

From Yassıada to Democracy and Liberties Island, Istanbul: Exploring a Microcosmos of Emotions, Bodies, and Space (working title)

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This research explores Democracy and Liberties Island -formerly known as Yassıada- in Istanbul, particularly focusing on the role of emotions in the overall Island experience, on the ways in which a narrative is created, and on the interplay between the various agents involved in the Island's transformation over decades. Of the three museums built on the Island, this project pays special attention to the *Democracy and Liberties Museum* and probes how it imagines, enables, and conveys its message(s). The project discusses the Island against the backdrop of the contemporary museumscape in Turkey.

Lying off the coast of Istanbul, Yassıada is etched on the public mind as the location where the military trials were held after the 1960 military coup d'état. Starting in 1949, Turkish Naval Forces used the Island as a training location. The Navy then abandoned the facilities in 1978 due to logistical difficulties, and the Island was left largely desolate until the early 2000s. A number of decrees were issued to alter its legal status, in 2013 the name was officially changed to *Demokrasi ve Özgürlükler Adası* [Democracy and Liberties Island], and in 2015 construction began on the Island. In 2020, on the 60th anniversary of the military coup, the Island complex was officially inaugurated. Today, the Island welcomes its visitors with three museums, a hotel, a mosque, a congress center, and a lighthouse. Attempting to transform itself into a site of memory, the museums capitalize on the Island's tumultuous history and incorporate the past traumatic events in its narrative.

Following Donald Preziosi's theorization of museums as institutions that do not merely exhibit, but are actively involved in embodying a narrative, this project conceptualizes the museum space as an active agent in formulating a narrative and evoking emotions. With the museum constituting a focal point, this project focuses on the ways in which bodies move on the Island and emotions are instigated and instrumentalized, while bearing in mind the highly politicized history of the small piece of land. The research further provides vignettes of other adaptive reuses as museums in order to cultivate a more substantiated comprehension of recent developments in Turkey's cultural domain.

October 2023