

The role of news media in reproduction of urban space: Ideological presentation of news reports on Galataport Istanbul Project in Hürriyet and Sabah newspapers

Rümeysa Kartalcı Güreken¹ *

¹ Media and Communication Management, School of Social Science, Yeditepe University, Istanbul, 34755, Turkey

*** Correspondence to:**

Rümeysa Kartalcı Güreken

E-mail: rumeysa.kartalci@std.yeditepe.edu.tr

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Abstract

Media is shaping the consciousness, ideas, emotions and even daily lives of individuals by presenting a certain framework of meaning to the society. The individuals evaluate the social events and facts within the framework of meaning that is provided by the media. This study is defending the opinion that the content and discourse that is produced in the urban transformation news reports by the journalist, as the organic intellectual, is legitimizing the capital-oriented transformation of the city and the relations of production are reproduced. Starting from the presupposition that reality that is constructed in news which is produced along with certain hegemonic discourse has influences on the consciousness of the individuals, the study argues the news discourse is influential over the individuals in leading them to illusions by neglecting the social inequalities and contradictions, and by virtue of this, neoliberal hegemony can be reproduced. Accordingly, in the study, the role of the hegemonic discourses produced in the news in mainstream newspapers about the Galataport Istanbul Project, which is considered as the spatial reflection of neoliberal hegemony, in legitimizing the capital-oriented transformation of the city and in the production of social consent, is researched with a critical approach and Teun A. Van Dijk's critical discourse analysis method. As a result of the study, to be legitimized the space reproduced as a commodity, it has been observed the project is identified with a strong economy, development, well-being and welfare of the society in the news discourses. By developing a content and discourse that affirms such projects for a strong and developed, society has been encouraged to support neoliberal urban hegemony.

Keywords: media, urban transformation, news discourse, organic intellectual, neoliberal urban hegemony.

INTRODUCTION

It is stated that the Turkish economy has rapidly integrated to global capitalism by adopting neoliberal policies since 1980s. Also, post-1980 changes in the economic and political fields required re-regulation of the urban space to the needs of the global economy. In this sense, great mega projects are part of the neoliberal programme that has been implemented in Turkey after 1980. It is seen that, every day a new mega project is added to the previous ones which are implemented with the objective of regulating the city and the economy for the desire of making Istanbul a global city. Such projects and their implementation have put Istanbul in a race for the sake of taking place in the class of global cities.

Galataport (Salı Pazarı Cruise Port) project, which was started to be built in Beyoğlu district of Istanbul and which is the research subject of this study, is also one of the mega projects which have been implemented with the operation rights transfer method, in the framework of public-private cooperation projects which we see as an instrument of implementing the model of neoliberal urbanisation. With this project, consisting in a port and an urban transformation project, covering a coastline of 1.2 kilometres from Karaköy Dock to Mimar Sinan University Fındıklı Campus, implementation of a tourism and commerce-oriented transformation is aimed.

It is possible to tell that in Turkey urban transformation projects are implemented with the cooperation of capital-political power. Although in the public-private cooperation projects, the capital groups to be the partners of the public are specified by open tenders, it is seen that the preferred groups consists in the pro-government capital groups (Sönmez, 2016, p. 20). With the 1980s, the ideology and practices of neoliberalism also penetrated into media. As to this period, holding owners in various sectors became interested in the field of media and the ownership structure of the media industry started to change.

With the holding bosses gaining power in the field of media, media transformed into an instrument which acts in a manner representing the worldview and politics of the class dominating on the economy in terms of capital and ensuring the demands of capital to be accepted by the people. Therefore, the projects such as Galataport İstanbul are marketed under the name of “great visionary projects” especially by the pro-government media.

Since in such projects, the capital group which is the partner of the public often also has media ownership. Thus, the media do not deal with problems such as gentrification, rising house rents, rising cost of living in the area arising from such projects and displacement of the local people. Their main argument is that these projects shall make the appearance of the city more beautiful with their aesthetic panorama; they will contribute to the modernisation of the city and opening of the road for international investments and develop the country's economy.

Media is shaping the consciousness, ideas, emotions and even daily lives of individuals by presenting a certain framework of meaning to the society. The individuals evaluate the social events and facts within the framework of meaning that is provided by the media. In this study, it is aimed to expose whose reality is the reality constructed in the urban transformation-related news reports, as media texts where capital-oriented elements are brought together and on what elements media depends in construction of reality. Also, by using Gramsci's concept of "organic intellectual", exposing that the discourse produced by journalist plays an important role in production of social consent by legitimizing the capital-oriented transformation of the city and serves the reproduction of the dominant relations and materialising this discursive practice, is another aim of this study. For this reason, on the one hand, an economic-political approach problematizing the ownership structure and ownership relations of media institutions shall be taken as a starting point in order to examine the role played by capital-political power-media relationship in the process of news production, and on the other hand, reproduction of the status quo and hegemony by the construction and functioning of ideology in news reports shall be focused on.

The news, which is transmitted through language and which is a fiction, is not the reality itself, but it is a representation of it. In this study, which considers news as a representation of reality, the focus is on how the dominant ideology is reproduced through the news discourse. Starting from the presumption that reality that is constructed in news which is produced along with certain hegemonic discourses such as progress, development, improvement, modernisation, entrepreneurship, competitiveness, and contribution to urban culture and urban economy has influences on the consciousness of the individuals, the

study argues the news discourse is influential over the individuals in leading them to illusions by neglecting the social inequalities and contradictions, and by virtue of this, neoliberal hegemony and status quo can be reproduced.

The hypothesis of this study, which shall focus on the capital-political power-media relationship through the news reports in the mainstream newspapers regarding the Galataport Istanbul project and evaluate the role played by media in general and news in particular in the capital-oriented transformation of the city, is as the following.

Through certain hegemonic discourses that are spread by the journalist in the newspaper reports as the organic intellectual, social support regarding the capital-oriented transformation of the city can be obtained and thus, continuity of neoliberal hegemony is made possible.

In this sense, the problem of the research may be summarised as the following: The discourse produced by journalists as organic intellectuals in the news reports regarding urban transformation is manipulating the truth by shaping the minds of the individuals about a public issue and legitimizing the transformation and marketing of the urban space to global capital. As a result, this prevents the urban space, transformed according to the neoliberal logic and rules of capital, to be perceived as urban commons belonging to all social classes and hides the reality behind the creation of urban spaces only addressing capital and upper-income groups by assigning different functions to the city.

Related Literature

In an age, when we are witnessing urban space being modified and transformed more intensively and systematically according to the rules of capitalism, research which analyse the relationship between production of space and creation of the capitalist society is becoming more important (Uğurlu, 2013, p. 2). In the field of social sciences, there are many distinct studies about urban space. Among such studies, it is seen that there are ones which examine the relation between the economic-political processes and production of space within the context of the political economy of the space, as well as ones which discuss spatial inequality through concepts of class and labour under the framework of Marxist analysis. Also, in the field of communication sciences, there are various researches

which deal with the way of representation of urban transformation practices in different communication texts, such as cinema films, documentaries, newspaper reports and housing advertisements.

Halman, in her study, titled, *Semiotic Analysis of Urban Transformation Promotional Films of Municipalities in Istanbul* (2019), by examining the changing roles of the municipalities about the laws by 1980, scrutinizes which themes have been used in the promotion films prepared by the local administrations about urban transformation. In the study of Özarlan, titled, *In the Context of the Housing Problem: Branded Housing Advertisements* (2018), the themes dealt in the advertisements have been analysed with the method of critical discourse, by focusing on the role of the housing problem in branded housing advertisements. In a study made by Cankurt, titled, *Ideology of Urban Transformation: An Analysis on Newspapers* (2017), the function of ideology has been considered by looking at the way of representation of urban transformation in Turkey in newspaper reports and it is concluded that the discourses of the dominant class and political elites are used in the reports examined by using the method of content analysis. And also in the study by Eken, titled, *Reflections of the Ever-Changing Visual Communication Strategies on the Advertisements throughout the Globalization Process: The Case of Residence Advertisements* (2013), the reflections of the changing visual communication strategies along with globalisation is examined by semiotic analysis. Bektaş, in her study, titled, *Transformation of Urban Space and Alienation: An Overview to the City Through Documentaries* (2013), by analysing the impact of the transformation activities of urban space along the neoliberal policies on the alienation of the citizens through documentaries, tried to look at an issue about the city through the lens of a product of media. And in the study of Mutlu, titled, *Publishing Experience of the Urban Poor: Katık Newspaper* (2011), how the urban poor as recycling workers experience and sense the processes of exclusion has been resolved by analysing 9 issues of the Katık Newspaper as the first and single publication experience of the urban poor in Turkey by using participatory observation and interview techniques.

The science of communication which is so suitable for establishing relations among different disciplines is a problem area, where various theoretical approaches come together

(İnal, 1996, p. 12). When the historical development of communication research is considered, two main approaches called “liberal pluralistic” and “critical” approaches are confronted. While the liberal theories assume that there is an objective reality reported through the news media and the news or the reporter is neutral in political and ideological sense (Erdoğan & Alemdar, 1990, p. 57); the critical news analyses argues that the way the liberal approach defines the role of the journalist hides how the power is constructed through the news discourse (İnal, 1996, p. 12). For this reason, the critical theories which consider the mass communication as an industrial structure which makes production and distribution, do not only focus on the communication tools and their impacts. They also focus on the tools and devices used in the production, distribution and consumption processes and on the organised forms of structures and relations; in short how and by whom, with which interests and through which processes the communication is carried out (Erdoğan & Alemdar, 2005, pp. 236, 237).

Discourse has an important role to play in the reproduction and daily articulation of ideologies (van Dijk, 2003, p. 13). Discourse, as a linguistic practice, is one of the important spheres for the social relations and it is one of the places where the hegemonic struggle is most vividly lived. The society constructs itself within the fiction of the dominant ideology through communication based on discourse (Çoban, 2003, p. 270). Gramsci tries to explain the situation with the concept of hegemony where dominant ideology is transmitted to the society without using violence and coercion. The concept of hegemony can be defined, in lean terms, as the worldview of the class leading the society. The worldview of the dominant class can influence all spheres of daily life through ideological control mechanisms and institutions of socialisation. According to Gramsci, the organic intellectuals working in the field of mass communication have an important function for spreading ideas of the dominant class to the broader society. The organic intellectuals spread the ideas of the dominant class to the society through daily language. When Gramsci’s concept of ideology is adopted for media, it is seen that media is an instrument transmitting the values of the dominant class. The events and facts that shall be newsworthy in the media are always presented through the lens of the dominant class. Hence, media serves reproduction of the hegemony and status quo by transmitting the dominant values to the society (Yaylagül, 2006, pp. 97-101).

UNIVERSE OF THE RESEARCH and METHOD

The sample of the study has been identified from among the research universe consisted in the mainstream daily newspapers published at the national scale by the method of non-probability purposive sampling. In the purposive sampling, relevant units that have been previously defined and identified are selected for making the research (Erdoğan, 2007, p. 210). In this framework, for establishing the sample of the study, stemming from their ownership structures, from among the mainstream newspapers, the Hürriyet newspaper and the Sabah newspaper which also have organic relations with the political power besides being mainstream newspapers have been selected. The Internet websites of the aforementioned newspapers were used in obtaining the news reports included in the sample, and the columns were omitted from examination.

Within the framework of these criteria, the digital news broadcasted between the years, 2013-2020 and which referred to Galataport Istanbul project in their headlines, spots or subtitle were extensively surveyed. The reason for choosing the date range in this way while identifying the sample is that, the process that started by the tender for the project in question in May 2013 and awarded to Doğu Holding giving the highest offer, is desired to be shown in its entirety. In this manner, it is thought to be possible to show in which contexts the developments regarding the project in the process from 2013 until 2020, when the opening date of the project was approaching, were reflected in the news reports.

As a result of the survey, total 111 news reports were obtained; 62 from Hürriyet newspaper and 49 from the Sabah newspaper, respectively. However, when these 111 news reports in question were evaluated among themselves, one report from each calendar year was selected and included in the analysis for avoiding repetition in the study; thus, total 8 news reports from the Hürriyet newspaper and total 7 news reports from the Sabah newspaper were examined, since 2017 any news reports regarding the Galataport project in the website of the latter could not be found.

Related news headlines are as follows:

“Galataport Count Day”, (Coşan, 2020).

“First Ship on April 5th”, (Coşan, 2019).

“Its Demolition Was With Reactions! And Here Is Its Final Image”, (Yıkılması tepki toplamıştı!, 2018).

“Seal to Galataport”, ((Erbil, 2017).

“4.5 Billion Worth of Signatures for Galataport, (Galataport için 4.5 milyonluk, 2016)
Council of State Prosecutor too Says ‘Against the Public Interest’ in Galataport Case”, (Çapa, 2015).

“Explanation on Galataport”, (Galataport ile ilgili açıklama, 2014).

“Master of the Ports”, (Limanların efendisi, 2013).

“Near-End in Galataport to Become Istanbul’s New Gateway to the World”, (İstanbul’un dünyaya açılan, 2020).

“Galataport to Increase Istanbul’s Number of Cruise Tourists from 20 Thousand to 1.5 Million”, (Galataport İstanbul’un kruvaziyer, 2019).

“Foreign Investors Showed Great Interest in Beyoğlu’s Projects”, (Yabancı yatırımcılar Beyoğlu’nun, 2018).

“First Dig to Galataport”, (Öztürk, 2016).

“Galataport Flies You”, (Alakent, 2015).

“Galataport Statement by Öib”, (ÖİB’den Galataport açıklaması, 2014).

“Galataport Flies Karaköy”, (Galataport Karaköy’ü uçurdu, 2013).

In this study, newspaper news reports are considered as communicative activity that legitimizes spatial transformation and produces a discourse that serves the reproduction of dominant relations. It is argued that the discourse produced by the journalist as an organic intellectual is used as a tool to legitimize the capital-oriented transformation of the city and to produce social consent. For this reason, in the study, the critical discourse analysis method proposed by van Dijk will be applied to the news reports about the Galataport Istanbul Project in the Hürriyet and Sabah newspapers, respectively, in line with the macro and micro structural analysis.

Van Dijk's method draws attention to the relationship established between the structures of discourse and the structures of power and argues that the structures of this cognitive power can be found in discourse. In this sense, power emerges as a characteristic of a relationship among the social groups and mainly forms in the interaction within communication

(Sancar, 2014, pp. 140, 141). Van Dijk, who argues that the media has a unique role in the production and reproduction of power structures, points out how power emerges among the social groups through language and communication, and how it is reproduced through the minds of individuals (van Dijk, 1994). In this context, van Dijk's model is quite favourable in terms of revealing the structure of the news and, more importantly, the ideological presentation of the news (Özer, 2011, p. 82).

Özer points out that van Dijk deals with the news narrative in two different types of linguistic analysis, "synthetic" and "semantic", by also mentioning the importance of contextual factors that shape the basic structure of news discourse. While the syntax of the news is the grammatical structures of the preferred sentences, semantics refers to the meaning of words, sentences, that is, the whole discourse. In this context, van Dijk's analysis model is examined under two headings: "macro structure" and "micro structure" (Özer, 2011, p. 83). Özer explains van Dijk's model as follows: Macro structure has two sub-headings: thematic and schematic analysis. In the thematic structure, the headings, entrance to the news (the spot, the first paragraph or the first sentence of the news text in the absence of a spot), the photo should be looked at. And in the schematic structure, status and interpretation sections are included. The status section is divided into the narration of the main event, results, background and context information, and the interpretation is the evaluation of news sources and parties of the event. In the micro structure, syntactic analysis, which involves with the active-passive and simple-complex nature of sentence structures, regional adaptation, which involves with the levels of causal/functional/referential relationship, word choices and the rhetoric of the news consisting of the photographs, credible information, statistical information, and the statements of eyewitnesses are examined (Özer, 2011, p. 85).

CONCLUSION and EVALUATION

Considering the content and discourse produced by the journalists in the reporting of the Galataport Istanbul project, it is seen that the news is generally presented through the opinions of Doğu Group and Bilgili Holding managers, Galataport Istanbul managers, prominent people in the real estate and tourism sectors and the Mayors. In line with the

dominant perspective, Galataport has been projected as a one that makes a difference, provides advantage, and causes an increase in income and profit. In this sense, It has been observed in the news the understanding that the project has economic returns covering the whole society is dominant.

It is seen in the news that the causality relationship has been established on the basis of arguments such as the project is a beneficial one for all of Turkey, especially Istanbul, and as it is implemented in order to increase the well-being and welfare level of the whole society. In this context, it has often been argued in the news that the project will add value to Istanbul with its cultural values and symbols, and carry Istanbul to the place it deserves in the competition with other cities. In addition, it is seen that the project is presented as a one that will contribute to the urban culture and the urban economy and will have an impact on the progress, development and improvement of the city with the opportunities it brings. For this reason, it is frequently emphasized in the news that the economic gains to be obtained through tourism, trade and service sectors will increase thanks to the tourists and local visitors living in the city that will arrive with the operation of Galataport as a world-class port. In this manner, a meaning is tried to be created as such projects were implemented by considering the benefit and welfare level of the whole society.

It is seen in the news Galataport is generally considered as a colourful, bright, magnificent, clean, safe and comfortable venue. This is a clear indication that the city is presented to the consumption of domestic and foreign public as a showcase. The basis of this kind of reporting is the idea of attracting the attention of domestic and foreign public opinion in order for the circulating capital to arrive to the city. As a matter of fact, Galataport is a venue equipped with the necessary functions to serve the process of articulating Istanbul to the world economy. As organic intellectuals, journalists fulfil their responsibilities in creating an image that can attract the attention of capital and tourists in order to market the project through news discourse.

In newspaper news, issues such as what information the journalist gives or does not give when dealing with a subject and in what contexts, if any, have a decisive effect on the reader's level of consciousness and cognition. In the study, it was seen that the journalists,

who were evaluated as organic intellectuals in the news about the Galataport Istanbul Project, handled the issue in an abstracted manner from the problems that it created or will create, exactly as it should have been. By developing a content and discourse that affirms such projects for a strong and developed city and even country, society is encouraged to support neoliberal urban hegemony. This result also confirms the hypothesis of the study. In this sense, it is possible to say that spatial transformation is handled with a certain systematic in the news and its social, economic, cultural and spatial cost is almost never seen.

Presenting the economic interests of the dominant class in the media as the common interest of large segments of the society causes projects such as Galataport to be supported by large social segments in cities. Thanks to the manufactured social consent, the pressure of the neoliberal mind on the urban space is increasing, and the physical environment of the cities comes increasingly under the influence of neoliberal logic. The ruling powers, which serve the continuity of domination of the ruling class, have to reproduce the consent of the society in all cases for the continuity of the current historical block. The most effective way to do this is to use the media, as a tool, which is dependent on power for economic interests. For this reason, such projects are considered as "investments" made in the city for the people within both the power circles and the media.

However, the global urban ideal and spatial interventions made in line with this ideal are one of the functional tools that ensure the maintenance of the capitalist production relations. Mega projects such as closed luxury residential areas, skyscrapers, residences, business towers, wide highways, revitalized ports and international airport have become landmarks surrounding Istanbul. As a result, the city has turned into a commodity designed for the upper classes and tourists to have fun and have a pleasant time with its gentrified neighbourhoods and areas.

Considering the representation of the urban space in the media, especially in Galataport, it is seen that this venue is marketed as a shopping centre overlooking the sea for the people of Istanbul and domestic and foreign tourists. However, this new space has two different intertwined functions: the cruise port and the shopping centre. It is not difficult to predict

that there will be contradictions between the representation of the space in the media and the spatial experiences of individuals since the ships approaching the shore will completely close the sea view when the cruise port starts to operate at full capacity. The fact that the real-life spatial experiences of individuals and the representations of urban space produced in the media do not coincide may lead to significant problems and discussions. Therefore, it is thought that the study will contribute to new studies on this subject.

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