behavior of the villagers:

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<sup>123</sup> “Köylüler kendilerini televizyonda gazetede görünce mutlu oluyorlardı. Daha çok gaza gelip birbirlerine daha sıkı bağlanıyorlardı.” Interview with İrfan Abi, 08. 02 2006

<sup>124</sup> Ginsburg, "From Little Things, Big Things Grow," 135.

<sup>125</sup> “Belki medya olmasa bizi onlar paramparça eder. Medyanın önünde yapıyoruz eylemlerimizi. Köylü beş bin kişi yürüyorsa, iki bin de polis var.” Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*, 98.

We are standing under the sun. We need to eat something. We sit near the path, we are preparing our meals and start to eat. The soldiers are there. The woman touches, she remembers her son. She takes off her handkerchief and cleans the sweat of the soldiers. The other old man shares his bread, one gives cheese, the other olives... The police does not expect this. They had not seen that kind of thing. They could not hit us.<sup>126</sup>

The behavior of the villagers also prevented the security forces from practicing violence at the beginning of the movement, but as emphasized in the previous chapter, later the security forces disappointed the villagers and became one of the reasons that caused them lose their confidence in the Turkish government and its policies.

It must be emphasized that in addition to the popular media, small popular media such as the newspapers *Bakırçay Postası* (The Post of Bakırçay) and *Granit* (Granite) or the *Kardelen* (Snowdrop) radio have had an important place throughout the duration of this movement. As Ginsburg points out, small media can help create a political public sphere by weaving a web of political solidarity and also informing the people by serving as the carriers of oppositional discourse. Both the local people and local media create new arenas of cooperation and consciousness from the revival of local cultural practices to the insertion of their histories into the national imagination, as discussed in the previous chapters. They aim to make their concerns visible to the world “thanks to the popular media.” As can be concluded, self-representation in the popular media has been a key process of this movement; moreover, the relationship and media-practices and social action have occupied key places in this movement. However, the intended goals do not always give the

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<sup>126</sup> “Güneşin altında duruyoruz. Bizim öğlen yemeği vaktimiz geliyor. Asfaltın kenarına oturuyoruz, çıkanlar açılıyor yemek yemeye başlıyoruz. Askerlerde karşımızda. Şimdi kadın duygulaniyor oğlu aklına geliyor. Çıkartıyor mendilini, askerin terini siliyor. Öteki dede ekmek dağıtıyor biri peynir veriyor, birisi zeytin götürüyor. İki bin kişilik konvoyda herkese ekmek veriyoruz. Polis bunu beklemiyor. Böyle bir hareket görmemiş. Bu olmamış dövemiyorlar. Hareketi engellemiyorlar.” Ibid.



intended results; therefore, in the case of Bergama, we need to examine how the movement is represented and how it wishes to be perceived.

The Story of a Transition: From “The Lives of Our People Are More Valuable Than a Piece of Gold”<sup>127</sup> to “the Inferiority Complex in Bergama”<sup>128</sup>

The written and visual media have always been vehicles of self-representation; a way of communication and understanding each other. However, the popular written and visual media not only reflect the representations or communications, but also “produces its own tools and methods,” as Sherwin emphasized. “It generates its own images, signs, stories, characters and metaphors in the course of making sense of legal reality. In this way, official and unofficial legal meanings, sometimes unmixed, other times intermingled, routinely circulate through the mass media of popular culture.”<sup>129</sup> It interprets what it has been reporting; sometimes it manipulates the deficiencies and sometimes elevates the feelings.

In the case of Bergama, the local or national medias are the agencies that reflect the cultural and economic sides of the movement and also produce counter politics or behave in biased ways; that is to say, while in the beginning, the mainstream newspapers affirmed the actions in the movement, they began to criticize or criminalize the movement later.

The main reason that I chose the newspapers *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet*, which frequently do not support the political struggles according to their publishing policy,

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<sup>127</sup> “İnsanımızın Hayatı Bir Avuç Altından Değerlidir,” *Hürriyet*, 30 March 1992.

<sup>128</sup> “Bergama’da Aşağılık Kompleksi,” *Sabah*, 3 August 1997.

<sup>129</sup> Richard K. Sherwin, “Law in Popular Culture,” in *The Blackwell Companion to Law and Society*, ed. Austin Sarat (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 101.

is to find an answer to the question of why these newspapers gave a great deal and space and supported this movement, which is thought of as a political struggle and claims to be against the neoliberal global policies of the government in addition to other reasons, such as the right to live, health and the protection of the agricultural products. Since the discourse of these newspapers is closer to the discourse of the government's neoliberal policies, the support they gave to the movement should carry some other meanings that could be analyzed.

The main theme of this chapter initially was to be the dichotomy of the media on the representation of the movement. However, with time I understood that the reasons for the dichotomy and the views of the newspapers were more complicated than I had expected. During the movement, the view of these newspapers has changed according to the dynamics of the movement, such as the disagreements in the legal process of the movement, the amount of violence in the movement, the changing conditions of the mine and also the general economic undulations in Turkey. And all of these have affected the views and reasons of these newspapers as they report on the movement. Besides the changing views and reasons of these newspapers, the most significant and crucial point is the changes in public opinion, which is easily influenced by the written and visual media.

The Bergama Movement has occupied a key place, especially between 1993 and 1997, in both *Hürriyet* and *Milliyet* and the local representatives of these publishing corporations. Almost all of the news and writings on Bergama in these newspapers supported the villagers and carried on propaganda against the mine. The

support of the villagers is clear not only in the column parts of the newspapers but also in the style of the other page's news.<sup>130</sup>

The gendarme hindered: In Bergama, old, young, women, men shouted slogans and carried banners, "Does this country not have an owner?" "Hey deputies, where are you?" "No to gold with cyanide!" "We want life not gold!" "We want white gold, not yellow!" *But*, the gendarme hindered the gathering of local people and allowed *only* a press conference in Çamköy.<sup>131</sup>

After giving descriptive knowledge on the event, the tone of the information and the last sentence which begins with "but" and continues with "only" allowance indicate the view of the journalist that s/he feels the necessity of give the information on the gendarme and interpreting the event. Besides this, the journalists usually mention the risks that could be created by the mine frequently and also criticize the reports that have been prepared by Eurogold. For example,

The three villages of Bergama are under the threat of cyanide: The vein of gold is a depot of illnesses. It is reported that the cyanide and the chemical materials that have been used in the decomposition of gold near Bergama lead to the illnesses. İlkay 19, Hamit 21 and Göksel Andaç 17 state that they were poisoned by the toxic wastes that have mixed with the drinking water. The Andaç family wants some precautionary measure against the danger which threatens the villagers with death.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup> See, "Altın Yatağı Hastalık Deposu," *Milliyet*, 6 June 1991, "Altına Protesto," *Hürriyet*, 20 June 1992, "Demirel'e Kefenli Karşılama," *Milliyet*, 11 November 1994, "Siyanüre karşı işbirliği," *Hürriyet*, 8 March 1994, "Siyanürlü Altın Mahkemelik," *Hürriyet*, 9 November 1994, "Siyanürlü Altına Mezarlı Protesto," *Hürriyet*, 12 April 1993, "Siyanürlü altına sürekli eylem," *Hürriyet*, 15 November 1993, "Siyanürlü Ölüm Kaderimiz Olmasın," *Hürriyet*, 23 April 1991, "Yeni Yıl Kartıyla Siyanürü Protesto," *Hürriyet*, 30 December 1993.

<sup>131</sup> "Altın Bölgesinde Olay" "Jandarma Engelledi: Bergama'da yaşlı genç, kadın erkek, "Bu memleket sahihsiz mi?", "Ey milletvekilleri neredesiniz", "Siyanürlü Altına Hayır", "Altın Değil Hayat İstiyoruz", "Biz sarı altın değil, beyaz altın istiyoruz", diye slogan attı ve pankartlar taşıdı. Ancak jandarma toplanmak isteyen halkı engelledi, sadece Çamköy'de bir basın toplantısına izin verdi." "Altın Bölgesinde Olay," *Milliyet*, 17 October 1994.

<sup>132</sup> "Bergama'nın üç köyü siyanür tehdidi altında: Altın yatağı hastalık deposu, Bergama yakınlarındaki altın madenlerinin ayrıştırılmasında kullanılan siyanür ve kimyasal maddelerin hastalıklara yola açtığı bildiriliyor. 19 yaşındaki İlkay ile 21 yaşındaki Hamit ve 17 yaşındaki Göksel Andaç içme sularına karışan zehirli atıklardan zehirlendiklerini öne sürdüler, Andaçlar tüm köylüleri

The news only seems to inform us in an objective way. The emphasis on the risks and dangers of the mine in all the news proves the affirmation of the movement and indicates from which position they choose to look at the movement. Only some sentences, words or choices could help us understand the opinion of the popular media on this movement. In the example below, the choice of the sentence of the prime minister also indicates the emphasis which takes into account the risks of this mine.

The mayors of the Bakırçay Region, who visited Prime Minister Süleyman Demirel and Deputy Prime Minister Erdal İnönü in order to convey the concerns on the mine in Bergama Ovacık and the Aliğa Thermoelectric Power Plantare, are replied to in a positive manner... Nihat Dirim, mayor of Foça Municipality informed that Süleyman Demirel had said that "We could not endanger the life of 200,000 people in order to have a handful of gold."<sup>133</sup>

Although the general tendency supports the elevation of the movement, the frequency of this kind of news would decrease over the next seven years from the beginning of the movement. Interestingly enough, the Council of the Ministers and the Council of State made a decision that the mine had to be closed in 1997 yet the mine continued to work in illegitimate ways. Then the mainstream newspapers, which had been supporting the struggle, started to give news in favor of the mine. Especially, *Milliyet* became a strong defender of the mine while *Hürriyet* gave space

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*ölümle burun buruna getiren tehlikeye karşı önlem alınmasını istiyorlar."* "Altın Yatağı Hastalık Deposu."

<sup>133</sup> "*Bergama Ovacık Köyü yakınlarında bulunan altın madeni ve Aliğa Termik santrali konusundaki endişelerini Ankara'ya giderek Başbakan Süleyman Demirel ve Başbakan Yardımcısı Erdal İnönü'ye ileten Bakırçay Bölgesi Belediye Başkanları olumlu yanıtlar aldı... Foça Belediye Başkanı Nihat Dirim, Başbakan Süleyman Demirel'in "Bir avuç altın için 200 bin insanın yaşamını tehlikeye atamayız." dediğini bildirdi.*" "İnsanımızın Hayatı Bir Avuç Altından Değerlidir."

to many-sided news, both against the mine and the villagers. That is to say, the representation of the villagers in these newspapers has begun to change after 1997.<sup>134</sup>

There are four reasons why the movement was reported, discussed, and given a great space in the mass media. One of the reasons that made this movement visible in these newspapers is the authenticity and the cuteness of the villagers and to some extent, the nationalist-statist discourse of the villagers which is parallel that of the newspapers. With the style of traditional clothes (the shalwar and yashmak for the women) and the style of pronunciation (the Aegean accent), the Bergama Movement fed the popular side of these newspapers.

In the news, especially a big part of the photographs of the villagers occupy a key place rather than what the problem is, or by focusing or showing pictures of one of the main characters, who take part in the movement with Turkish flags in his or her hands, the news we want to hear stands in the background. On the one hand, these two popular newspapers and their local representatives prefer to present the “cuteness” and the “strangeness” of the movement –since the struggle of the “traditional” villagers, Turkish flags in the hands of those who have “modern” wishes such as the right to live, the right to health, the protection of the environment seem strange to these newspapers- by showing especially the photographs of the undeveloped traditional villagers.<sup>135</sup> On the other hand, for the people who read these

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<sup>134</sup> I emphasized that it would be helpful to us if we divide the process of this movement into two: before 1997 and after 1997. We could call the years 1991 ad 1997 as the period of “systematic organization” which the local people organize conferences on “gold with cyanide,” the professors came to give open lessons, the facilities and activities in the form of “civil disobedience.” However, after 1997 and especially throughout the 2000, after the Council of Ministers and Council of State gave a decision that the gold mine had to close and then the decision was not carried out, the presentation of the movement in the newspapers has changed.

<sup>135</sup> The discussions on “peasantry” (*köylülük*) had been frequently argued with the discussions of “modernization” and “development” in Turkey. See Pamuk and Toprak, eds., *Türkiye'de Tarımsal*

newspapers, there appears a feeling of sympathy which constitutes the close relations between the traditional past of people and the struggle of the villagers; therefore, the presentations of the villagers makes the people own and support this movement. However, the change in the style of the presentation since 1997 shadowed and consumed the popular side of the movement since the attitudes of the actions had become violent because of the violation of the decisions in favor of the villagers, as will be discussed now.

The other reason why this movement is covered widely in these newspapers is the style of the movement: civil disobedience. As mentioned in the previous Chapters 4 and 5, civil disobedience is composed of controllable and anti-violence practices; rather the first description of civil disobedience that comes to mind is “suitable to the civil law, opposed to the laws” (*hukuka uygun, kanunlara aykırı*). In the case of Bergama, the practices were both suitable to the rights and the laws. The local people in the movement always point out that this movement has always been against violence. To be against violence and the style of civil disobedience has contributed to the visibility of the movement in the pages of the newspapers. Since although there are many struggles that could be called social movements, they are not given importance or are ignored. Even if they are covered in these newspapers, they are not supported or wished to be supported.

The non-violent form of movement or the control of violence (Oktay Konyar or Sefa Taşkın and also Senih Özay have always known the limits of the practices and warned the villagers against any danger in the legal process) also have made people

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*Yapılar.*, Yücel Çağlar, *Köy, Köylülük ve Türkiye'de Köy Kalkınması Sorunu* (Ankara: Türkiye Ziraatçılar Derneği, 1986).

support this movement because it is thought that this movement constitutes an example for other social movements in Turkey. The local people of Bergama have always pursued their struggles on legal grounds; they have applied to the courts, acted within the limits of the law, and won the case. They have tried to solve the problem by taking into consideration that Turkey is a state of law and while doing that, they have always emphasized the desire for a democratic society which was parallel to the “development” context of Turkey in the 1990s. Therefore, it could be said that the Bergama Movement has been a vehicle in order to present Turkey as a democratic state and a candidate for the “development” idea with its villagers who have modern wishes. However, as mentioned above, when the decisions were not carried out, the dimensions of the movement, such as the form of disobedience or the confidence of the villagers in their state, and the place of Bergama in the economic context of Turkey started to change and thus, the presentation of the movement in the newspapers also directly changed.

What has made the movement acceptable and supportable in the mass media has been the nationalist discourse that both the villagers and the popular media had. The popular media in Turkey was especially known with smiling on Turkish government policies and contributing the “nationalist” and “development” discourse of Turkey. We discussed the counter-nationalist discourse of these newspapers against the nationalist discourse of the villagers after 1997 earlier.<sup>136</sup>

In addition to the authenticity of the villagers, the form of civil disobedience, the common nationalist discourse before and also different national paradigms and

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<sup>136</sup> It was thought that the Bergama Movement preventing the economic development of Turkey in spite of widespread gold reserves throughout the 2000s. Whereas, the actors of the movement believed that they were struggling for the lands of their country.

defenses as the most significant and conspicuous reason have affected the emphasis on the environmental side of the movement which will be discussed presently.

The discussions on environmentalism began to occupy a key place in the world arena after the 1980s and the discourse of environmentalism has constituted a social agenda since the 1990s in Turkey. How much a country deals with its environmental problems also determines the level of the development of that country. One of the provisions of modernization is also in relation with the discourse of the protection of the environment and overcoming the environmental problems.

The emphasis put on the Bergama Movement as an environmental movement made people support this movement, since the right to live in a healthy environment is a general wish and everyone has something to say in this context. However, the reason that made the newspapers reflect the movement as an environmental one in great amount is the wish of the newspapers to show it as an example of contemporariness and modernization that could be thought of as more comprehensive in order to constitute a public opinion. Moreover, it should be added that the environmental problems which are owned by a great part of the society always have “technological solutions”<sup>137</sup> according to the neoliberal policies of a government which is always in search of foreign investments. Unfortunately, foreign investments always have solutions for the problems they create. Therefore, it could be reasonable and suitable to present the movement as a “fashionable environmental” movement rather than a peasant movement, struggling for their rights. Furthermore,

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<sup>137</sup> Foster claims that the capitalist system conceives technology as a savior taking into consideration the environment. The capitalist ideology thinks that it can protect the environment by replacing harmful technology with a less harmful ones. See John Bellamy Foster, "Asıl Sorun Kapitalizmdir," *Birgün*, 12 October 2005.



to present it as a peasant movement also would bring the question of an undeveloped peasantry onto the agenda of the Turkish government. Therefore, the choice of reflecting the movement as an environmental one but as a “fashion,” without constituting the main meanings on environmentalism would not only highlight the modernization and development policies of Turkey, but also manipulate the real wishes of the actors. The crucial point here is to notice the emphasis that was put on the movement as an environmental one also shaped the movement itself since the villagers who saw their struggle in the newspapers and felt the affirmation of their movement started to emphasize the discourse of environmentalism by leaving the right to live, the right to health and the problems of the peasantry in the background.

Nonetheless, what the concept of the “environment” symbolized for the local people and for the mainstream newspapers remains to be discussed. For example, one of the readers of *Green Column (Yeşil Köşe)* writes that,

When I participated in the Bergama Festival, I had the chance to talk with the people, who said, “As you see, we have these lands, we are hovering over them and I believe that we have to protect them” with their antique values and green parks.<sup>138</sup>

And 14 years later, after the Day of Environment when the supporters of the mine attacked to the environment activists, Bekir Coşkun in his column expressed the same things in a different way: “They attacked the ‘love’ which wished to protect the trees, birds, water, fish, lands, flowers.”<sup>139</sup> Although years have passed, the style of the people expressing environmental problems seems to have an “innocent”

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<sup>138</sup> “1991 Bergama festivaline katıldığımda tarihi antik değerleri, yemyeşil parklarıyla “İşte buralar bizim, gözümüz gibi koruyor sahip çıkmamız gerektiğine inanıyoruz.” diyen bilinçli dostlarla söyleşme şansına sahib olmuştum.” “Yeşil Köşe,” *Hürriyet*, 19 August 1991.

<sup>139</sup> “Ağacını-kuşunu-suyunu-balığını-toprağını-çiçeğini korumak isteyen ‘sevgiye’ saldırırlar.” *Hürriyet*, 12 June 2005.

discourse; however, when the villagers talk about the environment, the problem is not so easy to express since the imagination of “environment” in the villagers’ minds, to some extent, differ from that of the outsider of that environment, as will be discussed later in this chapter.

After having brought up these four important reasons that made the movement visible in the newspapers and led to us support the discussion of “what happened” after 1997, the transition to the presentation of the movement is inevitable. After the Council of Ministers and the Council of State gave a decision that supposed the closure of the mine, the local people and the supporters of the movement assumed that the decision would be carried out. However, the decision was not carried out and the local people were disappointed in the following process since they had had great confidence in their state. They had pursued their struggle on legal grounds and won the cases against the corporation and also won the action for damages, but despite all of the legal procedures nothing had changed except the presentation of the movement in the newspapers. The publishing corporation, which had a parallel discourse with the neoliberal policies of the government and sought ways of presenting Turkey as a modern democratic state, started to seek new ways to establish a new discourse that supported and legitimized the activities and the neoliberal policies of the government.

One of the main differences after 1997 was that the local people of Bergama, who had always produced their struggle from a nationalist discourse and thought that the Turkish government would also help their struggle, started to criticize the government’s policies. They began to speak ill of the government and they even harshened the style of their activities. Therefore, the mainstream newspapers, which

had to maintain a discourse that supported the government's policies, also started to criminalize the movement and speak ill of it. Shortly afterwards, when the villagers expressed the insufficiency and injustice of the government, the newspapers tried to first criminalize and then eliminate the movement since the accusation of the state, on the one hand, threatened the atmosphere in which the newspapers wanted to create the image that the Turkish state was a developed, contemporary one. For example, a columnist not from *Hürriyet* or *Milliyet* but from *Sabah*, Necati Doğru, stated that,

The movement in Bergama is becoming a show. This stubbornness, which is not suitable for rational thought and is illogical, makes people say that Turks are sitting on the gold but are afraid of extracting that gold. The thing that is growing in Bergama is not a social movement, it is an inferiority complex.<sup>140</sup>

The new statements aimed to expose the movement as an artificial one. The use of the words “show” and “stubbornness” support the idea of the unnecessary of the movement. The expression “Turks are sitting on the gold but afraid of extracting that gold” also tries to denigrate the power of the Turks and thus motivate negatively the nationalist feelings of the people who live there. Although what the expression “inferiority complex” refers to is not understood, it is obvious that Doğru aims to create a point that ridicules the movement; thus, he supports the gold extraction, which he thinks both beneficial and profitable.

Another reason that caused the movement to be defamed was that gold extraction came to be seen as a solution to the economic crisis that started at the

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<sup>140</sup> “Bergamadaki hareket şova dayalı bir biçime dönüşüyor. Mantık kalıplarında oturmayan akıl süzgecinden geçmeyen bu dikleniş, Türkler altının üzerine otururlar fakat topraktan altın çıkarmaya korkarlar dedirtiyor. Bergamada büyüyen halk hareketi değil aşağılık kompleksi.” “Bergama’da Aşağılık Kompleksi.”

beginning of 2000. As mentioned in the first chapter, it is estimated that Turkey has gold reserves in huge amounts and the possibility that Turkey would become a country which exports gold made people start looking at gold extraction again. For example, Osman Pepe, the Minister for the Environment said, “Whoever makes propaganda behind the mask of environmentalism, and opposes it, I have a piece of advice for them: you, go and mind your own business, we want work and food in this country.”<sup>141</sup> The fact that new gold mines would create a space of employment also became a matter of primary importance since it is considered that the gold reserves in Turkey have the potential to create employment for 25,000 people.

The newspapers, on the one hand began to emphasize the importance of an economic solution and denigrate the movement by showing the villagers, who had been resisting for fifteen years, working at the mine, or they passed on news that after seeing the gold, the Bergama villagers had become silent.<sup>142</sup> On the other hand, these newspapers, to some extent, published news that presented the movement as a dangerous one which threatened the economy of the state. For example, an engineer from the Mineral Research and Exploration Institute, Muhterem Köse, stated that,

The struggle is the struggle to obstruct the use of a potential of 6,500 tons of gold which could serve the economy of Turkey. But after twelve years’ gold extraction suffering, who came and invested in your country in order to extract gold. Not only did we not spend their money, we also have to pay the damages, you should know!<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> “Kim çevrecilik maskesi ile propaganda yapıyorsa, karşı çıkıyorsa, pankart asıyorsa onlara bir çift sözüm var: siz gidin kendi işinize bakın, biz bu memlekette iş istiyoruz aş istiyoruz.” “Kendi İşinize Bakın,” *Milliyet*, 7 July 2005.

<sup>142</sup> See “Altın Baldan Tatlı,” *Milliyet*, 12 October 2002, “Altını Görünce Fikirleri Değişti,” *Milliyet*, 13 July 2001, “Altını Olup da Çıkarmayan Yok,” *Milliyet*, 8 May 2002, “Dedemi Kandırdılar,” *Milliyet*, 25 July 2004, Muhterem Köse, “Bergama Sınırları Aştı,” *Milliyet*, 8 October 2000.

<sup>143</sup> “Yapılan mücadele Türkiyenin 6500 ton altın potansiyelinin kendi ekonomisinin hizmete sokulmasının engellenmesi mücadelesidir. Ama 12 yıllık altın yatırımı çilesinden sonra kim gelir altın

While the movement could have been a solution to the economic problems, it also was accused of creating economic problems. Moreover, the news that foreign countries, especially Germany, did not want Turkey to extract gold and so supported the movement in order not to spoil the supply and demand became a current issue.<sup>144</sup> All of these were used as ways to criminalize the facilities of the movement in order to legitimize the government policies.

After discussing the style of presentation before and after 1997, namely, the reasons how and why these newspapers gave a significant place to the Bergama Movement and then how and why these newspapers turned on the movement with various excuses, what made this transition possible and so easy for these newspapers was also discussed. Although this transition in the presentation of the movement was in relation to the exterior economic and social factors, this transition was possible and easy because of their conception of “environment.” Since these newspapers were representing “environment” in terms of “intellectual environmentalism” in order to indicate the “developed and contemporary” Turkey, that is why they always missed the point that these local people wanted to emphasize. When a problem is discussed in very simple words such as in the context of “fashion environment,” a problem can be solved easily with technological vehicles, as in the case of the gold mine.<sup>145</sup>

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*çıkarmak için size para yatırır. Parasını yiyemediğimiz gibi şimdi tazminat ödeyeceğiz haberiniz olsun.” Köse, "Bergama Sınırları Aştı."*

<sup>144</sup> Necip Hablemitoğlu, *Alman Vakıfları ve Bergama Dosyası* (İstanbul: Toplumsal Dönüşüm Yayınları, 2003).

<sup>145</sup> It is thought that new technological vehicles that have superior properties would protect the environment. However, the main problem is that this thought ignores the life of people who used to live on these lands that I will discuss now. See, Foster, "Asıl Sorun Kapitalizmdir."

Contrary to these newspapers, it must be questioned what the local people wanted to say when they were talking about the “environment,” what other meanings “environment” has and what it symbolized for these people different from what it meant for the newspapers. In order to understand the local people in the context of environment, there is a need to discuss the literature on environment.

### The Bergama Movement as an Environmental One

One of the properties that made the movement take on of central importance is that the movement produced a counter environmental discourse against gold extraction with cyanide. What made the movement overall is the universality of environmental problems, as well.

Before discussing the Bergama Movement specifically, it is necessary to discuss the conception of “environment” in Turkey after the 1980s. Laws that urged the protection of the environment became an issue after the 1980 *coup d’etat* with the military government. Since environmentalism had been discussed as a matter of modernization, all the governments took the environmental problems at the top of their must list. Semra Somersan, in her book *Türkiye’de Çevre ve Siyaset* (Environment and Politics in Turkey), discusses the importance of these laws:

in order to protect the environment, they make laws similar to those of the West; however, it could be said that they understand neither the environment nor protection, the laws they made were insufficient and the actuality of the laws was not constructive. Furthermore, due to the effect that Turkey would create in the eyes of the West, even the formation of these laws was really important.<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> “...çevreyi korumak için Batı’dakilere benzer yasal düzenlemeler getirmeye çalıştıkları ama çevreden ve korumadan pek anlamadıkları , yaptıkları yasaların yetersiz, fiiliyatın ise olumsuz olduğu söylenebilir. Üstelik bunların oluşturulmasında bile, Türkiye’nin arasına katılmak istediği Batılı

As can be seen, the concept of the environment and practices on environment have almost always been discussed referring to the West. The discussion made above on the reasons which affirm the movement and present the movement in the first pages of these popular newspapers, also prove that the context of environment is taken as a problem of being developed and the contemporariness of Turkey. However, Somersan adds that all of these environmental problems are discussed incorrectly since, according to the government, the most important reason for environmental pollution is “ignorance;” namely, “uneducated people.”<sup>147</sup> By reducing the environmental problems to simply an individual problem, the most serious polluters of the environment are not exposed or held responsible for anything. The responsibility of private sector is ignored and industries continue to pollute. As the problem is reflected as an only individual one, solutions remain insufficient. Nonetheless the necessary thing for Turkey not to look at the individual’s relation to his or her environment, but to look at, in its broadest sense, the social environment made up of other human beings and their activities. Ecological problems should be defined as those concerning the relation between society as a whole and its environment.<sup>148</sup>

The government only tries to make individuals conscious of the environment, but its institutions ignore these environmental problems. And the problem of environment is discussed in a context of flowers, insects, birds, green nature; namely,

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*ülkelerin gözünde yaratacağı etki hayli önemliydi.” Semra Somersan, Türkiye’de Çevre ve Siyaset (İstanbul: Metis, 1993), 33.*

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Jonathan Hughes, *Ecology and Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 11.

in a romantic context, but the duty of the government and how it prevents pollution in a systematic way are not discussed. The context of environment in Turkey is especially emphasized because all of these factors stated above, are related to the specific Bergama context. The environmental problem in Turkey has to refer more than individual solutions and has to be discussed outside the discourse of development. The environmentalist elegance that produces a hegemonic space that contains different ideological presuppositions such as “contemporariness” or “sustainable development” and manipulates the real wishes and concerns should be eliminated while receiving and analyzing the Bergama Movement.

The concept of “environment” that the local people of Bergama have been using must be considered again. Contrary to “fashion environmentalism,” or “intellectual environmentalism”<sup>149</sup> the imagination of the villagers while talking about the environment is a pattern which is composed of social relations in which they produce a place that gives them confidence and tranquility with other acquaintances and feel a belonging to that place, economic resources which allow them to survive materially and provide continuity, and traditions and values which all of the people have some common experiences in the past and desires for the present and hold them together. Something, not only economic or political, but also spiritual.

When I asked Sefa Taşkın if the movement was only an environmental one, the response expressed more than a pure environmentalism. He said, “theoretically why a person becomes an environmentalist and tries to protect his/her environment. The

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<sup>149</sup> During the research, I came across different types of definition on environmentalism that I will discuss at the end of this chapter.



concrete reason of that is the motive that makes people survive with others.”<sup>150</sup> According to these local people, they have protected an “environment” which constitutes a habitat to natural and artificial components and in which all types of human activities are to be found, exists in certain equilibrium and in the İzmir First Management Law Court (*İzmir 1. İdare Mahkemesi Kararı*), it is clarified that,

It is obvious that, if the factors forming this system of equilibrium are lost, the resulting environmental damage would have a destructive effect on life-forms, lives in health and equilibrium in an environment that is still intact. As the protection of human life must be given the highest priority, it is essential that the natural basic elements of man’s life be protected and be developed, and the protection of the environment is the most important and indispensable component of human life.<sup>151</sup>

In the case of Bergama, as these natural and artificial components and all types of human activities must be in equilibrium, on the condition that the pattern of social relations, traditions and values and economic resources are endangered, the people, who feel they belong to that land, want to struggle against the dangers. A struggle between life and death. Therefore, the movement has to be thought of a different context from the “fashion environmental” context. Konyar’s response to this question explains the claims of the movement better.

From now on, ours is a new Project. It was Gandhi’s civil disobedience. Disobedience is different; struggle of environment is very different. Of course in the base of environment struggle stands against imperialism, but in the essence of our struggle there is human rights, democracy, right to live, a reaction to all kinds of injustice in the country.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>150</sup> “Teorik olarak insan neden çevresini korumaya çalışır neden çevreci olur. Bunun somut nedeni insanın çevresinde kişilerle birlikte varolma güdüsüdür.” Interview with Sefa Taşkın, 07.02. 2006.

<sup>151</sup> *Yeşil Kararlar: Bergama’da Siyanürlü Altın*, vol. 39 (İzmir: Bergama Belediyesi Kültür Yayınları, 1997), 21.

<sup>152</sup> “Bizimki artık yeni bir projeydi. Bizimki Gandhi’nin itiatlılığıydı. İtiatsızlık ayırıcıdır, çevre mücadelesi çok ayırıcıdır. Tabii ki çevre mücadelesinin özünde de emperyalizme karşı bir duruş biçimi var, ama bizim mücadelemiz özünde insan hakları var, demokrasi var, yaşam hakkı var, ülkenin her

Although Konyar exaggerates the political ideology of the movement, the statements above tell the importance of the movement in the political and social framework of the Turkey.

It must be added that the environmentalist movements in Turkey generally are thought of as “intellectual environmental movements” which are struggles of enlightened individuals to protect the environment. However, the movement in Bergama is thought of as a movement in which region people are involved. For example, Birol Engel, the president of Çev-Der (Association of the Environment) states that,

In such a time when political movements have become exhausted, you will see that with the Bergama Movement this process has begun to change. You will witness that in the case of Bergama, local dynamics have attended this movement and exterior supports have been appended to this struggle. With this movement the context of the intellectual environment movement has passed and you see the growing dynamic of social movements.<sup>153</sup>

The Bergama Movement has created a political arena with its local dynamics and agents since after the movement we have been coming across different kinds of local struggles both large and small; in Efemçukuru, İnay, Gümüşhane around Turkey. It seems that the movement in Bergama with its style of organization and struggle, its civil disobedience, opens the door for new local movements. In order to analyze the environmental dynamics of local movements, a conceptual framework will be drawn next.

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*yerindeki satılmışlığa karşı tepki var.” Reinart, Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor, 115.*

<sup>153</sup> *“Politik sürecin dibe vurduğu bir dönemde, Bergama hareketiyle bu sürecin değiştiğini göreceksiniz. Bergama sürecinde yerel dinamiklerin olaya sahip çıktığını dış etkenlerin sonradan bu mücadeleye eklendiğini görürsünüz. Bu hareketle birlikte entelektüel çevreci hareketin aşıldığını görüyorsunuz, yeniden bir toplumsal hareket dinamiğinin yukarı çıktığını görüyorsunuz.”* Interview with Birol Engel, 08.02.2006.

## Environmentalism of the Poor

The social movements based on the notion of protection of habitation have been widespread in recent years. Taking into consideration the basic properties of the local movements discussed in Chapter 1, it should be questioned whether ecologic crisis, caused by neoliberal global policies and market economy, create a space of struggle for social opposition or not.

If such a general problem as “ecologic crisis” exists, we could consider that the countries which cause this crisis have a common aim called “ecologic imperialism.” Foster and Clark discuss this,

Ecologic imperialism presents itself most obviously in the following ways: the pillage of the resources of some countries by others and the transformation of whole ecosystems upon which states and nations depend; massive movements of population and labor that are interconnected with the extraction and the transfer of resources; the exploitation of ecological vulnerabilities of societies to promote imperialist control; the dumping of ecological wastes in ways that widen the chasm between center and periphery; and overall, the creation of a “metabolic rift” that characterizes the relation of capitalism to the environment and at the same time limits capitalist development.<sup>154</sup>

As can be understood from the statements above, we need to look not only at ecologic imperialism as a biologic expansion, but also evaluate it as a politic and economic reception. The social movements against the policies of ecologic imperialism refer, at the same time, to the sovereignty of capitalist powers and the relationship that they established with the environment. That is to say, the most important point in the expression above and what needs to be noticed in order to understand these social movements, especially local-place based movements, is the

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<sup>154</sup> John Bellamy Foster and Brett Clark, "Ecologic Imperialism: The Curse of Capitalism," in *Socialist Register 2004*, ed. Leo Panitch and Colin Leys (New York: Merlin Press, 2004), 115.

need to define the relationship between capitalism and its environment. Although the movement in Bergama against gold extraction with cyanide has not been influenced by all of the policies of ecologic imperialism or multinational corporations, but as a singular one, it is a part of these neoliberal policies which take the policies of ecologic imperialism as a must in order to develop economically. In the case of Bergama, as mentioned above, besides the risk of losing biologic variety in the soil and environmental destruction such as cutting down trees; namely more material risks, the spiritual side of the risks need to be focused, as I put; the feeling of losing the social relations, traditions and values, and agricultural resources.

Taking into consideration the movement in Bergama, it would be more meaningful to use the word “land” instead of “environment” in order to understand the movement better, since the interviews made with the villagers indicate that the villagers refer to multi-meanings when they use the word “environment.” For example, a 53 year old villager from Süleymanlı, Mustafa Umaç, stated that, “I was born in Ovacık, I grew up there. I went to school there. We got cold, froze in the winter, but did not cut even a branch of pine. We did not have any money but did not cut them. We always kept watch over these pines. Pine means life, it gives air. These guys cut thousands of them.”<sup>155</sup> This villager associates his past with the land he lives on, and the risk of losing one of the elements of the land such as the pine trees, make him struggle against “these guys.” Even the very difficult conditions in the past, he protected the value of his land, but now these guys come and threaten the existence and his identity on the lands. “It is widely accepted that our sense of

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<sup>155</sup> “Ben ovacık köyünde doğdum, büyüdüm. Okulumu burada bitirdim. Biz kışın üşüdük, donduk, o çamların bir dalını kesmedik. Parasız kaldık. Kesmedik. Başka arkadaşlara da kestirmedik. Nöbetini tuttuk o çamların. Çam demek hayat demektir, hava verir. Bunlar binlercesini kestiler.” Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*, 54.

history, like our sense of memory and self-identity, is in large measure the result of arranging and telling stories,” emphasizes Sherwin and continues, “just as it is through stories that we construct the meaning of the individual and collective experience so also it is through stories that we are moved to blame (or exonerate) others.<sup>156</sup> When the villagers were talking about their lands, they always started to tell stories about their past experiences. Since land refers lots of economic, political and spiritual meanings, they could not only pass over birds, flowers or insects, they betrayed all the meanings they associated with that land.

The mining company, Eurogold,<sup>157</sup> denied the right to live of those local people in Bergama, whose relationship to the land is central to their spiritual identity and survival, by violating their land rights.<sup>158</sup> The sensation of losing their lands and the feeling of regional belonging that binds them to the land with their experiences of past and present; namely, the fear of displacement motivates the villagers to struggle. They called the gold-mining management an “occupation” and therefore, they feared the loss of their social relations, traditions and values and also economic sources. The words Ayşe Kurhan from Narlıca village explain this feeling better:

We have thirty *dönüm* fields and we have two big water pits in both fields. We plant cotton on one side, bamyas on one side, we plant corn, beans; we take everything from these fields, we take our winter provision. But what would we eat and drink if we went somewhere else? What would happen to us? We can't live in the city. We live in the village with honor and virtue. Even the people who live in the city live in difficulty. What would

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<sup>156</sup> Sherwin, "Law in Popular Culture," 104.

<sup>157</sup> Throughout the process, the name of the company had been changed: Eurogold, Newmont, Normandy and now Koza Gold Company.

<sup>158</sup> Joan Martinez-Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation* (Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2002), 101.

happen to us there? We disappear, vanish, we are consumed. Because we don't know anything, we know the land.<sup>159</sup>

Ayşe Kurhan experiences the fear of displacement and so, the uncanniness of life in depth. According to her, land is more than a commodity; it is a question of very survival. She could not imagine a world different from her life in the village and, as discussed in the chapters above, she feels that if she lost her lands, she would also lose the traditions and values and also the social relations who give her an identity and a place in the village and allow her to survive. The words of Sebahat Gökçeoğlu form Çamköy explain it better:

We grew up in poverty. We know wretchedness. We grew up by crawling and working hard in these lands. I know everything about these lands. Not only persons or bananas grow in these lands... We cut a pine tree once in a blue moon in order to get warm. Then that company Eurogold brought an engine for cutting the woods; they cut the trees, bizz bizz. I panicked. We like the environment but we ourselves do not know that we like it. While they were cutting the upper side of the mountain, I wished to commit suicide.<sup>160</sup>

As seen from the words of Sebahat Gökçeoğlu, even the villagers do not think about their environment. However, the possibility of losing the land and what it means; such as the lost of traditions and values, a common past, social relations, make them sensitive about the problems of environment. While these local people

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<sup>159</sup> “Bizim otuz dönüm ovada tarlamız var, ikisinde de büyük su kuyuları var. Orada biz bir tarafına pamuk ekerik, mısır ekerik, fasulyemizi ekerik, her şeyimizi alırık, kışlığımızı alırık. Emme biz başka yere gidince ne yirik, ne içerik? Biz ne oluruk? Biz şehir yerinde hiç yaşayamayık. Biz köy yerinde namusumuzla, gözümüzün astarınla yaşyık. Şehirde oralarda büyüyenler bile ne zor hallara helirler. Bize ne yaparlar? Biz yok oluruk, hiç oluruk, biterik biz. Çünkü biz bir şey bilmeyik, toprağı bilirik.” Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik: Bergama Köylüleri Anlatıyor*, 45.

<sup>160</sup> “Biz fakirlikte büyüdük. Garibanlığı biliriz. O toprakların içinde, didinerek, emekleyerek büyüdük. O topraklar üstünde çok şey biliyom. Sadece insan yetişmez muz yetişmez o topraklarda...Biz köylüler kart bir çam ağacın kırk yılda bir kesip onu ısınmak için kullanırdık. Sonra o Eurogold firması bir sürü odun biçki motoru getirmiş, çatır çatır, çatır çatır o çamları kesiyorlar. Ben panik oldum. Biz çevreyi seviyorduk ama sevdiğimizi kendimizde bilmiyormuşuz. O dağın üstü kesilirken benim intihar edeceğim geldi.” Ibid. 54.

are talking about the “environment,” they wish to express more than “fashion environmentalism,” which could be thought of as superficial environmentalism.

In the theoretical literature, an environmentalist movement which is owned and motivated by the local people of that environment is called an “environmentalism of the poor.”<sup>161</sup> It is thought that the environmentalism of the poor questions the production and distribution within human society. The concern of poor environmentalism is “with the use of the environment and who should benefit from it, not with environmental protection for its own sake.”<sup>162</sup> The meaning of “environmental protection for its own sake” refers to “intellectual environmentalism” or “first world environmentalism” as an interest of the upper class. In theoretical discussions, while first world environmentalism is a post-materialist, full stomach, a luxury, leisure time concern that emerged only after the basic material needs of food were met, the environmentalism of the poor is thought to be “grown out of local, regional, national, and global ecological distribution conflicts caused by economic growth and social inequalities.”<sup>163</sup> Ruth Rosen clarifies the differences between the environmentalism of the poor and first world environmentalism:

At best the large, mainstream environmental groups focus on the health of the planet: the wilderness, forests, and oceans that cannot protect themselves. In contrast, the movement for environmental justice, led by

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<sup>161</sup> “The idea of environmentalism of the poor first appeared in print in the late 1980s and early 1990s. For many years, the conventional wisdom was that the poor were “too poor to be green”. If you look at the countries that are interested in environmentalism, or at the individuals which support environmentalism within each country one is struck by the extent to which environmentalism is an interest of the upper middle class. Poor countries and poor individuals simply aren’t interested’ not accident,” Martinez-Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor*, 209.

<sup>162</sup> Ramachandra Guha, "The Environmentalism of the Poor," in *Between Resistance and Revolution: cultural politics and social protest*, ed. Richard Fox and Orin Starn (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1997).

<sup>163</sup> Martinez-Alier, *The Environmentalism of the Poor*, 14.

the poor, is not concerned with overabundance, but with environmental hazards and social and environmental inequalities that ravage their communities.<sup>164</sup>

As can be concluded, First World environmentalists seem to be aware of other species and carry an ethical responsibility toward them and “enrich the spiritual side of their own existence” by protecting the wild; nonetheless, environmentalism of the poor, led by the poor; perhaps villagers, workers, poor people, and indigenous people, aims to change the present conditions that are caused by economic growth, social inequalities or legal injustices.<sup>165</sup>

After discussing the theoretical frame of different kinds of environmentalism, if we need to categorize the movement in Bergama, it is easy to place as an example of environmentalism of the poor. In fact, the interviews conducted with Sefa Taşkın and Birol Engel also indicate that the local people in Bergama think that this movement differs, to some extent, from the other environmental movements in Turkey. For example, Sefa Taşkın states that “the environmental movements in Turkey are generally intellectual environmental movements. First, the local peasant environment movement is the movement of ordinary people in Bergama.”<sup>166</sup> Birol Engel also emphasizes that,

The movement in Bergama changed the style of environmental movements in Turkey. The ones who have problems are not found in the struggle, how much you carry the greens, nothing changes. We could call the movement

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<sup>164</sup> Guha, "The Environmentalism of the Poor."

<sup>165</sup> The ways of expression in environmentalism of the poor has also a different motive. As we discussed preceding chapter, the Bergama movement has an original way of struggle; “vocabulary of protest, the collective show of strength, sit-down strike, putting moral pressure on the state as a whole”. Ibid., 15.

<sup>166</sup> “*Türkiye’deki çevreci hareketleri genelde entelektüel çevreci hareketleridir. İlk kez yöresel çevre hareketi, Bergama’daki sıradan insanların hareketidir.*” Interview with Sefa Taşkın, 07.02.2006.



in Bergama an environmental one. You cannot abstract the struggle of environment from anything else. It is political.<sup>167</sup>

Although it would be very assertive to say that the Bergama Movement is different from the other environmental movements and the first poor environmentalist movement in Turkey, it can be said that this movement has opened new doors to other local and environmental movements with its goals, style, and results.

We must not limit ourselves to a conceptual framework such as the environmentalism of the poor. Taking into consideration the basic properties of the Bergama Movement, we could also call it a grass roots environmentalist movement.<sup>168</sup> Grass roots environmentalist movements demand the government interfere in the economy. The significant things that separate grass roots environmentalism from the other environmentalist movements are the characteristics of the actors in the movement, the demands of the movement and the approaches to the government. The actors in the grass roots environmental movements are generally minorities or marginal people; such as women, indigenous people, the poor, and in the case of Bergama, villagers or local people. The basic demand of grass roots environmentalist movements is that the government should defend the rights and interests of the people, not those of the companies.<sup>169</sup> For example, in the case of Bergama, the local people wanted the government to defend their rights;

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<sup>167</sup> *“Türkiye’deki çevre eylemlerinin de tarzını değiştirdi. İşin içinde olanlar bu eylemlerde olmazsa, ne kadar yeşilleri taşısan da hiçbir şey değişmez. Bergama hareketine bir çevre hareketi diyebiliriz. Çevre mücadelesini hiçbir şeyden soyutlayamazsın. Politikadır.”* Interview with Birol Engel, 08.02. 2006.

<sup>168</sup> Basically used for the struggle of the low income class, but basic properties of Bergama movement prove that the movement in Bergama is also a grass root movement. See, Balta, "Ekolojiyle Uyumlu Bir Toplumsal Yaşam."

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 151.

however, the company continued to work in spite of the court decisions. Thus, the local people in the movement lost confidence in the government; they even felt betrayed. Although the people in Bergama know that the governments protect the company in illegal ways, they still defend the argument that the duty of the Turkish government has to be to protect their rights and interests. The demand of environmental justice in Bergama is the demand of protecting the interests of the villagers; namely the demand of protecting the public interest. In this context, we could call grass root environmental movements against neoliberal policies and globalization and, indirectly, the Bergama Movement, too.

In brief, although we can evaluate the Bergama Movement in different suitable conceptual frameworks as environmentalism of the poor or grass roots environmentalism in order to understand the movement better, we should notice that the presentation of the movement during the process has affected the public opinion to a great extent. While trying to transfer or translate the movement, the mainstream newspapers have presented the movement in the rhetoric of environmentalism in the name of modernization or sustainable development. However, they have ignored the basic properties of the movement or manipulated these properties due to the changing intentions. The attitude of the mass media is not surprising, but how it represent the movement shaped the ideas of the outsiders and such an attitude made the movement superficial and caused to be despised.

It is obvious that the intended goals of the movement, such as the right to live, health, and environment, protection of habitation in Bergama, have not achieved the intended consequences. Nonetheless, by looking at the two different layers in the representation of the movement and the consequences of the movement, we can not

define the movement as an unsuccessful one. Since social movements have to be evaluated not by their consequences, but by their aims and the changes that they have undergone in the process. The Bergama Movement has succeeded in creating a new social agenda in Turkey.

## CONCLUSION

In this study, the way of organization, the demands, the conflicts and the dynamics of the Bergama Peasant Movement were examined. However, the important factor in this study was not the movement itself but how the movement was reflected and perceived by other groups. Thus, how the mass media interpreted the movement and the transformation in the reflections of the media about the movement were analyzed. The reason for choosing the Bergama Peasant Movement as a case study is that the movement, which is thought of as having a social base, samples economic, political, cultural, and juridical tensions and conflicts in Turkey. In this thesis, the way of the organization first was illustrated and then which discourses were used while the mass media interpreted the developments, the transformations and the tensions experienced in this process and the reason of using different discourses were discussed.

In the global economic system, big transformations have been experienced that affect local communities and change their living conditions. The most important reason for the increase of social movements, both local and global movements, in recent times is the violation of human rights by the global economy system, called global capitalism. The reason for that certainly cannot be explained in the context of only human rights. One of the most well-known aims of global capitalism is to decentralize the power system and thereby it desires to create new spaces of power for itself. The significance of social movements and the politics of multinational corporations as in the case of the Bergama Peasant Movement should be discussed in this context.

Taking into consideration the discussions of social movements and globalization/resistance and the formation of collective identity, the way of the organization, and ignorance of the ethnic differences in the process, the movements has to be discussed as a place-based movement. Yet it has to be mentioned that the study on the Bergama Peasant Movement is not a space study or a study of realizing a space. On the contrary, by centralizing a specific movement, it is aimed to realize the changing economic social and juridical conditions in Turkey. By taking into account the increase of the specific movements such as in Bergama, it is possible to argue some basic problems of totality.

The Bergama Peasant Movement is a movement in which cultural nationalism sticks out, the ethnic differences is ignored in the sake of a common aim and the notion of dependence on the land (the notion of dependence on the land is always central for peasant movements which always have indigenous elements) stands in the forefront. It is a movement that organizes itself with the memory of the common experiences and it is always the local people that motivate the movement. The movement establishes a collective identity against a common enemy based on the discourses of “right to live,” “right to a healthy environment,” and “right to protection of habitation.” The Bergama villagers were organized through the dependence to the land and they articulated the discourse of place-based with a national discourse in accordance with their practical struggles.

The local people in Bergama experienced a period of consciousness on the dangers of gold-extraction with cyanide at the beginnings of the 1990s and after 1995 they began to protest with direct actions. The villagers, who initially preferred the way of “civil disobedience” that consists of ironic and non-violence practices as the

style of demonstration, then changed the positive discourse on the power after the violation of the court decisions in favor of them. Their activities then became harsh and abrasive.

In addition to the factors that bind the movement, there are some economic and cultural factors that divide the movement. The positive and negative meanings that arose with by the Bergama Gold Mine have affected the choice of the villagers. Due to economic reasons the villagers do not want to miss the possibility of occupation and furthermore, the philanthropic activities of the mine called “social responsibility” is also one of the factors that affected the region’s people. Accountancy, or how government policies were applied both against the mine and the villagers is also an important factor that determined the course of the movement. The villagers relied heavily on the government, and have been disappointed when the government policies approved of the activities of the multinational corporations, supported the integration of foreign investment and not did not apply the court decisions. The nationalist discourse at the beginning gradually were replaced by the discourse of criticizing the government policies and the way of civil disobedience also were replaced by violent and insulting practices.

One of the basic properties of the social movements is the wish of carrying out the struggle on legal ground. In the process of the Bergama struggle the peasants have given the law an important place. The Turkish Republic, which claims to be a state of law, suspended legal ethics without applying the court decisions. Neoliberal policies have become prioritized due to the encouragement of foreign investment. Different governments were to pay compensation to the region’s people many times in this process. What is significant in the Bergama Peasant Movement is what kind of

alternative resistance systems were developed by the villagers when the law has excluded some groups or were suspended. While not participating in the census, refusing to join the army and send their children to school criticize the importance that the state gives its “citizen, symbolic activities such as the occupation of the mine, naked demonstrations, and demonstrations with shrouds and their meanings underline the importance of the values of the peasantry.

Having mentioned the organization style of the movement, the change and the tension within this process, how mass media has covered the movement and implications of this was discussed.

During the early 1990s, when people of the region were concerned about the news that the gold was going to be extracted with cyanide, *Hürriyet*, *Milliyet* and their small-scale agencies supported the movement and produced news which did not negate the movement. This attitude of mainstream media, which actually posed a different approach towards such kind of social movements, constituted a contradiction. However, this different attitude of mainstream media had its own implications and meanings.

Visibility in the media was crucial for the Bergama Peasant Movement to draw support and become widespread. Yet how the movement was made visible was also important. There were various reasons for the popular media to support the movement. Along with that, different points made available by the media led to different sorts of people to support and endorse the movement. Nevertheless, the fact that certain points and arguments were foregrounded resulted in the ignorance of some very important ones.

The peasants’ demands to have the right to live, to have a healthy environment,

which itself is a traditional society, resulted in their authenticization in the newspapers. For instance, the peasants appeared with their traditional clothes and accessories in the news. However, when the magazine side of the movement was consumed, the representation of the movement started to change. Another reason was the fact that the movement did not endorse violence and possessed a national discourse in line with that of the newspapers.

The most important of all these reasons stemmed from the will of the press to articulate Turkey as a modern and democratic country where environmentalist groups can raise their voices with the developmentalist discourse. Environment policy, one of the musts of modernization, was continually emphasized in the Bergama Peasant Movement and almost was reduced to a superficial environmentalism. However, the struggle of the peasants for a healthy environment aimed to protect their habitation and therefore stands as a unique one in terms of intellectual and superficial environmentalism. In this process, the risk of losing the villagers' rights of self-determination and protection of habitation, their struggles for right to live and to lose their agricultural lands was ignored through what the press did.

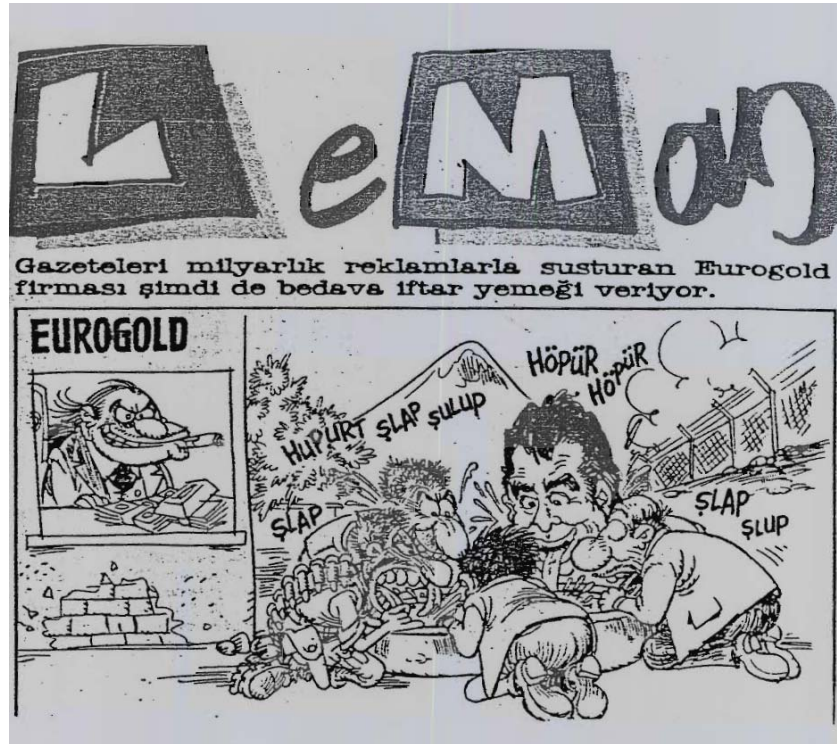
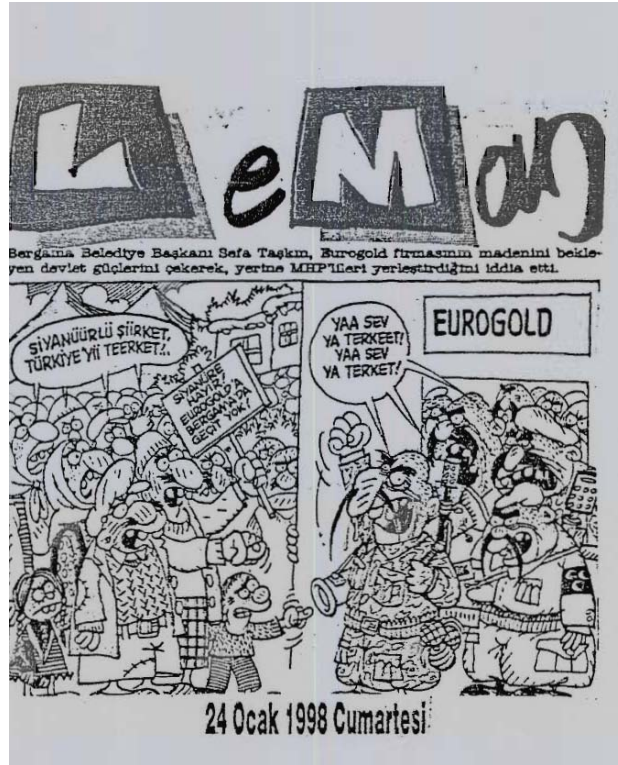
After a while, how the press reflected the matter changed along with the economic and political conditions of Turkey, though. The fact that the court decisions were not put into practice following 1997 and the government's attitude towards mine companies and foreign capital also transformed the villagers' view of the government and the movement acquired a discourse which criticized the government's policies. With this transformation, the mass media began to negate the movement and gave place to news praising mine companies and what the gold sector



will provide for Turkey. News with the claim that the gold sector would provide the cure for the crisis and create employment presented the Bergama movement as a barrier in front of economic development and criminalized this movement.

The Bergama Peasant Movement – thought to have a social basis – was inspired and guided followed the environment and peasant movements methodologically. However, the press aimed to reflect the movement differently according to the agenda of Turkey. As we can understand, the press first did not negate and attempted to articulate the movement with discourse of modernization and democratic development. Following that, it only began to criminalize the movement once it believed the movement hindered economic development. The mass media both gave place to and reflected the movement according to both the socio-economic conditions and the reactions of the actors to these conditions. Yet it emphasized the civil disobedience and reduced the movement to only an environmentalist one and tried to articulate this struggle to the politics of development and thus ignored the villagers' struggles for their basic rights such as right to live and protection of habitation.

APPENDIX



Source: *Leman*, 24 January 1998.



The Soldiers against the Villagers (*Source: Sefa Taşkın, Siyanürcü Ahtapot, İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 1998.*)



Women in Demonstration (Source: Sefa Taşkın, *Siyanürcü Ahtapot*, İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 1998.)



Children in Demonstration (Source: Sefa Taşkın, *Siyaniürcü Ahtapot*, İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 1998.)



“We Want Life Not Gold” (Source: Sefa Taşkın, *Siyaniürcü Ahtapot*, İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 1998.)



Women in Demonstration (*Source: Sefa Taşkın, Siyanürcü Ahtapot, İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 1998.*)



Demonstration in Coffee House in Çamköy (Source: Sefa Taşkın, *Siyanürcü Ahtapot*, İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 1998.)





“Either Cyanide Or Us” (Source: Sefa Taşkın, *Siyanürcü Ahtapot*, İstanbul: Sel Yayıncılık, 1998.)



# Madenci köylü, çevreci köylüye karşı

Altın Madeni'nde çalışan madenciler, Bergamalı köylülere yumurta atıp köye girişlerini engellemeye çalıştı



ELÇİN YAĞIZ

**D**ünya Çevre Günü'nü Bergama Çamköy'de kutlamak isteyen ve Bergamalı köylülerin de aralarında bulunduğu çevrecilerle, Ovacık'taki altın madenini işleten Koza Altın Madeni Şirketi'nde çalışan işçiler arasında gerginlik yaşandı. Madenciler çevrecilerin köye girişini engellemek için otobüslerine yumurta ve taşlarla saldırdı.

Ovacık Altın Madeni'ni işleten Koza Altın Madeni Şirketi, 5 Haziran Dünya Çevre Günü'nü Bergama'nın Ovacık ve Çamköy girişinde kutlamak için izin aldı. İzmir-Bergama, Eşme, Sivrihisar, Havar/Küçükdere El Ele Hareketi üyesi çevreciler de bugünü Çamköy'de kutlamak üzere İzmir'den otobüsler ve özel otomobillerle yola çıktı. Ovacık ve Çamköy girişindeki yol üzerinde kutlama yapan maden işçileri ve aileleri, çevrecilerin otobüslerinin Çamköy'e girişine izin vermedi. Madenin girişine

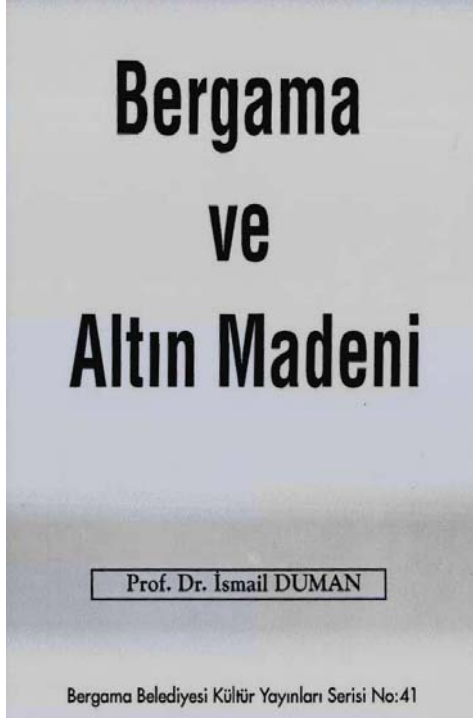


Miner Villagers against Environmentalist Villagers (Source: Birgün, 6 June 2005.)



Bergama köylüleri Ankara'da açtıkları pankartla... (Fotoğraf: Timur Daniş)

Bergama Villagers in Ankara (Source: Üstün Bilgen Reinart, *Biz Toprağı Bilirik*, İstanbul: Metis 2003.)



The Publishings of the Municipality of Bergama

## Goldproduction Using Cyanide

(Translation from German into English)

12

**Republic of Turkey**  
6 th Chamber of the  
Higher Administrative Court

Reference no :1996/5348  
Ruling no :1997/2311

Appellant :Senih Özyay (on behalf of Mrs. Birsal  
Lemke)  
1. Beyler No:51/306  
Konak/Izmir  
Appellee : 1. Ministry of the Environment-Ankara  
2. additional party to the proceedings:  
Eurogold Madencilik A.Ş.  
(Eurogold mining corporation)  
Attorney : Solicitor Selçuk Ömerbaş  
Bağış Sok. No:14/8 Kocatepe-Ankara

### Summary of the Petition of Appeal:

It is petitioned that the ruling of the 1 st Chamber of the Administrative Court Izmir dated 2 July 1996, reference no.1994/644, ruling no. 1996/539, be reversed on account of a breach of regulations and laws.

### Summary of the statement of the defendant Ministry and the additional defendant:

As there is no reason to reverse the ruling appealed against, it is petitioned that the proper and lawful ruling be confirmed.

### The opinion of the examining judge Selçuk Topal:

13

If the environment, which continues to exist by virtue of a certain equilibrium, loses certain factors that from this system of equilibrium, this will result in disruptions that destroy life-forms and pollute the environment. The basis is the continued existence of human life in good health and in an intact environment that is equilibrium. Environmental protection is essential for the existence of human life. The environment is of prime importance for protecting and developing mankind's natural living conditions.

On evaluating the effects on the environment and the expert reports, one comes to the conclusion that gold-mines run with cyanogen compounds constitute a risk and a threat to human health and the environment.

One cannot ignore the probability that this risk factor, which endangers the environment and human health, will materialise. Irrespective of the economic gains to be attained through this activity it is essential that the public interest be interpreted in favour of human life. Therefore, one cannot talk of the activity, being in the public interest, if it is granted a licence for economic reasons that would constitute a danger to the environment and human life.

As, therefore, a licence for the said gold-mines would not bring about any benefits to the public in accordance with the Constitution and the law, the examining judge is of the opinion that the ruling of the Administrative Court, with which the lawsuit was dismissed and which is now the subject matter of the appeal proceedings, has to be reversed.

#### **The opinion of the prosecutor Habibe Ünal:**

The Ministry of the Environment granted the Eurogold mining corporation the licence to run gold-mines in Dikili, Bergama, Ovacık, Çamköy and in nearby villages on the conditions that the obligations be fulfilled, that, in the period prior to, during and after commissioning, until the com-

pany's obligations have ended, the activities be inspected and monitored by a supervisory commission to be formed under the coordination of the Governor of Izmir for the purposes of the obligations, that the environmental regulations be complied with and that valid regulations laid down by the appropriate institutions and authorities be fulfilled by taking corresponding measures. The lawsuit petitions that the procedure applied by the Ministry of the Environment be reversed. The Administrative Court took the view that the defendant Ministry had, within the limits of the rights and duties legally assigned to it, examined the facts and circumstances in detail, with regard to the development of the state, the observance of environmental values, the health and safety of the public, laid down the necessary measures to be taken in detail, imposed these measures as an obligation on the company and defined the prerequisites enabling the company to be monitored at any time. The examination and expert reports obtained and prepared reveal that the company will absolutely fulfil the prerequisites set in the formal obligation as regards human and environmental health, that the central and local authorities promise to fulfil their obligations to examine and monitor the company in all phases during and after commissioning and that, in connection with this promise, the licensing procedure is safe with regard to the public interest and existing legal regulations as to public health, natural plant life, historic and culture resources, olive groves and all types of agricultural goods. The reason given is that, after evaluating the said expert report and the relevant files, it was determined that regulations were not violated in the case of these proceedings, which are the subject matter of the lawsuit. Consequently, the lawsuit was dismissed. The defendants have lodged an appeal against this ruling.

• In paragraph 56 of the Constitutional Law of the Republic of Turkey, it is stated that every person has the right to live in a healthy environment that is in equilibrium and that the state and its citizens are obliged to develop the environment,

protect the health of the environment and avoid polluting the environment. In paragraph 1 of the law on the environment, no. 2872, it is stated that all citizens must, in respect of the goals of this law, create certain legally technical bases, in order to protect and develop our joint existence, i. e. the environment, to use all types of agricultural goods and land in inhabited areas in the best possible way for preventing water, soil and environmental pollution, to protect plants and animals as well as historic and cultural resources and to protect the environment for mankind today and in future, whereby these ordinances and the measures to be taken must be adapted to allow for economic and social progress. •

As, in the case at issue, which is the subject matter of the lawsuit, the material "cyanogen compound" to be used at gold-mines has poisonous properties, this subject is significant.

In the case of the prepared examination and expert reports ordered by the Administrative Court, it was assumed that the company would absolutely fulfil the prerequisites set in the formal obligation, that these prerequisites would be applied with utmost care and that the obligations to examine and monitor would be fulfilled in all phases by the central and local authorities. It was ignored thereby that the company might not take the measures promised or, for any reason whatsoever, the measures taken might be ineffective, that cyanogen compounds and other poisonous gases and heavy metals might directly find their way into the air, water and earth in such a case, and to what extent public and environmental health would be affected by this and to what extent such effects could be remedied or not.

As all possibilities regarding this subject, which greatly concerns environmental and human health, must be examined and set out in detail, it is necessary for the Administrative Court to commission the same expert committee to prepare an additional expert report. Furthermore, new

studies must be carried out and new expert reports obtained if necessary, to clarify the subject concerned. Only then is a decision to be made and the ruling, which is the subject matter of the appeal, to be reversed.

#### IN THE NAME OF THE TURKISH PEOPLE

After the Higher Administrative Court, 6th Chamber, which made this decision, had heard the opinion of the examining judge and examined the files, the essential matters were conferred upon:

It was not considered necessary to hold a hearing.

This lawsuit is directed against the licence granted to the Eurogold mining Corporation by the Ministry of Environment, i.e. the licence to run gold-mines in Dikili, Bergama, Ovacak, Çamköy and in the nearby villages on the conditions that the obligations be fulfilled, that in the period prior to, during and after commissioning, until the company's obligations have ended, the activities be inspected and monitored by a supervisory commission to be formed under the coordination of the Governor of Izmir for the purposes of the obligations that the environmental regulations be complied with and that valid regulations laid down by the appropriate institutions and authorities be fulfilled by taking corresponding measures. The aim of the lawsuit is to reverse the procedure applied by the Ministry of the Environment.

Following the examination carried out on site and after evaluating the expert report and the files, the Administrative Court came to the conclusion that the company, i.e. the additional plaintiff, had received an exploration permit on 16 August 1989, that the total taxes and state levies for this project amount to approx. 40 million US dollars according to standard prices in 1995, that 320 million of exchange proceeds in US dollars, will be attained for the country by

exporting the entire gold produced, that the cost of this project in terms of capital expenditure is estimated at 35 million US dollars, that, with the letter from the Department of Public Labour and Settlement in Izmir dated 14 January 1992, the opinion of the Ministry of the Environment was requested, that this subject was examined by the Ministry within the scope of the powers and obligations granted to it by law, that the development of the country and the protection of the environment with regard to public health and safety were assessed that the measures to be taken in this respect were laid down, that compliance with these obligations was promised by the company, i.e. the additional plaintiff, that the prerequisites under which the company is to be monitored in every phase were defined and measures were taken, that additional work necessary during commissioning was carried out by the experts, that the company Eurogold mining corporation will fulfil the conditions defined in the formal obligation dated 18 October 1994 regarding human and environmental health, that fulfilment of the obligations to examine and monitor is promised by the central and local authorities during and after commissioning, that, in connection with this promise, the licensing procedure regarding the lawsuit is safe in respect of the public interest and existing legal regulations as to public health, natural plant life, historical and culture resources, olive groves and all types of agricultural goods. The reason given is that, as no contradictions of regulations were determined in the licensing procedure with regard to the lawsuit, the lawsuit was dismissed. The defendants have lodged an appeal against this ruling.

In paragraph 17 of the Constitutional Law, no. 2709 of the Republic of Turkey the following rules are set out: "Every person has the right to live, as well as to protect and develop assets and non-assets". In paragraph 56. it is written that "Every person has the right to live in a healthy environment that is in equilibrium. The state and the citizens

are obliged to develop the environment, protect the health of the environment and avoid polluting the environment. The state plans health institutions from once source and organises related services, so that people's lives are protected, people can continue to live in physical and mental health, saving human and material energy, increasing efficiency and bringing about co-operation..."

In paragraph 1 of the law on the environment, no. 2872, it is stated that all citizens must, in respect of the goals of this law, create certain legally technical bases, in order to protect and develop our joint existence, i.e. the environment, to use all types of agricultural goods and land in inhabited areas in the best possible way for preventing water, soil and environmental pollution, to protect plants and animals as well as historic and cultural resources and to protect the environment for mankind today and in future, whereby these ordinances and the measures to be taken must be adopted to allow for economic and social progress.

When evaluating the effects on the environment and preparing the expert report, the effects of cyanogen compounds on the atmosphere, groundwater, flora-fauna and noise as well as on used agricultural areas were examined. It was determined thereby that the potential erosion of groundsoil in the area by water (surface influences) and wind is comparatively high, that the degree of erosion of forest soil is to be classified in classes 2 and 3 and in class 1 in the other areas, that the forest greatly contributes to society in respect of erosion and health, that the soil is permeable, that this area is situated in a zone highly at risk of earthquakes that the groundwater ensues from rain and surface effects gleaming through, that rain will cause flooding in the project area, that the quantity and frequency of rain in this area are very high in winter and spring months, that, therefore, the water leads to flooding of storage reservoirs during these seasons that the people living there use this groundwater that poisonous waste/substances could trickle into the gro-



underwater, that the pH-value with regard to cyanogen compounds is important and this value is affected by rainfall, that cyanogen is transformed into the very dangerous gas HCN (hydrogen cyanogen compound) if the pH value falls, that HCN has a low boiling point (25,7 C) and, therefore, there is a big risk that it could find its way into the atmosphere, that even if the cyanogen compound is removed in great quantities by big layers of earth, it will flow back into the water in the course of time for reasons such as hydrolysis, that resulting heavy metals following processing, have to be examined, that substances in the sewage dam affect the groundwater for 20 to 50 years, that the operating company has undertaken to carry out inspections for the duration of 5 years following commissioning, that it is necessary to carry out a hydrogeological test in this area, that leaks can occur due to the internal permeability of the grounding as well as holes and faults in the dam grounding that dam and grounding work is very important for this reason, that, if these leaks enter the atmosphere and groundwater, the environment and flora-fauna will be negatively affected, that the company is showing good will and shall fulfil the prerequisites set out in the formal obligation with utmost care that the central and local authorities promise to fulfil their obligations to examine and monitor in every phase and that, in connection with this promise, there are no misgivings in these proceedings, which are the subject matter of the lawsuit, about benefits to the public and compliance with existing legal regulations.

The above-mentioned expert reports reveal that cyanogen compounds used in goldmining with the Lic method as well as other heavy metals resulting thereby have a negative effect on human and environmental health and, therefore, present a risk and danger factor that, particularly if the cyanogen compound-which is very poisonous-finds its way into the soil, water and air, constitutes a danger to all lifeforms, that on account of this process, therefore, substances containing cyanogen compounds that are pumped into sewage

dams could enter water sources and other areas of use due to leakages in sewage dams, which were planned to be impermeable, that, consequently, the risk factor as regards gold-mines run with cyanogen compounds has come to the fore, that, additionally, as a result of this risk flora and fauna in this area could be threatened and damaged, that cyanogen compounds present a very great risk to human health and the environment and that, therefore, one must be very sensitive in this respect.

The environment which gives a habitat to natural and artificial components and in which all types of human activities are to be found, exists in a certain equilibrium. It is obvious that, if the factors forming this system of equilibrium are lost, the resulting environmental damage would have a destructive effect on life-forms and, therefore, cause environmental pollution. The basis is that mankind, which is most important life-form, lives in health and equilibrium in an environment that is still intact. As the protection of human life must be given the highest priority, it is essential that the natural basic elements of man's life be protected and developed, and the protection of the environment is the most important and indispensable component of human life. On account of the above determinations, the goldprocessing method, which is the subject matter of the lawsuit, is unsafe and has a direct and indirect effect on human life. It must be precisely studied on judicially examining the administrative proceedings regarding regarding the lawsuit, taking account of the Constitutional Law and legal regulations, particularly the public interest and the primary meaning of this term.

Only comments such as "the good will of the company" and "The measures will be monitored with utmost care" and the like remain thereby. It is obvious that the public interest is to be interpreted in favour of human life, if one compares the economic gains attainable upon completion of the activities with the damage that will be caused by the risk to the environment and directly or indirectly to human life.

Therefore, one cannot say that, on using cyanogen compounds when processing at gold-mines with the Lic method, the probability of risk will be reduced by the promised monitoring measures to be taken by the company.

Within the framework of the above-mentioned technical and legal determinations, it must be considered that people have the right to live, that the state is obliged to protect the environment, to avoid environmental pollution and to ensure that every person continues to live in physical and mental health. Therefore, the licence for gold-mining using cyanogen compounds with the Lic method, which is the subject matter of the lawsuit, would not be consistent with the public interest. As taken into account in the evaluation of effects on the environment and in the expert report, such gold-mining would operate at a risk which, if materialised, would certainly directly or indirectly impair human life due to the resulting damage to the environment.

For this reason, the ruling of the Administrative Court, with which the lawsuit was dismissed, is incorrect.

As substantiated above, the ruling of the Administrative Court Izmir, 1st Chamber, dated 2 July 1996, reference number 1994/644, ruling number 1996/539, is **REVERSED**. Court charges totalling 503.500-TL and charges paid in excess totalling 376.200-TL will be reimbursed to the party that lodged the appeal. The file will be sent to the said court. The ruling was unanimously pronounced on 13 May 1997.

Presiding judge	Associate judge	Associate Judge
<b>Gürbüz ÖNBİLGİN</b>	<b>Yaşar Selim</b>	<b>Acar OLTULU</b>
	<b>ASMAZ</b>	
Associate judge	Associate judge	
<b>Bekir AKSOYLU</b>	<b>Faruk ÖZTÜRK</b>	

Certified as consistent with the original  
(Stamp and signature)

22

## Goldabbau Mit Cyanidlaugung

(Übersetzung aus dem Türkischen ins Deutsche)

23

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