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KÖPRÜDEKİLER: RETHINKING WALL, DOOR AND BRIDGE AS METAPHORS OF CINEMATIC ISTANBUL[1]

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, making a film about Istanbul corresponds to making a travel or immigration film. The city, which is just like an ephemeral hotel in the shape of a historic caravanserai, hosts strangers from many different walks of life for a long time. Most of these strangers, who began migrating to the magnet-like city especially after the 1960s, hold a simple and superficial cinematic cliché about the city: *Istanbul's soil and stones are golden.* The 'perfect but delusive' and 'polished but artificial' urban discourse were simultaneously fictionalised and criticised by the early Turkish cinema. However, the film *Köprüdekiler* (2009) reveals some of the paradoxes between exclusion and belonging, between isolation and involvement, between immigration and strangerhood and, between space and disorder. For this purpose, it utilises the metaphor of the wall, the bridge and the door, which are the urban metaphors of Istanbul. In this article, both the phenomenon of migration as an urban dilemma and the issue of alienation as a spatial division reflected in socio-cultural divisions are discussed. At the end of the article, Simmel's concept of *door* and *bridge* is rethought and criticised in the context of cinematic Istanbul.

Keywords: Istanbul, The City, The Stranger, Bridge, Wall, Door, Film.

KÖPRÜDEKİLER: SİNEMATİK İSTANBUL'UN METAFORLARI OLARAK SUR, KAPI VE KÖPRÜYÜ YENİDEN DÜŞÜNMEK

ÖZET

Son yıllarda İstanbul ile ilgili bir film yapmak, bir seyahat ya da göç filmi yapmaya karşılık gelmektedir. Tıpkı tarihi bir kervansaray şeklindeki geçici bir oteli andıran şehir, uzun bir süredir hayatın birçok farklı kesiminden yabancıları ağırlamaktadır. Özellikle 1960'lardan itibaren bu mıknatıs-vari şehre göç etmeye başlayan yabancıların çoğu, şehir hakkında basit ve yüzeysel bir sinema klişesine sahiptiler: *İstanbul'un taşı toprağı altındır*. "Kusursuz ama yanıltıcı" ve "cilalı ama yapay" olan bu kentsel söylem, ilk dönem Türk sineması tarafından eşzamanlı olarak hem kurgulanmış hem de eleştirilmiştir. Ancak *Köprüdekiler* (2009) filmi, dışlanma ile aidiyet, izolasyon ile katılım, göç ile yabancılık ve mekân ile düzensizlik arasındaki bazı paradoksları ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Bu amaçla İstanbul'un kentsel metaforları olan sur, köprü ve kapı metaforlarından yararlanmaktadır. Bu yazıda hem bir kentsel ikilem olarak göç olgusuna hem de sosyo-kültürel bölünmelere yansıyan mekânsal bir bölünme olarak yabancılık meselesine değinilmektedir. Makalenin sonunda Simmel'in ele aldığı *kapı* ve *köprü* kavramları yeniden düşünerek sinematik İstanbul bağlamında eleştirilmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: İstanbul, Kent, Yabancı, Köprü, Sur, Kapı, Film.

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INTRODUCTION

This study makes a socio-spatial analysis of Istanbul through the film *Köprüdekiler*. There is a deep-rooted and symbiotic relationship between cinema and the city, so much so that the first films depict cities; while cities have also been the essential ground of cinema. "Namely, thinking about films is to think about society and the city; therefore, those who try to solve the puzzle of the city and society should look for some clues on screen. All films either imply or explicitly articulate the hope and disappointment, struggle and deadlock, peace and conflict, harmony and contrast, solidarity and enmity of urban life" (Demir, 2014, p. 22). Films are projectors of complex social structure (Diken and Laustsen, 2007). The lives shown on the screen are the mirror, representation and projection of daily life. For this reason, the film analysed in this article, beyond a technical infrastructure, functions as a kind of reflector that captures the soul of the social. On the other hand, this projection is both subjective and interpretive.

Köprüdekiler has brought a new perspective to Turkish cinema, which for years consisted of Istanbul. It is one of the strong representations of the minimalist New Turkish Cinema that has risen especially after the 2000s. Here, Istanbul is portrayed as the home of social disappointments and conflicts rather than the ideal city life. The New Turkish Cinema actually initiated the shift of artistic interest from Istanbul to Anatolia – that is, from the city to the countryside (Suner, 2010). However, Yeşilçam refers to an Istanbul-centred era in Turkish cinema between the 1950s and 1980s. It involves mostly melancholic stories and characters. As Richardson, Gorbman and Vernallis state, the Yeşilçam industry is the Turkish equivalent of Hollywood (2013, p. 391).

In the cinematic era, Istanbul had been portrayed both as being a paramount door opening into a room filled with wealth and fortune, as a bridge that unifies every kind of socio-economic and cultural polarisation, and also as a phantasmagoria of unfulfilled expectations and unsatisfied claims. The cinematic characters of this era were either extremely rich or exaggeratedly poor, either purely good or utterly bad. Perceptions and interpretations which sharply classify attitudes, habits, personalities, experiences and spaces unavoidably ignored the existence of the people, relationships and values which they were referring to. Yeşilçam in Turkish cinema is not just a period; is a touchstone. In fact, Turkish cinema is classified as "Pre-Yeşilçam" and "Post-Yeşilçam" in cinema corpus (Arslan, 2011).

Köprüdekiler (2009), in contrast with the early (Yeşilçam) cinema, enters the uncaptured streets and attempts to change the meanings of some urban "clichés"[3]. It is a film that deals with multifaceted urban life as a complicated dilemma that occurs among thousands of ambiguous poles. In this dilemma, just as the opposite of evil does not necessarily have to be goodness, the remedy to poverty may not be wealth. In any case, the absolute unity or the complete duality of the city is both inadequate paradigms for describing the sociological notion of Istanbul. Today, since Istanbul is also articulated by its neighbouring cities, such as Tekirdag and Kocaeli, it is hard even to draw a decent map of the city. "Istanbul is the immutable intersection of vast and diverse mobilities. It reaches across the East-West and the North-South axes of the world, and all their possible variants" (Sassen, 2009, p. 5).

The feature of geographical centrality has made Istanbul desired city of different socio-ethnic groups throughout history; as a consequence, Istanbul does not have a *monolithic* structure. Rather, *it is more than one city* because, although it is a dense city, this density appears as a multiple-division rather than a complete duality (Keyder, 1999, p. 25). Subsequently, perhaps, Sassen states that Istanbul is not a huge village; rather, it is a city that consists of a great

[3] Contrary to the Yeşilçam, as stated, a different and pessimistic image of Istanbul has started to emerge since the 1990s.

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number of villages (2009). Moreover, the great number of these villages implies unplanned growth, and this affects the whole of society (Castles and Miller, 2009, p. 20).

As Spykman mentions, "the border is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that expresses itself in a spatial form" (2009, p. 148). In this sense, the film *Köprüdekiler*, 2009), directed by Aslı Özge—who, herself, is one of the most significant women directors in recent years—, should be seen as a plain mirror which *realistically* reflects the lives of the strangers in urban space. The power and worth of the film come from its simplicity and sincerity. It is an ordinary story of a teenager who struggles to survive by crossing the Bosphorus Bridge on a daily basis.[4]

Figure 1
Somehow, everything on the Bosphorus Bridge seems normal and ordinary from a distance. However, this may be misleading. That is why this image should be zoomed in a bit more.

Throughout the first minutes of the film, the director continues to introduce the rest of the characters. Indeed, apart from Fikret, there are three more independent characters and stories in the film. However, in this article, only the story of Fikret is zoomed in. In this study, Fikret is the subject of analysis as he is a dynamic portrait of spatial and social segregation. The viewers are again on the bridge. This time, a dark-skinned, poorly dressed young man is seen. He is selling roses to people who are waiting in traffic due to a jam on the bridge. This is Fikret. The social inadequacies which Fikret faces in terms of education, finance and vocational career are interpreted as being a manifestation of the *gecekondus*[5] in which Fikret and people like Fikret live. He is not a cinematic character who plays a given role. In other words, any of us can encounter him on the bridge when he offers red roses for us to buy. But it is necessary to pay careful attention to his voice since his voice blends—and almost even gets lost—in with the sounds of engines, car horns and sirens: "Roses! … Beautiful roses! … Here you go… Roses!". The uneducated, poor and desperate stranger, who lives in the slums of the city, struggles to ease his suffering by selling flowers on the bridge.

[4] In Istanbul, there are three main bridges connecting the Asian and European continents: the Bosphorus Bridge (known officially as the 15 July Martyrs Bridge since July 15, 2016 when the coup attempt took place), The Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge and The Yavuz Sultan Selim Bridge.

[5] *Gecekondu(s)* (squatters; etymologically *gece,* meaning 'night', and *kondu*, meaning 'landed') may be seen as a spatial symbol of socio-cultural transmission. Gecekondus are reproductions of rural space in the urban space (Tolan, 1977, p. 57).

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Figure 2
Fikret sells roses among thousands of vehicles everyday on the bridge.

With the pull effects of vast job opportunities, developed industries, widespread trade networks, better quality education and health services, infrastructure and facilities, millions of people have migrated into the city; this, in turn, has added a cinematic and sociological dimension to the issue of *strangerhood* and to the meaning of the *walls* surrounding the city.[6] Besides, the half-century-old and continual immigration process has caused an unstable growth in population, unplanned urbanisation, bizarre architectural formations, squatting, unemployment, poverty, crime, and infrastructure, dwelling and traffic problems. *Köprüdekiler*, the German, Dutch and Turkish co-production, thus zoom in on these urban problems and their socio-spatial reflections through new strangers to Istanbul.

As a result of ongoing immigrants from different geographies and cultures, the city turns into *a crooked mirror* in which everything is socially, economically, culturally and demographically nested to each other. These characters in the film are different extensions and colours of that portrait. Each of their lives passes over the bridge. Apart from this, they are commonly internal immigrants who are highly likely not to have been born in Istanbul but who came to the city later on. Those who are marginalised and tossed aside are not *foreign strangers*, but literally *native* [Anatolian] *strangers* who have entered the city from either the Haydarpasa Train Station or the Harem Bus Terminal.

FIKRET: A STRANGER INSIDE THE WALLS

The concrete and stones that were used in constructing the bridges that decorate the Bosphorus Strait once were the building materials that constituted the walls that used to completely surround the city of Istanbul. Those stone walls, which were witnesses to the most crucial events that changed the fate of Constantinople, were also strong and gigantic shields that saved the city from its enemies of the fifth century. Several times, many huge armies attempted to cross the walls but had to return empty-handed to their respective territories. But, after cannonballs began to be used on battlefields, Mehmet II, an Ottoman sultan known as *the conqueror*, and his army encircled the city-walls for weeks. The legendary walls were substantially demolished with cannonballs that were shot from his cannons when, finally, the city was conquered on May 29, 1453. For many years after its capture, Istanbul has continued to be a walled-city. The fall of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the Turkish Republic in 1923, however, deeply affected the future of its walls.

[6] Apart from these pull factors that make Istanbul attractive and preferable, there are some push factors that make rural Turkey unbearable, such as the decrease in cultivated areas through shared heritage, declining agricultural labour through agricultural mechanisation, insufficient funds, extended family structures, terror events, etc.

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As a result of its increasing population and unplanned urbanisation, Istanbul's periphery exceeded the walls and rapidly reached its neighbouring cities. The walls that once surrounded the city today lost their meaning and turned into a merely touristically observable, or visitable, space.[7] Nevertheless, new walls have been built that are no longer around the city but inside it. They expand and penetrate into each street—and even into each relationship of the city. These new walls are placed into rooms, houses, streets and districts on the basis that the new strangers who live among the urbanites must also be avoided and closed off from the regular denizens of the city.

Fikret, who positions himself in a corner of the city in terms of socio-economic class and status, hopes to go beyond those walls and try to get closer to its centre. He completely embodies the *other* who can be easily recognised in that he has a different accent, clothes, job, educational background, group of friends, living space, etc. Otherness shows its face especially whenever he comes to the city centre. Fikret is originally from Edirne, a place from which many Romani people inhabit, but he lives in Kuştepe, is a shanty town which, paradoxically, is, in the middle of Şişli, one of the most important trade centres in Istanbul. There are a great number of illegal and unsafe *gecekondu*s in Kuştepe which, even though topographically at the heart of the city, socio-economically is at one of the farthest corners of the city. According to Keyder, the main reason for Istanbul's population's increasing from one million to ten million after the second half of the twentieth century was due to the expansion of illegal housing (1999, p. 144). Kuştepe is, in this sense, one of the most obvious and nearest evidences of this reality.[8]

Figure 3
Fikret and his friends walk idly in devastated Kuştepe streets. There is almost no difference between the inside and the outside of a *gecekondu*.

In Kuştepe, there are also other strangers who share similar problems and pressures with Fikret. The director underlines their shared feelings and experiences by portraying the spatial features of the *gecekondu*s. First of all, the living area does not have any environment or urban planning. Its streets are generally dirty and messy. There exists neither pavement for pedestrians nor a proper route for vehicles! *The doors* of the houses directly open onto the street. Their clothes, and even underclothes, are hung outside the houses. As a result of this display, those who live in the same district can easily see each others' private belongings and

[7] The film, *Tabutta Rovasata* (*Somersault In A Coffin*, 1996) directed by Dervis Zaim, on the other hand, deals with the walls as a space of desolation and corruption. Similarly, in Alain Robbe-Grillet's film, *L'immortelle* (1963), it is possible to sense the solitude of these walls.

[8] Recently, Kuştepe and some similar towns were discussed in the context of urban transformation. Seeing as Kuştepe is very close to the skyscrapers of Şişli, it also constitutes one of the sharpest architectural contrasts in the city. One of the three campuses of Istanbul Bilgi University is also located in Kuştepe. Perhaps for this reason, three (Turkish) books (about Kuştepe and its socio-urban experience) were written by Professor Gulten Kazgan and were both published by Istanbul Bilgi University Press: Kuştepe Arastirmasi (Kustepe Reaserch, 2001) and Kuştepe Genclik Arastirmasi (Kustepe Youth Research, 2002).

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possessions—as if they each were a member of the other's family! The family image and the usage of space are mainly nourished with the shared intimacy and primacy these people have of the city. Accordingly, the most common opinion regarding the city is its uncanny and sinister nature. Moreover, its nature, which is protected with invisible walls, indirectly forces the strangers to put up visible walls between the uncertainties of urban life and themselves. The *gecekondu*s thus enable these strangers to construct and maintain their social existences in a safe frame. In other words, most of the society-made discriminative rules are suspended therein in the form of a socio-psychological *catharsis*. On the other hand, the more these walls rise, the more social distances among individuals and groups from different statuses inevitably increase. That is why, in Fikret and his friends' lives, Beyoglu is geographically close, but it, nevertheless, is still socio-economically distant to Kuştepe.

FIKRET: A DEVIANT OUTSIDE THE DOOR

Since meaning depends on gaze and since gaze depends on experience, even the best known tourist places in the city are always interpreted in a different way by strangers. For instance, when Fikret and his friends see the Galata Tower, which was built by the Genoese in 1348 and which is still one of the most spectacular and worthwhile-to-see symbols of Istanbul, at close range, they behave as if they are tourists who are visiting Istanbul and who are seeing the place for the first time in their lives. The stranger is the owner of such a tourist-like gaze and even looks at his own city *from a mental distance*. In spite of many advertised activities, Istanbul is still a city constituted of similar strangers who still do not visit Topkapi Palace, Hagia Sophia, the Basilica Cistern, the Grand Bazaar or the Suleymaniye Mosque and who are even dismissive of their presence. For these strangers, going to the city centre is beyond an activity done on one's spare time; instead, it is a sort of domestic holiday that may only be taken once or twice in their lifetimes.

Again, as for Kuştepe, there exist several different, nested houses in that part of the city that do not architecturally resemble each other. Each of them stands as if they are marginal, irregular, pathological and self-ordained components of a meaningful whole. In fact, there may be *an ontological analogy between a stranger's isolated house and his unwanted body*. Both of them are persuaded as to their being both offensive and defenceless at the same time. Also, both are, on the one hand, the most concealed and, on the other hand, the most visible bodies in the city. The stranger's house is a sort of *manifestation* of his body. S/he is both a frightening and a frightened image. Her/his ambivalent being produces fear and repulsion over others. S/he has the potential of being everyone and everything simultaneously. He is the object-like subject of all evils in common spaces.

For instance, one day, Fikret and his friend are expelled from a store that sells technological merchandise as soon as they attempt to touch one of its products. The store-owner warns him, "Don't come here again! I never want to see you here again!" The warning is based on the reality that each space is polarised in itself and is surrounded by visible or invisible restrictive lines. The stranger occasionally tries to cross these lines but mostly cannot succeed.

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Figure 4
Fikret and his friend are, although innocent, treated like robbers in the store. They are warned as soon as they cross the invisible boundaries.

From this point-of-view, Fikret is both inside and outside the society in which he lives. Namely, even if he is bodily with other people, he can neither join nor be accepted as an organic and constant member of that society. He is consistently held captive by owners' eyebeams. Their *eliminative glance* is both the main source of the fears that makes strangers anxious and paranoid and the essential reason behind their unrealised collective harmony and integration into society. The stranger is thus one who remains *in purgatory* with no exits. Even though Istanbul embraces Asia and Europe, this fact is not very important for the stranger like Fikret. His house is, in fact, the bridge itself. In other words, he exists in between the walls that divide people, values and identities. Just as he does not have any permanence, he is neither inside nor outside, of the city's space. He waits in front of *the door*. He is to wait and is seen as deviant as he will not be able to be welcomed inside the house. On the other hand, he is not able to be expelled insofar as he is *functional* and allowed to stay as an answer to the most ontological and vital questions which locals/natives/owners have.

In this respect, although strangerhood—at least Fikret's strangerhood—seems as if it is based on immigration, poverty, unemployment and a lack of education, it is essentially based on the collective norms which society imposes on him. In other words, strangerhood is, as Segal argues, a characteristic of a relationship rather than a personal condition (1998, p. 273). Nevertheless, this is an incomplete definition. Strangerhood is not only a relationship but also a [functional] measure with which to define that relationship. For instance, the exclusion of Fikret and his friend from the store gives the viewers a comprehensive clue, not only about these strangers, but also about the security regime and its providers. Accordingly, on the one hand, Fikret and his friends are labelled as a threat; on the other hand—and much more importantly—, the store's owner and his attitude are marked as a standard that determines who the owner is, delineates where the border is to be found, and also who (and how) someone may (or may not) be allowed inside. Strangerhood thus plays the role of a measure; that is why strangers are seen as being functional as well as ambivalent and dangerous.

Their undesirability produces a desire over established characters and groups to demonstrate themselves as being strong, dominant and, above all else, owners. As Bauman asserts, since city-dwellers are weak, they reproduce the stranger as being another weakling who hides all of his weaknesses within his own body (1997, pp. 28-29). In this context, Heller must also be right: "They are not strangers because they act against the expectations of others, just the contrary – they are expected to act as strangers" (2000, p. 150). For this reason, the rules which strangers have to obey do not only reflect their defects and inabilities but also indicate

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the watchers' desires—so much so that their glance and judgment exceed the being of the stranger. As a consequence of this, the stranger who opens to every formulisation is unsteady, protean, volatile and erratic (Bauman, 1997, p. 25). He is a person who does not only have any ultimate identity (ibid.) but also one who is not allowed to have an identity either. He is experienced as a half-being whose conception should be completed perpetually by someone else. In this respect, the stranger is a reconstruction project; each construction attempt, however, serves the owners by legitimising all kinds of rulemaking and security precautions against the strangers: "Unambiguously, the strangers are purveyors of pleasures. Their presence is a break in the tedium. One should thank God that they are here" (Bauman, 1997, p. 28); this is because their uncertain identities and flexible bodies remove all uncertainties in the city and indirectly determine who the locals, owners, natives, the settled and the elites are.

FIKRET: AN OUTSIDER IN THE SEARCH OF BELONGING

Fikret and his friends sometimes show a tendency towards nationalism—even if they do not know what it means. Their aim is highly likely to reconcile with the dominant ideology and the social norms which classify them as being intolerable and anomalous strangers. Accordingly, sheltering under the flag, joining official ceremonies, and supporting military policies enable the strangers to temporarily enter the circle of the accepted groups. Besides, the collectively-designed ceremonies and meetings compel strangers to play-act for the sake of accepting them as members of the accepted class's value system.

Figure 5
Fikret eagerly becomes a part of the military ceremony by participating in and applauding it.

Indeed, as Bauman states, "the belonging on offer is sweet because, in the case of the nation, it stands a chance of being secure; but this security is a matter of accomplishment, not a foregone conclusion. It requires holding the ranks, and it takes concerted action" (1999, p. 165). Such a sense of *belonging* is even-superficially consumed by Fikret as a remedy for loneliness. For the same purpose, he partakes in exclaiming some nationalist slogans such as "*How happy* is the one who says I *am* a Turk" or "We shed blood for the [Turkish] flag". Moreover, emotionally affected by the enthusiastic crowd, he rapturously cries out, "I wish there was a war". Who knows, perhaps, in his sight, dying in a war for the sake of the nation's mission may be more preferable than living in a society that excludes him.

In this film, there is neither a beginning nor an end to Fikret's story. He continues to sell flowers on the bridge; besides, he knows well that there is also no hope and future in his job; therefore, he frequently looks for a better one, but in vain. Whenever he attempts to meet an employer,

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he is soon rejected due to his *lacking* an education, a driver's licence, work experience or references. Hence, each job application turns into a shameful attempt. He is sometimes rebuked, sometimes belittled and sometimes blamed. The more he attempts to find a job, the more he turns into an internal stranger who is exposed to a sort of social degradation (Bauman, 2005, p. 38). No wonder there is no room for him. Fikret is poor, young, only 17 years old, but experiences poverty, as Bauman states, not only as an economic but also as a social and psychological, condition (ibid, p. 38). In time, he loses his willingness to find a better job. Apart from selling flowers, he starts collecting the garbage of securitised, gated communities. Namely, the social-existence of the stranger relies on the waste of the locals. This is the message.

Figure 6
Fikret and his friend sit on a wall and talk about their *uncertain* futures.

At the end of the film, he and his friend use hashish. This can be interpreted as a first step towards committing a crime. Here is the blind spot of the bridge for the stranger who, once upon a time, innocently struggled to survive. He and his friend sit on a *wall* and talk about their uncertain futures. In the background, just like *a cubist portrait* or *a Tetris game*,[9] there are thousands of nested *gecekondu*s, amorphous apartment buildings, incomplete constructions, ruinous roofs, sporadic trees and bizarre satellite dishes. These seen dwellings are, just like their architectural and spatial characters, full of similar stories of strangerhood just like Fikret's. Then, he inhales the hashish. It is now his friend's turn.

Fikret's friend: Aren't you going to look for another job?

Fikret: (firstly smiling, then stoping and finally shaking his head) No. Selling flowers is great. I mean, it is better...

Fikret's friend: Are you going to do it all your life?

Fikret: (He cannot reply. Only silence for fifteen seconds).

Since there is no end of their story, nobody can know what happens to them later on. Nonetheless, it can be predicted that the more the stranger is excluded, the more his emotional condition may turn into that of hate, revenge and crime. At the showdown, with the intention of equalising the unfair condition and of highlighting his ignored existence, he may prefer to

[9] In order to see the tetris-like nature of Istanbul, this video, which was made by M. Melis Bilgin in 2010, can be watched via at http://www.canlandiranlar.com/filmler/. The title of the video is *Tetrist.*

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become a drug pusher, a robber, or a killer. In any case, he longs for a permanent and warm home which will help keep him out of harm's way. But Fikret is not the only person who lives under the shadow of uncertainty and is in search of a home.

RETHINKING THE METAPHORS BRIDGE AND DOOR

All these catastrophic dilemmas *accumulate* on the bridge and spread from there onto the streets of the city. Besides, the bridge, just as the film depicts, does not only refer to an architectural structure which connects two separate continents but also a social gap, or wall, which people often struggle to overcome. This film provides grounds upon which to *rethink* the concepts of the "door" and the "bridge"—concepts which Georg Simmel discussed years ago (1994, pp. 5-10). According to him, the concept of the "door" simultaneously refers to separation and connection, both of which are merely two faces of one and the same action. It is itself the division between "inside" and "outside". In this respect, it is a boundary point. However, the door, as the film indicates through the stories of the strangers in Istanbul, seems like *an exitless labyrinth* that is full of entrances.

The excluded marginality of Fikret paradoxically unifies all social differentiations into the antagonism of the common otherness. In other words, the stranger indirectly and inevitably gathers people together into his own antipathy. In a similar vein, according to Levine, the stranger is a mid-point who is able to combine all kinds of attitudes and identities into a unity that cannot easily or directly be expressed (1965, p. 22). He is, just like the bridge, a body that synbookes and colligates opposite poles with one another. The placeless character on the bridge is, on the other hand, without direction; therefore, he is open to be directed everywhere and, so, nowhere. He is not only in front of the door but perhaps the door itself; an entity that shares some of the characteristics of the inside as well as some of the characteristics of the outside; therefore, the place where he stands is the heart of placelessness.

The reality that Istanbul consists of thousands of villages is manifested as a spatial multiplication since strangers attempt to establish their own secure, but isolated, zones surrounded by [in]visible walls. As Gurbilek indicates, each district turns into a homogenous unit in itself (2011, p. 22). Everywhere in this fiction, there exist both friends and foes in direct sight of each other. Indeed, even though common spaces do not belong to any one person or group, it is as if each part of Istanbul is marked on behalf of some certain people. Regardless whether one is poor or rich, educated or uneducated, an employer or unemployed, it is a common fact that everyone somehow has space wherein they can enforce their own rules, norms and values.

The walls built once around the city now criss-cross the city itself, and in a multitude of directions. Watched neighbourhoods, closely surveilled public spaces with selective admission, heavily armed guards at the gate and electronically operated doors – are all now aimed against the unwanted co-citizens, rather than foreign armies or highway robbers, marauders and other largely unknown dangers lying in ambush on the other side of the city gates (Bauman, 1998, p. 48).

In a city surrounded and designed with visible and invisible walls, doors are, in contrast to Simmel's claim,[10] doors are mute but walls speak. Therefore, the memory of Istanbul can easily be read from these walls. Indeed, the walls continue to grow in the mental lives of the urbanites and silently reformulate their relationships with themselves—but especially with strangers. In other words, the urbanites themselves turn into a wall every passing day. As *Köprüdekiler*

[10] According to Georg Simmel, "the wall is mute but the door speaks" (1994, p. 10).

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demonstrates, these passenger-like and symbolically-homeless immigrants who live behind and inside walls.

The second image, which does not affirm Simmel's thought, is that of *the bridge*. In Simmel's view, the bridge refers to unity as well as a connection between those things that are separated (ibid., pp. 6-7; cited in Houtum and Struver, 2002 p. 143). Accordingly, since the bridge has been defined like this for years, Istanbul is also stereotyped and presented as a bridge-city that connects two continents and two civilisations (Keyder, 1999, p. 8). Saskia Sassen also portrays the bridges of Istanbul as places upon which people from different social statuses encounter each other (2009).

Figure 7
The tragedies of strangers are tarnished and covered by the dazzling lights of the bridge. But its panoramic view may be deceptive. Similarly, lights may conceal more than they show.

There is also another dimension to the bridge. It, with the help of traffic jams, stops the liquidity of Istanbul. In this respect, the bridge, which has been shown as one of the most essential symbols of mobility and liquidity, turns now into an immobile and unpredictable experience through which people watch each other without being watched. The experience "enables people and objects to congregate and mix without meeting, thus constituting a striking example of simultaneity without exchange" (Lefebvre, 2002, pp. 100-101). Another reason for claiming that the bridge is no longer an exotic, romantic or magical place is the suicide attempts which are committed there. Although Istanbul has a dynamic mobility (Sassen 2009), the bridge itself indicates that that mobility is not a predictable and manageable choreography.

CONCLUSION

Köprüdekiler elaborates with great depth and insight what happens on the bridge. The *close-up* shots of the bridge destroy the charismatic and illusive image that displays Istanbul as a harmonious, comfortable, organised and smooth city. As the film emphasises, the bridge is a symbol of chaos and disorder—so much so that, with every passing second, various identities and groups, *like puzzle pieces which do not complete each other*, pass through the bridge from Asia to Europe and vice versa. As a result of this, this encounter in contrast to many scholars like Sennett, Sassen and Keyder, signifies divergence and disconnection rather than meeting, integration and coalescence.

Istanbul transformed into a metropolis consisting of thousands of mono-typical Anatolian villages in which homogenously-segregated groups inhabited. These village-like suburbs were not only spatially, but also socially, separated from the Bosphorus, the city's centres, and its historical places. The places where they dwelled, the clothes that they wore, the foods that

they liked, the music that they listened to, the products that they consumed, the friendships that they forged, and so on, all *visibly* underlined their marginality and otherness in the eyes of those who lived closer to the Bosphorus or the city centres—so much so that their ambivalent personages were interpreted as being a reason for their having a shared fear towards them and, in turn, their building walls to protect them from those strangers.

To put it differently, the security of the regime as well as the city's gated communities were substantially nourished from the culture of fear and paranoia which was based on the existence of the strangers who contained every possibility. In the shadow of these strangers, even the bridge, which was once defined by the existing literature as a connective and integrative space between two continents, turned into a chaotic cultural symbol that disconnects, separates and divides. Today, the bridge symbolises the rhythmic disorder of Istanbul.

A similar semantic shift is true of the Bosphorus as well. Although, according to the existing literature, it relaxes the mental condition of local urbanites, this does not give them an absolute and eternal freedom and serenity because it is consumed unequally and only for a little while. In the city, there are many urbanites who live far away from the Bosphorus and who do not have the luxury of drinking a tea in a cafe on the Bosphorus Strait. This is only an activity done during their spare time. The Bosphorus highlights the social and economic gap between centre and periphery. In other words, it is a measure that determines sociologically where "near" and "distant" are. Accordingly, near places are generally under the influence of the Bosphorus, the city's money economy and its history; whereas distant places represent immigration-based challenges and an "incomplete" Turkish modernity.

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