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'Non-Istanbulites' of Istanbul : the right to the city novels in Turkish literature from the 1960s to the present

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CHAPTER 3

The Urban Sociological Context

As mentioned earlier, the novels in this corpus are described as the right to the city novels, not simply because they deal with themes about the right to the city, but because of their overall message regarding immigrants' presence in the city. Sometimes the idea of the right to the city appears as themes in the novels, such as themes on material necessities or other needs for a fulfilling life in the city; sometimes it is hidden between the lines, behind various other themes and motifs. In any case, it is argued in this dissertation that this concept is at the core of all the novels in the corpus. In the first section of this chapter, what is understood by this concept throughout this work is explained. In the novels of the corpus, the question of how immigrants adapt to urban life and their process of becoming urbanites comes to the fore as a central issue. Therefore, the concept of urbanity in the Istanbul context is discussed in the second section of this chapter. Finally, since immigrants' strategies and tactics to survive in the city is also an important theme in the novels, the concept of quiet encroachment and urban movements in Turkey are touched on, through their aspects relevant to the analysis of the novels, in the final section of the chapter.

3.1 The Right to the City

Henri Lefebvre, at the time of the great urban upheaval in Paris in 1967-8, developed the concept of the right to the city. At the core of this concept was his vision which went against the idea of city as exchange value. As Christian Schmid points out, in a capitalist system it is inevitable that "the city itself, urban life, becomes a commodity" (55). He describes this as "the commodification of the urban" (55). This commodification process is central in understanding Lefebvre's concept of the right to the city, which he develops against the organisation of urban life based on the exchange value of the city. As a result of the dominance of the exchange value, the majority of inhabitants of the city are deprived of living a fulfilling urban life, thus Lefebvre advocates for a transformation towards the use value of the city.

Lefebvre draws attention to the fact that in cities, in addition to wealth, "knowledge (*connaissances*), techniques, and *oeuvres* (works of art, monuments)" are accumulated (66). Thus he defines the city as '*oeuvre*'³⁷ and equates it with the use value as opposed to the *product* which is exchange value. According to Lefebvre, "the eminent use of the city, that is, of its streets and squares, edifices and monuments" is not based on production but on

³⁷ Inverted commas belong to the English translation of Lefebvre's work used in this analysis.

“pleasure and prestige” (“Right” 66). In arts, he sees the capability of creating “structures of enchantment” (173) and stresses that the bourgeoisie “replaces the *oeuvre*, by the product” (75). He underscores that “those who retain this sense of the *oeuvre*, including writers and painters, think and see themselves as ‘non-bourgeois’” (75). For a transformed society, where a completely different sort of city and urban life can exist, the dynamics of art and philosophy must also be transformed: “. . . the future of art is not artistic, but urban, because the future of ‘man’ is . . . in urban society. . . art and philosophy must reconsider itself in relation to this perspective. The problematic of the *urban* renews the problematic of philosophy, its categories and methods” (173). Only if the city is no longer a commodity to make profit from can the right to the city, which Lefebvre describes as “a transformed and renewed *right to urban life*” (158), be realised.

Lefebvre explains that, for this “an integrated theory of the city and urban society, using the resources of science and art” is needed and adds: “only the working class can become the agent, the social carrier or support of this realization” (158). He reminds us that “in the urban context, struggles between fractions, groups and classes strengthen the feeling of belonging” (67) and referring to the suburbanisation of the working class he acknowledges that “isolated from the city, the proletariat will end its sense of the *oeuvre*”, thus “urban consciousness will vanish” (77).

To inhabit is a crucial concept for Lefebvre, which he uses with reference to Heidegger. Lefebvre underlines that, to inhabit means “to take part in social life” (76) and draws attention to “the reduction of ‘to inhabit’ to *habitat*” in Paris during its urban transformation after World War II, when “all perceptible, legible urban reality has disappeared: streets, squares, monuments, meeting places” (79). Lefebvre defines urban life as follows: “Urban life suggests meetings, the confrontation of differences, reciprocal knowledge and acknowledgement (including ideological and political confrontation) ways of living, ‘patterns’ which coexist in the city” (75). Based on this elaboration of urban life, the distinction between the use value and exchange value in terms of the urban question is clarified as follows: “*use value* (the city and urban life) and *exchange value* (spaces bought and sold, the consumption of products, goods, places and signs)” (86). In the core of the city and urban life as use value lie social bonds, class struggle and labour. Lefebvre associates the “images of effort, of will, of subjectivity, of contemplation” with the city (87).

Lefebvre underlines that in addition to “anthropological needs which are socially elaborated” such as safety and security, social bonds and personal space (147) urban residents have needs such as “the need for creative activity, for the *oeuvre* . . . , of the need for

information, symbolism, the imaginary and play” (147). The right to the city includes access to opportunities for meeting such needs where “a new humanism, a new praxis, another man, that of urban society” will emerge (150).

According to Lefebvre, “the *urban* can only be confined to a strategy prioritizing the urban problematic, the intensification of urban life, the effective realization of urban society” (132). With “the effective realization of urban society” he means “morphological, material and practico-material base” (132). As summarised above, what Lefebvre means by *the right to the city* is something much larger in scope than meeting material necessities in the city. It is a right to a different type of city in a completely different system. As Harvey points out: “The right to the city is far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city” (23).

However, some researchers and activists conceive the right to the city simply as changes to rehabilitate urban life in the city as it exists within the current system. The list of rights in the *World Charter for the Right to the City*³⁸ first presented in 2004 at the Social Forum of the Americas, in Quito, Ecuador, and which “is an instrument designed to support urban struggles and in acknowledging human rights and the right to the city in the international system” (“World Charter” News) appears to be a good example of such an approach.

The Charter defines the right to the city as “the equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity, and social justice” and describes it as “the collective right of the inhabitants of cities, in particular of the vulnerable and marginalized groups” and stresses that “all the civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights which are already regulated in the international human rights treaties” are included in this right (2). Rights thus listed, under the umbrella of the right to the city, are as follows:

. . . rights to work in equitable and satisfactory conditions; to establish and affiliate with unions; to social security, public health, clean drinking water, energy, public transportation, and other social services; to food, clothing, and adequate shelter; to quality public education and to culture; to information, political participation, peaceful coexistence, and access to justice; and the right to organize, gather, and manifest one’s opinion. It also includes respect for minorities; ethnic, racial, sexual and cultural plurality; and respect for migrants.

³⁸ From here onwards, Charter.

The . . . right to development, to a healthy environment, to the enjoyment and preservation of natural resources, to participation in urban planning and management, and to historical and cultural heritage. (2)

Looking at this list, one cannot ignore the impossibility of the realisation of all these rights within a capitalist system where the city is a commodity. Lefebvre's constant emphasis on the use value of the city thus comes to the fore. Margit Mayer aptly describes the right to the city as "less a juridical right, but rather an oppositional demand, which challenges the claims of the rich and powerful" (71). Confirming that the rights in the Charter would improve the conditions of people living in cities, she draws attention to the fact that "unlike the Lefebvrian notion of the right to the city" these rights would only render possible "inclusion in the current city as it exists" but "do not aim at transforming the existing city – and in that process ourselves" (74). It should not be forgotten that Lefebvre describes the right to the city as "a superior form of rights: right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit" (173).

Goonewardena draws our attention to the fact that Lefebvre, in *Everyday Life in the Modern World*, makes the following call: "Let everyday life become a work of art! Let every technical means be employed for the transformation of everyday life!" (qtd. in Goonewardena 98). She stresses that both in that work and in *The Urban Revolution* Lefebvre emphasises that "there can be no social(ist) revolution without an urban revolution, no urban revolution without a social(ist) revolution, and neither without a revolution in everyday life" (98) and referring to documents such as the Charter list above, she makes the following analysis: "This is the backdrop against which Lefebvre's concept of *the* right to the city must be understood - not as another addition to the self-contradictory liberal-democratic list of 'human-rights,' but rather the right to a radically different *world*" (98).

In a similar fashion, Peter Marcuse clarifies the practical dimensions of the right to the city reciprocally with its overarching philosophical dimension in an apt analysis: the demand for the right to the city, he asserts, is "of those who are excluded" whereas "the aspiration is of those who are alienated", hence "the cry is for the material necessities of life" while "the aspiration is for a broader right to what is necessary beyond the material to lead a satisfying life" (31). He explains that:

The demand comes from those directly in want, directly oppressed, those for whom even their most immediate needs are not fulfilled: the homeless, the hungry, the imprisoned, the persecuted on gender, religious, racial grounds. . . . those whose work

injures their health, those whose income is below subsistence, those excluded from the benefits of urban life. (30-31)

Having clarified that, Marcuse describes the alienated as “those superficially integrated into the system and sharing in its material benefits” but unsatisfied in terms of their “creative activity” and “social relationships” and those who feel “guilty perhaps about an undeserved prosperity, unfulfilled in their lives’ hopes” (31). He concludes that “it is a combination of the deprived and the discontent who will lead the push for the right to the city” (33).

The rights mentioned above, for instance in the Charter, can be seen as what Marcuse defines as “the necessities for a decent life” which “must have priority” since “they are immediate, indeed existential, needs” (34). On the other hand Marcuse, like Goonewardena, urges us not to forget that at the core of the concept of the right to the city lies the struggle for a different world:

. . . the right to the city is a demand for a broad and sweeping right, a right not only in the legal sense of a right to specific benefits, but a right in a political sense, a claim not only to a right or a set of rights to justice within the existing legal system, but a right on a higher moral plane that demands a better system in which the potential benefits of an urban life can be fully and entirely realized. (34)

Some might call this utopian, or unrealistic; the argument on that is beyond the scope of this work. In any case, it might be useful to remember that Lefebvre always found utopias inspiring.

In the analysis of the novels below, while the idea of the right to the city appearing as themes on the surface are examined, its resonances through other themes in the novels are also explored.

3.2 The Question of Urbanity: ‘Istanbulites’ and ‘non-Istanbulites’

Who is an urbanite is a highly contested topic, and as Grönlund points out this notion can be “too vague and too complex” (112-02). In this dissertation, an ‘urbanite’ designates a person who lives in the city, and feels at home in the urban environment; who has adopted the social codes of behaviour necessary in the public space and who can behave comfortably in that space in his/her daily life; who is aware of the diversity in the city and is respectful to it, at least in terms of manners; who respects the participation of women in the social and economic life of the urban environment, at least in terms of manners; who can communicate with strangers in the urban environment without any problems; and who socialises with people other than close family and relatives. Rather than the understanding of a monotype

urbanity which equates it with certain types of outfit, accent, free time activities, ways of socialisation and so on, the approach in this dissertation can be defined as open to multiple/alternative urbanities.

3.2.1 Immigrants' Integration into the City

As pointed out in the previous chapter, as shanties spread in Istanbul, rural to urban immigrants who were mostly living in them were regarded as peasants in the city. However, this pejorative description did not offer a plausible solid definition for the status of the new members of the city. Kıray, in an article she wrote in 1973, stresses firmly that “people living in shanties are by no means peasants any longer”³⁹ (98). Yet, she adds, since the country industrialised very slowly, and it got organised even slower than that, “. . . this population who had to leave their land behind do not find the chance to gain an industrial-urban identity, and works in random, small, non-producing service works”⁴⁰ (98). She emphasises that the amount of “plausible industrial works”⁴¹ is limited, however “none of these people work in agricultural production, so they are no longer ‘peasants’”⁴² (98). She recommends the use of “pseudo-urbanization and pseudo-urbanite”⁴³ since “relationships involved in economic production and the vocations in the city are so amorphous, and this amorphousness has been ongoing for so long, that the shanties and craftsmanship have become an important aspect of urban life”⁴⁴ (99).

Based on the informal economy most of the immigrants were employed in, and their informal housing as shanty settlements, Tansı Şenyapılı, in 1978, describes them as marginal population and underscores that although these people “are not integrated in terms of cultural and social relations”⁴⁵, they succeed in being part of the “economic and physical space . . . making use of rational solutions”⁴⁶ (44). Wenfei Wang and Cindy Fan, in their article about the integration of rural to urban migrants in China, divide integration into three categories: “economic integration”, “social/cultural integration”, and “identity integration” (733). What T. Şenyapılı points out in the above quotation is that immigrants in Istanbul are not integrated in social or cultural terms or in terms of identity. However, in terms of finding ways to

³⁹ “Gecekondulular artık kesinlikle köylü değildir.”

⁴⁰ “. . . topraklarını bırakmak zorunda kalmış bu nüfus, endüstriyel-kentli işçi kişiliğini almaya fırsat bulamamakta, rasgele, küçük üretici olmayan hizmet işleri ile uğraşmaktadır.”

⁴¹ “elverişli endüstriyel işler”

⁴² “Hiçbir tarımsal üretimle de uğraşmamaktadır, dolayısıyla artık ‘köylü’ değildir.”

⁴³ “sahte-kentleşme ve sahte-kentli”

⁴⁴ “kentteki üretim ve meslek ilişkileri o denli amorfudur ki, ve bu durum o denli uzun sürmektedir ki, gecekondu ve küçük sanatlar kent yaşantısının belirgin bir parçası durumunu almaktadır.”

⁴⁵ “kültürel ve sosyal ilişkiler açısından bütünleşmemiştir”

⁴⁶ “ekonomik ve fizik mekanlarda . . . akılcı çözümlere vararak . . .”

survive economically, and of creating a place to live, they find ways through their informal and marginal solutions. Asef Bayat describes such tactics as quiet encroachment, which is briefly discussed below.

Although immigrants find tactics to be able to survive in the city, these tactics, which allow them to barely survive in the urban environment, do not enable them to culturally and socially integrate. This in turn brings the impossibility of integration in terms of identity. T. Şenyapılı stresses that working in a job which is accepted as urban is not enough for integration, one needs “enough income that makes it possible to participate in urban life”⁴⁷ for integration (38). Önder Şenyapılı also stresses that economic hardships create a barrier in front of adaptation to life in the urban context (101). He points out that “when peasants move to the city they are accepted as ‘urbanites’ since their labour becomes urban and they live in the city but, they are not ‘urbanites’ in the real sense”⁴⁸ (128) and describes them as “‘urbanizing peasants’”⁴⁹ (128). He stresses that if “urban activities (or non-agricultural activities) in the city”⁵⁰ and jobs that are “consistent, healthy, and bringing sufficient income”⁵¹ increase, then this process of urbanisation will also gain momentum (128).

All the views referred to above belong to the period which Erder defines as times when the focus of the discussions about immigration was on the integration of peasants (“Where Do You” 162). Views on immigrants, mainly based on the shanty people constituting their majority, went through various phases from empathy towards exclusion, as discussed in the previous chapter. The ways immigrants become urbanites in the city is an important theme in the novels of the corpus, as the analyses in the coming chapters reveal.

3.2.2 The Istanbulite and ‘Non-Istanbulite’ Dichotomy

The dichotomy of Istanbulite and non-Istanbulite has been reproducing the dichotomy of urbanite and peasant, pushing it into a vicious circle. As mentioned in the last chapter, the anti-immigrant discourse takes the form of an Istanbulite snobbism and nostalgia for a cosmopolitan Istanbul in the dominant public discourse. This discourse creates the illusion that these immigrants will never be Istanbulites so they do not belong to the city. However, if the myth dimension of this Istanbulite identity was emphasised more, along with the fact that Istanbul had always been a place of immigration, then immigrants could feel a stronger bond

⁴⁷ “kentsel yaşama katılma olanağı sağlayan gelir düzeyi”

⁴⁸ “Kente göçmekle, en azından emekleri kentlileştirdiğinden ötürü, artık kentte yaşamaya başladıklarından ötürü ‘kentli’ sayılıyorlar ama, gerçek anlamda ‘kentli’ değiller.”

⁴⁹ “‘kentlileşen köylüler’”

⁵⁰ “kentsel etkinlikleri (ya da tarım dışı etkinlikleri)”

⁵¹ “kararlı, sağlıklı, yeterli gelir sağlayan”

with the city. They could feel that they belong to Istanbul as well as to the places where they have come from. Second, after this important threshold is passed, then the dichotomy of urbanite and peasant could be rephrased as follows: urbanites and those who are becoming urbanites. At such a point then, concepts such as multi rather than mono type urbanity, or alternative urbanities could be used resulting in a much more inclusive approach.

Some argue that, in order to be accepted as an Istanbulite, one's roots must go back seven generations in this city. Behar, calculating the possibility of this mathematically, explains that “. . . in today's Istanbul of ten millions we can find around five hundred people 'who are seven generations Istanbulite'”⁵² (52). As a matter of fact “[Istanbul] is a city of immigrants, with three-quarters of its population born elsewhere” (Öncü, “Istanbulites and Others” 95), let alone people seven generations of whose ancestors were born in the city. Öncü points out that: “the question of who is an Istanbulite is a rhetorical question. A true Istanbulite is a ‘myth’” (95) and adds:

. . . the mythology of an Istanbulite has lost its cultural moorings in the realm of taste and distinction emblematic of high culture, shorn of its connotations of belonging and authenticity. It merely negates and excludes. It thus operates at the level of everyday, to cut and reshape the living texture of reality into a rigid dichotomy of Istanbulites and immigrants. (98)

Below, this dichotomy will briefly be discussed through its central aspects.

As Güvenç underscores, the discourse criticising immigrants and immigration finds support among immigrants as well (130). R.T. Erdoğan, the current president of Turkey, whose parents had migrated to Istanbul from Rize, considered bringing in a visa obligation for entering Istanbul during his appointment as mayor of the city, which is an unforgettable example of this stance (“Erdoğan: İstanbul'a”). In a similarly confusing manner, such an exclusionist discourse may also come from the left. Oya Baydar's article entitled “Istanbul as Defeated by the Other”⁵³ is a good example. Baydar gives a chronicle of rural to urban migration in this article, in addition to various urban planning problems deriving from inefficient governance and planning, and concludes it as follows: “In the Istanbul of the 1997's the central conflict is not class conflict but a cultural conflict in the widest sense”⁵⁴ (79). In this strikingly dichotomic approach, the cultural conflict is obviously between the culture of ‘Istanbulites’ and ‘non-Istanbulites’.

⁵² “. . . bugünün on milyonluk İstanbul'unda beş yüz kadar 'yedi göbek İstanbullu' kişi bulabiliriz.”

⁵³ “Ötekine Yenik Düşen İstanbul”

⁵⁴ “1997'ler İstanbul'unda baş çelişki artık sınıfsal değil en geniş anlamıyla kültürel bir çelişkidir.”

Jean-François Pérouse stresses the dichotomy between Istanbulites and immigrants and adds: “Most of the research on Istanbul is extremely selective and thus concealing. These works are fond of people who lived in the past and empty buildings, and they attack the ugly, contemporary Istanbul which is full of ‘rude’ people”⁵⁵ (21). An inclusive approach to immigrants as members of the city is necessary for their integration in terms of identity. As Pérouse points out, this can be missing in academic studies (21). So, it comes as no surprise that this is the case in the public opinion and discourse as well.

Leyla Neyzi as well draws attention to the fact that “Istanbul has always been a city of immigrants”⁵⁶ (80) and argues that “. . . ‘being an old-Istanbulite’ signifies a culture and life style rather than the time passed in Istanbul”⁵⁷ (82). While being an old-Istanbulite might be reserved as a signifier for an elite way of life, being an Istanbulite should be enlarged in a way that can cover all people living in Istanbul. As Erder points out, those who came from other cities of Turkey with their savings and skills and who now live in the city centre have adapted to the city easily and became Istanbulites (“Yerlisi Yok” 238-240). Since old-Istanbulites were never that visible in the city, these immigrants soon stopped feeling themselves to be the provincials of Istanbul (240). She adds that, “the old-Istanbulite is only a historical figure for them. Or he/she is an awkward master who they indirectly hear about from those who have actually had the chance to meet them [old-Istanbulites]. Today, for them an Istanbulite is anyone who lives, works in this city”⁵⁸ (240).

As Erder explains, former villagers and the poor had a very different story from those who came with their savings and skills. These people, most of whom lived in shanties were excluded in the past but today they “have become an important aspect of the city by all means”⁵⁹ (242). Describing them as “those who look at Istanbul from the periphery”⁶⁰ (243), she notes “. . . it can be understood that they do not feel themselves as strangers in the city but they do not see themselves as Istanbulites yet, however, there is no Istanbulite which they perceive as a concrete reality”⁶¹ (243).

⁵⁵ “İstanbul arařtırmalarının pek çoęu aşırı düzeyde seçici ve dolayısıyla gizleyicidir. Bu çalışmalar geçmiş dönemde yaşamış kişileri ve boş binaları sever, ‘kaba’ insanlarla dolu çirkin günümü İstanbul’una verip veriřtirir.”

⁵⁶ “İstanbul her zaman bir göçmen şehri olmuřtur.”

⁵⁷ “. . . ‘eski İstanbulluluk’, İstanbul’da geçirilimiř zamandan çok, bir kültür ve yaşam tarzını işaret etmekte.”

⁵⁸ “Eski İstanbullu onlar için sadece tarihsel bir figürdür. Ya da bunlarla tanışma şansına sahip olan yakınlarından dinledikleri tuhaf bir efendidir. Onlar için artık İstanbullu, bu şehirde yaşayan, çalışan herkeřtir.”

⁵⁹ “artık her yönüyle kentin önemli bir parçası haline gelmiřtir.”

⁶⁰ “İstanbul’a çevreden bakanlar”

⁶¹ “. . . İstanbul’da kendilerini yabancı hissetmedikleri, kendilerini henüz İstanbullu olarak saymadıkları ama somut bir gerçeklik olarak algıladıkları bir İstanbullu’nun da olmadığı anlaşılmaktadır.”

My City Istanbul [*Kentim İstanbul*] project launched in 2003 by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality is worth mentioning at this point. “During the project, the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality . . . organized sightseeing tours, coffee house talks, seminars, panels, and innumerable billboards, books and booklets”⁶² (Özbey). As part of the project, photos of famous figures residing in Istanbul but born elsewhere were presented on billboards in the city with the following slogan: “I am an Istanbulite” [“Ben İstanbulluyum”] (Özbey). The objectives of the project were “. . . to ensure that people living in Istanbul, feeling a sense of belonging to Istanbul inherit its enormous cultural heritage, . . . lay claim to it, and present it by defining themselves with it . . .”⁶³ (“Kent Kültürü”). Related to the project, surveys were made on “urban culture and consciousness of urbanity”⁶⁴ (“Kent Kültürü”) which revealed that the number of people defining themselves as an Istanbulite was quite low (Özbey; “Istanbul Parallel”). Özbey points out that the project which started in a very ambitious way soon lost its charm and the tender was not renewed for 2004, and adds: “Maybe the starting point of the project was wrong, more emphasis should have been made on *the mutual points*, a definition of Istanbulite should have been made based on what is being *shared in this place*”⁶⁵ (Par. 1). Similarly, Pérouse argues that, given the social reality of Istanbul, in order to be functional this project should have been designed in such a way that it could bring forth a concept such as: “I am an Istanbulite and a Sivasite; I am an Istanbulite and a Mardinite” (Personal Interview)⁶⁶. Pérouse’s words are inspiring for envisioning an urban identity that crosses over the Istanbulite and immigrant dichotomy. With such an approach, this dichotomy can be surpassed, and a more productive discussion can be made on urbanity with differences and on the possibilities of multiple urbanities. These people who do not define themselves as Istanbulites today might define themselves so in this way. However, they need to be welcomed and embraced by those who look at Istanbul from the centre. As Erder summarizes in the most lucid way: “. . . those who see themselves as Istanbulites . . .

⁶² “İstanbul Büyükşehir Belediyesi . . . ‘Kentim İstanbul’ adlı projesi boyunca geziler, kahvehane sohbetleri, seminerler, paneller düzenledi, sayısız afiş, kitap ve kitapçık bastırdı.”

⁶³ “. . . İstanbulda yaşayan insanların İstanbul’a aidiyet hissederek onun devasa kültür mirasını tevarüs etmesini, . . . sahiplenmesini ve kendisini onunla tanımlayarak temsil etmesini . . .”

⁶⁴ “Kent kültürü ve kentlilik bilinci”

⁶⁵ “Belki de projenin çıkış noktası yanlıştı, *ortak özelliklere* daha fazla vurgu yapılmalı, *burada paylaşılanlardan* yola çıkarak İstanbullu tarifi yapılmalıydı.” Both emphases added.

⁶⁶ On 13-26 September, 2005, a work entitled *That’s an Istanbulite* [*O bir İstanbullu*] was realised as “a part of *Positionings* program of the 9th International İstanbul Biennial” (“Istanbul Parallel”). The work was developed based on *My City Istanbul* project with the objective of creating a “confrontation of the inhabitants of İstanbul with themselves and also with their fellow citizens” (“Istanbul Parallel”). “In order to achieve this, the designed posters [were] placed on the billboards at bus stops” (“Istanbul Parallel”). The work was designed by Ülkü Gezer and realised by Sakine Çil (“Istanbul Parallel”).

maybe should give up searching for the nostalgic or monotype Istanbulite from now on and learn to enjoy the variety in Istanbul”⁶⁷ (“Yerlisi Yok” 244). Erder’s words bring to one’s mind Sennett, who points out that “society gains equally when people’s experience is not limited just to those who resemble them in class, race, or ways of life. Sameness stultifies the mind, diversity stimulates and expands it” (“Capitalism” 114). In the analyses below, the ways the Istanbulite and the ‘non-Istanbulite’ dichotomy is treated in the novels is explored together with different facets of the question of urbanity. The novels in the corpus are analysed in terms of whether they engender the possibility of multiple/alternative urban identities.

3.3 Laying Claim to the City: Quiet Encroachment vs. Urban Movements

Immigrants’ struggle for survival in the cities fall under two main categories: quiet encroachment and urban movements.

3.3.1 Quiet Encroachment

Asef Bayat, in an article where he searches for a way out of the dichotomy of “elite rule and subaltern’s failure” (“Politics in the” 110) in times of neo-liberal urbanity, stresses that the left sees the “neoliberal city [as] a lost city” where subalterns do not hope for better lives and “where the ideal of the right to the city is all but vanished” (117). While agreeing with various aspects of these arguments, Bayat draws attention to the need for surpassing “categorical dichotomies as passive-active, or win-lose” and examines “what possibilities the neo-liberal city may unintentionally furnish for subaltern struggles” (119). He defines streets as “indispensable asset/capital” for the subaltern where they can “subsist and reproduce economic as well as cultural life” (119). He defines this as a form of “street politics” (119): “Street vendors who spread their business on the pavements, poor people who extend their lives onto the sidewalks, squatters who take over public lands, or protestors who march in the streets are all involved in street politics” (120).

Bayat defines their strategies as “encroachment” (“Politics in the” 120), as well as “quiet encroachment of the ordinary” (*Life* 80). He explains that

. . . the reclamation, by the poor people, of public space through encroachment, stretching out, functioning, and subsisting constitutes an expression of street politics, while simultaneously feeding into and accentuating the political street. In other words,

⁶⁷ “. . . kendini İstanbullu olarak görenlerin de belki artık nostaljik ya da tek tip İstanbullu aramaktan vazgeçip, İstanbul’daki çeşitliliğin tadına varmayı öğrenmesi gerekiyor.”

through this encroachment, the dispossessed are constantly engaged in struggles in and about the urban space. (“Politics in the” 120)

This quiet encroachment of immigrants in their struggle to survive in the city appears in this or that way in almost all the novels analysed in this research. Encroachment of land by building shanties for shelter appears in almost all of them. Vending on streets which is another form of quiet encroachment has always been an important phenomenon in the lives of the immigrants, since it is a means of self-employment in the city where there are not enough jobs for everyone. As a matter of fact, these two phenomena, together with the self-organized *public transport* of immigrants in the form of the share-taxi appear in the title of an important book on rural to urban migration in Istanbul: *The City with Shanty, Dolmush and Vendors*⁶⁸ (Tekeli, Gölüksüz, Okya 1976). Themes related to vending on streets are developed in a highly unique manner in *Strangeness*, as discussed in its analysis below.

3.3.2 Urban Movements

Kıvılcım Ertan divides urban movements in Turkey starting in the 1970s into three groups: municipality movements, shanty movements and urban environmental movements (11-14). In 2013, fourteen years after Ertan’s article, the most significant urban movement in Turkey was experienced, the Gezi Resistance which started as a reaction against the building of a shopping-mall in Gezi Park in Istanbul, and evolved into a massive urban movement with the participation of people from all walks of life.

Quiet encroachment rather than urban movements enter the novels in the corpus. An expectation of immigrants’ struggle to build urban social movements does not appear as a theme or a message in them. In other words, none of the works in the corpus stresses the fact that immigrants as agents can actually fight for their right to the city under the umbrella of urban movements, instead of simply confining themselves to quiet encroachment.

⁶⁸ Gecekondu, Dolmuşlu, İşportalı Şehir