

Between Liminality, ‘Ghorbat-hood’ and Belonging - mapping the experiences of young Afghan migrants ‘in transit’ in Istanbul

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Abstract

Drawing on qualitative interviewing and observational sketching as method, this paper aims at exploring how young Afghan migrants experience and cope with their irregular status in one of Istanbul’s largest districts. As such, it intends to unravel how liminality, *ghorbat-hood* and belonging is shaped in the process of being ‘in transit’. Findings of this paper can provide fruitful insights into different nuances and linguistic modes of signification emphasized by the Afghan informants’ as a form of ‘meaning making’ of their displacement. Centuries of forced mobility from a country leaves inevitable marks on the language of that country. As an example, the word *ghorbat* describes the liminal state or condition of feeling like a stranger and being far away from one’s homeland. The informants’ stories also reveal a sense of belonging to the past, serving as a nostalgic remembrance or post-memory of a homeland in peace, which brings us again to the idea of ‘*ghorbathood*’. The paper also presents words used by the informants to express different linguistic forms of endurance: *zahmat*, *tahamol* and *saboor*. This paper can thus be a groundwork for understanding the intricate relationship between language, memory and migration.