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Köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının yerel idarelerle ilişkileri: Afyonkarahisar ili örneği*

 Kemal Duru¹ 

 İsa Sağbaş² 

Öz

Gelişmekte olan ülkelerin ekonomik kalkınma ve büyümeye stratejilerinde yerelleşmenin pozitif etkileri olacağı iddia edilmektedir. Yerellesmeden beklenen faydalaraın gerçekleşebilmesi için sosyal ihtiyaçlarının hızlı şekilde tespit edilmesi önemlidir. Muhtarlar halka en yakın birim olarak yerel idarelerle halk arasında aracı olarak yerelleşme politikalarına katkı sunmaktadır. Muhtarlar sosyal ihtiyaçları yerel idarelere iletme konusunda fonksiyoneldir. Bu çalışmada muhtarların yerel idarelerle ilişkileri incelenmektedir. Afyonkarahisar'da köy ve mahalle muhtarlarından 2025 yılında anket yöntemiyle veri toplanmıştır. Elde edilen bulgulara göre, muhtarlar en fazla su, elektrik, doğalgaz gibi temel hizmetlerde eksikliğin olduğunu belirtmişlerdir. Köy muhtarları en az belediyelerce önemsendiklerini düşünürken, mahalle muhtarları en az il özel idarelerinde önemsendiklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Köy ve mahalle muhtarları, en fazla valilik veya kaymakamlıklarca önemsendiklerini söylemişlerdir. Muhtarların %84'ü hak ve sorumlulukları konusunda mevzuat bilgisi sahibidir. Köy muhtarlarının %55'i haftada en az bir kez il/ilçe özel idaresi ile iletişim kurdukları bulgusu elde edilmiştir. Mahalle muhtarlarının %55'i belediye ile haftada en az bir kez iletişim kurduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Mahalle muhtarlarının, köy muhtarlarından daha fazla belediyeleri ziyaret ettikleri ve diyalog kurdukları bulgusu elde edilmiştir. Köy muhtarları valilik veya kaymakamlıkla mahalle muhtarlarından daha fazla iletişim içindedirler. Bulgulara dayalı olarak, varlığı tartışılan muhtarlık kurumunun 'halk-yerel idareler arası iletişimini sağlamada aracı rolünden' dolay devam etmesi ve güçlendirilmesinin gerekliliği iddia edilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler

Yerel yönetimler, Köy muhtarları, Mahalle muhtarları

The relationships between village and neighborhood mukhtars and local administrations: The case of Afyonkarahisar province

Abstract

Mukhtars (headmen) are functional in conveying social needs to local administrations. This study examines the relationships between mukhtars and local authorities. Data was gathered from village and neighbourhood mukhtars in Afyonkarahisar by using a survey conducted in 2025. The findings show that, according to Mukhtars, the most needed local services are water, electricity, and natural gas. It is found that village mukhtars receive the least consideration in municipalities, while neighbourhood mukhtars receive the least consideration in provincial special administrations. Village and neighbourhood mukhtars argue they receive the most consideration in the governor's/district governor's office. The finding indicates that 84% of the sample know the legislation about mukhtars' rights and responsibilities. 55% of village mukhtars contact provincial/district special administration at least once in a week for public purposes, while 55% percent of neighbourhood mukhtars contact the municipality. Neighbourhood mukhtars visit municipalities more frequently than village mukhtars. Village mukhtars have a contact with the governorship/district governorship office more often than neighbourhood mukhtars do. Based on the findings, it could be argued that the mukhtar institution, whose existence is debated, should be maintained and strengthened due to its "intermediary role in facilitating communication between the public and local administrations."

Keywords

Local administrations, Village mukhtars, Neighborhood mukhtars

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Extended Summary

It is argued that decentralization would have positive effects on economic development and growth in all countries. It is crucial to rapidly identify and meet social needs for realization of the expected benefits of decentralization. Mukhtar (headmen), as the nearby unit to the public, contributes to decentralization policies by acting as intermediaries between local governments and the public. This study examines the relationship between mukhtars and local administrations. The data is gathered from village and neighbourhood mukhtars in Afyonkarahisar by a questionnaire in 2025.

Mukhtars should be functional in collaborating with local administrations for meeting the social needs of local population. This study aims to examine the relationship between mukhtars and local administrations from the perspective of mukhtars. The relations between village and neighbourhood mukhtars and local administrations (the governor's office, district governor's office, municipalities, special provincial administrations, and their subunits) is examined using various indicators in this study. Previous studies on the relationship between mukhtars and local administrations have examined a single administration, such as a municipality or provincial administration. This study examines the comparative relationships of village and neighbourhood mukhtars with local administrations in a holistic method.

Mukhtars should establish effective dialogue with local authorities, both as required by law and to better perform their duties. In this context, mukhtars should be respected by local administration officials. If mukhtars feel respected by local authorities, the dialogue would continue. Whether mukhtars are respected by local authorities is examined. Mukhtars who are knowledgeable in the legislation are expected to communicate better with local administrations. Mukhtars are asked whether they are knowledgeable about the rights and responsibilities related to their duties. Mukhtars are also asked about perception of public services in their neighbourhood or village.

A comparative study is conducted on the frequency of contact between village/ neighbourhood mukhtars and local administrations. It is observed that neighbourhood mukhtars visit municipalities more frequently than village mukhtars do. Conversely, village mukhtars visit governorates/district governors relatively more frequently than neighbourhood mukhtars do. Overall, the majority of village and neighbourhood mukhtars visit and have a dialogue with both governors/district governors and municipalities at least once a month.

According to the findings, mukhtars most frequently report a lack of basic services such as water, electricity, and natural gas. Village mukhtars felt least valued by municipalities, while neighbourhood mukhtars expressed the least respected by provincial special administrations. Village and neighbourhood mukhtars are most appreciated by the governor's office/district governor's office at the local level. 84% of the mukhtars participating in the study believe they are knowledgeable about the rights and responsibilities of mukhtars. 55% of village mukhtars report communicating with the provincial/district special administration at least once a week. 55% of neighbourhood mukhtars report communicating with the municipality at least once a week. Neighbourhood mukhtars visit municipalities more often than village mukhtars. Village mukhtars, in turn, visit and communicate with governor's office/district governor's office more often than neighbourhood mukhtars. Based on the findings, it could be suggested that the mukhtar institution, whose existence is debated, should remain and be strengthened due to its 'intermediary role' in ensuring communication between the public and local administrations.

Giriş

Muhtarlık yerel ortak ihtiyaçların karşılanmasıında yerelleşme birimlerinden halka en yakın olan kurumdur. Bazı görevlerinin dijitalleşmeye bağlı olarak elektronik ortamda ve başka kurumlarca yerine getirilmesi muhtarlık kurumunun varlığının tartışımasına neden olmaktadır. Ancak köy ve mahallelerin tüzel kişiliğinin kamu kurumlarında veya resmi/özel etkinliklerde temsili noktasında muhtarlığın yeri önemlidir. Bunun yanı sıra, muhtarlıkların halka en yakın birim olarak ortak ihtiyaçların karşılanması, ortak sorunların çözümü gibi hususlarda merkezi hükümetin yerel temsilcileri (valilik/kaymakamlık), belediyeler ve il özel idareleri ile iletişim kurabilmeleri muhtarları yerelleşme açısından vazgeçilmez kılmaktadır. Yerleşmeden beklenilen faydalıların gerçekleşmesi için ortak ihtiyaçların yerel idarelere bildirilmesi gerekmektedir. Muhtarlık halkla yerel idareler arasında bir köprü vazifesi yaparak köy ve mahallelerin ortak sorunlarının hızlı şekilde çözülebilmesi için görev ifa etmektedir.

Muhtarların en fazla irtibatta oldukları kamu kurumları valilik, kaymakamlık, belediye ve il özel idareleridir. Köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının seçildikten sonra görevleri olan mahalli müşterek ihtiyaçlarını yerine getirilmesi için sorumlu kamu kurumlarıyla ilişkileri konusuna duyarlı olmaları gerekmektedir. Muhtarların kamu kurumları ile sağlıklı iletişim kurmaları hizmet verdikleri vatandaşların taleplerinin

karşılanması için de gereklidir. Bu çalışmada köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının karşılaştırmalı olarak valilik, kaymakamlık, belediye ve il özel idareleri ilişki ve diyalog düzeyleri incelenmektedir. Köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının yerel hizmetleri sunan yerel idarelerle ilişkisi veri analizine dayalı bulgular ışığında tartışılmaktadır. İzleyen kısımlarda sırasıyla teorik ve hukuki arka plan, empirik literatür, yöntem ve bulgular, sonuç ve genel değerlendirmeye yer verilmektedir.

Muhtarlık ve Yerel İdareler Arası İlişkilerin Teorik Arka Planı

Muhtarlık, yerelleşme hiyerarşisi içinde halka en yakın kamu görevidir. Yerelleşme, merkezi hükümetin elinde bulundurduğu bazı yönetim, hizmet sunma ve gelir toplama görev yetkilerini hizmet ve gelir toplama yetkilerini kısmen veya tamamen yerel birimlerle/idarelerle paylaşılmasıdır. Merkez ile yerel arasında hizmet paylaşımına etki eden en önemli konulardan birisi halkın hizmet talebinin hizmet sunumundan sorumlu yöneticilere ulaştırılmasına ilişkin hususlardır. Kamu yönetiminde hizmet sunumunda etkinliğin sağlanmasına yönelik şartlar hizmet talebinin yöneticilere doğru ve efektif bir şekilde iletilmesini de içerir. Yerel idarelerin halka merkezi hükümetten daha yakın olmaları sebebiyle halkın ihtiyaçlarını daha çabuk öğrenecekleri ve bunlara uygun hizmetleri daha verimli sunacakları kabul edilmiştir.³ Bunun sonucu olarak, yerelleşme ile kit olan kaynakların tahsisinde verimliliğin maksimize edileceği varsayılmaktadır (Sezer ve Büyükpınar, 2021).

Hizmetlerin yerellesmesi, daraltılmış bölgelerde kamusal hizmet tercihlerindeki farklılıklar en aza indireceğinden, seçmen kitlesindeki benzeşmenin olumlu sonucu olarak tercih edilen kamusal mal demetlerinin daha doğru sunulmasına katkıda bulunacaktır. Yerelleştirme, aynı zamanda etkinliğin en önemli güdüleyicisi kabul edilen rekabetin kamu kesimine uyarlanamaması sorununu da çözüm olacaktır. Çünkü rasyonel bireylerin hizmet üretecek kamusal aktörleri seçenken kendi çıkarlarını maksimize edeceklerini bilen yerel yöneticiler, rekabetlerinin temelini etkinliği oturtacaklar buna karşılık seçmenler de hizmet sunmadaki başarısı oylayacaklardır (Çalışkan ve Sağbaş, 2005).

Büyükşehir, ilçe ve kasaba gibi yönetimsel yapılanmalara kıyasla mahalle veya köy gibi küçük yapılanmalarda yaşayanların istekleri/talepleri benzer ve oldukça homojendir. Muhtarlar görevlerinden önce ve sonra da aynı mahallede/köyde beraber yaşadıkları halkın taleplerine daha duyarlı olmaktadır. Mahallelerde halkın kendi içinden seçtiği muhtarlar halkın sosyal ihtiyaçlarını daha hızlı bir şekilde öğrenmekte, hizmet sunumunda yetkili olan yerel yönetimlere aktarabilmektedir. Bu açıdan bakıldığından, zaman zaman varlığı tartışılan muhtarlık kurumunun yerellesmeden beklenilen avantajların gerçekleşmesi için enstrümantal olduğu iddia edilebilir.

Yerellesmeden beklenen yararların realize edilebilmesi için yerel yöneticilerin kurallarına uygun bir şekilde gerçekleştirilmiş bir seçim sistemi ile görevde gelmiş olması gereklidir. Kamu Tercihi Teorisine göre tipki piyasa mekanizmasında olduğu gibi bireysel çıkarlar politik aktörleri harekete geçirmektedir. Seçmen kendi çıkarlarını maksimize edeceğini inandığı adaya oy vermektedir (Mueller, 1976; Çelik ve Sağbaş, 2022). Muhtarlık seçimlerinde halkın kendi önceliklerini ve tercihlerini üst yerel yönetimle iletmede daha başarılı olacağına inandığı adaya oy verebilmektedirler. Seçimle görevde gelen muhtarlar yeniden seçilebilmek için mahallelerinde yaşayan halkın taleplerini yetkili yerel idareye iletme ihtiyacı duymaktadırlar.

Muhtarlar kendilerine ait icra yetkileri olmadığı için halkla icra organları arasında aracı kurum olarak görev yapmaktadır. Arıkboğa (2000) bu nedenle muhtarlığı 'boşluk doldurucu ve aracı kurum' olarak nitelendirmektedir. Aracılık fonksiyonu kamu hizmetlerinin yerine getirilmesinde boşluk doldurmakta ve bu fonksiyon bile muhtarlık kurumunun devam ettirilmesi için yeterli bir argümandır. Muhtarlar aracı kurum oldukları için yerel idarelerle ilişki kurmak zorundadır. Muhtar seçimleri dönemlerinde adayların birçoğu yerel idarelerle en iyi iletişimini kendilerinin kuracakları vaadinde bulunmaktadırlar.

Muhtarlık üç açıdan kuruluş işlevinin dışına taşmıştır. Bu nedenler muhtarlığın göreli ağırlığını artırdığı gibi muhtarın yerel idarelerle daha fazla irtibat kurmasına aracılık yapmasının yolunu açmıştır (Arıkboğa, 2000).

Muhtarlığı günümüzde daha da önemli kılan nedenlerden birincisi, yönetim kaynaklı olup çeşitli kamu kurumlarının boş bıraktığı alanlarda bu hizmetlere ilişkin talepler doğrudan muhtarlarla yapılmaktadır. Muhtarlar halktan gelen talepleri karşılamak için yerel idarelere ve iktidardaki siyasi partilerin temsilcilerine mahallesinin sorunlarını götürmektedir. Bazı durumlarda muhtarlar iş adamlarını mahallenin ilkokul ve benzeri çeşitli ihtiyaçlarını çözmeye teşvik etmektedirler. Bu tür yerlerde muhtarlar sadece yerel yönetim alanında değil; sosyal ve eğitsel konulara ait taleplerle de karşılaşmakta ve çözüm üretmeye zorlanmaktadır. Muhtarlığın kuruluş maksadının dışına taşıdığı ikinci olgu mahalle

3 Bu çalışmada yerel idareler geniş anlamda kullanılmıştır. Yerel idarelerin kapsamı içinde mülki amirlikler (valilik ve kaymakamlık), belediyeler ve il özel idareleri ve bunların alt birimlerinin tümü bulunmaktadır.

sakinleriyle ilgilidir. Sosyal, ekonomik, kültürel ve eğitsel olarak kentsel ortama ayak uyduramayan köy kökenli vatandaşlara muhtarlık hamilik yapmakta; onlar için çeşitli kamu kurumlarında aracılık/ış takipçiliği ve yol göstericilik rolü üstlenmektedir. Üçüncü olarak muhtarlık vatandaşların ihtilaflarıyla ilgilenmektedir. Muhtar burada ihtilaf çözümü ve arabulucu bir konumdadır; örneğin arazi ihtilaflarına çözüm yeri olabilmektedir.

Yerelleşmenin avantaj ve dezavantajlarının karşılaştırıldığı literatüre göre avantajlarının fazla olması bu politikayı önemli kılmaktadır (Bahl and Bird, 2018). Özellikle gelişmekte olan ülkelerin ekonomik kalkınma ve büyümeye stratejilerine yerelleşmenin önemli ve pozitif bir etkisi olacağı iddia edilmektedir. Yerelleşmeden beklenen faydalara gerçekleşebilmesi için halkın ihtiyaçlarının hızlı şekilde tespit edilmesi ve kit kaynaklar kısıtı altında karşılanması önem arz etmektedir. Muhtarlık halka en yakın birim olarak yerel idarelerle halk arasında aracı olarak yerelleşme politikalarına katkı sunmaktadır.

Türkiye'de Muhtarlık ve Yerel İdareler Arasındaki İlişkilerin Hukuki Arka Planı

Muhtarlar köy veya mahallenin tüzel kişiliğinin kanuni temsilcisidirler. Muhtarlık, yasal dayanağını Anayasa'nın 127. maddesinden almaktadır. "Mahalli idareler; il, belediye veya köy halkın mahalli müşterek ihtiyaçlarını karşılamak üzere kuruluş esasları kanunla belirtilen ve karar organları, gene kanunda gösterilen, seçmenler tarafından seçilerek oluşturulan kamu tüzel kişileridir."

4541 Sayılı Şehir ve Kasabalarında Mahalle Muhtar ve İhtiyar Heyetleri Teşkiline Dair Kanun'da muhtarlık ve ihtiyar heyetinin teşkiline ilişkin hükümler bulunmaktadır. Şehir ile kasabalarında kurulmuş olan ve 5393 sayılı Belediye Kanunu'nun 8. maddesi gereği kurulacak olan mahallelerde bir muhtar ve muhtarın başkanlığında bir ihtiyar meclisi bulunmaktadır. Mahalle muhtarı, ihtiyar meclisi ile bunların yedek üyeleri mahalle halkı tarafından seçilmektedir.

442 Sayılı Köy Kanunu'na göre muhtarın göreceği işler ikiye (devlet işleri ve köy işleri) ayrılır. Muhtarın göreceği devlet işlerinin bazıları şunlardır: "Devlet tarafından bildirilen kanun ve nizamları köy içinde ilan etmek ve halka anlatmak. Kanun, nizam, talimat ve emir ile kendisine verilen işleri yapmak; Köyün içinde asayı korumak; Salgın ve bulaşıcı hastalıkları günü gününe devlete haber etmek; Köylünün çiçek ve bulaşıcı hastalık aşısı ile aşılanıp hastalıktan kurtulmasına çalışmak." Köy muhtarının göreceği köy işlerinden bazıları şunlardır: "Köye ait mecburi işleri ihtiyar meclisi ile görüşerek yapmak ve yaptırmak; Köylünün isteğine bağlı işlerin yapılabilmesi için köylülere öğüt vermek; İhtiyar heyeti kararı ile köy işlerinde harcanacak parayı toplamak; Köy işlerinde harcanacak parayı topladıktan sonra harcamak için emir vermek."

5393 Sayılı Belediye Kanunu'nun 9. maddesinde mahalle muhtar ve belediye ilişkileri düzenlenmiştir: "Muhtar, mahalle sakinlerinin gönüllü katılımıyla ortak ihtiyaçları belirlemek, mahallenin yaşam kalitesini geliştirmek, belediye ve diğer kamu kurum ve kuruluşlarıyla ilişkilerini sürdürmek, mahalle ile ilgili konularda görüş bildirmek, diğer kurumlarla iş birliği yapmak ve kanunlarla verilen diğer görevleri yapmakla yükümlüdür. Belediye, mahallenin ve muhtarlığın ihtiyaçlarının karşılanması ve sorunlarının çözümü için bütçe imkânları ölçüsünde gerekli aynı yardım ve desteği sağlar; kararlarında mahallelinin ortak isteklerini göz önünde bulundurur ve hizmetlerin mahallenin ihtiyaçlarına uygun biçimde yürütülmesini sağlamaya çalışır."

2005 yılında yasal altyapının oluşturulmasıyla birlikte mahalle muhtarları ile belediyeler arasındaki ilişkilerin arttığı gözlemlenmiştir. Bu anlamda ilk somut gelişmeler, belediyeler tarafından muhtarlık ofislerinin yapımı, donatılması gibi alanlarda olmuştur. Diğer yandan kent konseylerinde muhtarlar katılım süreçlerinin parçası olmaya başlamıştır (Arıkboğa, 2018: 29).

Belediye Kanunu'na göre, mahalle muhtarları belediye meclisi ihtisas komisyonlarına katılmaktadır. Gündemdeki konulara ilişkin oy hakkı bulunmaksızın, kendi görev ve faaliyet alanlarına giren konuların görüşüldüğü ihtisas komisyonu toplantısına istirak edebilirler. Aynı kanuna göre mahalle muhtarları, kent konseyine katılım sağlayabilmektedir. Kent konseyinin faaliyetlerinin etkili ve verimli yürütülmesi konusunda yardım ve destek sağlarlar.

Muhtarlarla vali, kaymakam gibi mülki idare amirleri ile çeşitli konularda mevzuat gereği irtibat içinde olması gerekmektedir. Köy ihtiyar meclisi tarafından köy işleri en lazımlı olandan başlayarak sıraya konulur ve biri yapılip bitirildikten sonra hepsi sırayla köylüyeaptırılmaya çalışılır. Öncelikle yapılması gereken sağlık, yol ve okul işlerinin geri bırakıldığı şikayet edilir veya haber verilirse, köyün bağlı olduğu kaymakam ya da vali tarafından gösterilen yolda yapılır. Köyde ihtiyar meclisinin kesin olan nitelikli kararlarını karşı mülki amire itiraz da bulunulabilir. İhtiyar Meclisi'nce belirlenmiş olan salmaya ilişkin olarak yapılan itiraz üzerine verilmiş olan kararlar aleyhine, kararın tebliği tarihinden itibaren merkez İlçe de valiye, diğer ilçeler de ise kaymakama itiraz edilebilir (Apan, 2025: 51-52).

Köylere Hizmet Götürme Birlikleri, büyükşehir olmayan il ve ilçelerde kurulan, köylerin üyesi bulunduğu, il merkezinde vali ya da görevlendireceği vali yardımcısının, ilçelerde kaymakamın başkanlık etiği, yönetiminde ise bazı il genel meclisi üyelerinin ve köy muhtarlarının yer aldığı bir kuruluştur (Kara, 2019: 26). Köylere Hizmet Götürme Birlikleri köylerin su, yol, elektrik vb. ihtiyaçlarının karşılanması konusunda köy muhtarlarının mülki amirlere sorunları doğrudan iletebilmesi konusunda işlevseldir.

Vali, köy idareleri ile bunlara bağlı bütün kuruluşları denetler ve teftiş eder. Bu denetlemeyi bizzat kendisi yapabilecegi gibi, görevlendirecegi kişiler aracılığıyla da yapabilir. Valiler, her sene uygun gördükleri zamanlarda ilin bütün ilçe ve bucakları ile sırasıyla programa alınan köyleri ve il içinde yer alan teşkilatı teftiş ederler. Halkın ihtiyaç ve isteklerini yerli yerinde gözden geçirip gereğini yaparlar. Ayrıca benzer denetim ve teftiş yetkisi kaymakama da verilmiştir. Kaymakam her sene ilçenin tüm bucakları ile köylerinin en az yarısını ve ilçe içinde bulunan teşkilatı teftiş eder. Halkın istek ve ihtiyaçlarını yerinde gözden geçirir ve gereğini yapar (Apan, 2025: 52).

Köy muhtarlarının bütün işlem ve kararları mülki amirin vesayet denetimine tabidir. Muhtarların köyün yararına olmayan kararlarını vali ve kaymakamların bozabildiği, Köy Kanunu'nun 40. maddesinde ifade edilmiştir. Ancak vali ve kaymakam muhtarın yerine geçerek karar verememektedir. Karar yine köylü tarafından verilmektedir. Mülki idare amirlerinin vesayet denetimi gereği, köy yönetimi organları üzerinde başka tasarrufa da bulunabilmektedir. Köy Kanunu gereği, görevini yerine getirmeyen muhtarlar görevden alınabilmektedir.

5302 sayılı İl Özel İdaresi Kanunu'nda il özel idaresinin görev, yetki ve sorumluluklarında köylerin desteklenmesi ifadesi yer almaktadır. Aynı kanunda, il özel idaresinin giderleri arasında il genel meclisince belirlenecek ilkeler çerçevesinde köylere veya köylerin aralarında kurdukları birliklere yapılacak yardımlar ifadesi yer almaktadır. İl Özel İdaresi Kanunu'nda geçen bu süreçlerin yürütülmesi, idare ile muhtar-İhtiyar heyeti arasında olacaktır.

İl Özel İdaresi Kanunu'nun 6. maddesinde; belediye sınırları il sınırı olan ilin çevre düzeni planı, bayındırılık ve iskân, toprağın işlenmesi, erozyonun önlenmesi, kültür, sanat, turizm, sosyal hizmet ve yardımlar, yoksullara mikro kredi verilmesi, çocuk yuvaları ve yetişirme yurtları, ilk-orta öğretim kurumları için arsa temini, binaların yapımı, bakım ve onarımı ve diğer ihtiyaçların karşılanmasına ilişkin hizmetler il özel idaresinin görevleri arasındadır. İmar, yol, su, kanalizasyon, katı atık, çevre, acil yardım-kurtarma, orman köylerinin desteklenmesi, ağaçlandırma, park ve bahçe tesisiyle ilişkin hizmetleri belediye sınırlarının dışında yapmakla il özel idaresi görevli ve yetkilidir. İl sınırları içerisinde yer alan mabet, kültür ile tabiat varlıkları, kent tarihi bakımından önemli olan mekanlar ile cemevlerinin yapım, bakım ve onarımı il özel idaresi tarafından yapılabilir. Bakanlıklar ve diğer merkezi idare kuruluşları, yapım, bakım ve onarım işleri, devlet ve il yolları, içme suyu, kanalizasyon, enerji iletim hattı, eğitim, sağlık, kültür ve turizm, çevre, imar, bayındırılık, iskân ile gençlik ve spor gibi hizmetlere ilişkin yatırımları, kendi bütçelerinde bu hizmetler için ayrılan ödenekleri il özel idarelerine kaynak aktarmak yoluyla gerçekleştirebilmektedir. İl özel idaresi, hizmetleri vatandaşşa en uygun ve en yakın yerlerde sunar. Hizmetlerin diğer mahalli idareler ve kamu kuruluşları arasında bütünlük ve uyum içinde yürütülmesine dönük koordinasyon o ilin valisi tarafından sağlanmaktadır. İl özel idaresinin sayılan görev ve hizmetlerinde mahalle ve köyü ilgilendiren hizmetlerde idare ile muhtar ilişkisi ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Muhtarların, İl Özel İdaresi İhtisas Komisyonlarına katılma yetkisi bulunmaktadır. 5302 sayılı İl Özel İdaresi Kanunu'nun 16. maddesinde geçen ifadeye göre, gündemdeki konularla ilgili köy ve mahalle muhtarları oy hakkı bulunmaksızın, kendi görev ve faaliyet alanlarına giren konuların görüşüldüğü ihtisas komisyonu toplantısına istirak edebilirler.

Bu bölümde muhtarların yerel idarelerle irtibat kurmasının mevzuat gereği zorunlu olmasının hukuki durumu özetlenmiştir. Muhtarların yerel idarelerle ilişkilerinin etkin ve sürdürülebilir olması önemlidir. Yerel idarelerin kanun ve diğer mevzuatla verilen bazı görevlerin yerine getirilebilmesi için mahalle ve köy muhtarlarıyla iş birliğine gitmesi gerekmektedir. Buna karşılık icra yetkisi olmayan muhtarların yasal görev ve sorumluluklarını yerine getirebilmesi için yerel idarelerle görüşmesi ve sağlıklı diyalog kurması gerekmektedir.

Muhtarlık ve Yerel İdareler Arasındaki İlişkiler Üzerine Ampirik Literatür

Muhtarlar veya muhtarlıkla ilgili akademik çalışmalar muhtarlığın tarihsel gelişimi, kadın muhtarlar, halkın muhtarlarla bakişi ve memnuniyeti, 6360 sayılı Kanun'la köyden mahalleye dönünen yerleşim yerlerin muhtarları, Cumhurbaşkanının muhtarlarla toplantıları, muhtarların yerel idarelerle ilişkileri ve diğer konular başlıklarında sıralanabilir.

Konu	Çalışma
Muhtarlık ve mahalle yönetimi	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Akman (2018)Çılgın ve Yirmibeşoğlu (2019)Göküş, Bayraklı ve Alptürker (2013)Kavruk (2004)Kavruk (2018)
Cumhurbaşkanlığı muhtar toplantıları	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Aydın (2020)
6360 sayılı kapsamlı torba kanun ve muhtarlık	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Avşar ve Taş (2020),Toprak ve Aydın (2023)Usta, Akman ve Kocaoğlu (2018)
Muhtarlık tarihi	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Aydoğu ve Tuncer (2018)Güneş (2023)Erçoşkun (2012)Hanlıçe ve Çakmak (2024)Şahin ve Asarkaya (2019)
Muhtarlık üzerine ampirik çalışmalar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bulut (2001)Nacak (2024)Tahran ve Korlu (2020)
Kadın muhtarlar	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Kaşikirik (2022)Kaşikirik ve Dokuzcan (2022)Yıldız (2013)
Muhtarlıkla ilgili diğer konular	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Bal, Aygül, Uysal ve Oğuz (2012)Kahraman (2020)Kalaycı (2021)Yılmaz, İzci ve Atmaca (2020)Özkan Erdoğan (2017)

Çalışmamızın konusu muhtarların yerel idarelerle ilişkileri ile sınırlı olduğu için bu konuda yapılan ampirik çalışmalarla aşağıda yer verilecektir. Kadın muhtarlar, muhtarlık tarihi vb. diğer konularda yapılmış ampirik, teorik ve mesleki çalışmaların literatür taraması çalışmamızın kapsamı dışında bırakılmıştır.

Bulut, Yıldırım ve Şengül (2000) mahalle muhtarlarının belediye yönetimleri ile ilişkilerini Gaziantep ve Maraş örneklerinde anket yöntemi ile veri toplayarak araştırmışlardır. Çalışmada belediyelerin mahalle muhtarları ile bir diyalog içinde olup olmadığı; mahalle sorunları ve yapılacak hizmetler konusunda muhtarlarla görüşme toplantıları yapıp yapmadığını belirlenmesi; belediyeye yönetimlerinin mahalle muhtarları ile hangi durumlarda daha fazla iletişim kurmak istedikleri gibi konular araştırılmıştır. Ankete katılanların %52'si belediyelerle bilgi ve görüşme toplantılarına katıldıklarını, %32'si ise katılmadığını belirtmiştir. Diğer bir bulgu özellikle seçim dönemlerinde, doğal felaket durumlarında ve bir hizmet yapılacağı zaman belediyelerin mahalle muhtarları ile daha fazla diyalog kurdukları dikkat çekmektedir. Mahalle muhtarlarına belediyelerle irtibat için nasıl bir yöntem izliyorsunuz sorusuna bazı muhtarlar belediye başkanı ile görüşüklerini; bazı muhtarlar belediye meclis üyeleri ile, bazı muhtarlar belediye encümen üyeleri ile görüşükleri şeklinde cevap vermişlerdir. Mahalle muhtarlarından bazıları genellikle belediye başkanının sorunların çözümünde tek yetkili olduğunu düşünmelerinden dolayı sadece başkanla görüşüklerini dile getirmişlerdir. Muhtarlar belediyelerle mahalle muhtarları arasında düzenli toplantılar düzenlenmesi gereği ve bu toplantılarla herhangi bir siyasi ve ideolojik düşünce gündüldemen bütün mahalle muhtarları davet edilmesi gerektiğini belirtmişlerdir. Belediyelerde mahalle muhtarlarının sorunlarıyla doğrudan ilgilenecek bir 'muhtarlar odası' oluşturulması önerisinde bulunmuşlardır. Mahalle muhtarlarına belediye yönetimleriyle yakın bir ilişki ve iş birliği içinde olmadan bir yararı sorulmuştur. Bu tür bir diyalog için bazı muhtarlar yönetimi merkeziyetçilikten kurtaracağını; halkın programlar konusunda görüş ve rızalarının alınmasını sağlayacağını; muhtarlarının talep ve beklenmelerini dile getirme konusunda yardımcı olacağını düşünmektedirler. Mahalle muhtarları belediye yönetimleriyle diyalogun karşılıklı kaynaşmayı ve yakınlaşmayı sağladığını; katılımcı bir yönetimin sağlanmasına yardımcı olacağı kanaatini aktarmaktadırlar.

Bulut, Yıldırım ve Şengül'ün (2000) veri analizine dayalı çalışmasında elde edilen bazı bulgular şunlardır: Muhtarlar halkın nabzını tutmakta olup belediyelerle muhtarların fikir alışverişinde bulunması

belediyenin dolaylı olarak halk ile diyalog ve iletişimini anlamına gelmektedir. Mahalle muhtarlarının belediyelerle diyalogu hizmetlerin gerçekleşmesi konusunda hızlı hareket edilmesini sağlayacağı gibi objektif olmayı ve kişisel çıkarlardan uzaklaşmayı da sağlayabilir. Muhtarlarının belediyelerle ve diğer idarelerle yüz yüze ilişki kurması diyalog kurması sorunlarını açık bir şekilde dile getireceğinden yönetimim denetlenmesini de sağlar. Mahalle muhtarları yerel idarelere görüş, öneri ve sorunları daha kolay aktarma olanağına sahiptir bu nedenle sorunların gündeme alınması ve çözülmesi daha hızlı olacak ve yerel hizmetlerin verilmesinde etkinlik artacaktır. Muhtarların yerel idarelerle doğrudan diyalog sağlama daha akılcı rasyonel fikirlerin üretilmesini sağlayabilecektir. Mahalle muhtarlarıyla yerel idarelerin diyalog kurması bir yandan mahallelerde belediyelere yapmış olduğu hizmetler konusunda geri-dönüş sağlarken, diğer yandan muhtarların da belediyenin hizmetleri hakkında bilgi sahibi olmasını sağlamaktadır.

Toprak ve Aydın (2023) yaptıkları çalışmada köyden mahalleye dönüßen yerlerin büyükşehir belediyeleri ile ilişkileri ele alınmıştır. 6360 sayılı kanun ile birlikte büyükşehirlerde köylerin tüzel kişilerinin kaldırılarak mahalleye dönüştürülmesi sonucu kurulan muhtarlıkların sorunlarına yardımcı olmak amacıyla büyükşehir belediyelerinde muhtarlık işleri daire başkanlıkları kurulmuştur. Çalışmada Ankara Büyükşehir Belediyesi Muhtarlık İşleri Daire Başkanlığında yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat tekniği uygulanarak çeşitli bulgular elde edilmiştir. Bu çalışmada bulgulara göre kırsal mahalle ve Kırsal Yerleşik Alan Yönetmeliğinin olumlu bir gelişme olduğu fakat tam anlamıyla yeterli olmadığı tespit edilmiştir; 6360 sayılı kapsamlı torba Kanunun olumlu ve olumsuz yönleri belirlenmiştir. Toprak ve Aydın (2023) köyden mahalleye dönüßen muhtarlıkların büyükşehir belediyeleri ile ilişkileri konusunda öncü bir çalışmayı büyükşehir belediyeleri yönünden ele almışlardır.

Taş, Durgun ve Yalçınkaya (2021) bir halkla ilişkiler aracı olarak mahalle muhtarlarının il idaresiyle olan ilişkilerinin durumunu araştırmışlardır. Bu çalışmada mahalle muhtarları ile il idaresi arasındaki ilişkilerde ortaya çıkan sorunlar belirlenmiş ve çözüm önerileri sunulmuştur. Bu çalışmada Niğde ilinde bir alan araştırması ile 'bir halkla ilişkiler aracı olarak mahalle muhtarlarının il idaresi ile ilişkisi nasıldır?' sorusuna cevap aranmıştır. Mahalle muhtarlarının yanı sıra il idaresi kapsamında valilik birimlerindeki görevlilerle derinlemesine mülakat tekniği kullanılmıştır.

Muhtarların yerel idarelerle ilişkileri üzerine yapılan ampirik çalışmaların yanı sıra muhtar-yerel idarelerarası ilişkilerin mevzuat ve tarihsel gelişimi üzerine yazılmış veri analizine dayalı olmayan çalışmalar da bulunmaktadır. Apan (2025) ve Arikboğa (2018) veri analizine dayalı olmadan muhtar-mülki idare ve muhtar-belediye ilişkilerinin detaylı şekilde tarihsel gelişimi ve hukuki boyutunu ela alan çalışmalarıyla ilgili alana katkı sunmuşlardır.

Muhtarların yerel idarelerle ilişkileri üzerine yapılan ampirik çalışmaların literatür taraması ülkemiz üzerinde bu konuda yapılan akademik çalışmaların sınırlı sayıda olduğunu göstermektedir. Mevcut çalışmalarla mahalle muhtarları-belediye/il idaresi, köyden mahalleye dönüßen yerlerin muhtarlarının büyükşehir ilişkilerinin ele alındığı tespit edilmiştir. Bu çalışma ise, köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının karşılaşılmalı olarak valilik/kaymakamlık, belediye ve il özel idareleri ile ilişkileri bütüncül bir şekilde ele alarak ampirik literatüre katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Yöntem ve Bulgular

İller İdaresi verilerine göre Türkiye'de 50.428 muhtar görev yapmaktadır.⁴ Tablo 1'de köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının cinsiyete göre dağılımına ilişkin bilgiler sunulmuştur. Mahalle muhtarlarının %5'i kadın iken, köy muhtarlarının %1'i kadındır. Türkiye'de tüm muhtarların %3'ü kadın, %97'si erkektir. Köy muhtarlarının toplam muhtarlarla oranı %36, mahalle muhtarlarının ise %64'dür.⁵

Tablo 1: Türkiye'de cinsiyet türüne göre köy ve mahalle muhtarları

	Köy		Mahalle		Toplam	
	Sayı	%	Sayı	%	Sayı	%
Erkek	18.032	99	30.677	95	48.709	97
Kadın	178	1	1.541	5	1.719	3
Toplam	18.210	100	32.218	100	50.428	100

4 Kaynak: İller İdaresi Genel Müdürlüğü'nden elde edilen 22.07.2025 tarihli bilgi notu.

5 6360 sayılı Kanun'la 30 büyükşehir belediyesindeki bütün köyler ve beldeler mahalleye dönüştürülmüştür (Muğla Seydişehir'deki gibi gerekirse birleştirilerek, ilçeye dönüştürülen çok az sayıdaki köyler hariç). Bu dönüşümle birlikte mahalle muhtarlığı sayısı iki katına çıkmıştır (Arikboğa, 2018, 31).

Çalışmanın alanı Afyonkarahisar'la kısıtlı olduğu için evren ilde görev yapan muhtar sayısıdır. Örnekleme yöntemleri olasılığa dayalı olan ve olmayanlar şeklinde ikiye ayrılmaktadır. En ideal örnekleme yöntemleri olasılığa dayalı yöntemler olmakla birlikte, uygulanmasının zaman ve gider maliyeti oldukça fazladır. Bu nedenle olasılığa dayalı olmayan yöntemler tercih edilmektedir. Bu çalışmada da olasılığa dayalı olmayan yöntemlerden kolayda örnekleme yöntemiyle anket gerçekleştirılmıştır. Geliştirilen anket formu uygulanmadan önce Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi'nden etik kurul onayı alınmıştır. Dinar ilçesinde 20 muhtarla yapılan pilot çalışmadan sonra revize edilen anket formu sahada yüz yüze yöntemle uygulanmıştır.

Afyonkarahisar ilinde Tablo 2'de de görüldüğü üzere, resmi verilere göre 421 köy⁶ ve 448 mahallede⁷ görev yapan 849 muhtar bulunmaktadır. Çalışmada 211 köy, 231 mahalle muhtarı olmak üzere toplam 442 muhtarla anket yapılmıştır. Ankete katılanların %48'i köy, %52'si mahalle muhtarı olarak görev yapmaktadır. Çalışmada örneklem olarak, evrenin %52'siyle anket gerçekleştirılmıştır.

Tablo 2: Köy/mahalle muhtarları için evren ve örneklem

	Evren		Örneklem	
	Sayı	%	Sayı	%
Köy	421	48	211	48
Mahalle	448	52	231	52
Toplam	869	100	442	100

Ankete katılan muhtarların yaşlarına ilişkin tanımlayıcı istatistikler Tablo 3'te sunulmuştur. Örneklemde en genç muhtar 24, en yaşlı muhtar 75 yaşındadır. Örneklemdeki muhtarların %23'ü 40 yaş ve altı, %60'ı 50 yaş ve altı olarak tespit edilmiştir. En kalabalık yaş %5,7 ile 55 yaşı tespit edilmiştir. Örneklemde %2'si (21-30) yaş grubunda, %21'i (31-40) yaş grubunda, %38'i (41-50) yaş grubunda, %31'i (51-60) yaş grubunda, %8'i ise (61 ve üzeri) yaş grubundadır.

Tablo 3: Muhtarların yaş durumlarına ilişkin tanımlayıcı istatistikler

Yaş	Sayı	%	Kümülatif %	Yaş	Sayı	%	Kümülatif %
24	1	0,2	0,2	48	23	5,2	51,1
27	2	0,5	0,7	49	23	5,2	56,3
28	1	0,2	0,9	50	20	4,5	60,9
29	1	0,2	1,1	51	21	4,8	65,6
30	5	1,1	2,3	52	14	3,2	68,8
31	4	0,9	3,2	53	6	1,4	70,1
32	9	2	5,2	54	18	4,1	74,2
33	9	2	7,2	55	25	5,7	79,9
34	5	1,1	8,4	56	16	3,6	83,5
35	10	2,3	10,6	57	14	3,2	86,7
36	9	2	12,7	58	7	1,6	88,2
37	5	1,1	13,8	59	6	1,4	89,6
38	12	2,7	16,5	60	10	2,3	91,9
39	13	2,9	19,5	61	5	1,1	93
40	16	3,6	23,1	62	6	1,4	94,3
41	15	3,4	26,5	63	6	1,4	95,7
42	13	2,9	29,4	64	7	1,6	97,3
43	15	3,4	32,8	65	6	1,4	98,6
44	15	3,4	36,2	66	3	0,7	99,3
45	17	3,8	40	68	1	0,2	99,5
46	8	1,8	41,9	70	1	0,2	99,8
47	18	4,1	45,9	75	1	0,2	100

6 Köy muhtarları verisi için Bkz:

<http://www.afyonkarahisar.gov.tr/kurumlar/afyonkarahisar.gov.tr/Dosyalar/Se%C3%A7ilmi%C5%9Fler/2024-Koy-Listesi.pdf>

7 Mahalle muhtarları verisi için Bkz:

<http://www.afyonkarahisar.gov.tr/kurumlar/afyonkarahisar.gov.tr/Dosyalar/Se%C3%A7ilmi%C5%9Fler/2024-Mahalle-Listesi.pdf>

Ankete katılan muhtarların cinsiyet, eğitim ve medeni durumlarına ilişkin tanımlayıcı istatistikler tablo 4'te sunulmuştur. Katılımcıların eğitim durumuna göre 442 örneklenin 150'si ilkokul mezunudur (%33) ve en yüksek değeri; 147 lise mezunu (%32) ve 129 ortaokul mezunu (%29) görev yapmaktadır. Üniversite mezunlarının oranının ise %4 olması, toplumdaki üniversite mezunu artışının muhtarlığa yansımadığını göstermektedir. Diğer bir şekilde, üniversite mezunu muhtar sayısının az olması üniversite mezunlarının, muhtarlığı tercih etmediği şeklinde yorumlanabilir. Muhtarların %93'ü evli, %4'ü bekardır.

Tablo 4: Muhtarların cinsiyet, eğitim ve medeni durumlarına ilişkin tanımlayıcı istatistikler

Değişken		Sayı	%
Cinsiyet	Erkek	429	97
	Kadın	13	3
Eğitim	İlkokul	150	33
	Ortaokul	129	29
	Lise	147	32
	Üniversite	16	4
Medeni durum	Evli	410	93
	Bekar	17	4
	Boşanmış	7	1
	Eşi vefat etmiş	8	2

Katılımcıların %97'si erkek, %3'ü kadındır. 2024 Türkiye verilerine göre de kadın muhtarların toplam muhtar sayısına oranı %3'tür. Kadın ve erkek muhtarlar açısından örneklenin evren ile aynı orana sahip olduğunu göstermektedir.

Katılımcıların görev süresi ve mahalle/köy nüfusuna ilişkin tanımlayıcı istatistikleri tablo 5'te sunulmuştur. Muhtarlık görev süresi içerisinde görev süresi açısından incelenmesine göre muhtarların yaklaşık %50'si ilk defa seçilmiş ve görev yapmaktadır. Muhtarların %32'si 2. dönem, %12'si 3. dönem, %4'ü 4. dönem, %1'i 5. dönem, %2'si ise 6. dönem muhtarlıklarını yapmaktadır. Bu gösterge bize muhtarların %50'sinin ilk kez görev yaptığını göstermektedir. Muhtarların yaklaşık 1/3'ü 2. kez seçilmişdir. 8 muhtar 6. dönemlerinde görev yapmaktadır.

Ankete katılan muhtarların %7'si nüfusu 100'ün altında olan mahallede/köyde muhtarlık yapmaktadır. Muhtarların %63'ü nüfusu 100 ile 1.000 arasında olan yerlerde mahallelerde görev yapmaktadır. Muhtarların %18'i nüfusu 1.000 ile 3.000 arasında olan mahallelerde görev yapmakta iken %11'i nüfusu 3.000 ve üzeri olan mahallelerde görev yapmaktadır.

Tablo 5: Muhtarların görev süresi ve mahalle/köy nüfusuna ilişkin tanımlayıcı istatistikler

	Değişken	Sayı	%
Görev süresi (yıl)	0-5	215	49
	6-10	143	32
	11-15	54	12
	16-20	18	4
	21-25	4	1
	25 üstü	8	2
Mahalle/köy nüfusu (kişi)	0-100	32	7
	101-300	93	21
	301-500	95	22
	501-1.000	93	21
	1.001-3.000	81	18
	3.001-5.000	25	6
	5.001 ve üzeri	23	5

Ankete katılan muhtarların çalışma durumu ve yerleşim yeri tanımlayıcı istatistikleri Tablo 6'da sunulmuştur. Muhtarların %35'i muhtarlık dışında başka bir işte çalışmakta olup %40'i sadece muhtarlık yapmaktadır. Muhtarların %25'i ise emekli durumundadır ve %20'si kasaba, %62'si ilçe ve %18'i il merkezine bağlı olarak görev yapmaktadır.

Tablo 6: Muhtarların çalışma durumu ve yerleşim yeri değişkenlerine ait tanımlayıcı istatistikler

	Değişken	Sayı	%
Muhtarlık dışı çalışma durumu	Çalışıyor	159	35
	Çalışmıyor	174	40
	Emekli	109	25
Yerleşim yeri	Köy/Kasaba	91	20
	İlçe	272	62
	İl Merkezi	79	18

Ankete dayalı çalışmalarda tümevarım için örneklemin evreni temsil kabiliyetine haiz olması gerekmektedir. Eğitim, medeni durum, cinsiyet, görev yeri, görev süresi, yerleşim yeri değişkenlerine ilişkin tanımlayıcı istatistikler örneklemin alt gruplara normal dağıldığını göstermektedir. Örneklemin, evrenin yarısından fazla olması da örneklem büyülüğünün yeterli olduğunu göstermektedir.

Çalışmada eğitim durumu ile mahalle muhtarlığının türü arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığı Tablo 7'de sunulmaktadır. Köylerde ilkokul mezunu muhtar daha fazla iken, mahallelerde ortaokul, lise ve üniversite mezunu muhtar köylerden daha fazladır. Özellikle mahalle muhtarlığında üniversite mezun sayısı köylere göre üç kat fazladır.

Tablo 7: Eğitim durumu ile köy/mahalle muhtarlığı arasındaki ilişki

	Köy	Mahalle	Toplam
İlkokul Mezunu	87 (%41)	63 (%27)	150 (%33)
Ortaokul Mezunu	58 (%21)	71 (%30)	129 (%29)
Lise Mezunu	62 (%29)	85 (%36)	147 (%33)
Üniversite Mezunu	4 (%1)	12 (%5)	16 (%3)
Toplam	211	231	442

Parantez içi rakamlar toplama oranı göstermektedir.

Eğitim durumu ile mahalle nüfusu arasında bir ilişki olup olmadığı incelenmiş ve bulgular tablo 8'de gösterilmektedir. İlkokul mezunu muhtarların yarısından fazlası nüfusu 0-500 arası yerlerde muhtarlık yapmaktadır. Lise mezunlarının yaklaşık yarısı nüfusu 0-500 arası yerlerde muhtarlık yapmaktadır. Örneklemin yaklaşık %50'sinin nüfusu 0-500 arası yerlerde muhtarlık yapması, köy ve mahallelerin ölçek açısından yaklaşık %50'sinin nüfusunun 500'den az olduğunu göstermektedir.

Tablo 8: Muhtarların eğitim durumu ile nüfus arasında ilişki

	0-500	501-1.000	1.001-3.000	3.001 ve üzeri	Toplam
İlkokul Mezunu	80	31	22	17	150
Ortaokul Mezunu	60	29	30	10	129
Lise Mezunu	74	29	25	19	147
Üniversite Mezunu	6	4	4	2	16
Toplam	220	93	81	48	442

Muhtarlar kendilerine iletilen kamu hizmetleri ilgili sorunları yerel idarelere bildirmek zorundadır. Bunun içinde yerel idareelerle muhtarların iletişim içinde olmaları gerekmektedir. Bu kapsamında muhtarlar görev yapılan mahalle veya köyde eksikliğini hissettiği kamu hizmetleri sorulmuştur. Birden fazla seçenek işaretleyerek cevap verilmiştir. Bulgular Tablo 9'da sunulmuştur. Muhtarların en fazla eksikliğini hissettikleri kamu hizmetleri sıralamasında su, elektrik, doğalgaz gibi temel hizmetleri en başta yer almıştır. Ulaşım ve altyapı hizmetleri ikinci sırada yer almıştır. Muhtarların %31'i eksik kamu hizmeti bulunmadığını belirtmektedirler.

Tablo 9: Muhtarların en fazla eksikliğini hissettikleri kamu hizmetleri

	sayı	%
Sağlık hizmetleri	97	22
Eğitim hizmetleri	90	20
Katı atıkların toplanması ve çevre düzeni	73	17
Ulaşım ve altyapı hizmetleri	118	27
Su, elektrik, doğalgaz gibi temel hizmetler	148	34
Sosyal yardım ve destek programları	66	15
Güvenlik hizmetleri	67	15
Eksiklik hissetmiyorum	138	31

Muhtarlar kamu hizmetleriyle ilgili en fazla hangi konularda bilgi eksikliği hissettiğleri sorulmuştur. Birden fazla seçenek işaretleyerek cevap verilmiştir. Bulgular tablo 10'da sunulmuştur. Muhtarların en fazla bilgi eksikliği hissettiğleri kamu hizmetleri sırasıyla sağlık hizmetleri, imar işlemleri ve altyapı çalışmalarıdır. Muhtarların %36'sı kamu hizmetleri konusunda bilgi eksikliği hissetmediklerini belirtmiştir.

Tablo 10: Muhtarların en fazla bilgi eksikliği hissettiğleri kamu hizmetleri

	sayı	%
Sağlık hizmetleri	92	21
Eğitim hizmetleri	76	17
İmar İşlemleri	93	21
Tarım hizmetleri	62	14
Altyapı çalışmaları	90	20
Sosyal yardım ve destekler	50	11
Çevre ve temizlik	73	17
Nüfus işlemleri	20	5
Defin işlemleri	18	4
Güvenlik hizmetleri	39	9
Eksiklik hissetmiyorum	160	36

Köy ve mahalle muhtarların kamu hizmetleriyle ilgili en fazla hangi konularda bilgi eksikliği hissettiğlerine ait bulgular karşılaştırmalı olarak Tablo 11'de sunulmuştur. Altyapı çalışmaları, çevre ve temizlik konularında köy muhtarlarının en fazla bilgi eksikliği hissettiğleri hizmetlerdir. Sağlık ve imar hizmetleri mahalle muhtarlarının en fazla bilgi eksikliği hissettiğleri kamu hizmetleridir. Köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının %20'si herhangi bir kamu hizmetinde bilgi eksikliğinin olmadığını ifade etmişlerdir.

Tablo 11: Köy ve mahalle muhtarların karşılaştırmalı en fazla bilgi eksikliği hissettiğleri kamu hizmetleri

	Köy	Mahalle
Sağlık hizmetleri	40 (%11)	52 (%12)
Eğitim hizmetleri	29 (%8)	47 (%11)
İmar İşlemleri	40 (%11)	53 (%12)
Tarım hizmetleri	32 (%9)	30 (%7)
Altyapı çalışmaları	42 (%12)	48 (%11)
Sosyal yardım ve destekler	20 (%6)	30 (%7)
Çevre ve temizlik	44 (%12)	29 (%7)
Nüfus işlemleri	9 (%3)	11 (%3)
Defin işlemleri	9 (%3)	9 (%2)
Güvenlik hizmetleri	15 (%4)	24 (%6)
Eksiklik hissetmiyorum	75 (%21)	85 (%20)

Parantez içi rakamlar toplama oranı göstermektedir.

Muhtarlar görevli oldukları görevlerle ilgili olarak yerel kamu yöneticileri ile iletişim içinde olmaları gerekmektedir. Muhtarlar sorumlu oldukları görevleri ile sorunları çözebilmek için valilik, kaymakamlık, belediye veya il özel idaresi ile görüşmeleri gerekmektedir. Bu bağlamda muhtarlarla bağlı bulunduğu valilik veya kaymakamlıkla ne sıklıkta görüşükleri sorulmuştur. Bulgular Tablo 12'de sunulmuştur. Köy muhtarlarının %53'ü haftada en az 1 kez, mahalle muhtarlarının %51'i ayda en az 1 kez valilik veya kaymakamlığa gittiğini belirtmişlerdir. Köy muhtarlarının göreli olarak devletin temsilcilikleri olan valilik/kaymakamlıkları daha fazla sıklıkla ziyaret ettikleri bulgusu ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Tablo 12: Kamu hizmetlerine ilişkin muhtarların valilik/kaymakamlıkla iletişim sıklığı

	Köy	Mahalle	Toplam
Yılda birkaç kez	18	34	52
Ayda en az 1 kez	79	118	197
Haftada en az 1 kez	112	74	186
Hiç iletişim kurmuyorum	2	5	7
Toplam	211	231	442

Muhtarlarla görev yaptıkları yerin belediyesi ile ne sıklıkta görüşüştükleri sorusu yöneltilmiştir Bulgular Tablo 13'te sunulmuştur. Köy muhtarlarının %39'ü ayda en az 1 kez, mahalle muhtarlarının %55'i haftada en az 1 kez belediyeyi ziyaret ettiğini belirtmişlerdir. Mahalle muhtarlarının göreli olarak köy muhtarlarından daha fazla sıklıkla belediyeleri ziyaret ettiğini bulgusu elde edilmiştir.

Tablo 13: Kamu hizmetlerine ilişkin muhtarların belediyelerle iletişim sıklığı

	Köy	Mahalle	Toplam
Yılda birkaç kez	49	9	58
Ayda en az 1 kez	82	93	175
Haftada en az 1 kez	34	127	161
Hiç iletişim kurmuyorum	46	2	48
Toplam	211	231	442

Kamu hizmetlerine ilişkin muhtarların valilik/kaymakamlıkla ve belediyelerle iletişim sıklığı karşılaştırmalı bir şekilde ele alındığında şu bulgular elde edilmiştir. Mahalle muhtarlarının göreli olarak köy muhtarlarından daha fazla sıklıkla belediyeleri ziyaret ettiğini görülmüştür. Buna karşılık köy muhtarlarının göreli olarak mahalle muhtarlarından daha fazla sıklıkla valilik/kaymakamlıkları ziyaret ettiğini bulgusu elde edilmiştir. Toplamda ise köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının çoğunuğu hem valilik/kaymakamlıkları hem de belediyeleri ayda en az bir kez ziyaret ettiği ve iletişimde geçtiği gözlenmiştir. Muhtarlarla görev yaptıkları yerin il/ilçe özel idaresi ile ne sıklıkta görüşüştükleri sorulmuştur. Bulgular Tablo 14'te sunulmuştur. Köy muhtarlarının %55'i haftada en az 1 kez il/ilçe özel idaresini ziyaret ettiğini belirtirken, mahalle muhtarlarının %11'i haftada en az 1 kez iletişim kurmaktadır. Köy muhtarlarının göreli olarak il/ilçe özel idarelerini mahalle muhtarlarından daha fazla sıklıkla ziyaret ettiğini bulgusu elde edilmiştir.

Tablo 14: Kamu hizmetlerine ilişkin muhtarların il/ilçe özel idaresi ile iletişim sıklığı

	Köy	Mahalle	Toplam
Yılda birkaç kez	21	47	68
Ayda en az 1 kez	70	83	153
Haftada en az 1 kez	117	25	142
Hiç iletişim kurmuyorum	3	76	79
Toplam	211	231	442

Muhtarlarla yerel idarelerle (valilik/kaymakamlık, belediye, il/ilçe özel idaresi) iletişim veya ziyaret sıklığı sorulmuş ve bulgular Tablo 15'te sunulmuştur. Köy muhtarları en az belediyelerle iletişim kurduklarını ifade ederken, mahalle muhtarları il/ilçe özel idareleri ile en az sıklıkla iletişim kurduklarını ifade etmişlerdir. Köy muhtarlarının %55'i haftada en az bir kez il/ilçe özel idaresini ziyaret ettiğini veya iletişim kurduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Mahalle muhtarlarının %55'i belediyeyi haftada en az bir kez ziyaret ettiğini veya iletişim kurduklarını belirtmişlerdir.

Tablo 15: Kamu hizmetlerine ilişkin yerel idarelerle iletişim sıklığı: Karşılaştırmalı bulgular

		Valilik / Kaymakamlık, %	Belediyeler, %	İl / İlçe özel idaresi, %	Ortalama, %
Köy	Ay	37	39	33	36
	Hafta	53	16	55	41
Mahalle	Ay	51	40	36	42
	Hafta	32	55	10	32

Muhtarlar mevzuat gereği yerel idarelerle iletişimde olmaları zorunluluktur. Mevzuatı iyi bilen muhtarların yerel idarelerle daha iyi bir iletişim kurmayı beklenir. Bu kapsamında muhtarlarla yaptıkları görevle ilgili hak ve sorumlulukları hakkında mevzuat bilgi sahibi olup olmadıkları sorulmuştur. Bulgular Tablo 16'da sunulmuştur. Köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının cevapları arasında benzerlik gözlenmiştir. Çalışmaya katılan muhtarların %84'ü muhtarların hak ve sorumlulukları konusunda mevzuat bilgisi sahibi olduklarını belirtmiştir. Muhtarların yaklaşık %15'inin muhtarlık mevzuatı hakkında yeterli düzeyde bilgi sahibi olmadığı bulgusu elde edilmiştir. Mevzuat bilgisi yetersiz muhtarlarla görevde başlarken mevzuat eğitimi verilmesi tavsiye edilebilir.

Tablo 16: Muhtarlık mevzuat bilgisine sahiplik

	Köy	Mahalle	Toplam
Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	6	13	19
Katılmıyorum	1	4	5
Kısmen Katılıyorum	17	21	38
Katılıyorum	96	90	186
Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	87	100	187
Fikrim Yok	4	3	7
Toplam	211	231	442

Muhtarlar hem mevzuat gereği hem de görevlerini daha iyi yapabilmeleri için yerel idareelerle çok sıkı ve sağlıklı iletişimde olmaları gerekmektedir. Bu kapsamda muhtarların yerel idareelerde görevliler tarafından önemsenmeleri gerekmektedir. Eğer muhtarlar yerel idareelerde önemsendiklerini hissederlerse iletişim daha sağlıklı bir şekilde devam edecektir. Bu kapsamda muhtarlarla valilik veya kaymakamlıkta önemsenip önemsenmedikleri konusu Likert ölçüği ifadelerle sorulmuştur. Bulgular Tablo 17'de sunulmuştur. Köy muhtarlarının %55'i, mahalle muhtarlarının %58'i 'muhtar olarak valilik/kaymakamlıkta önemsendiğimi hissediyorum' ifadesine kesinlikle katılıyorum cevabı vermişlerdir. Tüm muhtarların %57'si valilik veya kaymakamlıkta kesinlikle önemsendiklerini belirtmişlerdir.

Tablo 17: Muhtar olarak valilik/kaymakamlıkta önemsenme

	Köy	Mahalle	Toplam
Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	8	14	22
Katılmıyorum	1	0	1
Kısmen Katılıyorum	6	14	20
Katılıyorum	78	69	147
Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	117	133	250
Fikrim Yok	1	1	2
Toplam	211	231	442

Muhtarlarla belediyelerde önemsenip önemsenmedikleri konusu Likert ölçüği ifadelerle sorulmuştur. Bulgular tablo 18'de sunulmuştur. Köy muhtarlarının %30'u, mahalle muhtarlarının %52'si 'muhtar olarak belediyelerde önemsendiğimi hissediyorum' ifadesine kesinlikle katılıyorum cevabı vermişlerdir. Tüm muhtarların %41'i belediyelerde kesinlikle önemsendiklerini belirtmişlerdir.

Tablo 18: Muhtar olarak belediyede önemsenme

	Köy	Mahalle	Toplam
Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	10	15	25
Katılmıyorum	12	5	17
Kısmen Katılıyorum	18	21	39
Katılıyorum	81	69	150
Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	64	119	183
Fikrim Yok	26	2	28
Toplam	211	231	442

Muhtarlarla il/ilçe özel idaresinde önemsenip önemsenmedikleri konusu Likert ölçüği ifadelerle sorulmuştur. Bulgular tablo 19'da sunulmuştur. Köy muhtarlarının %49'u, mahalle muhtarlarının %38'i 'muhtar olarak il özel idaresinde önemsendiğimi hissediyorum' ifadesine kesinlikle katılıyorum cevabı vermişlerdir. Tüm muhtarların %43'ü belediyelerde kesinlikle önemsendiklerini belirtmişlerdir.

Tablo 19: Muhtar olarak il/ilçe özel idaresinde önemsenme

	Köy	Mahalle	Toplam
Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	8	10	18
Katılmıyorum	3	7	10
Kısmen Katılıyorum	8	19	27
Katılıyorum	86	74	160
Kesinlikle Katılıyorum	103	88	191
Fikrim Yok	3	33	36
Toplam	211	231	442

Muhtarlarla yerel idarelerde (valilik/kaymakamlık, belediye, il/ilçe özel idaresi) önemsenip önemsenmedikleri konusu Likert ölçüği ifadelerle sorulmuştur. Bulgular tablo 20'de sunulmuştur. Köy muhtarları en az belediyelerde önemsendiklerini ifade ederken, mahalle muhtarları il/ilçe özel idarelerinde en az önemsendiklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Köy ve mahalle muhtarları en fazla önemsendikleri yerel idarenin valilik/kaymakamlıklar olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir.

Tablo 20: Muhtar olarak yerel idarelerde önemsenme: Karşılaştırmalı bulgular

	Valilik/ Kaymakamlık, %	Belediyeler, %	İl/ilçe özel idaresi, %	Ortalama, %
Köy	55	30	49	45
Mahalle	58	52	38	49
Tüm muhtarlar	57	41	43	47

Sonuç ve Genel Değerlendirme

Muhtarlar mahalle/köy halkın sosyal ihtiyaçlarını yerel idarelere iletme konusunda fonksiyonel olmaları gerekmektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı muhtarların yerel idarelerle ilişkilerini muhtarlar yönünden incelenmesidir. Köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının yerel idarelerin kapsamı içinde mülki amirlikler (valilik ve kaymakamlık), belediyeler ve il özel idareleri ve bunların alt birimleri ile iletişimimin boyutu anketten elde edilen çeşitli göstergelerle incelenmektedir. Muhtarlık yerel idareler ilişkisi üzerine yapılan önceki çalışmaların belediye, il idaresi gibi tek yönlü olduğu görülmüştür. Mahalle ve köy muhtarları ayrı çalışma konusu yapılmıştır. Bu çalışmada ise, köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının karşılaştırmalı olarak valilik, kaymakamlık, belediye ve il özel idareleri ile ilişkileri bütüncül bir şekilde ele alınarak veri analizine dayalı bulgular elde edilmiştir.

Muhtarların en fazla eksikliğini hissettikleri kamu hizmetleri sıralamasında su, elektrik, doğalgaz gibi temel hizmetler en başta yer almıştır. Ulaşım ve altyapı hizmetleri ikinci sırada yer almıştır. Muhtarların %31'i eksik kamu hizmeti bulunmadığını belirtmiştir. Altyapı çalışmaları, çevre ve temizlik konularında köy muhtarlarının en fazla bilgi eksikliği hissettikleri hizmetler iken sağlık ve imar hizmetleri mahalle muhtarlarının en fazla bilgi eksikliği hissettikleri kamu hizmetleridir. Köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının 1/5'i herhangi bir kamu hizmetinde bilgi eksikliğinin olmadığını ifade etmişlerdir.

Muhtarlarla yerel idarelerde kendilerini önemli hissedip hissetmedikleri sorulmuştur. Köy muhtarları en az belediyelerde önemsendiklerini ifade ederken, mahalle muhtarları il/ilçe özel idarelerinde en az önemsendiklerini ifade etmişlerdir. Köy ve mahalle muhtarları birlikte en fazla önemsendikleri yerel idarenin valilik/kaymakamlıklar olduğunu ifade etmişlerdir. Çalışmaya katılan muhtarların %84'ü muhtarların hak ve sorumlulukları konusunda mevzuat bilgisi sahibi olduklarını belirtmiştir. Muhtarların yaklaşık %15'inin muhtarlık mevzuatı hakkında yeterli düzeyde bilgi sahibi olmadığı bulgusu elde edilmiştir. Köy muhtarlarının %55'i haftada en az bir kez il/ilçe özel idaresini ziyaret ettiğini veya iletişim kurduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Mahalle muhtarlarının %55'i belediyeyi haftada en az bir kez ziyaret ettiğini veya iletişim kurduklarını belirtmişlerdir. Mahalle muhtarlarının köy muhtarlarından daha fazla belediyeleri ziyaret ettiğini tespit edilmiş, ancak köy muhtarlarının valilik/kaymakamlıkları mahalle muhtarlarından daha fazla ziyaret ettiğini belirlenmiştir. Köy ve mahalle muhtarlarının çoğunluğu hem valilik/kaymakamlıkları hem de belediyeleri ayda en az bir kez ziyaret ettiği tespit edilmiştir.

Şehir, ilçe ve kasaba gibi yönetimsel yapılanmalara kıyasla mahalle veya köy gibi yerlerde kamu hizmet talepleri benzerdir. Halkın kendi içinden seçtiği muhtarlar halkın sosyal ihtiyaçlarını daha hızlı bir şekilde öğrenmekte, hizmet sunumunda yetkili olan yerel idarelere aktarabilmektedir. Bu açıdan bakıldığından zaman zaman tartışılan muhtarlık kurumunun halk-yerel idareler arası iletişimini sağlamada aracı rolünden dolayı devam etmesi ve daha da güçlendirilmesi önem arz etmekte olduğu iddia edilebilir.

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Sensory–political topography (SPT): An operational framework for micro-public realms

 Devran Bengü¹ 

Abstract

This article develops Sensory–Political Topography (SPT) as a normative–analytic framework for diagnosing and improving micro-public realms. SPT bridges the dominant access and service-provision agenda in social-infrastructure research with theatre/space debates on staging, thresholds, and atmospheres, and conceptualises the sensory–spatial conditions of publicness at the scale of the venue as four parameters: public visibility, sensory commonality, embodied participation, and spatial permeability. Each parameter is operationalised through a practical rubric with clear definitions, observable indicators (proxy measures), evaluation criteria, and design/operational levers. Methodologically, the study is theory-driven: secondary materials (time-stamped vignettes; spatial readings of plans and photographs) are used to conduct a single-case stress test on an independent venue in Istanbul. The analysis shows how threshold ecologies and staging arrangements render actions publicly visible while assembling a field of sensory commonality, and how these configurations act as effective levers in helping to sustain that field. The contribution is twofold: (i) an operational theory of micro-publicness that links atmospheric conditions to concrete spatial and organisational choices; and (ii) a transferable assessment-and-intervention rubric to inform the design and evaluation of social infrastructure across venues such as libraries, community centres, and clinics. Limitations include the absence of new participant data and the single-site scope; future work should test SPT across multiple settings with mixed methods.

Keywords

Social Infrastructure, Public Realm, Atmospheres, Embodied Participation, Spatial Permeability

Introduction

Alternative performance venues are more than architectural configurations shaped by aesthetic preference. They operate as relational environments that foster social encounter, collective experience, and public visibility. Scholarship on theatre architecture has mapped spatial/formal transformation, stage–audience dynamics and aesthetic expression; yet the social and political infrastructures through which such venues sustain publicness and relate to the public realm remain comparatively under-examined. In particular, micro-scale, flexible and participatory settings can be read as sensory–social infrastructures that contribute to the formation of the public realm—positioning theatre as an arena for public imagination rather than a surface of representation. Field-based research from Kadıköy further indicates that independent stages shape publicness through street interfaces, programme practices and audience engagement.

Beyond discursive accounts of the public sphere, critiques highlight that publicness is inseparable from its spatial–aesthetic medium: how bodies appear to one another is mediated by interfaces, layouts and atmosphere (Didi-Huberman, 2018/2009). In this register, theatre is not merely a surface of representation but—when configured accordingly—a spatial means of public appearance. On that premise, SPT focuses on the site-level conditions under which micro-public realms become legible, comfortable and repeatable.

This article brings Hannah Arendt's account of appearance, action and plurality into dialogue with Gernot Böhme's aesthetics of atmospheres. Arendt clarifies the conditions under which action becomes publicly legible; Böhme explains how shared attunement is composed through light, sound, materiality and proxemics. Taken together, they clarify how situations become public—through visibility and recognition—and how they are sensed—through affective tonality and bodily attunement. While Arendt

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is normative-political and Böhme phenomenological-aesthetic, the two remain methodologically compatible when read at the level of conditions.

The article proposes Sensory-Political Topography (SPT) as an original, theory-led, venue-agnostic normative-analytic framework that formalises four parameters—public visibility, sensory commonality, embodied participation and spatial permeability. These parameters are formalised as jointly necessary at site level and specify the spatial and organisational levers—interfaces and threshold optics; light-sound-material composition; proxemics and multi-address layouts; edge devices and routines—by which collective presence is made legible, comfortable and repeatable. SPT does not prescribe a typology; it translates sensory formation and political appearance into operational criteria applicable across social-infrastructure settings.

The study asks whether alternative performance venues can be understood as micro-public social infrastructures, and whether a normative-analytic framework can be formalised to guide spatial/operational decisions beyond theatre. Three guiding questions organise the inquiry:

- RQ1. Which spatial and organisational conditions enable micro-public realms in alternative venues?
- RQ2. Can a theory-led set of parameters (visibility, sensory commonality, embodied participation, permeability) be operationalised as a transferable framework (SPT)?
- RQ3. How do these parameters manifest in a well-documented case, and what does this reveal about transfer to other social-infrastructure contexts?

Corresponding propositions are advanced: P1. Calibrated interfaces/layouts increase mutual legibility; P2. Composed atmospheres sustain shared attention without exclusion; P3. Proxemics and conversational scaffolds redistribute initiative; P4. Porous thresholds convert nominal access into lived practice.

The analysis is theory-driven and supported by secondary sources (2013–2025): recorded talks and interviews (platform/time-stamped), press pieces and architectural/urban commentaries. Items were purposefully sampled for direct relevance to the four parameters. Evidence is presented as brief vignettes tied to publication metadata (title, channel, date; timecodes where available). Publicly available documentary materials (e.g., Perdesiz Sahneler, 2018) are treated as secondary sources. No new participant data were collected. Plans, photographs and screenshots are discussed for their analytical role rather than illustration. This design privileges visibility of routines and limits claims about unseen practices; scope conditions and implications are addressed in Section 6.

Moda Sahnesi—a former cinema repurposed as a theatre in the early 2010s within Kadıköy's independent-theatre ecology—offers a well-documented setting to stress-test SPT. Beyond architectural transformation, the venue exhibits: (i) porous street-entry commons interfaces; (ii) flexible staging and reconfigurable seating; and (iii) programme practices that frame audiences as interlocutors. These features, together with accessible public documentation, justify case selection. Generalisation is conceptual and conditional rather than statistical; SPT is proposed as transferable guidance across social-infrastructure types.

SPT specifies site-level mechanisms—interfaces, layouts, atmospheric composition and threshold routines—that link spatial composition to day-to-day practices, providing operational guidance beyond access metrics (see Section 5; Figure 5).

Section 2 develops the conceptual background by situating alternative staging ecologies within social-infrastructure debates. Section 3 elaborates the Arendt–Böhme synthesis and defines SPT. Section 4 applies the framework to Moda Sahnesi. Section 5 formalises the four parameters into a rubric with a Diagnosis → Action → Evaluation cycle (summarised in Figure 5). Section 6 concludes with limitations, links to spatial justice and commons-based urbanism, and implications for transferability beyond theatre.

Conceptual Background

This section develops two conceptual axes that structure the study: (i) alternative staging ecologies—approached beyond any single hall typology—and (ii) social infrastructure. Read together, these axes indicate that theatre venues are more than sites of aesthetic representation: they operate as relational and political environments in which spatial arrangements, dramaturgical choices and institutional practices condition publicness. The discussion prepares the ground for the theoretical synthesis in Section 3 and the case analysis in Section 4.

Alternative Staging Ecologies

Alternative staging denotes configurations that enable reconfiguration, proximity and role fluidity between performers and audiences. Here, *staging* refers to the spatial ecology of the entire venue—including the entry commons (lobby/foyer or equivalent), thresholds, in-between spaces, circulation and street-facing interfaces—rather than the auditorium alone.

Across the literature, emphasis falls on what spaces afford—embodied encounter, shared attention and the situational reframing of relations—rather than adherence to a fixed formal template. Brook's reflections on the “empty space” articulate theatre as a field of action that comes into being through performance, beyond architectural fixity (Brook, 1995). Venues that are modest in scale, technically equipped and architecturally minimal frequently support such adaptability; footage from the documentary *Perdesiz Sahneler* (2018) documents independent theatre practices across multiple venues, illustrating how minimal interiors are mobilised for multi-purpose use and audience involvement.

Participation-oriented practices reinforce this reading by foregrounding collective transformation and dramaturgies that invite intervention (Boal, 2008; Cohen-Cruz & Schutzman, 2006). Boal's spect-actor points to audiences who intervene and co-produce meaning; these practices gain spatial traction where movable seating, dissolved thresholds between performers and viewers, and collective reconfiguration are feasible. Historical critiques of representational fixity likewise pivot towards immediacy and intensity as spatial-performative values (Artaud, 1938/2024). In the Turkish context, research on site-specific and alternative practices shows how spatial adaptability sustains emergent publics and corporeal interaction (Altunkaya, 2017; Başar, 2014).

Within this broader field, typological labels that privilege a neutral, reconfigurable hall retain historical value but do not exhaust contemporary alternative venues. Treating any single hall configuration as an umbrella risks over-generalisation, particularly where the entry commons, thresholds, in-between spaces and street-facing interfaces are constitutive of the venue-wide staging ecology. While movable seating and neutral finishes facilitate adaptability, alternative staging equally turns on porous interfaces and city-facing routines that are not reducible to a room type. Accordingly, the analysis that follows addresses the venue-wide spatial ecology—public edge, entry commons, circulation and assembly zones—so that interfaces, thresholds and city-facing routines are treated as constitutive, not as annexes to an auditorium.

In the post-2000 Turkish context, independent theatre expanded and diversified, with Istanbul's scene—notably Kadıköy—consolidating around flexible, reconfigurable studio-format venues and neighbourhood-facing practices in which thresholds, entry commons (foyer), and street-facing interfaces are integral to staging rather than ancillary to it (Ejder & Salta, 2019; Bengü, 2019).

Evidence from Kadıköy's independent-theatre ecology shows that privately operated venues can host micro-public realms when site-level conditions are met—reversible street-foyer address, proxemic closeness that frames audiences as interlocutors, and doors-open/threshold routines that sustain shared attention before/after shows (Erbaş & Bengü, 2018; Özgür & Bengü, 2022).

Read alongside social-infrastructure debates, *focality*—understood as shared, place-based focal practices—clarifies why interfaces and staging should be judged by how well they sustain shared, participatory use rather than mere service delivery (Passinmäki, 2019).

Social Infrastructure: Site-Level Foundations of the Public Realm

Contemporary urban theory recognises that city life takes shape through relations as well as spatial arrangements. Within this perspective, social infrastructure offers a powerful lens for explaining how encounters are organised and how public life becomes sustainable. Klinenberg (2018, p. 5) defines social infrastructure as the *physical places and organisations that shape interaction*, enabling people to meet, build trust and weave support networks. He also demonstrates the stakes of this argument in the analysis of the 1995 Chicago heatwave: neighbourhoods with dense social ties showed markedly higher survival among older residents living alone (Klinenberg, 2018, pp. 23–25).

In earlier work, Klinenberg (2012) traced the rise of single-person households and examined how public places function as buffers against urban solitude (pp. 190–195). A conceptual proximity is evident here to Arendt's account of the public realm as a domain of appearance and action (1998): infrastructures that cultivate encounter help render actions and bodies legible to one another. The compatibility—and limits—of this proximity are taken up in Section 3.

Building on this foundation, Latham and Layton (2019) propose four analytic dimensions that make the concept operational: *infrastructure*, *publicness*, *encounter* and the *politics of provision*. These dimensions shift attention beyond access toward the qualities and governance of places — how inequality, belonging and spatial justice are negotiated over time. Accessibility is necessary yet insufficient; sustaining a culture of encounter and its institutional supports is equally vital (Latham & Layton, 2019, pp. 4–6).

Extending their synthesis, Latham and Layton (2022, pp. 660–664) map four ways the concept is read in urban studies: (1) persons as infrastructure (e.g., Simone, 2004); (2) social relations crystallising around physical systems; (3) care services (health, education) that underwrite social reproduction; and (4) semi-public spaces that stage everyday encounters. The last category includes settings where sensory co-presence — bodies, voices and gazes sharing a field — emerges as a condition for collective life. In this respect, cultural social infrastructures such as theatre venues can operate as specific spatial forms that strengthen ties and animate sensory publicness through participatory aesthetic experiences.

Evidence from adjacent domains supports this reading. Layton (2022) shows how amateur football fields, swimming pools and fitness centres function beyond exercise alone: they are environments in which differences of class, age and gender are collectively experienced, facilitating embodied and inclusive forms of public life (pp. 8–11).

Read in this light, alternative theatre venues function as cultural social infrastructures where visibility, sensory commonality, proxemics and permeability jointly mediate encounter quality—beyond access alone—through interfaces, layouts and threshold routines.

As framed in Section 2.1, alternative theatre venues configured as venue-wide staging ecologies exemplify this potential. Reconfigurable seating, proximity between performers and audiences and porous interfaces between street, entry commons and auditorium enable embodied participation and inclusive gathering. Across complementary traditions, Brook's (1995) notion of the “empty space” underscores performance as a field of action beyond the constraints of fixed built form; Boal's (2008) participatory methods, alongside practice-oriented readings (Cohen-Cruz & Schutzman, 2006), foreground intervention and collective transformation; and Artaud's (1938/2024) critique of representational fixity clarifies why immediacy and intensity matter as spatial-performative values).

In sum, social infrastructure is more than service-delivery hardware: it encompasses the relational, sensory and political production of public life across concrete settings. Read in this light, alternative theatre venues operate as cultural social infrastructures that foster ties, sustain practices of visibility and stage inclusive encounters—with implications for both political appearance and atmospheric–embodied formation.

Theoretical Framework

To analyse alternative theatre venues as micro-public realms with both political and sensory stakes, Section 3 develops a synthesis of Hannah Arendt's account of the public realm (appearance, plurality) and Gernot Böhme's aesthetics of atmosphere (embodied sensing), enabling joint analysis while keeping the two registers theoretically distinct.

Hannah Arendt: The Political Spatiality of the Public Realm

In *The Human Condition*, Arendt distinguishes labour, work, and action, and defines the public realm through action as a shared domain where persons appear to one another, act, and speak, thereby constituting a common world (Arendt, 1998, pp. 7–10, 198–199). Rather than a fixed enclosure, the public realm functions as a space of appearance—a relational field in which deeds and words gain meaning through mutual visibility. The foundational condition is plurality: acting-together with and through difference discloses unique identities and makes initiatives legible (Arendt, 1998, pp. 179–181).

This spatial imagination aligns theatre and politics at the level of co-presence, contingency, and beginning (natality): theatrical and political actions unfold before others, entail unpredictability and irreversibility, and render persons recognisable (Arendt, 1998, pp. 195–200, 243–245). Read spatially, Arendt's public realm denotes relational intensity—a field in which bodies, voices, gazes, and expressions become perceptible in common. This clarifies why theatre settings can be treated as political spatialities insofar as they organise conditions of visibility and collective address.

Public visibility concerns perceptual–spatial legibility; political publicness concerns acting-together under plurality within a shared realm of recognition and judgement. This distinction structures the subsequent analysis. Democratic theory reinforces this linkage: for Bobbio, democracy stands against

arcana imperii—public power is power under visibility and thus open to scrutiny; representation, *a fortiori*, is necessarily public (Bobbio, 1987, pp. 33–34). Accordingly, visibility functions as a condition of accountability: when procedures are mutually legible to those affected, actions and decisions can be recognised and judged in common (Brighenti, 2010, pp. 113–114). Political representation requires publicness. Theatre, too, is an art of representation that stages word and deed before a public. When a configuration of visibility, plurality, and mutual recognition is established, theatre acquires a political dimension; representation opens to the public, accountability becomes possible, and publicness is achieved (Arendt, 1998; Bobbio, 1987).

Gernot Böhme: The Sensory Formation of Atmospheric Space

Böhme theorises atmosphere as a shared affective field—neither a purely objective property nor a private feeling—through which space is felt (Böhme, 1993, pp. 114, 122; 2016, p. 2). This conception is reinforced by his account of the quasi-objectivity of atmospheres in scenographic production and reception (Böhme, 2016, p. 2; 2017, pp. 159–162).

In performance, atmospheres are produced through scenographic composition (light, sound, voice, movement) and through bodily arrangements; Böhme explicitly takes the stage set as the paradigm for the art of making atmospheres, detailing how staging tunes audiences and coordinates embodied perception (Böhme, 2016, p. 2; 2017, pp. 160–166).

Accordingly, the emphasis shifts from visual composition alone to how environments are composed to direct attention and attune bodies—including acoustic and spatial articulation—so that actions become legible in common (see also Böhme on acoustic “spatial music”) (Böhme, 2017, pp. 128–129, 163–166; 2016, p. 2).

Extending this account, *Atmospheric Architectures* develops how spaces convey public meaning through affective patterning and embodied experience—beyond representational content—particularly in chapters on the social experience of atmospheres and interpersonal communication (Böhme, 2017, pp. 97–103; see also pp. 86–90 on bodily presence). In this light, theatre is not reducible to a narrative vehicle; it operates as a collective sensory-political field organised through sound, light, proximity, and movement. The book’s programmatic subtitle frames such conditions as “felt spaces” (Böhme, 2017, pp. 13–17, 97–103).

For the framework developed in Section 3.3, this specifies sensory commonality as a shared field that holds attention and informs embodied participation by showing how bodies are tuned and invited to act in co-presence.

Sensory-Political Topography (SPT): Definition, Scope, and Terms

Building on the distinctions above, Sensory-Political Topography (SPT) formalises four jointly necessary, site-level conditions—public visibility, sensory commonality, embodied participation, and spatial permeability—under which micro-public realms can take shape, and renders them observable through indicators, proxies, and design/operational levers. Introduced here as a new, venue-agnostic term, SPT names an operational–normative framework rather than a descriptive reuse of “topography”. The sources cited below anchor the scope of “topography” and the terminology used; they do not prefigure or name the framework. To our knowledge, no prior framework treats these four site-level conditions as jointly necessary for sustaining micro-public realms.

SPT draws on Arendt for the public realm, appearance and plurality (Arendt, 1998), and on Böhme for atmosphere and embodied sensing (Böhme, 1993, 2016, 2017). It is further informed by the place/topography literature—Casey on the phenomenology of place (memory, bodily presence, sensory experience), Frampton on topography as a layered cultural–historical matrix, and Norberg-Schulz on meaningful totalities articulated by light, material, climate and symbol (Casey, 1997; Frampton, 1995; Norberg-Schulz, 1985). Regional scholarship emphasising cultural memory, sensory configuration and relational place resonates with this extension (Yürekli, 2014; Özbek Eren, 2019; Nane, 2022). Debates on the distribution of the sensible, sensorial politics and sensory inequality are treated as adjacent rather than foundational (Rancière, 2004; Davidson & Brash, 2021; Gissen, 2023).

The term *topography* is used beyond physical relief to include the affective, experiential and representational layers through which places acquire relational thickness—memory, bodily presence, and cultural narrative. This expanded sense—articulated by Casey, Frampton and Norberg-Schulz, with regional resonances in Özbek Eren and Yürekli—grounds the use of topography (Casey, 1997; Frampton, 1995; Norberg-Schulz, 1985; Özbek Eren, 2019; Yürekli, 2014). On this basis, SPT is formulated to travel across venues and public settings while remaining anchored in situated spatial articulations.

On Malpas's (2019) account, place is the enabling horizon of appearance: appearance belongs to, and arises in, place. Within this register, SPT uses “topography” to name the situated articulations—interfaces, thresholds and proxemic layouts—through which actions, bodies and atmospheres are rendered mutually legible as a shared field, with limits operating as productive thresholds.

Sensory commonality is used as the primary label for shared sensory fields; sensory co-presence and shared sensory field are retained as stylistic variants. The distinction between public visibility and political publicness is maintained throughout. Operationally, Section 3.5 derives these parameters; Section 5 formalises them as indicators, proxies and levers.

Arendt × Böhme: Compatibility and Productive Tensions

Arendt clarifies the political conditions of publicness—appearance and plurality (and, in later writings, judgement)—whereas Böhme clarifies the sensory conditions—atmospheric production and embodied perception (Arendt, 1998; Böhme, 1993, 2016, 2017). Read together, they explain both how situations become public—through visibility and recognition among a plurality—and how they are sensed—through affective tonality and bodily attunement. Ontologically, Arendt centres intersubjective action, whereas Böhme centres aesthetic–affective fields. To prevent conflation, SPT treats atmosphere as an enabling or constraining condition for Arendtian appearance—never a substitute for political action. Accordingly, SPT preserves Arendt's normative horizon while using Böhme to specify the sensory medium of co-presence; read with Passinmäki's account of focal practices, this implies that venues are judged by how they sustain focal participation rather than device-like consumption (Passinmäki, 2019). Operationally, this complementarity grounds the four venue-scale parameters that structure Section 5.

How the Normative Principles Were Determined

The four parameters are theory-led and operationalised for case analysis; their full elaboration appears in Section 5.

From Arendt to “public visibility”:

Appearance, plurality and address require conditions of legibility—interfaces, sightlines, and proximities (Arendt, 1998, pp. 179–199).

From Böhme to “sensory commonality” and “embodied participation”:

Atmosphere as a shared affective field implies co-sensing; scenographic and layout operations that invite bodily engagement are treated as enabling conditions (Böhme, 1993, pp. 114, 122; 2017, pp. 83–85, 157–159; 2016, pp. 15–16).

From social-infrastructure debates to “spatial permeability”:

Cultures of encounter depend on porous thresholds and in-between spaces that sustain flows, spill-outs, and informal gathering—beyond access alone (Klinenberg, 2018; Latham & Layton, 2019, 2022; Layton, 2022).

Section 4 stress-tests these parameters through time-stamped vignettes (source, date, platform; timecodes where available) and plan/photographic readings of interfaces and layout operations, enabling a focused reading of Moda Sahnesi's venue-wide staging ecology—auditorium, entry commons (foyer/lobby) and street interface—while keeping analytical criteria stable for later generalisation.

Moda Sahnesi: Case Analysis Through SPT

Moda Sahnesi is treated as a theory-led, single-case stress test for SPT; claims aim at analytic rather than statistical generalisation (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Yin, 2014). The analysis operationalises the four SPT parameters—public visibility, sensory commonality, embodied participation and spatial permeability—using purposively sampled secondary materials (recorded talks/interviews, press pieces, architectural project pages, publicly available videos) with time-stamped vignettes, complemented by plan/photographic readings. No new participant data were collected. The unit of analysis is the street–foyer–hall interface and its everyday routines. Prior field-based work in Kadıköy provides contextual grounding for case selection and for the theatre–publicness relation (Özgür & Bengü, 2022; Erbaş & Bengü, 2018). Limitations are discussed in Section 6; the aim is situated feasibility, not universality.

Each subsection operationalises one SPT parameter: first, the spatial operation is specified (with figure callouts); second, it is anchored in time-stamped vignettes; finally, a brief synthesis feeds forward to the next parameter.

Since the 2000s, Istanbul's independent stages have reoriented beyond conventional dramatic and spatial logics, experimenting with flexible formats and audience–performer proximities (Başar, 2014; Altunkaya, 2017). Following the mid-2000s restructuring of cultural venues in Beyoğlu and market pressures, independent groups sought new spatial trajectories, with Kadıköy emerging as a productive locus for cultural action (Bengü, 2019; Curavci, 2021; Ejder & Salta, 2019; Yalçın, 2019). Studies document theatres that operate as zones of encounter and platforms for political engagement as well as artistic expression (Öztek, 2024a, 2024b). Within this milieu, Moda Sahnesi was designed through a collaborative, user-oriented process that prioritised openness, modularity, and permeability (Kalfa & İşcan, 2013; Ertem, 2023; Uğur, 2019; Arkitera, 2013; Halukar Architecture, 2013). Publicly available talks and documentary material present the venue as part of a neighbourhood-facing culture of gathering and discussion (Açık Radyo, n.d.; Kamusal Tiyatro, 2019; *Perdesiz Sahneler*, 2018; soL TV, 2023). This background frames Moda Sahnesi as a suitable test bed for SPT.

Typological and Spatial Setup

This subsection establishes the typological and spatial conditions that enable the analytical reading developed in Sections 3 and 4. Figures 1 and 2 serve as evidence for the principal operations at work in Moda Sahnesi's staging ecology. The aim is to specify how architectural arrangements organise conditions for public visibility, sensory commonality, embodied participation, and spatial permeability. The discussion proceeds from the auditorium to the foyer and thresholds, and concludes with a synthesis linking these arrangements to the four parameters of SPT.

Flexible seating and reconfigurable staging

First, telescopic tribunes, mobile platforms, and reoriented playing zones recalibrate proximity and address by varying performer–audience distance, sightlines, and mutual orientation (Figure 1).

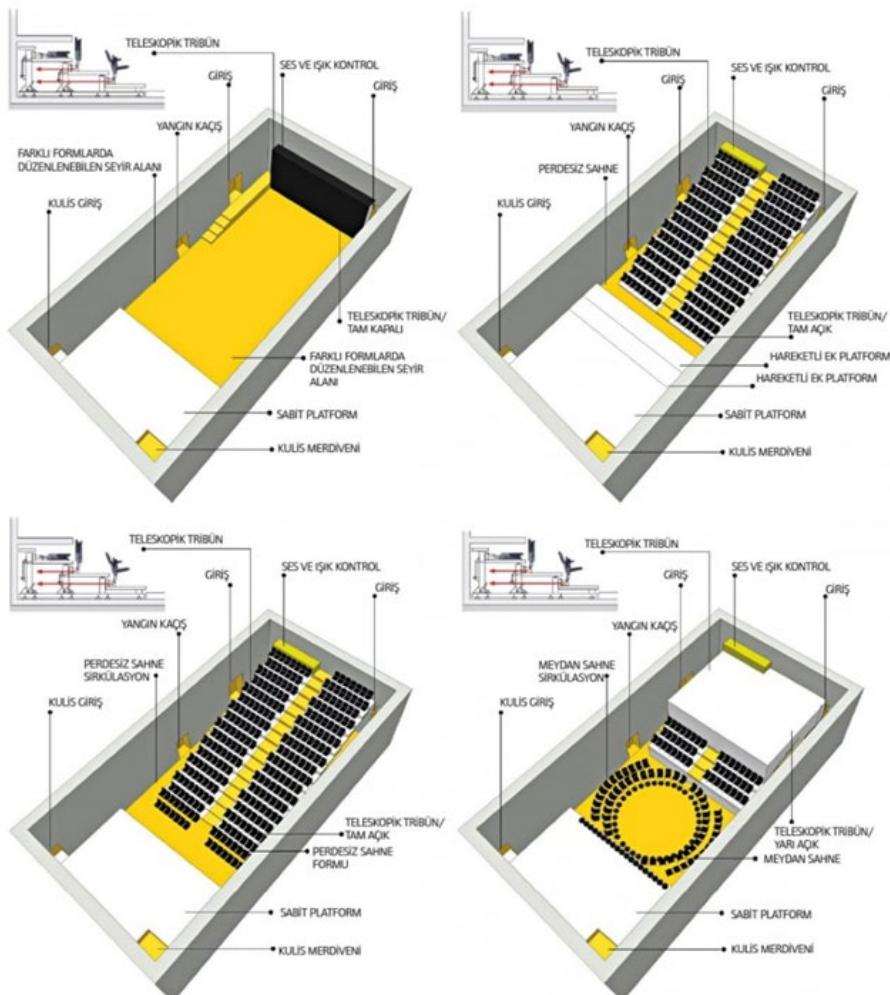


Figure 1. Flexible seating and stage configuration at Moda Sahnesi.
 Source: Author's archive—Adapted from Moda Sahnesi archives (2019).

As Figure 1 indicates, longitudinal layouts stabilise attention along a dominant axis, whereas transverse, corner, or circular arrangements distribute gaze multi-directionally, inviting lateral exchange and peripheral awareness across spectators. Such shifts are not cosmetic; they operationalise conditions for embodied participation (role fluidity, short traversals, standing/standing–seated mixes) and shape sensory commonality by tuning how voice, breath, and small gestures circulate at close range. Minimal interventions—tribune deployment, platform relocation, re-seating—thus produce distinct spatial logics without structural renovation, acting on perception, interaction, and shared attention rather than on technical capacity alone.

Foyer interfaces, reflective surfaces, and translucent organisation

Next, the foyer operates as an optical and social threshold: reflective glass planes, glazed openings, semi-translucent partitions, and the columned void mediate the street–interior relation and multiply sightlines between the entrance, foyer, stair, and internal rooms (Figure 2).

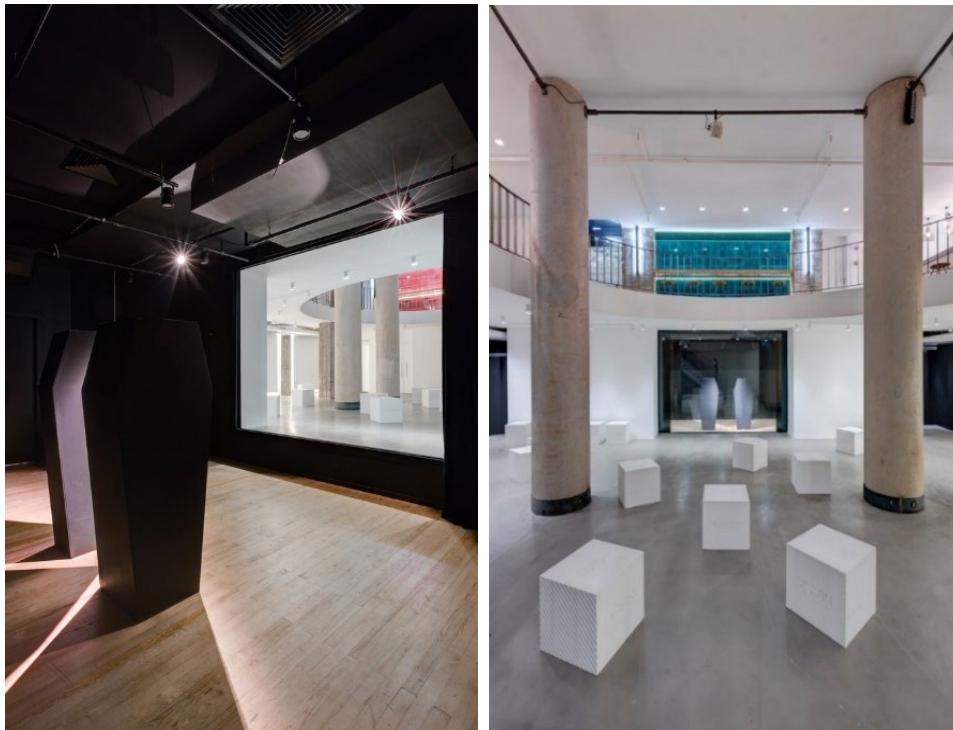


Figure 2. *Reflective glass surface and translucent spatial organisation at Moda Sahnesi.*
Source: Moda Sahnesi Archive (2019). Image reproduced with permission from Kemal Aydoğan.

Figure 2 clarifies how visitors see and are seen before and after performances, extending public visibility beyond the stage to spaces of arrival, waiting, and dispersal. The foyer's openness to the street—together with informal standing/seating patterns—prepares spatial permeability: flows spill out at peak times and re-enter without rigid checkpoints, while reflective/translucent surfaces sustain a sense of co-presence across adjacent zones. Thresholds, in other words, do not merely connect rooms; they compose a continuous environment in which perceptual and social cues carry from city edge to auditorium.

Analytical synthesis: mapping operations to SPT

Taken together, Figure 1 and Figure 2 ground the case analysis in architectural operations that can be explicitly mapped onto the SPT parameter:

Public visibility: Multi-point sightlines in the foyer/thresholds (Figure 2) and gaze redistribution in non-longitudinal seating (Figure 1) establish legibility across street–foyer–auditorium interfaces.

Sensory commonality: Reconfigured proximities and enveloping layouts (Figure 1) foster shared sensory fields; reflective/translucent planes (Figure 2) sustain co-presence across adjacent spaces.

Embodied participation: Mobile tribunes and playing areas (Figure 1) enable role **fluidity** and local traversals, allowing bodily engagement during performances and post-show exchanges.

Spatial permeability: The foyer's porosity to the street and layered thresholds (Figure 2) support flows, spill-outs, and informal gathering, extending public life beyond the auditorium.

Together, these typological and spatial features establish the analytic baseline for what follows. The four parameters are then examined in turn at site level, with cross-references to Figure 1 and Figure 2 where specific spatial operations—auditorium configurations and threshold optics — require brief clarification.

Public Visibility

This subsection examines how public visibility — the perceptual and spatial legibility of bodies and actions — emerges across the street–foyer–auditorium sequence. Within the SPT framework, visibility is read as a set of spatial operations that enable seeing/being seen across thresholds and within the hall, beyond stage illumination. Figure 1 and Figure 2 are cross-referenced where specific spatial moves require clarification; the conceptual distinction between public visibility (legibility) and political publicness (acting together under plurality) is maintained.

At the street–foyer interface, the entrance aperture and the two-storey void choreograph arrival, waiting, and dispersal as perceivable situations (see Figure 2). Glazed and translucent elements generate layered vistas that expose interior rhythms to passers-by while preserving a view back to the neighbourhood. This reversible address turns thresholds into a public-facing proscenium where micro-events—ticket exchange, announcements, conversation—gain appearance before others. In effect, visibility operates beyond the stage as a continuous condition distributed across frontality and interior void.

In threshold areas, reflective planes and semi-translucent partitions multiply lines of sight across entrance, stair, and upper landing (see Figure 2). Reflections create secondary sightlines that double movement and gesture; translucent elements maintain silhouettes and colour-fields that signal occupancy. These low-tech optical devices stabilise legibility without surveillance effects and render presence as recognisable participation in shared routines.

Inside the auditorium, reconfigurable seating and playing zones enable gaze redistribution (see Figure 1). Longitudinal layouts consolidate attention along a dominant axis; transverse, corner, or circular arrangements produce lateral and reciprocal sightlines among spectators, turning the audience into co-witnesses of one another's responses. Analytically, reconfiguration converts visibility into an interactive resource, a precondition for recognising actions and speech as public in the sense outlined in Section 3.

Having specified the street–foyer interface, threshold optics, and auditorium address, the analysis turns to brief vignettes drawn from secondary sources; each example anchors the above operations in concrete scenes (title, platform, date; timestamps where available).

V1 — Entrance as reversible address: Pre-show gathering at the glazed frontage illustrates threshold-based appearance; open doors and waiting clusters render interior rhythms legible from the street (*ArchDaily*, 2016).

V2 — Redirected gaze in non-longitudinal seating: Project documentation shows transverse/corner layouts that enable multi-directional sightlines and audience co-witnessing (*ARKIV*, n.d.).

V3 — Reflections and silhouettes across thresholds: Night-time images indicate mirror-like readings at the foyer screen; silhouettes and secondary reflections extend visibility across the stair–landing sequence (*Halukar Architecture*, n.d.).

In sum, public visibility is spatially produced across street–foyer–auditorium interfaces as a distributed, site-level condition, distinct from political publicness. A corollary is that its legibility depends on a shared sensory field, specified in the next subsection.

Sensory Commonality

Building on Section 4.2, sensory commonality is examined as the atmospheric field that sustains shared attention and co-presence across the street–foyer–auditorium sequence. In the SPT framework, it denotes collectively structured sensing—how light, sound, proximity, and material interfaces tune bodies into a shared field. Atmospheres are composed rather than incidental, produced through spatial and scenographic decisions (Böhme, 1993, 2017).

A first operation concerns the glass interface that connects the foyer to the street. Depending on the lighting balance, the surface reads as transparent or mirror-like, generating reflections and silhouettes

that register movement as ambient stimulus. These optics keep bodies perceptible across the threshold while maintaining a soft boundary between inside and outside. Figure 3 documents how rehearsal fragments, warm-ups, or small-scale activities behind the glass inflect the foyer's ambience without collapsing separation



Figure 3. Transparent glass interface connecting the foyer to the street at Moda Sahnesi.
Source: Author archive (2024), based on personal fieldwork.

A second operation is the street-facing seating element fronting the venue. Pre- and post-show gatherings produce a low-intensity sound bed—murmur, footsteps, laughter—under a filtered daylight canopy; these cues carry into the foyer during arrival and dispersal. The seating turns the street edge into a continuous envelope of sensing, cultivating anticipatory focus and familiar routines of meeting, pausing, and conversing. Figure 4 illustrates this condition and its role in extending the theatre's ambience beyond the hall.



Figure 4. Street-facing seating element in front of Moda Sahnesi.
Source: Author archive (2024), based on personal fieldwork.

Beyond thresholds, scenographic composition within the auditorium consolidates joint attentiveness. Directional lighting cues, blackout resets, and spatialised sound create shared focus while keeping spectators mutually perceptible; flexible staging (Figure 1) supports proximity-based listening and lateral awareness among audience members. Neutral finishes and technical grids enable quick shifts of tonality, aligning with Böhme's account of atmosphere as a produced condition that tunes perception (Böhme, 2017). Read together, threshold operations (Figures 3–4) and in-hall scenography (Figure 1) compose a single atmospheric field that spans street, foyer, and auditorium.

To anchor these mechanisms in reported audience experience, the subsection closes with brief secondary-source vignettes drawn from published criticism. Each vignette paraphrases a concrete description (title, platform, date; timestamps not applicable for print/online reviews) that exemplifies how sensory commonality is assembled.

V4 — Dream-like atmosphere as a shared field: The review notes a “dream atmosphere” that renders mental states tangible; light/music/stage design gather spectators into a common field (Çekirge, 2023).

V5 — Minimal scenography, concentrated attention: The piece reports a “markedly minimal line” that yields “clever solutions,” stripping distraction and sharpening shared focus (Yılmaz, 2017).

V6 — Aftertaste of shared affect: Audience reports describe laughter giving way to a lingering sting after the show—an after-glow indicating that the shared field persists beyond the event (Mitrani, 2017).

Taken together, the transparent foyer (Figure 3), street-edge seating (Figure 4), and restrained, attention-centring scenography assemble sensory commonality as an operational condition. This atmospheric ground supports the forms of embodied participation and spatial permeability analysed in Sections 4.4 and 4.5.

Embodied Participation

Embodied participation is examined as the redistribution of agency through bodily proximity, movement, and role fluidity between performers and spectators. Within the SPT framework, participation is treated as a situated practice: layouts, scenographic cues, and front-of-house routines organise how bodies co-produce the event. Flexible staging (see Figure 1) provides the material substrate, while dramaturgies of address sustain reciprocal engagement (Boal, 2008; Cohen-Cruz & Schutzman, 2006).

Proxemic reconfiguration. Telescopic seating and multiple playing zones enable shifts from longitudinal focus to lateral witnessing. Corner, transverse, and circular arrangements allow spectators to register one another’s responses—laughter, hesitation, silence—as part of the performance texture. These proxemic effects convert attention into an interactive resource, consonant with Arendt’s account of appearance and recognition under plurality (Arendt, 1998, pp. 179–199). In practice, reconfiguration reduces distance, multiplies lines of address, and opens space for micro-interventions (eye contact, brief verbal exchange, negotiated pathways).

Participation beyond the stage. An open-threshold policy and entrance/egress routines, together with pre-/post-show gatherings and moderated conversations, foreground spectators as interlocutors rather than recipients. Staff and performers circulate through the foyer before and after shows; announcements and informal exchanges construct a conversational frame that carries back into the hall. In this ecology, the audience’s presence acquires legibility and consequence: actions and speech become recognisable to others, a precondition for political publicness as outlined in Section 3.

Field reports from Kadıköy’s independent-theatre ecology document close seating and conversational framing that render spectators co-witnesses and co-speakers rather than distant viewers, aligning with SPT’s visibility/participation parameters (Özgür & Bengü, 2022).

To anchor these mechanisms in reported practice, this subsection presents secondary-source vignettes annotated with platform, upload date, and timestamps (for audio/video):

V8 — Audience as interlocutor (muhatab): In *Tiyatronun İçinden – Seyirci*, the audience is framed as an interlocutor rather than a passive viewer, linking theatre to neighborhood-level democratic address (moda sahnesi, 2025, 03:25–07:50).

V9 — Public dimension as appearance and interaction: In *Dr Esra Dicle: Kamusal ve Tiyatro Kavramı İlişkisi*, Dicle (drawing on Arendt) argues that theatre’s public dimension lies in speech-action and civic interaction, not mere exhibition (Kamusal Tiyatro, 2021, 06:00–16:00).

V10 — Reconfiguring relations among those present: In *Dr Zeynep Uğur: Kamusal Tiyatro Nedir*, Uğur (drawing on Rancière) states that to reconfigure space—i.e., the *distribution of the sensible*—is to reorganize relations among those present (Kamusal Tiyatro, 2021, 26:00–28:00).

V11 — Civic activation and co-presence: In *Tiyatronun İçinden – Tiyatro Kurmak*, participation is described as civic practice and theatre as the togetherness of audience and actor (moda sahnesi, 2024, 22:10–24:10; 26:30–28:50).

At Moda Sahnesi, embodied participation is assembled through proxemic design (reconfigurable seating, multi-address layouts) and relational routines (conversational framing, post-show exchange). V8–V11 specify these as civic address and shared initiative: proxemic closeness, multi-address talk, and lighting facilitation redistribute agency and render participation publicly witnessable.

Spatial Permeability

This subsection examines spatial permeability—the porous thresholds and in-between spaces that allow flows, spill-outs, and informal gathering across the street–foyer–auditorium sequence. Within the SPT framework, permeability denotes operative openness through which bodies and routines cross

address lines while remaining legible as public appearance (Arendt, 1998, pp. 198–199) and atmospherically attuned as a shared field of sensing (Böhme, 2017, pp. 83–85, 157–159).

At Moda Sahnesi, permeability at the street–foyer interface is achieved through a continuous glazed line and an open threshold that operates more as a filter than a boundary. By day the glazing reads as a translucent scrim; by night interior luminosity turns the foyer into a soft lantern for the lane (see Figure 3). The street-facing seating extends this interface into the public realm, creating a semi-stationary pocket where people pause, wait, converse, and return (see Figure 4). The café counter, aligned with the glazed line, couples interior service routines with street life so that ordering, waiting, and conversing unfold across the threshold within one low-barrier milieu (Figures 3–4). Taken together, these elements produce reversible address: sights and cues travel in both directions, carrying the foyer's ambience to the street while drawing neighbourhood rhythms back into the building.

Permeability is also institutionalised as policy. The following published materials substantiate this coupling of spatial interface and governance; each item is cited with platform, upload date, and timestamps.

V12 — Doorless front as inclusive policy: In *Başka Sanat – Kemal Aydoğan*, the director states that the theatre frontage is kept doorless to avoid erecting a barrier and that neighbours should be able to “enter and exit without fear,” framing architectural openness as inclusive house practice (Martı Medya, 2024, 08:24–10:30).

V13 — Publicness depends on spatial/aesthetic medium: In *27 mart sunumlar*, Zeynep Uğur argues that publicness cannot be conceived apart from its spatial medium and aesthetic composition; under some conditions, privately operated stages can enable publicness by protecting organisational autonomy while sustaining open assembly—observed in alternative theatres (Kamusal Tiyatro, 2021, 01:10:00–01:15:00).

V14 — Space-led practice as civic interface: In *Şeyler & Şeytanlar (2): 90'lar ve sonrasında alternatif tiyatro hareketi*, participants recall a 1990s shift where venue knowledge, street-facing thresholds, and actor-completed spaces framed co-creation and public address (Medyascope, 2016, 05:24; 53:24).

Operationally, this openness modulates time as well as space. Pre- and post-show spill-outs on the seating edge generate a low-intensity sound bed—murmur, footsteps, laughter—that drifts through the glass into the foyer during arrival and dispersal; the same cues invite passers-by to linger and observe. Such routines extend the theatre's temporal envelope, sustaining micro-public encounter before and after the performance and strengthening ties between venue and neighbourhood (Özgür & Bengü, 2022; Erbaş & Bengü, 2018).

This pattern aligns with observations from Kadıköy's independent-theatre ecology, where doors-open routines, reversible address and proxemic closeness sustain micro-public encounter before and after performances (Erbaş & Bengü, 2018; Özgür & Bengü, 2022).

Read together with the visibility operations in Section 4.2 (threshold optics, reversible address) and the atmospheric composition in Section 4.3, spatial permeability at Moda Sahnesi shows how a porous, policy-backed interface anchors public life across architectural and institutional registers. The four parameters examined in Sections 4.2–4.5—public visibility, sensory commonality, embodied participation, and spatial permeability—form the operative ground of SPT in this case.

Formalising SPT: An Operational Normative Framework For Social Infrastructure

Why SPT? Accounts of social infrastructure typically foreground access, amenities and provision. SPT complements these by specifying the necessary spatial–sensory conditions under which micro-public realms become legible, comfortable and repeatable. In doing so, SPT translates Arendt's appearance/plurality and Böhme's atmospheres/embodiment into a transferable framework that designers and operators can apply across libraries, community hubs, clinics, sports facilities and cultural venues.

Sensory–Political Topography (SPT) is a venue-agnostic normative–analytic framework that specifies four jointly necessary, site-level conditions—public visibility, sensory commonality, embodied participation and spatial permeability—under which micro-public realms can take shape. Each condition is translated into observable indicators, evaluation proxies, and design/operational levers.

On Malpas's (2019) orientation to placed truth—truth and appearance arise in and belong to place—SPT formalises the four conditions as jointly necessary at site level. In operational terms, the site ceases to read as a micro-public realm when any one is absent: without visibility there is no legibility; without

sensory commonality, no shared field; without embodied participation, no co-present action; and without spatial permeability, no durable two-way address.

Rather than prescribing a building type, SPT sets out spatial and organisational conditions through which micro-public realms can be configured across diverse settings. Read alongside social-infrastructure research (Section 2), SPT shifts attention beyond access to the quality of encounter at site level, turning interfaces and threshold optics, atmospheric/proxemic composition, and governance routines into concrete levers for making appearance mutually legible and durable. The parameters are theory-led (Section 3), stress-tested on Moda Sahnesi (Section 4) and formalised here as cross-typology guidance.

Each parameter is presented through a venue-agnostic rubric: (1) Definition; (2) Observable indicators; (3) Evaluation criteria (proxies); (4) Design/operational levers; (5) Governance notes; (6) Test-case mapping; (7) Transfer questions. The rubric supports a Diagnosis → Action → Evaluation cycle and includes a feedback loop that refines levers and proxies over time. *Method note (applies across parameters):* no specific measurement technique is prescribed; proxies can be assessed through periodic walkthrough observations and simple plan-based checks.

Figure 5 summarises how theoretical inputs (Section 2) and case materials (Section 4) are processed through this rubric to yield transferable guidance

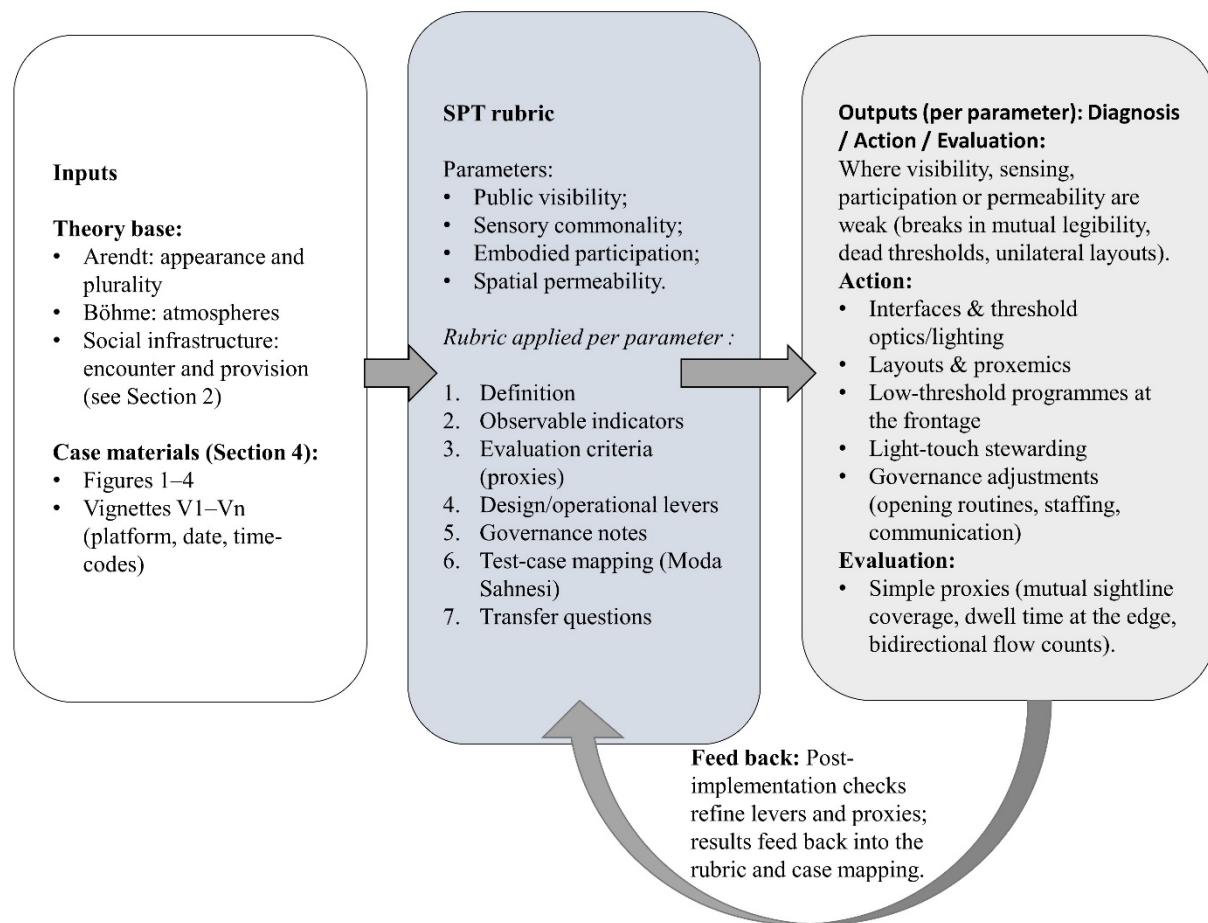


Figure 5. SPT workflow: from theory and case materials to transferable guidance. Inputs (theory base and case materials) are processed through the SPT rubric, applied to each parameter to generate diagnosis, action and evaluation outputs; a feedback loop refines levers and proxies over time. Abbreviation: SPT = Sensory–Political Topography. Source: Author illustration (2025).

Applied as shown in Figure 5, the rubric now formalises the four parameters at site level; the first is public visibility, operationalised through interfaces, threshold optics and interior address.

Public Visibility

Workflow: Diagnosis → Action → Evaluation.

Definition:

Public visibility denotes the perceptual and spatial legibility of bodies and actions in a shared realm. In SPT, visibility is treated beyond lighting levels as a distributed condition produced across the urban interface, thresholds/entry commons (lobby/foyer) and interior assembly zones—settings where seeing/being seen enables recognition and collective address (Arendt, 1998, pp. 198–199), as derived in Section 3.5.

Public visibility concerns legibility through optics and address; spatial permeability concerns flows across thresholds and in-between spaces. They are complementary but non-substitutable.

Observable indicators (morphology–interface–use scenario):

Urban interface: transparent/reflective boundaries, daylight balance, outward-facing activities; the extent to which interior rhythms are legible from the street and vice versa.

Threshold optics: reflective planes and translucent partitions that generate multi-point sightlines across entrance, stair and landings; silhouettes and colour fields that signal occupancy.

Interior address: layouts (longitudinal, transverse, corner, in-the-round, clustered) that redistribute gaze and allow users to register one another's responses; applicable to assembly halls, reading rooms, waiting areas and multi-purpose rooms.

Evaluation criteria (proxies):

Mutual Visibility Index (MVI): proportion of mutually visible pairs across key zones (street↔entry commons; entry commons↔stair/landing; user↔user); include blind-spot mapping.

Event legibility: clarity with which micro-events (announcements, gathering, dispersal) are perceptible to others without inducing surveillance effects.

Temporal envelope: duration for which visibility is maintained before/after programmed activity (arrival/dispersal windows; lingering time at the frontage).

Design/operational levers:

Interfaces: calibrate glass reflectance/translucency and lighting contrast to switch between transparent and mirror-like readings across day/night cycles (Böhme, 2017, pp. 83–85, 157–159).

Layouts: provide reconfigurable arrangements to vary axes of attention and thicken lateral perception (applicable to libraries, clinics, sports facilities, community centres, cultural venues).

Programming/curation: position low-threshold programmes near the frontage (pre-session talks, reading circles, advice desks, vaccination/info booths, open sessions) so that appearance is threshold-based rather than confined to back-of-house; align wayfinding and notice boards with the field of view established by the optics (see Test-case mapping below; cf. Section 4, Figures 1–3).

Governance and management:

Adopt front-of-house routines that favour open presence (doors open at peak times; staff circulation in the entry commons) and light-touch stewarding that supports looking without policing.

Align communications (signage, boards, digital tickers) with spatial optics so that information itself has a visible stage.

Avoid surveillance cues (prominent camera signage; hard policing); prefer presence-based stewardship and observable routines.

Publish visibility-relevant routines (opening windows, stewarding presence) on the entry commons notice board so that provision is publicly inspectable.

Test-case mapping (Moda Sahnesi):

Urban interface and thresholds: the transparent/mirror-like façade/entry line and columned void extend appearance into arrival and waiting zones (Figures 2–3).

Interior address: non-longitudinal layouts redistribute gaze and allow users to co-witness one another's responses (Figure 1).

Transfer questions:

From how many vantage points can interior rhythms be perceived without entering?

Which thresholds generate recognisable micro-events?

Can the interior layout be re-addressed to increase lateral visibility and mutual perception?

Do lighting and material choices support reciprocal legibility across day/night cycles?

Position within social-infrastructure debates: At site level, public visibility makes publicness actionable by calibrating interfaces, threshold optics and interior address so that presence and procedures are mutually legible—beyond access alone (Section 2; Klinenberg, 2012, 2018; Latham & Layton, 2019, 2022). In democratic terms, visibility renders provision inspectable and hence accountable (Bobbio, 1987). For measurement, use the proxies specified above (MVI, dwell time, event legibility) as small, repeatable indices across libraries, community hubs, clinics, sports facilities and cultural venues, with focal participation as the normative benchmark (Passinmäki, 2019).

Sensory Commonality

Workflow: Diagnosis → Action → Evaluation.

Definition:

Sensory commonality refers to collectively structured sensing—how light, sound, proximity, thermal conditions and material cues tune bodies into a shared field of attention and co-presence. In SPT, atmospheres are composed conditions rather than decorative by-products: they are produced through spatial/optical decisions (light and transparency), acoustic zoning, material tactility and proxemic organisation that sustain joint attentiveness (Böhme, 1993, pp. 114, 122; 2016, pp. 15–16; 2017, pp. 83–85, 157–159), as derived in Section 3.5.

Observable indicators (morphology–interface–use scenario):

Optical field: layered illuminance (task/ambient/accent), glare control, day–night transitions, colour-temperature consistency across the public edge, thresholds and interior assembly zones.

Background soundscape: a stable sound bed that keeps speech intelligible; source placement that avoids hotspots and dead zones.

Material and thermal cues: mixed absorptive/diffusive finishes (fabric, timber, perforated panels); surface temperature/air movement that maintain comfort without sensory flattening; tactile anchors (handrails, low walls, bench-ledges) enabling relaxed lingering.

Proximity and pacing: furniture density, seated–standing mixes, slow/fast paths and edge seating that allow lateral sensing of others, not only frontal address.

Evaluation criteria (proxies):

Acoustic intelligibility: background levels and dispersion patterns support clear conversation without strain; announcements are perceivable without inducing a sense of surveillance or reliance on intrusive amplification.

Light balance: faces remain legible while glare is avoided; day–night transitions at interfaces are smooth and maintain visual comfort.

Comfort & dwell: perceived comfort supports lingering at interface/assembly zones; usage patterns show a healthy distribution between lingering and pass-through.

Lateral awareness: qualitative signs of shared attention (mutual noticing, micro-gestures, shared laughter, coordinated silences) are observable across layouts.

Design/operational levers:

Light composition: combine ambient and task layers; prefer warm–neutral colour temperatures to keep faces readable; script day–night shifts so that interfaces perform as filters—more than mere thresholds—rather than barriers (Böhme, 2017, pp. 83–85, 157–159).

Acoustic zoning: create quiet and conversational pockets via absorption (curtains, soffits, books stacks/planting masses), diffusion and soft surfaces; avoid continuous hard canopies that increase reverberation.

Material palette: use mixed absorptive/diffusive surfaces and tactile elements that invite relaxed posture; avoid fully reflective palettes that collapse the soundscape.

Proxemics: offer reconfigurable arrangements (clusters, edge benches, leaning ledges) to enable lateral listening and shared attention across different user mixes.

Programming/curation: schedule low-threshold frontage routines (reading circles, advice desks, open bench hours, warm-ups) to seed a continuous atmospheric field spanning public edge–threshold–interior.

Governance and management:

Atmosphere stewardship: light-touch practices (volume guidance, device etiquette, staff positioning) that support looking and listening without policing.

Temporal scripting: arrival/interval/exit light–sound cues; “quiet hours” or “conversation windows” aligned with user profiles (e.g., after-school slot, mornings for older adults).

Communication: align signage and notice points with the designed optical field so information remains readable at likely dwell nodes.

Test-case mapping (Moda Sahnesi):

Interface optics: glazed frontage reads as transparent by day and softly reflective at night, extending a single atmospheric field across street–entry commons (Section 4, Figures 3–4).

Street-edge seating: pre-/post-session gathering produces a low-intensity sound bed that carries into the entry commons during arrival and dispersal (Section 4, Figure 4).

Interior flexibility: neutral finishes and reconfigurable layouts support proximity-based listening and lateral awareness among users (Section 4, Figure 1).

Transfer questions:

Which light–sound combinations help users hold a shared focus without glare or overload?

Where do quiet and conversational pockets form, and how can materials/fixtures stabilise them?

Do day–night transitions at the public edge maintain a continuous atmospheric field?

Which small-scale routines (reading circles, advice desks, open bench hours) could anchor sensory continuity between interface and interior?

Position within social-infrastructure debates: See Section 2 for the overarching frame; here the site-level focus is the quality of encounter (atmospheric/proxemic composition).

Embodied Participation

Workflow: Diagnosis → Action → Evaluation.

Definition:

Embodied participation denotes the redistribution of agency through bodily proximity, movement and role fluidity among users, facilitators and staff. Within SPT, participation is treated as a situational practice organised by layouts, optical/atmospheric cues and front-of-house routines—as derived in Section 3.5. The emphasis is on converting presence into co-authored action, aligned with Arendt's account of action and plurality and with atmospheric attunement as an embodied mode of sensing.

Observable indicators (morphology–interface–use scenario):

Proxemic set-ups: Furniture densities, mixed seated/standing arrangements and circulation paths that shorten interpersonal distance and enable lateral noticing.

Multi-address configurations: Multiple focal points (islands, corners, workbenches, pop-up stations) rather than a single front; the ease with which a room can be re-addressed mid-session.

Conversational scaffolds: Visible facilitation devices (portable microphones, writable surfaces, pin-boards), question prompts and time windows assigned to user voice.

Frontage-adjacent engagement: Low-threshold routines at the public edge (advice desks, open bench hours, warm-up/drill windows, micro-clinics) that license try-and-talk forms of participation at the entry commons.

Evaluation criteria (proxies):

Turn-taking and contribution spread: Observed distribution of speakers across a session; ratio of staff talk-time to user contributions.

Distance and path clarity: Typical interpersonal distances during active segments; ability to cross the room without bottlenecks; number of viable approach paths to focal points.

Attendance→participation conversion: Share of attendees who move from watching to contributing (speaking, writing, assisting, demonstrating).

Post-session carryover: Frequency of threshold-area exchanges (Q&A clusters, sign-ups, peer follow-ups) after sessions.

Design/operational levers:

Proxemics and layouts: Provide reconfigurable clusters (tables on castors, stackable chairs, mobile leaning ledges) and short-radius arrangements that support easy eye contact and quick entry/exit from discussion.

Multi-address focal points: Equip rooms with moveable focal points (portable lecterns, dispersed microphone points, writable boards/screens) so that address can **rotate** and **decentralise** mid-session.

Participation windows: Insert embedded slots within programmes (micro-tasks, show-and-tell, peer demos); place some at the entry commons to enable drop-ins; use clear visual prompts and cues.

Facilitation kit: Standardise a light kit (clip-on microphones, writable boards, sticky surfaces, portable task lights) to lower the activation energy for user voice.

Edge devices at the entry commons: Provide leaning ledges, small tables and perch points to seed informal exchange before/after sessions.

Governance and management:

Access & inclusion: Clear, inclusive participation rules at entry points (how to request the floor; where to sit/stand; how to post questions).

Safeguarding and inclusion: Concise codes of conduct; gentle moderation; translation, captioning or assistive listening where relevant.

Training & facilitation: Staff coaching in light-touch facilitation (prompting, summarising, distributing turns) and de-escalation that preserves openness without policing.

Feedback loops: Rapid pulse checks (cards/dots/QR) to adjust layouts, timings and formats over time.

Test-case mapping (Moda Sahnesi):

Proxemics & multi-address. Non-longitudinal layouts and multiple interaction zones shorten distances and allow users to co-witness one another's responses (Figure 1).

Conversational framing. Pre-/post-**session** exchanges and recorded talks frame users as interlocutors rather than recipients (see Section 4.4, vignettes V8 and V11).

Transfer questions:

Which proxemic changes would allow more voices to enter with minimal friction?

Can the room be re-addressed mid-session so that attention rotates rather than accumulating at a single front?

Where can entry commons participation be safely trialled (e.g., info desks, open benches) to reduce the threshold to entry?

What light facilitation kit is needed so any room can host contribution without advance build-out?

Position within social-infrastructure debates: See Section 2; here the emphasis is civic capacity (proxemics, multi-address layouts, conversational scaffolds).

Spatial Permeability

Workflow: Diagnosis → Action → Evaluation.

Definition:

Spatial permeability denotes the porosity of thresholds and in-between spaces that allow flows, spill-outs and informal gathering across the public edge, the entry commons and interior assembly zones. Within SPT, permeability is read as operative openness: it preserves legibility as public appearance (Arendt, 1998, pp. 198–199) while sustaining an atmospheric continuum across edge–threshold–interior (Böhme, 2017, pp. 83–85, 157–159). The concern is less gatekeeping and more filtered exchange—two-way cues, reversible address and an extended temporal envelope around sessions and everyday use.

Observable indicators (morphology–interface–use scenario):

Threshold configuration: number/type of entrances (wide spans, operable glazing, transparent vestibules), step-free access, canopy depth, visibility through the façade/entry line.

In-between spaces: entry commons proportions that permit lingering; landings/vestibules that decongest flows; exterior setback pockets with benches/ledges.

Edge continuity: level changes, kerb alignment and surface continuity at the frontage; **visual porosity** (calibrated glazing) and controlled acoustic leakage that invites approach.

Operational permeability: open-door periods; queue layouts that do not block passers-by; managed spill-out onto forecourts or seating edges.

Temporal permeability: pre-/post-session windows; frontage-adjacent micro-programmes (info desks, help points) that keep the edge active outside narrow session times.

Evaluation criteria (proxies):

Bidirectional flow pattern: in/out movement at the threshold shows spread peaks rather than single spikes; queues do not impede non-users.

Edge dwell: lingering is observable at the frontage/vestibule without producing blockage; a healthy distribution between linger and pass-through use.

Open-window practice: documented periods when doors/operable glazing are physically open (seasonally adjusted).

Step-free & bottlenecks: minimum clear width is maintained at pinch points; principal routes provide gentle gradients and step-free access.

Weather resilience: the frontage remains usable in rain/wind/night with modest adjustments (canopy, baffles, light).

Perceived ease of approach: quick intercept notes indicate “easy to enter/leave” and “comfortable to wait” at the threshold.

Design/operational levers:

Threshold design: use operable glazing or wide doors with transparent vestibules so the entry behaves as a filter —more than a mere threshold—rather than a barrier; provide step-free, level transitions and tactile cues.

Edge furniture & micro-topography: integrate continuous seating ledges/leaning rails, bicycle stands and small forecourt pockets that absorb spill-outs without obstructing flows.

Microclimate & lighting: canopies, wind baffles, air curtains and graded exterior/interior lighting that support evening use and a “lantern” effect without glare.

Surface continuity: non-slip finishes, clear drainage and seamless crossings that signal public invitation rather than a private threshold.

Program at the edge: low-threshold desks/pop-ups (advice, registration, reading/after-school corners, warm-up windows) to activate the frontage on ordinary days.

Queue stewardship: light-touch stewarding and wayfinding that shape lines while maintaining pavement permeability for non-users.

Governance and management:

Opening policy: time-based “doors open” windows before/after programmed activity; seasonal adjustments documented in front-of-house procedures.

Neighbourhood protocols: noise, litter and frontage etiquette agreed with neighbours and enacted through gentle reminders rather than barriers.

Inclusive access: step-free guarantees; pram/wheelchair priority; clear priority rules at pinch points.

Safety without fortification: passive surveillance via sightlines and staff presence; avoid security hardware that visually hardens the edge.

Care & maintenance: cleaning, rain/snow routines and temporary devices (bollards/cones) that can be deployed/removed without disrupting openness.

Test-case mapping (Moda Sahnesi):

Edge & threshold: a continuous glass line and an intentionally doorless front act as a filter, with a soft lantern effect at night (Figures 3–4).

Spill-out pocket: street-facing seating at the frontage absorbs pre-/post-session gathering and carries cues into the entry commons (Figure 4).

Policy articulation: recorded remarks describe the “no-door” stance as an inclusive house practice (see Section 4.4, vignettes on threshold practice).

Transfer questions:

Which thresholds already behave as filters rather than barriers—and which need redesign or policy change?

Where are the narrowest pinch points, and what minimum clear width/step-free route can be guaranteed at peak times?

For how many minutes before/after activity are doors/glazing held open, season by season?

Where could seating/leaning edges absorb spill-outs without blocking desire lines?

How will the interface perform in rain, wind and night conditions—and what low-cost adjustments secure comfort?

Position within social-infrastructure debates: See Section 2; here the emphasis is flows/reversible address across edge–threshold–interior.

Removing any single condition (e.g., legibility without permeability) degrades encounter into watching without joining, gathering without staying, or access without co-presence.

In sum, the four parameters of SPT—public visibility, sensory commonality, embodied participation and spatial permeability—constitute a venue-agnostic operational normative framework. Taken together, they operate as jointly necessary conditions and specify the situated levers—interfaces and threshold optics; light–sound–material composition; proxemics and multi-address layouts; edge devices and routines—through which micro-public realms are made legible, comfortable and repeatable. The accompanying rubric and Diagnosis → Action → Evaluation cycle (Figure 5) convert the parameters into transferable guidance for design and operations, foregrounding the quality of encounter—beyond access alone—when read alongside social-infrastructure research (Section 2).

Conclusion and Discussion

This study reconceives alternative venues as micro-public realms and proposes a venue-agnostic framework—Sensory–Political Topography (SPT)—to specify and steer their qualities. Situated at the intersection of Arendt’s account of appearance, plurality and public action, and Böhme’s aesthetics of atmospheres as shared, produced attunement, SPT formalises four parameters—public visibility, sensory commonality, embodied participation and spatial permeability. Rather than prescribing a building type, the framework identifies context-specific spatial and organisational levers—interfaces and threshold optics; light–sound–material composition; proxemics and multi-address layouts; edge devices and everyday routines. These levers make collective presence legible, comfortable, and repeatable.

Read within social-infrastructure debates, SPT makes encounter quality operational at the site scale by specifying the levers of interfaces, layouts, atmospheric composition, and threshold management (Section 5; Figure 5). In practice, this means: (i) calibrated visibility renders publicness legible, beyond

access alone; (ii) composed atmospheres sustain shared attention; (iii) proxemic and conversational arrangements redistribute initiative; and (iv) porous thresholds convert nominal access into lived practice. Read through Passinmäki's account of focal practices, this amounts to evaluating settings by how well they sustain focal participation rather than device-like consumption; at venue scale, SPT's parameters specify when provision is converted into lived publicness through sustained, shared engagement (Passinmäki, 2019).

For evidentiary orientation, the case material in Section 4 documented (with dates/timecodes) how these parameters operate in practice: threshold optics and two-way address at the street–entry commons interface (Figures 2–3; vignettes V1–V3); redistributed gaze through non-longitudinal layouts (Figure 1; V2); conversational framing and proxemic closeness that position users as interlocutors (V8–V11); and a deliberately open, door-free threshold paired with inclusive front-of-house routines (V12). These scenes substantiate feasibility and clarify the situated operations through which encounter becomes legible, comfortable, and repeatable.

Scope conditions qualify the inferences. The analysis relies on secondary-source vignettes and readings of plans and photographs; no new participant data were collected. Such sources are curated and time-bound, which may over-represent visible routines and under-represent less perceptible practices, limiting claims about user diversity. The argument is tested on a single case in a particular neighbourhood and building configuration; generalisation is therefore conceptual and conditional rather than statistical. While the parameters are operational, measurement rests on pragmatic proxies that need calibration in field settings. SPT should consequently be read as a heuristic design-and-governance lens that specifies if/then relations—for example, if interfaces and layouts are calibrated in X ways, the qualities of encounter tend to improve—rather than as a causal theory validated across multiple sites.

These limitations point to three strands of future work. First, comparative, multi-case studies across libraries, community hubs, museum foyers, outpatient and clinic lobbies, sports facilities, and post-disaster community spaces can test where transfer holds and where local adaptation is required. Second, mixed-method audits pairing plan-based visibility analysis with simple, repeatable proxies—coverage and reciprocity of sightlines, dwell time at the frontage, conversational audibility bands, pre-/post-session use logs—would enable before/after comparison and longitudinal tracking. Third, governance experiments—low-threshold programmes at the edge, light-touch stewarding, and doors-open routines—co-designed with operators and user groups can examine how everyday practices sustain encounter over time. Across these strands, a specific hypothesis to test is whether the proposed design and operational levers measurably reduce device-like patterns and increase focal participation across venue types (Passinmäki, 2019).

SPT also speaks to debates on spatial justice and commons-based urbanism. Choices about optics, thresholds and doors-open routines shape who is visible, who can stay, and on what terms. In this sense, SPT translates justice claims into concrete, designable operations. At the edge, shared elements—benches, leaning ledges and poster walls—and light protocols of care function as everyday commons, maintained jointly through spatial devices and user practices rather than left solely to access rules.

Figure 5 summarises the workflow. Theory and case material enter the SPT rubric; the rubric produces Diagnosis → Action → Evaluation outputs; a feedback loop then refines levers and proxies. Together, this provides a clear bridge from conceptual parameters to transferable practice.

In sum, SPT advances public-realm theory by placing sensory, embodied, and relational formation on the same analytic plane as political appearance, and by translating that plane into actionable levers for design and management. The workflow set out in Section 5 is meant to be used context-specifically as a playbook: (i) design programmes and layouts that widen mutual legibility; (ii) compose atmospheres that sustain shared attention without exclusion; (iii) scaffold proxemics and conversational frames that share initiative; and (iv) keep thresholds open and intelligible over time. As these adaptations are tested and tracked across diverse venues, SPT can serve as a common language linking theory, spatial practice, and governance—and as a practical route to spaces of encounter that are more inclusive, more durable, and more equitably sensed.

SPT is best read as a minimal, transferable grammar of micro-public provision: four non-substitutable conditions, each rendered observable and actionable.

The case shows that private governance can enable publicness when the site-level conditions specified by SPT are met, suggesting transfer pathways beyond theatre.

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European cities through the eyes of late Ottoman intellectuals: Three cities, three cases

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Abstract

The modernization process confronted late Ottoman intellectuals with an ambivalent paradigm that positioned Western civilization as both an imperialist threat and a model to be emulated. This study examines the spatial projections of the Ottoman modernization mindset and the transformation of the perception of the West through the narratives of Namık Kemal, Ahmet Midhat Efendi, and Mehmed Akif Ersoy on European cities. The study examines London, which Namık Kemal's London, conceived as a utopia where the political order, constitutionalism, and justice mechanisms function flawlessly; Ahmet Midhat Efendi's Paris, approached with encyclopedic curiosity but reflecting the tension he experienced between technological progress and moral decay; and Mehmed Akif Ersoy's Berlin, read through the lens of discipline, hygiene, and the ideal of social solidarity under the conditions of the First World War. The comparative analysis conducted through articles, travelogues, and literary texts reveals that these intellectuals instrumentalized European cities not merely as geographical spaces, but as mirrors that diagnosed the institutional, social, and spatial deficiencies of the Ottoman Empire. Namık Kemal presented London as a romanticized political model, Ahmet Midhat portrayed Paris as a laboratory to be approached with caution, and Mehmed Akif depicted Berlin as a cautionary scene synthesizing material progress and spiritual resistance. The research findings show that all three thinkers internalized the material superiority and urban order of the West with admiration, while developing a selective modernization strategy aimed at preserving spiritual and cultural codes. In this context, European cities served as a rhetorical ground for Ottoman intellectuals to legitimize their own political and social projects.

Keywords

Ottoman Modernization, Perception of the West, European Cities, Spatial Representation, Ottoman Intellectuals

Introduction

Modernity, as a process in which the paradigm began to change on a universal scale, is a process in which the world became Westernized and Western countries established economic, political and cultural domination and hegemony over the world. Modernity describes a specific historical process and the state created by this process in the geography referred to as the West. This situation, on the one hand, reflects the market economy and society that emerged after capitalist accumulation and technological progress, characterized as a post-traditional structure. On the other hand, it describes the nation-state. The conditions that led to this state are based on the assumptions of rationality, progress, and secularization that began to emerge in the 16th century. The political discourse that emerged around the Ottoman Empire's desire to re-establish its order within its own historical context began to frame its problems in relation to the West with the advent of the period known as modernity. Colonial activities, technical progress and the rapid interaction processes created by capital have intensified relations between societies around the world. This intensity has also increased interaction and permeability between individuals, groups and classes. Modernity, therefore, is the name given to a period and a state in which the social and political consequences of transformations occurring in a specific geography become a test for the desires they create in the rest of the world. The intellectual impact of these transformations, which occurred over extended periods, led to a search for opportunities to follow the pioneers more closely, while also causing political and intellectual transformations to lag behind social transformations. After encountering modernity, although the intensity of its impact varied, every country was forced to engage with the West. Western politics, economics and the emerging world order influenced it. All societies confront modernity in one way or another. However, the moderation of

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modernity has manifested itself as the task of the elite. Inclusion in modern societies requires varying degrees of contact and integration with the capitalist system. Therefore, modernity is transmitted to countries that are not yet modern by individuals who have entered into relations with modern countries. These individuals, as they take steps towards modernity, also carry its symbols and consciousness. In that sense, modernity, which encompasses both universality and particularity, is, according to Jameson, not a concept but a narrative category and is therefore subjective (Jameson, 2002, p. 94). These subjective narratives position themselves as weak, backward, and inferior in relation to the idealized West, thereby emphasizing the progressive aspect of modernity. Western cities are presented as the most important examples of progress from this perspective.

The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were pivotal in the expansion of Western trade, which subsequently led to an increase in Western political domination over the rest of the world. As is the case in numerous other non-Western contexts, the Ottoman Empire also experienced a profound economic transformation (Göcek, 1996, p. 87). This transformation led to a notable change in Ottoman society and politics. Although Europe did not feature prominently in Ottoman writings, primarily historical or political ones, before the 18th century, it would be incorrect to say that there was no interest in it, according to Faroqhi. However, it was not until the 18th century that Ottoman diplomats and bureaucrats began to write about their experiences (Faroqhi, 2004, p. 6). The most important primary sources on Europe during this period are the *sefaretnames*, written by ambassadors. *Sefaretnames* are simply embassy reports, accounts of diplomatic missions and diplomatic travelogues. These texts describe the architecture, social life, technology, and forms of government of the cities visited by the ambassadors.

Kara Mehmet Paşa's *Viyana Sefaretnamesi* (1664-65), Yirmisekiz Çelebi Mehmet Efendi's *Paris Sefaretnamesi* (1721), Ahmed Resmi Efendi's *Viyana Sefaretnamesi* (1757) and *Berlin Sefaretnamesi* (1763), Ebubekir Ratib Efendi's *Büyük Sefaretname* (1791-92), Ahmed Vasif Efendi's *İspanya Sefaretnamesi* (1787-88), Azmi Efendi's *Berlin Sefaretnamesi* (1790) are among the most essential examples of *sefaretnames* literature in the 18th century. Ambassadors traveling to European cities on duty do not visit places of their own choosing, like tourists, but instead go to places that the authorities of the country they are visiting wish to show them and participate in events. During these events, the ambassadors and their entourages, viewed through an Orientalist gaze, were centers of attraction, unlike the Ottomans, who could travel more freely in the 19th century.

Ottomans were a dynamically expanding state, which gave them the power to adapt the products of other societies they came into contact with and to shape what they adopted (Göcek, 1987, p. 80). According to Emrence, "the key to durable rule was the adaptation of the imperial state to local conditions" (Emrence, 2008, p. 289). During the Tulip Era in the 18th century, European forms became more visible, and adopting these forms became a status symbol. Similarly, in 18th- and 19th-century Europe, the Turquerie movement emerged as a trend that influenced art, fashion, architecture, and, in short, lifestyle among those who adopted Turkish forms (Avcioğlu, 2011). Interaction between the West and the Ottoman Empire increased mutually in the 18th century compared to previous periods. As a result of this increased interaction, European forms, goods and understanding entered every sphere in the Ottoman Empire. Tekeli claims that city centers, in particular, have seen the emergence of establishments resulting from consumption patterns and lifestyles brought about by the shift towards Western culture and new economic relationships. Examples include luxury shops, theatres, entertainment venues and cafés (Tekeli, 1985, p. 881).

Looking back at the 19th century, described as the longest century of the Ottoman Empire, (Ortaylı, 1983) one witnesses rapid transformations both in the world and within the Empire. Located on the very edge of Europe, or even within it, the Ottoman Empire had little chance of remaining isolated from the rapidly changing world. The Ottomans began to view Europe not merely as a *battlefield*, but also as a geography that deserved recognition and should be emulated. The Ottoman Empire faced external pressure from various actors, as well as diverse resistance movements. The Ottomans were prompted to adopt rapid change due to several factors, including foreign intervention, control of trade, the need to counter Russian expansion, and the Balkan uprisings. The Ottoman Empire undertook various reform movements to maintain its former power and survive in the changing world order. The reform movements initiated during the reigns of Selim III and Mahmud II, particularly in the military and technical fields, but not limited to these areas, reached their peak with the Tanzimat.

In the 19th century, there was a significant increase in the number of Ottomans travelling to Europe, a period when contact with the West was most intense. While there were various reasons for this, one of the most important was to find a solution to the country's *backwardness* and *desperation* in the face of the West. Another reason was to oppose those in power. Ottoman bureaucrats, intellectuals, as well as the Sultan Abdülaziz, travelled to Europe in this context and made impressions about it. While these

trips were sometimes for official assignments or educational purposes, they were sometimes stories of compulsory exile and escape. On the other hand, a significant portion of the bureaucrats and thinkers of the Tanzimat period were either educated in Europe or trained in Western-style schools. For this reason, they had not only a geographical but also an intellectual and cultural relationship with Europe. In this relationship with Europe, Europe emerged, on the one hand, as a place of escape and, on the other, as an ideal to be admired. The place where this ideal was most clearly defined and depicted was in cities.

In the 19th century, the Ottoman view of Europe, especially among those who physically witnessed it, diverged from that of Ottoman envoys who had seen Europe in the 18th century. This divergence manifested as admiration for the progress of European cities and, conversely, overt or subtle criticism of Ottoman cities. On the other hand, European cities, often idealized as objects of comparison, became targets and reference points to be surpassed in the modernization process of Ottoman cities. Ottoman intellectuals turned their attention to analyzing the developmental dynamics of European cities, while simultaneously constructing a critical discourse on the Ottoman social and institutional structure. This critical accumulation laid the groundwork for the formation of hybrid ideologies, producing an intellectual orientation and strategic framework aimed at achieving similar modernization outcomes. The admiration for European cities primarily focuses on the ideal of general prosperity and order observed in these cities; poverty, class tensions, and crime phenomena brought about by urbanization are either ignored or not placed at the center of critical discourse.

The colonial activities and Orientalist thought carried out by the Western world after the advent of modernity paved the way for the emergence of progressive ideas, which were shaped around the axis of anti-Westernism and pro-Westernism in non-Western societies. The thinkers examined in this study were influenced by Europe's development process but adopted an anti-imperialist stance. Within the context of this article, the names to be discussed reveal a twofold distinction in Western perceptions. The first is a West that is perceived as threatening the Ottoman Empire, Islam, and the East in general; consequently, developing a defense against it is seen as imperative. The second is a West that serves as an example in certain aspects of modernization, from which lessons must be learned to overcome this threat. In this context, the West carries the quality of an *other* that is both positioned as an enemy and referenced in addressing its own shortcomings. In their search for an answer to the question, "How can we develop as much as the West?", European cities were idealized as concrete examples of the modernization ideal.

Mehmed Akif, influenced by the political conditions of his time, developed a discourse centered more on liberation; Namık Kemal and Ahmed Midhat Efendi, on the other hand, adopted a progressive and transformative stance. The political fragility of the Ottoman Empire and its urgent need for modernization led these thinkers, like many Ottoman intellectuals, to adopt a pragmatic approach. This pragmatism deepened the dichotomies established between Europe and the Ottoman Empire, while also facilitating the emergence of new ideals and categories of opposition. In this regard, the West, Europe, and certain European cities in particular, have taken center stage in the intellectual sphere as concrete examples and objects of comparison for modernization goals. Europe and European cities served as a benchmark and frame of reference for Ottoman intellectuals in determining their position and orientation toward modernization. The paradox created by Ottoman intellectuals during the modernization process, who coded the West as both an imperialist threat and a civilizational horizon to be attained, and the spatial representations of this dilemma, form the core problem of this study. In this context, the study adopts a comparative text analysis method centered on the narratives of Namık Kemal in London, Ahmet Midhat Efendi in Paris, and Mehmed Akif Ersoy in Berlin; it conducts its examination through the authors' articles, travelogues, novels, and other works. The research is significant in that it reveals how, during the modernization crisis that spanned the 19th and 20th centuries, European cities ceased to be abstract geographical spaces and instead functioned as mirrors and laboratories for diagnosing the institutional, social, and moral deficiencies of the Ottoman Empire. The main thesis of the study is that the intellectuals in question constructed their observations of European cities to legitimize a selective modernization strategy aimed at internalizing the material progress and urban order of the West while preserving their spiritual and cultural codes, and to instrumentalize them in line with their own political projects. This thesis is illustrated by Namık Kemal's admiration for the political order and justice system in London, Ahmet Midhat's ambivalence between technological progress and moral decay in Paris, and Mehmed Akif's spiritual resistance line, developed by interpreting the discipline in Berlin as a synthesis of mind and heart. In this respect, these urban spaces functioned as dynamic sites that both **molded and mirrored** the specific modernization paradigms envisioned by each intellectual.

Namık Kemal's London: Order and Progress

After the proclamation of the Republic, Namık Kemal was presented as the pioneer of patriotism in Turkey. In addition to his identities as a poet, writer, journalist, statesman, and intellectual, he was a figure who embodied many firsts in the intellectual sphere of Ottoman-Turkish modernization. One of the leading representatives of the Young Ottomans movement, Namık Kemal, was born in Tekirdağ in 1840. In the 1860s and 1870s, he developed a critical stance towards the administrative approach of Ali Pasha and Fuat Pasha, the defining figures of the Tanzimat. Coming from a family closely connected to the state bureaucracy, Namık Kemal had the opportunity to see different regions of the Ottoman Empire during his childhood, thus gaining a broad range of observations about the empire. His tenure at the Translation Office, a crucial institution in the dissemination of Western thought to the Ottoman Empire, (Kamay, 2012, p. 2) was one of the key experiences that shaped his intellectual orientation. Namık Kemal, who began writing for *Tasvir-i Efkâr* in 1862, went to Paris with Ziya Bey in 1867 due to increasing political pressure resulting from a letter written by Mustafa Fazıl Pasha to Sultan Abdülaziz. During Sultan Abdülaziz's visit to Paris, he was forced to move to London, where, with the support of Mustafa Fazıl Pasha, he and Ziya Bey began publishing the *Hürriyet* newspaper (Akün, 1972, p. 241). However, Mustafa Fazıl Pasha's reconciliation with the Sultan and withdrawal of his support strengthened Namık Kemal's decision to return home; he returned to Ottoman territory with Ali Pasha's permission. Considering the possibility of his pardon and return to Istanbul, he yielded to the pressure from the Ottoman government, of which Ali Pasha was the grand vizier, to leave *Hürriyet* (Tansel, 2013, p. 172). Namık Kemal, who also contributed to the drafting of the Constitution, moved away from journalism and opposition during the reign of Sultan Abdülhamid II and turned to literary work. Namık Kemal, who died at a relatively young age in 1888, overcame the tension between Islamic and Western concepts, creating a synthesis. In this respect, he influenced subsequent generations and made significant contributions to the formation of the conceptual framework of modern political thought in Turkey (Mardin, 2000, pp. 286–287).

As Mardin states, the Young Ottomans incorporated Enlightenment thought into the intellectual heritage of Turkish thought. Still, in doing so, they sought to establish a synthesis between Islam and this intellectual legacy (Mardin, 2000, p. 4). Although Namık Kemal's views on the West have multiple sources, it is possible to examine these sources in two periods. The first period encompasses the knowledge he acquired before traveling to Europe, through the Translation Office and various Western texts. The second period, which also includes his brief experience in Paris, is primarily informed by his observations and experiences in London. The literature examining Namık Kemal's relationship with the West, England, and London presents London as indispensable (Uçan, 2012, p. 77) yet exaggerated for him, (Uçan, 2012, p. 70) embodying a content that adorns his dreams (Kuntay, 2010a, p. 538) and is associated with his civilizationalism (Tampınar, 2007, p. 389). This also incorporates a style that seeks to instill excitement in the reader. Namık Kemal describes himself as an Anglophile in a letter he wrote during his time in London (Kuntay, 2010b, p. 757).

London had several meanings for Namık Kemal. First, it was a kind of voluntary exile; it offered him an opportunity to distance himself by his own choice, as opposed to the actual exile imposed by the Ottoman government, which sent its opponents to remote posts. Second, London was the place where Namık Kemal engaged in intense intellectual activity. Here, he continued his opposition by publishing the *Hürriyet* newspaper with Ziya Pasha, while also taking private lessons in political philosophy, economics, and law from an intellectual named Fanton; these lessons eventually laid the groundwork for a friendly relationship between the two. The third and perhaps most defining significance of London for Namık Kemal was his admiration for the social order, public life, and institutional functioning he observed in the city; this was counterbalanced by the disappointment and, at the same time, the hope he felt when looking at the situation in his own country. Therefore, the years he spent in London were highly influential in shaping Namık Kemal's intellectual formation. Beyond Europe's visible prosperity and technological advances, the self-satisfaction that marked mid-Victorian culture made it even harder for the Young Ottomans to dismiss European—and especially English—superiority in progress and civilization (Çiçek, 2010, pp. 174–175). Namık Kemal's admiration for England, particularly exemplified in London, is fundamentally directed at the social order and the mindset that makes this order possible. He observes how public life practices, internalized by broad social segments, produce a social structure organized on the basis of rationality and functionality; he feels a deep admiration for the ideas of progress, order, and social harmony that flawlessly derive from this structure. According to Namık Kemal, this order is the reason why London is considered the most peaceful place in the world, as he expresses it as follows: "London is a country where those who have not seen it do not know the meaning of peace" (Tansel, 2013, p. 94).

One of the essential articles he published in the newspaper *İbret*, which he began publishing after returning to his country, is the aforementioned *Terakki* article. The *Terakki* article focuses on London,

examining the perfection of the order created in the superstructure (political and social) through the progress achieved by the structural (economic and technological) transformations of England. Namık Kemal approaches civilization and progress from a quantitative perspective, while also acknowledging humanity's capacity to dominate itself and nature. In this article, he describes London and addresses the Ottomans, expressing his admiration for the progress of London and England. However, he ultimately concludes by urging them to "wake up from their slumber of negligence" (Ülken, 1994, p. 104). The article in question, although brief, bases its discussion of England's order in London specifically on the prevailing mentality, the progress it has generated, and the institutions, city, and structures within the city that this progress has created. While envisioning London as an example of progress in the world, he emphasizes that there is no city or place more advanced than it and that it is perfect in every sense (Kul, 2014, p. 206). His admiration for England, particularly London, is not only about material progress but also the established order and the traditions upon which it is based. According to Menemencioğlu, even though Kemal had a strong aversion to the aristocracy, he recognized the importance of the freedom afforded by long-standing institutions (Menemencioğlu, 1967, p. 41).

In this vision of civilization, founded on a parliamentary system and an unwavering commitment to justice, the parliament, reflecting the will of the people, enacts laws necessary for progress through mature deliberations. Kemal first focuses on politics, drawing a metaphor based on the parliament building. According to him, a man in London, if he wishes to see the course of the principles of justice, will first of all encounter that great parliament which is the center of legislation and the birthplace of many of the political rules we see in the world. Just by looking at its grand building, one might suppose that public opinion has taken physical form against administrative oversight, and it seems as if that intimidating body has turned to stone, showing that any impact cannot easily destroy it (Kul, 2014, p. 207). At the same time, the courts apply these laws through a system that respects human rights, is impartial, and is supported by juries. In this environment, where justice and public order are so firmly established, security forces are busy monitoring daily order and traffic rather than fighting crime. Social development is not limited to law but is also reflected in education. A high-level intellectual climate has been created, supported by libraries housing millions of books and observatories studying the sky, where children grow up with the maturity of adults and young people acquire multilingual and in-depth scientific competence. City life, meanwhile, displays immense splendor and vitality through a free press that disseminates ideas worldwide, massive buildings reminiscent of Istanbul's palaces, magnificent bridges, and a transportation network that operates without interruption.

He then focuses on education, comparing it to education in the Ottoman Empire and arguing that education in England is far more advanced (Kul, 2014, p. 208). While discussing the large number of grand buildings and their high value, (Kul, 2014, p. 210) the sophistication of transportation routes and methods, and the abundance of vehicles, (Kul, 2014, p. 211) he emphasizes that progress is not merely a technological advancement but holds significance that completely transforms social and daily life. As he continues to give examples, he shares quantitative data and does not hesitate to exaggerate at this point. He mentions fifty thousand workers in a printing house, fifteen thousand horses pulling carts in a brewery, hotels that can accommodate three thousand people, and halls where four thousand people can eat (Kul, 2014, p. 212). Namık Kemal approaches civilization and progress from a quantitative perspective, while also not ignoring humanity's ability to master the human body and nature. For example, he claims that pears the size of watermelons can be grown (Kul, 2014, p. 213).

At the end of the article, it reiterates its initial purpose. It states that:

"Yes, we also know that it is not possible to transform Istanbul into London or Rumelia into France within a few years. However, since Europe has reached this state in just two centuries, and since they have been the inventors of the means of progress, we will find those means ready; if the matter is handled comprehensively, is there any doubt that we too can become counted among the most civilized countries—at least within two centuries—and wouldn't two centuries be but a blink of an eye relative to the life of a society?" (Kul, 2014, p. 215).

In another article in the same journal, which again describes and discusses the progress of London and its civilization. In this habitat where the mind is the creator and nature is the servant, London has become a center where wealth and happiness flow, which is what Namık Kemal also desired for his country and its capital, Istanbul (Namık Kemal, 2005, p. 566).

The rapid urbanization that followed the Industrial Revolution, along with the large structures built in cities, and the admiration for the harmonious continuation of urban order, directed attention both to London and to the functioning of industrial society. However, there is a narrative in which Namık Kemal either did not observe certain things, did not describe them in his writings even if he had seen them, or

emphasized them only as simple geographical features. For example, when he mentions London's poor air quality, he is not referring to the pollution emitted from factory chimneys, but rather to the constant rain and the absence of sunshine. He mentions this in a letter (Tansel, 2013, p. 106) he wrote and in his famous *Terakki* article, noting that even in August, it is cool, and the sun is rarely seen (Tansel, 2013, p. 113).

There is a reductionist approach that overlooks the social and economic problems that have emerged at the current stage of progress, particularly class antagonisms, and a depiction of London based on this approach. Referencing the level of civilization rather than the mechanisms of exploitation in production relations, the author considers the narrative that leaves behind the prominent class conflicts of the period and issues such as the city's severe air pollution to be sufficient. However, Namık Kemal's depiction makes no mention of the poverty, misery, environmental hazards, crime rates, and class tensions faced by the working class in London's suburbs during the same period.² Having lived in London for over three years and established various relationships with the local population, it is inconceivable that he was unaware of all these problems. Therefore, his depiction of London is more a romanticized idealization than a realistic observation and ultimately serves as an indirect criticism of the Ottoman Empire and its social structure.

Ahmet Midhat's Paris: Ambivalence and Civilization

Ahmet Midhat Efendi's exceptional productivity, described during his time as a *writing machine*, is closely linked to his socio-economic background. Being born into a Circassian immigrant family with modest means led him to internalize work not only as a survival strategy but also as a social ethos. This necessity gradually evolved into a desire for upward social mobility; this desire became the driving force that spurred the writer's insatiable curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Carter Findley conceptualizes the writer's multifaceted intellectual appetite and encyclopedic output with the term "jack of all trades" (Findley, 1998, p. 20). While the author's encyclopedic curiosity is open to all kinds of intellectual production of the period, the epistemological sources that nourish it are predominantly Western in origin. Ahmet Midhat learned French at a young age; this linguistic proficiency laid the foundation for his profound and enduring curiosity about the Western world. Ahmet Midhat's knowledge of the West was shaped by his trip to the Orientalists Congress, which he attended as Sultan Abdülhamid's delegate, and by his previous readings from various sources. Ahmet Midhat, who sought to increase the number of stops during his congressional trip, visited a wide geographical area, including Germany, France, Italy, and Austria in continental Europe, as well as various Scandinavian countries in the north, in two and a half months. The book he wrote about his trip to the Orientalists Congress, *Avrupa'da Bir Cevelan*, (Ahmet Midhat, 2015) is more than just a travelogue recounting the author's subjective experiences; it is a source containing sociological, political, cultural, economic, and historical analyses of the West. Although he was assigned to introduce the East and the Ottoman Empire at the Congress, he used this opportunity to gain a detailed understanding of the West. One of the places he stayed the longest during this trip was Paris, which is also the city he used most frequently as a setting in his own novels. In Midhat's view, the Paris and World's Fair is a place of comparison where the hierarchy between civilizations is interpreted through social Darwinist codes (Findley, 1998, p. 38). He associates man's domination over nature with scientific competence, (Ahmet Midhat, 2013, p. 13) observes that the sense of competition that may arise in the face of Western superiority contains a dialectic of envy and jealousy (Ahmet Midhat, 2000c, p. 126). Ahmet Midhat Efendi acknowledges the intrinsic link between European travel literature and the continent's political and economic hegemony; yet, he maintains that this entanglement with power does not compromise the universal validity of the knowledge produced through such endeavors (Herzog & Motika, 2000, p. 149). He criticizes the Ottomans on this matter (Sagaster, 2000, p. 14).

Scholarly discussions on the nature of East-West encounters often necessitate a critical re-evaluation of Edward Said's theoretical framework regarding discursive power. Carter Findley criticizes Said for his reading of Foucault. According to him, Said has attributed an absolute nature to discourse by ignoring the possibility of resistance that coexists with power in Foucault's discourse theory. While discourse may potentially be a strategy of power in the Foucauldian sense, it can also be the driving force behind resistance and counter-strategies. Findley argues that Ahmet Midhat was "an Ottoman thinker who could creatively engage with Europe and yet resist its cultural power that was not omnipotent" (Findley, 1998, p. 49). Ahmet Midhat's conception of the West can be read through Okay's conceptualization as a state of *being opposed* to (Okay, 1975). The term *opposite* here has an

² There is significant literature on this subject. For instance: (Wise, 2009), (Whelan, 2009), (Winter, 2005) and (Daunton, 1991).

ambivalent structure that simultaneously implies an ontological defense reflex and an inevitable confrontation (Parla, 2006, p. 18). In this context, Ahmet Midhat's approach parallels Ahiska's definition of Occidentalism. For Ahiska, Occidentalism is not merely an internalized Orientalism or a reactive defense mechanism, but rather an attempt to create a discursive *common sky* in which *Eastern subjects* construct their own identities and differences (Ahiska, 2003, p. 365). Ahmet Midhat constructs the idea of the West as a discursive narrative, both in his novels and works centered on the West. This construction process is accompanied by his inexhaustible intellectual curiosity and a constant state of *wonder*. He conceptualizes the relationship established with Europe as one of necessary coexistence, in which the parties are foreign to each other but share an inevitable destiny. For him, who points to the existence of misjudgments stemming from mutual epistemological blindness, the real problem is the Ottoman subject's ability to comprehend the West in its factual reality (Okay, 1975, pp. 27–28). In his works, Ahmet Midhat Efendi adapted Western literary strategies to cultivate Ottoman subjectivity, using the novel not only to model citizenship but also to foster reader agency through the text itself (Ringer, 2020, p. 175). In his readings about foreign places, Ahmet Mithat consistently uses his own socio-cultural universe and local context as a reference point. When interpreting the outside world, he always builds his starting point on his own social habitus. When examining foreign places, Ahmet Mithat always determines his reference point based on his own sociocultural reality and value system (Esen & Koroğlu, 2006, p. 11).

Like Namık Kemal's positioning of London as the center of the modern world, Ahmet Midhat also considers Paris to be the center of progress and civilization (Ahmet Midhat, 2015, p. 19; 2003, p.13). But unlike Namık Kemal, Ahmet Midhat's style stands out for its observational realism and richness of detail. Midhat presents an encyclopedic wealth of information about Europe. This attention to this frequently repeated detail can be explained not so much by simple admiration, but rather by the travel writer's mission to bear witness and document the world. In contrast to Namık Kemal's concise, striking, and emotionally appealing rhetorical style, Ahmet Midhat adopts a comparative narrative strategy. This difference is reflected in the two writers' perceptions of architecture: Namık Kemal openly expresses his admiration for London's architecture, while Ahmet Midhat appreciates the aesthetics of Parisian buildings but also defends Ottoman architecture. According to Midhat, Ottoman architecture is not inferior to Western examples; therefore, any possible feeling of envy is unfounded and baseless (Ahmet Midhat, 2015, p. 660).

In Ahmet Midhat Efendi's narrative realm, Paris is constructed as an ambivalent structure, one that transcends being merely a geographical location, as it serves as the ontological center of Western civilization and modernism. The comfort standards offered by urban life, the capacity of libraries, (Ahmet Midhat, 2000b, p. 138) advances in printing technology, and the efficiency of transportation networks are material elements of progress that profoundly influenced the author. In addition, examples of mechanization exhibited at the Fair (Exposition Universelle), (Ahmet Midhat, 2015, p. 659) as well as modern urban planning practices, such as clean streets free of mud, (Ahmet Midhat, 2015, p. 539) are other technological manifestations that reinforced the author's admiration. He presents Paris as both the pinnacle of scientific, technological, and architectural progress and the source of social and moral degeneration. In this context, Paris is depicted as a showcase of civilization dominated by material progress and rules of etiquette, yet with a chaotic world lurking in the background, ruled by ruthless social stratification, poverty, and debauchery. This city, presented from a comparative perspective with Istanbul, is both an aesthetic and intellectual ideal sought after by the Ottoman intellectuals struggling with the pains of modernization and a place of excessive freedom considered *dangerous*. Ahmet Midhat Efendi, while structuring his observations of Paris around livability standards and economic conditions, argues that Istanbul is in a more advantageous position in many respects. In his comparison, particularly regarding housing costs, the author asserts that living conditions in Istanbul are more economically rational and reasonable than those in Paris, which are characterized by high rental costs (Ahmet Midhat, 2015, p. 661).

In his works such as *Altın Aşıkları* and *Mesail-i Muğlaka*, Ahmet Midhat problematizes Paris as a center that embodies the allure of the West but is also a volatile and superficial place grappling with deep moral contradictions. The author's approach positions Paris as an admired example of material success while subjecting it to harsh criticism from a spiritual perspective. The author's critique of Paris is fundamentally rooted in a communitarian and puritanical work ethic derived from his own class origins and worldview. From this perspective, Europe is coded as the center of an economy of waste, ostentation, and detachment from national values rather than productivity. This moral dichotomy is also embodied in the author's character construction: Mustafa Kamerüddin in *Demir Bey* or the novel *İnkışaf-i Esrar* represents an idealized typology endowed with the virtues of chastity and thrift, rejecting momentary pleasures; while the character Senai in the novel *Bahtiyarlık* becomes a symbol of moral

decline, falling victim to *the curse of gambling and sensual desires* in Paris, where he went for education (Ahmet Midhat, 2000a, p. 36). Consequently, for Ahmet Midhat Efendi, Paris is both a reference point for Westernization and modernization practices and a laboratory for cultural degeneration, his greatest fear.

In Ahmet Midhat's works, Paris is portrayed not only as a place of charm but also as an unsettling *testing ground* where the Ottoman subject must exercise caution. This dualistic narrative of Paris, constructed by the author, permeates both his personal travel notes and the experiences of his fictional characters. The dominant normative discourse in the texts idealizes a pragmatic stance that does not succumb to the city's morass of debauchery and corruption, but rather is free from hedonistic impulses, goal-oriented, and maintains moral integrity. Ahmet Midhat Efendi idealizes Paris as the center of industry and science, while simultaneously portraying it as a place of social decay, as seen in his novel *Paris'te Bir Türk*. Within this dichotomous structure, the author justifies moral decay, which has acquired a classless quality, through the destruction of human nature wrought by the accumulation of wealth and liberation, the dissolution of the family institution, and the deviations brought about by idle time. Therefore, Paris is represented as a paradoxical space harboring deep contradictions within itself rather than as a monolithic symbol of civilization. While affirming the city's intellectual and artistic richness, the text critically problematizes the moral deformations and corrupted aspects brought about by modernity and social freedom, adopting a realistic approach.

Ahmet Midhat demonstrates his meticulous style in his works not only through textual density and quantity, but also by making the mental effort required to achieve this proficiency visible through in-text references. The author legitimizes his narrative by emphasizing that this effort is appreciated even by foreign audiences. For example, although he wrote the novel *Paris'te Bir Türk* without ever seeing the city, he presents the reader with the astonishment of a Parisian university instructor at this descriptive power through an anecdote recounted by Teodor Kasap (Ahmet Midhat, 2015, pp. 90–91). Ahmet Midhat, who displays similar methodological rigor in his preparations before traveling, attempts to prove his mastery of the subject through systematic research on city plans, maps, and guidebooks (Ahmet Midhat, 2015, p. 94). While the details he provides sometimes contain dense technical information, Midhat also occasionally attempts to analyze the society living in Paris with a sociologist's approach. Ahmet Midhat made two separate visits to Paris during his European journey, one on the way there and one on the way back; he stayed longer in the city on his return trip. The author made productive use of this relatively limited time frame thanks to his detailed planning, carried out with the meticulousness of a conscious tourist. His primary goal during this process was to gain maximum insight into the city's cultural, economic, and social fabric, as well as its daily life practices, and to convey these observations to his readers. His mental map of Paris takes shape at the intersection of his travel notes and fictional works. Ahmet Midhat finds the opportunity to reevaluate and test the images of Paris he has created in his novels during his actual travels. This experience leads to the revision of some of his preconceptions. In particular, the fact that the architectural structures appear to lack the grandeur he had envisioned causes the image he had idealized to collide with the wall of reality (Ahmet Midhat, 2015, p. 95).

Mehmed Akif's Berlin: Order and Sorrow

Mehmed Akif, one of the founding figures of the Turkish-Islamic intellectual world and a spiritual architect of the National Struggle, was a multifaceted thinker and man of action who laid the intellectual groundwork for modern conservative thought through his works, particularly *Safahat*. The poet instrumentalized his literary production for social benefit, prioritizing pragmatic idealism over aesthetic concerns. In this vein, he practiced his art, constructed with a simple language and didactic style, with an activist attitude aimed at mobilizing the masses. Mehmed Akif, who took a stance against the rule of Sultan Abdülhamid and supported the re-establishment of the constitutional monarchy, played a decisive role in the intellectual life of the period, centered around the journal *Sırat-ı Müstakim* (later renamed *Sebilürreşad*). On the political front, Akif became a 'critical' member of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), on the condition that the oath text in the party's constitution be changed (Erişirgil, 2006, pp. 91–92). Akif withdrew his support as a result of the society's autocratic tendencies, and this membership did not constitute active party politics, as Düzdağ points out (Düzdağ, 1988, p. 17). Although Erişirgil views Akif's Unionism as limited to his lectures at the Science Club, (Erişirgil, 2006, p. 93) the author's role on behalf of the state in strategic missions such as Berlin and Arabia shows that he had a deeper relationship with political/bureaucratic mechanisms than is commonly believed.

Despite defining Western civilization as a morally and spiritually corrupt structure—in his own words, a *monster with only one tooth left*—Mehmed Akif adopted a selective modernization approach, seeing the recipe for national salvation in the transfer of Western science and technology. Akif embraces the examples of Japan and Germany, which achieved development by maintaining a critical distance from

the West, as ideal models in this context. Although the poet's perception of the West was shaped by his intellectual readings, his concrete observations of Berlin were based on the strategic assignment he undertook within the Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa, which is an intelligence, paramilitary, and secret police organization, during World War I (Somel, 1987, p. 212). During this approximately four-month journey, Akif carried out propaganda activities targeting Muslim prisoners in the Allied forces and took charge of the Turkish edition of the *El Cihad* newspaper (Kon, 2012, p. 87). These trips to Berlin and Arabia, the most concrete manifestation of his relationship with the CUP government, served as a rehearsal for the poet's awareness-raising activities during the National Struggle period. Although Akif submitted an official report to Sheikh al-Islam Hayri Efendi upon his return from Berlin, due to the loss of this document, traces of the author's sociological observations and impressions of that period can only be found in the *Berlin Memories* (Berlin Hatıraları) section of *Safahat* (Köroğlu, 2007, p. 140).

Although he did not leave behind an autobiographical account of his trip to Berlin, other sources from the period confirm Mehmed Akif's moral stance and action-oriented identity during this assignment. In particular, his refusal to stay in a luxury hotel, whose expenses would be covered by the German authorities, and his choice of a more modest accommodation, (Kon, 2012, p. 89) demonstrate his principled attitude. During his approximately four-month assignment in Germany, he delivered sermons in mosques built for prisoners of war, wrote propaganda texts, and visited the front lines himself to address the soldiers (Köroğlu, 2007, p. 141). The texts Akif produced during this period have a mobilizing language aimed at prompting his audience to take immediate action. The poet seeks to create a shocking awareness by confronting the public with their inertia and utilizing the concept of *shame*, while simultaneously pursuing a dual rhetorical strategy that motivates the masses with a powerful message of hope.

For Akif, Berlin and Germany in general are positioned as a center where science, technology, and progress are embodied, and this level of development is viewed with admiration. Despite directing harsh anti-imperialist criticism toward Western civilization, Akif places Germany in an *exceptional* position, outside of this critical discourse. This selective attitude coincides with the political circumstances of the period, particularly the Germans' support for Pan-Islamism and the Germany-centered alliance strategies of the Committee of Union and Progress. In this context, Berlin presents an idealized picture of development, characterized by its prosperous structure, advanced transportation networks, urban hygiene, comfortable accommodation options, and a civilized human profile. He, like Namık Kemal and Ahmet Midhat, was fascinated by the order.

Berlin Memories, is built on the sharp dichotomy between the manifestations of modernity in Berlin and the social and spatial backwardness in the Ottoman geography. Using an ironic and sarcastic style, the poet directs harsh criticism at the disorder and misery in the Ottoman Empire through Berlin's urban planning, transportation networks, and accommodation facilities. Mehmed Akif begins his account of Berlin Memories with a spatial and cultural comparison between the atmosphere of a Berlin café and Istanbul. In this comparison, the stagnation and chaos symbolized by the image of the "neighborhood coffeehouse" in the Ottoman Empire contrast with Berlin's rational and systematic order. In the poem, places are treated not only as physical structures but also as a vision of civilization. Unlike the dilapidated inns of the Ottoman Empire, Berlin hotels are described as structures that are as well-maintained as palaces, providing peace of mind where every detail has been considered, from heating systems to the abundance of water, hygiene, and comfort (Ersoy, 2008, p. 286) A similar perfectionism is evident in public spaces; regardless of seasonal conditions, the streets are constantly clean and free of mud thanks to the will and discipline of "we will not allow it" (Ersoy, 2008, p. 288). Technology and the perception of time are also essential parts of this civilizational comparison. In the Ottoman Empire, the transportation system, which operated as *fate permitted* and was dominated by uncertainty, has been replaced in Berlin by a modern railway network that seems to fly through time and space, is punctual, and fully meets needs (Ersoy, 2008, p. 287). The poet's descriptions of Berlin's cafes are the pinnacle of his admiration; these places are even more imposing and magnificent than the *Düyün-ı Umûmiyye* building, which symbolizes the Ottoman Empire's financial collapse (Ersoy, 2008, p. 289). The fact that the cafes are as bright as day is interpreted as a metaphorical reference to both the physical spaciousness of the place and the enlightenment of Western thought (Ersoy, 2008, p. 290). Ultimately, Akif presents Berlin as an impossible-to-fathom space and a utopia where technology thoroughly permeates life, emphasizing the distance between Ottoman reality and this ideal.

The text transcends a mere description of the city, serving as a comparative critique of civilization that examines the structural dynamics of German and Ottoman societies. Throughout most of the text, the poet explains Germany's scientific and demographic superiority during its fifty years of peace, which is rooted in the harmonious union of *brain* (mind/science) and *heart* (spirituality) (Ersoy, 2008, p. 297). In this German model idealized by Akif, the intellectual class rises without leaving the people behind; on

the contrary, science has become a social staple, and education, military life, and industry have gained an organic unity with the institution of the family (Ersoy, 2008, pp. 296–297). The Ottoman society, which presents a picture opposite to this integrated structure, is afflicted with division, ignorance, and disarray, rather than uniting around a common goal (Ersoy, 2008, pp. 297–298). Akif does not attribute this multifaceted backwardness in the Ottoman Empire solely to external forces; he also harshly criticizes the moral decay spreading and the social inertia that views historical heritage as an excuse for complacency.

The final part of *Berlin Memories* is almost entirely concerned with the Ottoman Empire. While observing the devastating effects of World War I from Berlin, Mehmed Akif compares the individual grief of a German family with the much more profound and collective tragedy experienced by the peoples of Asia and Africa, who were driven to the front lines by colonial powers. Viewing the Ottoman Empire from this perspective of global catastrophe, the picture is one of utter ruin: critical infrastructure such as railways fell under foreign capital control, the people became *captives* in their own homeland, and the institutional structure was in a state of physical and administrative destitution. The material collapse in the Ottoman Empire was accompanied by spiritual decay, caused by the dysfunction of science and literature that undermined social morality.

Conclusion

This study examines the perceptions of modernity and the image of the West constructed by late Ottoman intellectuals, including Namık Kemal, Ahmet Midhat Efendi, and Mehmed Akif Ersoy, through their visits to London, Paris, and Berlin, respectively. All three authors instrumentalized European cities not merely as geographical locations, but as mirrors reflecting the institutional, social, and spatial deficiencies of the Ottoman Empire, and as horizons of civilization to be attained. Namık Kemal focused on political order, parliament, and justice in London; Ahmet Midhat examined the ambivalence between technological progress and moral decay in Paris; and Mehmed Akif centered on discipline and national unity based on the unity of mind and heart in Berlin. The study reveals that while these intellectuals admired the material progress of the West, they developed a selective modernization strategy with a reflex to preserve their spiritual and cultural codes, using European cities as idealized rhetorical tools to legitimize their own political projects.

Namık Kemal, Ahmet Midhat Efendi, and Mehmed Akif Ersoy's accounts of European cities essentially share a common admiration for the material progress, urban order, and institutional functioning of Western civilization. For Namık Kemal, London is a symbol of order, described as the most peaceful place in the world, organized on the basis of rationality and functionality. Similarly, Mehmed Akif depicts Berlin as a vision of civilization where science and technology are embodied, and every detail, from transportation networks to urban hygiene, functions flawlessly. Ahmet Midhat, on the other hand, positions Paris as a center of progress with its libraries, printing technologies, and clean streets. All three authors used this material and institutional development in European cities as a mirror to compare with the backwardness, disorder, and inertia in the Ottoman Empire; they instrumentalized their observations to criticize their own societies and spur them into action.

Despite this shared admiration, there are clear methodological differences between the authors' approaches to cities and their styles. Namık Kemal adopts a rhetorical style that romanticizes London, ignoring negatives such as class conflicts or environmental pollution, and focuses on idealistic and political institutions (parliament, justice). In contrast, Ahmet Midhat, with his encyclopedic identity as someone who seeks to understand everything, approaches Paris with a more detailed, observational, and realistic approach. While describing the technological developments he admires, he does not shy away from making economic comparisons, such as rental costs, or defending Ottoman architecture. Mehmed Akif, on the other hand, uses an ironic and sarcastic language in his account of Berlin, aiming to create a shocking awareness in the reader by presenting a sharp dichotomy between Berlin's palace-like hotels and the Ottoman Empire's dilapidated inns, and between the Germans' punctual trains and the Ottoman Empire's uncertain transportation. The deepest point of divergence between the three names emerges in their interpretations of the moral and spiritual dimensions of European cities. Namık Kemal praises social harmony, viewing the order in London as the product of a mindset and understanding of justice that have been internalized by English society. Ahmet Midhat, on the other hand, displays an ambivalent attitude toward Paris, marked by contradiction; he portrays the city as both a center of progress and a swamp of debauchery, waste, and moral decay, warning the reader against this dangerous center of attraction. Mehmed Akif, while in Berlin during World War I, distinguishes German society from that of other Westerners, attributing their success to the unity of material and spiritual aspects.

The scope of the research is limited to the literary and intellectual texts containing the observations of the three intellectuals in question in the aforementioned cities, focusing on the representation in the intellectuals' mind rather than the degree to which these narratives correspond to historical reality. The fact that the texts were shaped by the authors' political positions and the circumstances of the period (e.g., World War I) is a fundamental factor limiting the objectivity of the narratives. Future studies comparing the European perceptions of these figures with the narratives of other Ottoman intellectuals belonging to different factions of the period, such as the Westernizers, will add depth to the literature. Furthermore, examining the impressions of European travelers who visited Istanbul during the same period, as well as the observations of Ottoman intellectuals on Europe from a reverse-gaze perspective, could offer a more comprehensive understanding of the East-West axis modernity debates and the construction of the *other* at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

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