# A Brief Glance at the Relationship of Urban Spaces and Social Change on Turkish Novels[*]

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**Abstract:** The relationship of novels and cities is quite deep because novels are heavily interested in urban life. The view is common that urban life and urban social processes have impacted the birth of the novel. The concepts of individuality, bourgeoisie, modernity, urbanization, and modernization have been cited in different contexts with the birth of the novel as a new literary genre. Therefore, talking about the novel means to mention the city and urban relations in a sense. Cities are a never-ending, inexhaustible resource for novels. The world of the novel, which describes in detail all conditions of urban spaces and people, also fulfills a function directed at urban social analysis. Novels narrating about lives in the city have become a basic resource for revealing the different directions and orientations of social structure and social change. In this sense, reading novels can be stated as bearing witness too social life. Sociology, being another testimonial of social life, can take some samples from the lives that come forth in the world of novels and strengthen analyses. Therefore, sociology can use the novels in front of it as a colossal resource in social analyses.

**Keywords:** modernization • sociology of literature • cities of the novel • Turk novels • urban culture

The relationship of cities and novels is rather deep due to novels having a predominant interest in urban life. The opinion that urban life and urban social processes have been impactful on the birth of the novel is widespread. The concepts of individuality, bourgeoisie, modernity, urbanization, and modernization have been cited in a different context together with the birth of the novel as a new literary genre. Therefore, talking about the novel means, in a sense, talking about the city and urban relations.

City life's wealth, diversity, and instance of thousands of types that demolish being the only case present the novelist with various stories. The novelist has made note that the pomp and disorder of modern life can only be followed in the city. Novelists attempt to describe different worlds, lives, and conditions in novels with a new world, thus trying to hold the mirror to society and cities through novels. For whatever reason, the city obviously attracts the novelist like a magnet. The city becomes the compulsory destination of the novelist.

The city-novel relationship covers the behavior of urbanity and the forms of urban life. The states of the city reflect moment by moment in the novel. The city affects, defines, and shapes people through its properties of being a living area and life style. Many issues that restrict city people, such as the different lives of people who belong to different social bases, wealth-poverty levels, loneliness, tragedies, social conflict, compromise and contradictions, crowds, freedoms, and monetary relations, provide significant contributions to the novelist's story base.

The world in the novel can be said to want to choose the city itself as the stage and paint the city and its people. The novel, which narrates the city through multiple aspects, presents the city first as a character. A type of presence can thus be mentioned, the *cities of the novel*. The city becomes the novel's hero; the city itself is described personally. Being the hero of the novel, the city transforms beyond being a location to a metaphor. Here the city corresponds to the lives loaded with many more specific qualities and portrayed through clear images. Cities are described as they are mentioned, a vigorous lively existence. The city here is not a stage; it is directly the character and actor and has its story. The city turns into a character or type.

Istanbul, beyond being more than a locale and a city, is an actor. Istanbul is a character in novels like *A Mind at Peace* (Tanpınar, 1986) and *Fatih-Harbiye* (Safa, 2000). Istanbul is practically the soul of the works of Abdülhak Şinasi, as if nothing but Istanbul is meant to be described. In *Ankara*, Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu (2000) doesn't stop describing the new capital from district to district and region to region. The transition between the old and new Anakaras, or the tension, unfolds in front of the eyes. In the novel *Noontime in Yenişehir*, Sevgi Soysal (2003) again has the reader confront Ankara as a character. In the history of the world of novels, Andrey Bely, Robert Musil, and Alfred Döblin have each respectively brought Petersburg, Vienna, and Berlin to the literary world as cities of the novel.

Another situation featured in the relationship of novels and cities is the relationship of human conditions with urban locales. Locale, as an indispensable element, determines the dimensions of the urban narrative. The city's geographical position and environmental and natural properties are the locales that are put forward in the flow of the story. Alongside this, the urban locales are narrated as a living area in a way that will strengthen the story. Therefore, the locale is the force of the story. Almost all locales featured at the urban level participate in the story. Homes, religious locales, hospitals, parks, bus stations, coffeehouses, entertainment places, bakeries,, shops, malls, residential areas, neighborhoods, streets, and avenues have each become stages that practically show the reader around. Novels both realize the depiction of locales and establish the local-human-society connection. The novel, narrating locales as elements not independent of people or society, thus spreads the thin relationship between urban locales and urban life in front of the eyes.

Novels perform their urban narrative over neighborhoods and districts. In particular, the narrative of a neighborhood or comparison of two neighborhoods is a considerably remarkable issue. In this case, novels that attribute a certain cultural texture or identity in the neighborhood try to directly establish the link between that neighborhood and the people. Every neighborhood has its own unique lifestyle, perspective, and culture that it produces; therefore it has an identity that imperceptibly inoculates itself on the people. Just like cities, neighborhoods also gain the quality of a symbol in this case. Neighborhoods are recognized through their associations. Neighborhoods at the same time also draw the interest of the novel as one of the typical views of spatial separation and discrimination in the city. Some neighborhoods and districts may represent the segregation of urban people.

In *Fatih-Harbiye*, a detailed comparison is made of Istanbul's various neighborhoods. In the particular comparison between the Fatih and Beyoğlu districts, the general structure, people, social relations, and locales of the neighborhoods are evaluated. According to this, Fatih is depicted through the people who come and sit in front of the coffeehouses, shops, and restaurants in the center to look at the past and through the miserable state of the shops. Beyoğlu, meanwhile located across from Fatih, is portrayed as having pleasure, as the locale of people. Here the shops and storefronts are practically like flowers.

Yakup Kadri Karaosmanoğlu's novel *Ankara* makes a kind of neighborhood narrative by prominently emphasizing the difference between the old and new Ankaras. Significant differences exist between Yenişehir, a neighborhood where the newly emerged bourgeois reside, with the neighborhoods of the old Ankara. The city is in a sense divided and segregated. Social practices are also changing together with spatial segregation. Two different lifestyles start to prevail in the same city and even between to nearby neighborhoods.

Together with neighborhoods and districts, novels aimed at homes, which are more a micro-living area, portray the home as a world in and of itself. Novels give a special importance to homes. The main reason for this is that the home forms the most simplest locale that reflects the changing society. The apartments, mansions, villas, shacks, pavilions, waterside homes, detached homes, and secured sites signify the differentiation in life styles in a sense. Each locale leads to the formation of a lifestyle and culture distinct in itself. The experienced locale defines life; therefore the locale bears the clues related to life.

Cities are a never-ending, inexhaustible resource for novels. The world of the novel that narrates in detail all aspects of the urban locales and people also fulfills a function aimed at the sociological analysis of cities. Novels that narrate lives in the city become a basic resource that exposes the different directions and orientations of the social structure and social change. In this sense, novels can be said to be witnesses to social life. Sociology, being another witness to social life, can take some samples from the lives portrayed in the world of novels and strengthen analyses. Therefore, sociology can use the colossal supply in front of it in social analyses.

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