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Mapping solidarity: organizational density of hometown associations in Istanbul

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ABSTRACT

This study explores cohesion levels within Istanbul's internal migrant groups, focusing on formal solidarity networks and Hometown Associations (HTAs). It examines disparities in organizational density within formal associations among these groups and identifies the underlying factors that contribute to the varying degrees of cohesion. The findings highlight a contiguous region at the intersection of the Black Sea's hinterland and Eastern Anatolia, where migrants in Istanbul exhibit higher levels of solidarity through organizational density. HTAs originating from villages tend to concentrate in peripheral settlements, while city and district associations are prevalent in central residential areas. This research adds to the understanding of internal migration and solidarity networks, offering a data-driven basis for further studies. It presents an innovative metric for quantifying the bonds within migrant groups, crucial for evaluating their social capital. This metric serves as a foundation, encouraging a broader research agenda to deepen insights into migrant social capital.

KEYWORDS Internal migration; rural migration; migrant solidarity networks; hometown associations; Turkish civil society

Introduction

The migration from rural areas to urban centers in Turkey has deeply influenced the social fabric of metropolitan cities, instigating substantial shifts in the cultural and political orientations of migrant populations. A pivotal dimension of this transformation is the emergence of solidarity networks, which coalesce around the collective identity of individuals hailing from rural backgrounds who have transitioned to urban settings. As people migrate to urban centers, they find themselves gravitating towards others who share similar backgrounds, creating close-knit solidarity networks built on familial and hometown ties. These networks have played a

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crucial role in shaping the cultural and political leanings of migrants, as they foster a sense of belonging and shared experiences.

Within these solidarity networks, migrants come together to address various urban challenges, such as housing, infrastructure, public services, and integration into city life. These networks function as a robust support system, extending aid and guidance to newcomers, thereby facilitating their seamless assimilation into the urban environment. Over time, these solidarity networks have evolved and expanded, encompassing not only immediate family and kin but also migrants from the same rural origin. As a result, a broader sense of community and shared identity has developed, transcending individual family ties. This expansion has led to the establishment of formal civil organizations, with one prevalent type being the hometown associations (HTAs), representing migrant solidarity based on various levels of hometown affiliations, such as village, district, and city.

This study investigates the level of cohesion within different internal migrant groups in Istanbul, particularly through HTAs. It seeks to identify the factors that contribute to the varying degrees of solidarity among these groups. Furthermore, the study aims to uncover the underlying reasons behind these variations in terms of organizational density. Previous research on Turkey's social history has often neglected the critical influence of migrant networks. This study aims to fill that void by examining how hometown identity influences social organization, with a specific focus on the distribution and intensity of HTAs. By exploring this dimension, we aim to provide new insights into social organization models where migrant solidarity assumes a central role.

In this study, we adopt the term 'organizational density' from the field of organizational ecology[1], albeit with a nuanced interpretation tailored to our context. Here, it is used to reflect the extent of formal organizational structure within migrant groups, as indicated by the number of HTAs in proportion to the size of the migrant population. The examination of organizational density among migrant groups is key to understanding their collective capacity to navigate the unique challenges and opportunities they encounter in their new urban surroundings. This approach posits that a greater number of associations relative to population size might signify a more robust organizational framework within these communities. To explore this, this study identifies active HTAs in Istanbul and measures their organizational density by comparing the number of associations to the migrant population. The research endeavors to grasp the nuances of this organizational coherence, which fluctuates in accordance with the origins of migrants and their geographical distribution across various districts of Istanbul.

To conduct this investigation, the study utilizes data from DERBİS (*Dernekler Bilgi Sistemi*, Associations Information System) and TÜİK (*Türkiye*

İstatistik Kurumu, Turkish Statistical Institute). Through a meticulous analysis of this data, the researchers acquire invaluable insights into the determinants that underpin disparities in the organizational structure of migrant groups within Istanbul. This research introduces a novel metric designed to measure the connections among migrant communities, a key component in assessing their social capital. Through data analysis, the study examines the organizational density of these groups, considering both their backgrounds and geographic distribution across districts, contributing to the growing body of research that employs data-driven methodologies to examine migration in Turkey.[2] By accentuating the role of hometown identity, the research expands our comprehension of social organization models and prompts deeper reflection on the impact of migrant social institutions in developing migrant social capital.

Literature review

The literature review commences by delineating the pivotal role of HTAs within Turkish society, which is marked by its complex socio-cultural dynamics. Scholarly works under consideration are systematically divided into three distinct yet interrelated categories which reflect the multifaceted nature of these associations.

The first category explores the origins of HTAs, tracing their roots back to the significant rural-to-urban migration flows that characterized the 1960s, particularly from rural Turkey to Istanbul. This body of work critically examines how these migrations fostered the development of associative ties among migrants, serving as the facilitator of communal networks in urban centers. The second category shifts focus towards the literature on hometown organizations, both formal and informal, scrutinizing their structure, functions, and the role they play in the social fabric of migrant communities. Finally, the third category offers a nuanced analysis of the political dimensions of HTAs, exploring their influence on local and national politics. This subsection highlights the intricate relationships between these associations and the rise of Alevi and Islamist political movements in the 1990s, thereby shedding light on the broader socio-political implications of hometown affiliations in Turkey.

Social researchers have extensively examined the complex impact of rural migration to Istanbul, taking into consideration both the migrants' place of origin and the period of migration. Schüler[3] highlights the dominant role of the Black Sea coastal provinces in the migration to Istanbul, particularly after the mid-1980s. Between 1985 and 1990, migrants from the provinces along the Zonguldak-Rize coastline constituted 22 percent of those settling in Istanbul. Moreover, the Eastern and Central Anatolian provinces also significantly contributed to this migration wave.

Many migrants did not intend to sever their ties with their hometowns upon relocating to Istanbul. The possibility of returning to their place of origin was always a part of their migration plan. According to data cited by Schüler in 1992, around one in every five people living in Istanbul at that time maintained close relations with their hometowns and expressed a desire to eventually return.[4]

Schüler further distinguishes between migrants from the northeastern provinces and those from the Central and Eastern Anatolian provinces based on their political polarization.[5] The author characterizes those who migrated from the northeastern provinces in the 1980s as a 'dynamic element' forming the core of this study's focus on the collective capacity of immigrants. However, Schüler points out that previous studies did not thoroughly investigate how hometown identity binds individuals to each other within political parties and other organizations, including religious groups.

Existing research highlights the multifaceted nature of rural migration to Istanbul and sheds light on the dynamics of hometown identity and its influence on migrant communities. The varying political inclinations of migrants from different regions add further complexity to the study of organizational density among immigrants in the city. This analysis underscores the need for a more comprehensive understanding of the role of hometown identity in shaping social and political connections among migrants.

The second area of focus in this study involves a comprehensive examination of both formal and informal hometown organizations by scholars. These investigations are geographically categorized, covering associations formed outside of Istanbul, those extending across national borders, and organizations based within Istanbul. The research delves into the varied roles of HTAs, including their influence on urban development, political patronage dynamics, clientelism, and the economic interactions between host and origin communities.

Studies on HTAs in Turkey can be classified geographically into three categories: (a) those examining associations of the Turkish population abroad,[6] (b) those focusing on associations in cities outside Istanbul,[7] and (c) those studying the nationwide organization of a migrant group or the organization of migrant groups in Istanbul.[8]

The studies on HTAs differ in their research questions and areas of investigation. Some delve into how HTAs influence urbanization.[9] The concept of 'buffer institution' has been introduced to highlight the role of *gecekondu* (squatter settlement) residents and new immigrants in the process of urban adaptation.[10] Other studies explore the relationship between *gecekondu* formation and hometown networks.[11] Additionally, a separate field of study focuses on the inherent political patronage and clientelism found within HTAs.[12]

HTAs are discussed in terms of their multifaceted political and economic relationships, both domestically within rural areas and internationally with their home countries. Some studies emphasize the financial relationships, often in the form of remittances, between the host country and the sending country.[13] The effects of these associations on socio-economic integration and their role in rural areas have been explored.[14] Furthermore, various studies have sought to classify HTAs based on criteria such as membership structure and the characteristics of their origin settlements.[15] Perouse's work[16] takes a departure from the existing literature by suggesting an independent reading of the history of HTAs, separating it from internal migration history. The author argues that with the involvement of elites, these associations have become influential economic and political factors at the national level. Perouse also critiques the analysis of HTAs as obstacles to urban integration, emphasizing their involvement in various social and political dynamics that contribute to local, regional, and even national legitimacy. Therefore, the author suggests studying HTAs in a more comprehensive manner, transcending the urban/rural dichotomy.

In a related anthropological study, Meeker[17] sheds light on the organization of people from Trabzon in Istanbul through the branches of the 'Of Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği' located in Laleli and Kadıköy, respectively. Meeker argues that these associations were more modern, diversified, and vibrant organizations, distinct from the traditional influential figures like '*ağa*' and '*hoca*' from the Of district.

The functions of transnational HTAs in social, economic, political, and cultural interactions run parallel to the functions of domestic HTAs in Turkey in terms of fostering migrant social capital. The literature in this area often highlights studies focusing on transnational migrants and their relationships with Turkey. For example, Christiansen investigates how Kurdish migrants from Konya, Turkey, living in Denmark, participate in development and integration activities through HTAs and the effect of social remittances during this process.[18] Based on a case study of a Turkish HTA in Germany, Caglar examines migrant HTAs within the context of changing state-space relationships in neo-liberal globalization.[19] These associations might perform functions similar to HTAs in Istanbul. Bavoni explores how soccer reinforces the cultural ties between Mexican migrants and their homelands.[20] The study delves into the relationship between a soccer team in Chicago and HTAs, debating how sports can bolster transnational bonds. In Istanbul, some HTAs also function as sports associations, leading us to question if sports clubs serve as a bridge between migrants and their origin cities.

Connections can also be drawn between the HTAs of transnational migrants in the international context and the case of Turkey regarding political interaction, participation, and competition between associations.

Paarlberg discusses how Mexican migrants engage in U.S. elections through HTAs.[21] Vonderlack-Navarro and Sites analyze the leadership roles of associations with Mexican origins in the immigrant rights movement in Chicago,[22] while Muñoz and Collazo discuss the contributions of associations with Latin American origins to projects and political access in their homelands.[23] Waldinger et al. examine the conflict and competition within HTAs of Salvadoran migrants in Los Angeles.[24] Although these works mainly focus on migrant associations of Latin American origin in the U.S., they motivated our exploration into the roles of HTAs in Istanbul in both local and national politics, their internal conflicts, and their relationships with politics in their origin cities.

A substantial body of research investigates the influence of migrant networks on local and national politics, particularly focusing on the emergence of Alevi and Islamist political movements in the 1990s. It includes an analysis of the solidarity based on faith and kinship among Alevi migrants in Istanbul, as well as their interactions with HTAs. The critical role of HTAs, especially in local religious events, is highlighted, along with the recognition by political groups of the strategic value in gaining support from migrant communities. Such support has been key to achieving representation in local neighborhood and district governance structures.

The organization of Alevism in Istanbul presents an intriguing topic for researchers studying HTAs. The unique blend of faith and migrant among Alevi migrants from rural areas to Istanbul has garnered attention. A notable example of this intersection is the significant transformation of the Pir Sultan Abdal Derneği, originally established as the Banaz village association under Sivas's Yıldızeli district, into a national organization over time. Similarly, the Hacı Bektaş Vakfı was founded in Okmeydanı by representatives from around twenty villages in Sivas's Hafik district.[25] Schüler[26] explores the political differences stemming from regional distinctions within the Alevi community and examines the impact of migrant relations on Alevi politics. Massicard[27] distinguishes between Alevist organizations and Alevi HTAs, observing a strong connection between them. The administrators in both groups often overlap, and HTAs serve as a stepping stone for individuals to rise within these organizations. Alevism relies on mutual acquaintance to establish financial support. Moreover, since the late 1990s, migrant groups have played a significant role in local Alevi religious gatherings known as '*cems*' held in places of worship. Religious foundations, often organized by village associations, have begun renting their premises for cems attended by migrant groups.

During the 1990s, the rise of Alevism in Istanbul was paralleled by the rise of Islamism. The success of the Welfare Party (*Refah Partisi*) in local politics garnered scholarly attention. Erder[28] analyzed Islamic local politics, studying both Sunni and Alevi neighborhoods in Pendik. The author later expanded

this study to cover the AKP period.[29] Tuğal[30] examined the incorporation of Islamism into the state based on Sultanbeyli, the region where the Welfare Party initially gained ground. Wedel[31] investigated the participation of Kurdish women in local politics in Istanbul's *gecekondu* neighborhoods, delving into the ways in which Islamist politics utilized hometown networks. According to Wedel,[32] informal networks can effectively encourage women's local political participation and serve as a tool utilized by women involved in politics in Istanbul's neighborhoods. However, the social networks within *gecekondu* neighborhoods are largely confined to hometown relations due to neighbors gathering in the same spaces.

The relationship between Islamist local politics in Istanbul and the networks of hometown associates has also been widely addressed in the earlier studies, starting with the Milli Görüş movement and extending to the contemporary era of the Justice and Development Party (*Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi*, AKP). Doğan,[33] examining the trajectory of the Milli Görüş movement in Kağıthane district, identified over 50 HTAs in Sanayi Mahallesi. The AKP attached great importance to garnering support from HTAs at the local level and took care to ensure their representation in neighborhood and district administrations.[34] The person assigned to work on behalf of the party had to be demographically connected to a sizable and influential HTA, and, more importantly, possess strong ties (social capital) within the migrant community.[35] Support from these HTAs meant ready-made manpower for the party, trust in the individual before the party and extra votes.

The 'poverty-in-turn' strategy proposed by Işık and Pınarcıoğlu utilizes local actors, such as kinship, sect, and ethnic origins, to form supportive networks and allows participants to earn money through these networks.[36] Migrant relations offer opportunities for immigrants in the labor market. Part of these opportunities arises from the concentration of previous kin in certain job sectors, making it easier for newcomers to find or establish work.[37] 'Poverty-in-turn' represents a combination of intertwined hierarchical relationships resembling a mix of community and mafia relationships and is particularly visible in migrant relations.[38] In Sultanbeyli, the combination of sectarianization with ethnic differentiation has resulted in a fascinating interplay, sometimes superseding hometown identity, political, and cultural differences.[39] Tuğal focuses on the view of Islamists as well as other parties towards hometown identity.[40] While center-left parties view hometown identity and affiliation with rural areas as backward, Islamic parties emphasize the role of religion as a bridge between hometown networks and local communities.

These studies shed light on the complex and evolving role of hometown networks in Turkish society, particularly in urban areas like Istanbul. HTAs serve as vital civil institutions, shaping cultural and political

inclinations among migrants and providing a sense of belonging and support for communities based on shared origins and heritage. They influence local politics and even national dynamics through their organizational structure and connections to political parties and other organizations. Understanding the dynamics and implications of hometown organizations is crucial for comprehending the broader societal transformations brought about by rural migration in Turkey.

Methodology

Data gathering for this study was influenced by Perouse's text[41], which also highlighted significant challenges in data collection. The data from the Istanbul Police Department presented categorization issues with associations, including errors in addresses and names. In some instances, village associations were incorrectly labeled as HTAs. Similar challenges were encountered with data from the Ministry of Interior. A notable limitation was the absence of district and province names for many villages. Perouse addressed this by referring to a Turkish village atlas, but this method was not entirely effective in resolving all issues.[42] Consequently, the study incorporated alternative approaches, utilizing open-source platforms like Google Maps and Facebook groups to supplement and correct the data inconsistencies.

Unlike earlier studies that mainly looked at how many associations there are in Istanbul and where they are located,[43] this study takes a different approach. It focuses on the organizational structure and how densely HTAs are present in Istanbul's districts. Previous research used data from the Ministry of Interior's 'Associations Information System' (DERBIS) to count HTAs in Istanbul. However, this data had several issues. For example, some associations that should have been labeled as HTAs were wrongly classified as other types. Also, many records lacked important details like the exact location, province, and district of the associations, making it challenging to get a complete picture.

Among the current studies, the most comprehensive information on HTAs in Istanbul is found in a report published in 2020 by the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, Istanbul Planning Agency, and Istanbul Statistics Office. However, data compiled from the Ministry of Interior's Directorate General for Civil Society Relations and the Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) harbor various problems. For instance, the classification of HTAs based on the province they are connected to leads to categories such as 'Istanbul, Kars-Ardahan-Iğdır, Black Sea, Aegean, and Others.' The evaluation of statistics indicates that districts with a high rural population in Istanbul, such as Beykoz and Şile, feature a dense concentration of HTAs. From this, it is inferred that village associations from Istanbul are mistakenly accepted as HTAs, instead of being associated with internal migration and

urbanization from Anatolia to Istanbul. Another problematic aspect involves classifying associations with names related to multiple provinces or geographical regions such as Kars-Ardahan-Iğdır, the Black Sea, or the Aegean. Moreover, the statistical data from TÜİK displays Istanbul in all districts except for Sultanbeyli and Sultangazi among the top three provinces by registered population. However, incorporating Istanbul's registered population in measuring or identifying migrant organizational structures through HTAs seems problematic.

Given these complexities, this study adopts a unique method to measure organizational density of HTAs, defined as the formal organizational structure within migrant groups, indicated by the ratio of HTAs to the migrant population size. To achieve a more accurate assessment, the study specifically excludes Istanbul's registered population, focusing instead on comparing the number of associations with the registered migrant population from other provinces. This approach aims to provide a clearer understanding of the organizational dynamics of migrant groups in Istanbul.

Reviewing the Ministry of Interior's database, we found that Kayaoğlu's approach closely aligns with our methodology.[44] While Kayaoğlu identified associations established by emigrants, they did not encompass associations formed due to internal migration within the category of HTAs. Moreover, HTAs formed to represent specific regions were not incorporated into their province-based dataset. Similarly, associations that were identified as not primarily functioning as HTAs were omitted from their study.

Built on the principle of solidarity, HTAs are typically maintained within semi-structured or formal organizational frameworks.[45] The identification of the number, location, and addresses of the most prevalent form of semi-structured organizations, particularly hometown coffeehouses, is unfeasible. However, hometown foundations were identified, albeit in limited numbers (refer to Supplementary Table 3[46]). The primary focus of this article is centered on HTAs. The data used originates from the 'Associations by Provinces and Activities (*İllere ve Faaliyet Alanlarına Göre Dernekler*)' section of the Directorate General for Civil Society Relations (*Sivil Toplumla İlişkiler Genel Müdürlüğü*), Ministry of Interior.

On June 12, 2022, a collection of all associations in Istanbul registered in the DERBİS system[47] was compiled. It was observed that both in DERBİS and in previous studies documented in the literature, certain associations were incorrectly classified as HTAs. Recognizing this error, the decision was made to deviate from DERBİS's classification and develop an independent categorization system. Consequently, there may be noticeable discrepancies in the number of associations as reported by DERBİS, existing literature, and the findings of this study.

Among a total of 25,638 associations in Istanbul, village associations numbered 4,704, district associations totaled 738, provincial associations reached

1,263, regional associations stood at 121, and HTAs organized around ethnic identity, family, tribe, or profession amounted to 139. This HTA dataset was subsequently integrated with the 2021 TÜİK data detailing residents' provinces of registration, based on their respective districts within Istanbul. Despite these efforts, it was not possible to determine which province and district 66 village associations belong to. This is due to the fact that, in the data from the Ministry of Interior, these associations are only registered with the names of the villages. For instance, when confronted with an association named 'Acıpınar Köyü Kültür Dayanışma ve Yardımlaşma Derneği', multiple villages across different provinces and districts sharing the name 'Acıpınar' were identified. Consequently, the province and district affiliation for this association could not be definitively established. The district of origin for 13 village associations and one district association could not be ascertained. This challenge arose from disparities between the addresses provided in the associations' records and corresponding addresses within Istanbul.

In this study, Istanbul's HTAs were categorized into five distinct types (Table 1).[48] Firstly, associations established with names of villages, hamlets, towns, and neighborhoods were consolidated under a single category. Secondly, associations formed with names of provinces and districts were divided into two separate categories. Alongside associations centered around rural and urban (province/district) centers, two other distinctive types of associations were identified. Those established with names of regions or spanning multiple provinces were termed 'regional associations', while those founded on criteria such as ethnic identity, family, tribe, diaspora, or profession were designated as 'group associations', each listed separately. However, 'sports associations' and 'youth and sports associations' established in Istanbul but affiliated with other provinces were excluded from the category of HTAs, as the researchers regarded these associations as commercial ventures driven by significant profit motives.

Table 1. Five types of hometown organizations.

Category	Description	Examples
Village	Associations established with names of village, hamlet, town, and neighborhood settlements.	Bayburt İli Çatıksu Köyü Derneği, Adana Ceyhan Doruklular Kültür ve Dayanışma Derneği
District	Associations established with names of district-level settlements.	Zonguldak İli ve Beycuma İlçesi Çevre Köyleri Derneği, Kemaliye Gençlik Spor, Samsun Bafralılar Derneği, Akıncılar İlçesi ve Köyleri
Province	Associations established with names of province-level settlements.	Ardahan Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği, Erzurum Kültür Derneği
Region	Associations established with names referencing regions or multiple provinces within Turkey.	Karadenizliler, Kars-Iğdır-Ardahan, Trakyalılar, Adilcevaz-Erciş, Ankara ve Çevre İlleri
Group	Associations formed based on ethnic identity, tribe, family, diaspora, or profession, with references to the place of origin.	Rumeli, Caucasus, Zaza, Alikan, Roma people (Roma immigrants with a province name outside Istanbul)

Findings

When the active HTAs in Istanbul were listed according to their origin provinces, as displayed in Supplementary Table 1, a discernible trend emerges, with Sivas taking the lead with 733 associations, trailed by Tokat with 459, Kastamonu with 419, Giresun with 365, and Ordu with 359 associations. However, upon categorizing these associations into village, province, district, and group types, some variations in rankings become apparent. It is important to acknowledge that the discussion will not delve into the region and group type HTAs, as they are established based on geographical region, ethnic identity, or familial/tribal affiliations.

Within the realm of village associations, the leading provinces include Sivas (617), Tokat (361), Kastamonu (313), Erzincan (288), and Giresun (275). Shifting our focus to district associations, the provinces at the forefront are Ordu (58), Samsun (55), Erzurum (44), Giresun (38), and Kastamonu (37). Within the context of provincial associations, the top spot is shared by Sivas (73) and Tokat (73), closely followed by Kastamonu (68), Erzurum (62), and Trabzon (60). As expected, the hierarchy observed in village associations significantly influences the overall count of associations. It is noteworthy that, even though they may not feature prominently in the village association tally, Samsun, Trabzon, and Erzurum demonstrate noteworthy prominence within the district and province association categories.

After the adjustment of the cumulative association ranking based on the population of native citizens associated with their respective origin provinces – a feature denoted as 'organizational density' in the methodology – a revised ranking is obtained. In accordance with this ranking, as demonstrated in the 'Associations per 10,000 people' column of Supplementary Table 1 and summarized in Figure 1, the provinces displaying the greatest count of HTAs per 10,000 people in Istanbul are, in order, Bayburt, Gümüşhane, Erzincan, Sivas, and Tokat.

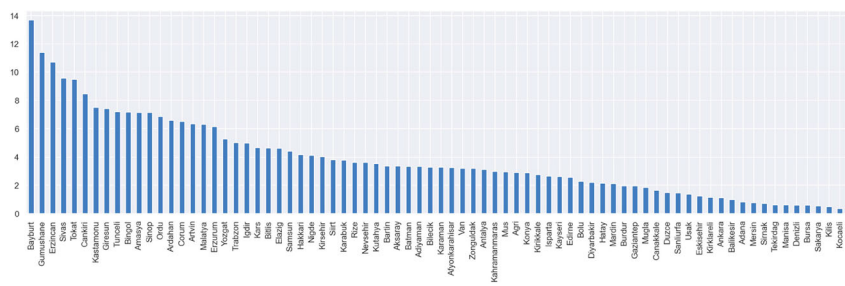


Figure 1. Total hometown associations per 10,000 people in Istanbul (Figure only displays the cases where a city has more than 1 associations).

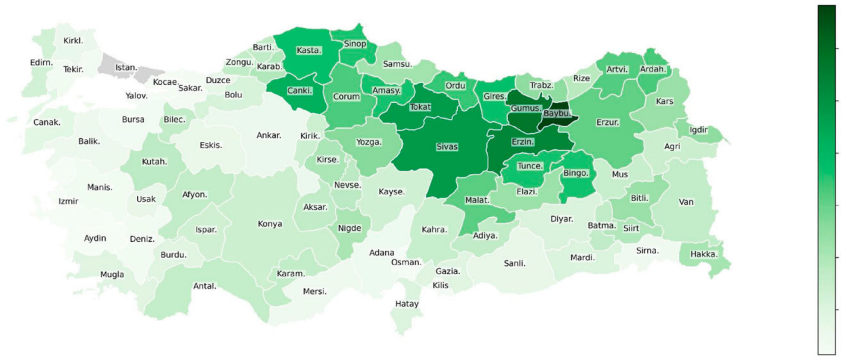


Figure 2. Number of hometown associations per 10,000 people by province.

The geographical proximity of the cities positioned at the top of the hometown organization ranking is of note, as depicted in Figure 2 on the map of Turkey's provinces. Provinces characterized by the highest number of HTAs per 10,000 people consistently align along the trajectory extending from Tokat and Sivas in the western direction to Erzincan, Gümüşhane, and Bayburt in the east. Supplementary Table 1 outlines the total number of associations per 10,000 people in Istanbul, excluding provinces with fewer than eight associations from the tabulation. Bayburt emerges as the province with the most pronounced organization, boasting 13.6 associations per 10,000 people. Following this, Gümüşhane follows with 11.3 associations, while Erzincan, Sivas, and Tokat respectively exhibit 10.6, 9.5, and 9.4 associations. Consequently, these provinces stand as the top five with the highest number of HTAs per capita. Neighboring provinces in this region, namely Amasya, Ordu, Giresun, Malatya, and Tunceli, also demonstrate elevated values in comparison to the national average. The depiction in Figure 2 underscores that the cultural geography of this region merits consideration when elucidating hometown affiliations in Istanbul.

Figure 3 provides a detailed breakdown of the total number of HTAs into rural and urban (province and district) associations across their provinces of origins. Within HTAs originating from villages, the top five provinces mirror those identified in the overall association tally: Bayburt (10.3), Erzincan (9.3), Gümüşhane (8.7), Sivas (8.04), and Tokat (7.4). In the context of district associations, Samsun (1.29), Çanakkale (1.22), Ordu (1.1), Tunceli (1.059), and Artvin (1.058) secure the leading positions. Regarding the city center, Hakkari (3.58), Bayburt (2.89), Gümüşhane (2.28), Kırşehir (2.11), and Yozgat (2.041) emerge as the top five provinces with the highest count of HTAs per 10,000 people.

In the context of regional associations, the prevalent naming convention primarily involves HTAs with a Karadeniz (Black Sea) affiliation. Bayraktar

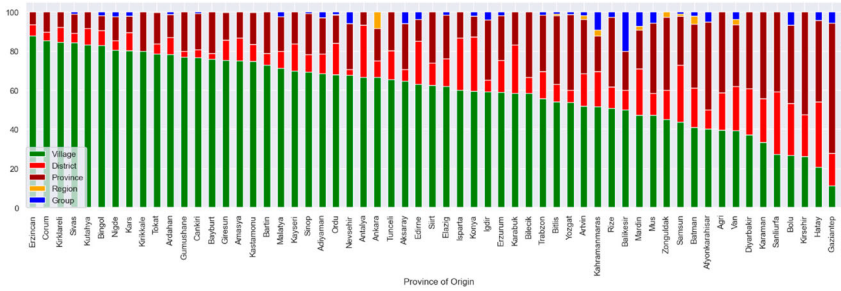


Figure 3. Provinces of origins by association types (only for those with more than 8 associations).

also states that the regional identity of the Black Sea region is much stronger compared to other geographical regions such as Central Anatolia and Eastern Anatolia.[49] In the group-type HTAs, we also include associations established with professional affiliations such as 'businessmen', 'industry and businessmen', or 'young businessmen'. These associations are considered as representatives and organized power of the 'Anatolian capital', especially of rising provinces and groups.[50]

In terms of the highest number of HTAs, the following districts in Istanbul were identified: Bağcılar (485), Esenyurt (356), Ümraniye (352), Esenler (338), and Küçükçekmece (332). When classified based on rural (village) and urban (province and district) associations, the top five districts with the highest number of village associations were Bağcılar (345), Ümraniye (277), Esenler (266), Kağıthane (258), and Küçükçekmece (229). As for district associations, the leading districts included Bağcılar (69), Esenyurt (57), Fatih (42), Küçükçekmece (41), and Bahçelievler (41). Regarding province-based HTAs in Istanbul, Esenyurt (80), Bağcılar (65), Pendik (61), Küçükçekmece (58), and Kartal (54) occupied the top positions.

Notably, the districts of Istanbul situated on the periphery or those that have recently experienced population growth, such as Başakşehir (1.89), Çatalca (1.99), Beylikdüzü (2.23), and Büyükçekmece (2.33), exhibited lower densities of HTAs. Remarkably, Bakırköy (2.36), despite being one of the oldest and central settlements in Istanbul, demonstrated a relatively smaller number of HTAs in proportion to its population. This can be attributed to the district boundary reorganization in the 1990s, resulting in the formation of districts like Esenler, Bağcılar (7.1), Bahçelievler (6.1), and Güngören (5.6). The neighborhoods organized by HTAs primarily remained within the borders of these districts, consequently leading to higher association densities in these areas.

In terms of district associations, the districts with the highest densities included Fatih (1.5), Beşiktaş (1.1), Şişli (1.04), Bağcılar (1.02), and

Zeytinburnu (0.89). As for province associations, the top five were Adalar (2.36), Şişli (2.1), Ataşehir (2.08), Beşiktaş (1.48), and Fatih (1.47). When it comes to village associations, Beyoğlu (7.8), Şişli (6.8), Kağıthane (6.6), and Esenler (6.5) emerged as the top four districts, with Sultanbeyli (5.6) surpassing Ataşehir (5.2) to secure the fifth place. Considering both rural and urban HTAs at the province and district levels, the central districts of Istanbul are predominant. According to Erder[51], these districts are categorized based on their settlement characteristics into three main groups: (1) districts without shanty towns, featuring a formal housing market; (2) urbanized districts with shanty towns; and (3) districts where the construction of *gecekondu* persists due to migration. Şişli, Fatih, and Beşiktaş, belonging to the first category and also ranking among the top five in terms of socio-economic development,[52] stood out as districts with the highest number of HTAs. This suggests that accessibility significantly influences the location of HTAs. Despite migrants changing neighborhoods as prosperity increases, established associations tend to remain in the areas where migrant groups initially settled. For instance, Caymaz's field study on Niğde migrants highlighted that the Niğde Culture and Solidarity Association (*Niğde Kültür ve Yardımlaşma Derneği*), the oldest association of Niğde migrants, continues to be situated in the Eminönü neighborhood (now within Istanbul's Fatih district), despite migrants from Niğde dispersing to other parts of the city.[53]

Overall, the findings suggest that the geographical and cultural affinities of the origin provinces play a significant role in the establishment and organization of HTAs in Istanbul. The regions with the highest geographical density of associations are typically located along the line connecting Tokat and Sivas in the west to Erzincan, Gümüşhane, and Bayburt in the east, forming a continuous region with strong cultural ties. Moreover, central districts of Istanbul with higher socio-economic development and easy accessibility tend to have a higher number of HTAs. On the other hand, districts on the city's outskirts and recently populated areas generally have fewer associations. The establishment of associations seems to be influenced by factors such as historical settlement patterns and the presence of shanty towns in the past. As migrants change neighborhoods, the associations mostly remain in the areas where the migrant groups initially settled. These findings shed light on hometown affiliations and the factors influencing the organization of HTAs in Istanbul.

Discussion

Previous research has highlighted how Alevi migrants from Turkey's countryside establish HTAs in larger cities, with a focus on the roles played by *cemevis* (Alevi worship places), political affiliations, especially with left-wing parties, and the shifting identity of the Alevi community's second

generation.[54] This study observes a distinct pattern: while provinces like Sivas, Erzincan, and Tokat are prominently featured in village associations, these same areas are less represented at the city level, including both province and district associations. In other words, the cultural region forming the core of HTAs in Istanbul predominantly relies on these three key provinces – Sivas, Erzincan, and Tokat. These associations primarily emphasize the identities tied to the migrants' original villages, which often overshadows their affiliation with the broader cities or administrative regions where these villages are located. The migrants' sense of identity is more closely aligned with their village rather than the larger urban or administrative entities encompassing those villages. We believe this pattern stems from the sectarian division in these provinces, which is a result of historical events leading to geographical segregation. As Alevi faith constitutes an organized minority in these provinces, the local identity expressed at the village level has become synonymous with sectarian and religious identity. Consequently, the provincial identity, which lacks a clear boundary with the 'other' inside, may have taken a secondary role. Similarly, the process of cultural minorities, such as Alevi communities, emphasizing their rural identities to distinguish themselves from the dominant Sunni majority, could have also contributed to this outcome. Examples of these village associations coming together to form a larger Alevi organization indicate their prioritization of sectarian identity over provincial or district identity. Massicard's observation of the transformation of Hacı Bektaş Foundation and Pir Sultan Abdal Association from village-level associations to national ones supports our argument.[55] Our hypothesis is further supported by the differences in the rural and urban organizational patterns of Çorum and Çankırı provinces, where sectarian divisions weaken the sense of provincial identity.

The distribution of the associations in the districts of Istanbul, as mentioned in our findings, indicates the following rankings in terms of the total number of HTAs per 10,000 individuals: Beyoğlu (9.94), Şişli (9.65), Esenler (8.22), Kağıthane (7.73), and Ataşehir (7.27) rank the highest. This statistic might be influenced by the relatively lower population size of these districts. Beyoğlu and Şişli, with their smaller populations, being the city's commercial and business centers, have become the primary locations for HTAs. The main offices of these associations are typically situated near administrative and economic centers, while their branches are found in the residential areas of the represented communities.[56] Moreover, the prominent districts around the Golden Horn are highly represented in the current ranking. In the top ten, only Ataşehir district, formed in 2008 by separating some neighborhoods from Kadıköy, Ümraniye, and Üsküdar on the Asian side, makes the list. Only Sultanbeyli district from the Asian side ranks in the top ten (7.03). Perouse's study also shows that, except for Mustafa Kemal (Ümraniye) and İçerenköy (Kadıköy) neighborhoods, which are

located on the Asian side, the majority of neighborhoods with the highest number of HTAs are on the European side.[57] Despite the emergence of business centers on the Asian side in recent years, the centralization of these associations seems to be influenced by the functional centrality of the European side. The areas surrounding the Golden Horn, where a well-established migrant worker population resides on the European side, host a concentration of HTAs. According to Bayraktar's article, migration waves and the resulting fragmentation of local community bonds have played a significant role in the emergence and proliferation of these associations, with Şişli, Kağıthane, Beyoğlu, Üsküdar, and Kadıköy districts being considered as Istanbul's sub-centers, hosting 27 percent of the total number of associations.[58] The reason behind this concentration is the accessibility of these locations to the associations. On the other hand, hometown foundations in Istanbul have some relevance to this study, albeit to a lesser extent. As such, we have identified the number of foundations in Turkish cities for comparison (see Supplementary Table 3). Some provinces, which are not prominent in HTAs, seem to be stronger in terms of the establishment of foundations. Branch associations often compete with foundations that bear the name of 'culture and education foundation'. Foundations established with the support of local authorities serve as pressure groups representing the interests of fellow citizens in densely populated areas.[59]

Conclusion

Our study begins with the premise that the frequency and diversity of associations within migrant groups serve as a significant indicator of their organizational density. This cohesion is quantified by comparing the number of these associations relative to the total population of the migrant group in question. We argue that such a metric can shed light on how well these groups are integrated within their new environments and offers a window into their collective capacity to mobilize, support each other, and contribute to their new communities.

Building on this foundation, our research proposes a novel metric for evaluating the degree of organization among migrant groups, which we believe is critical for assessing their social capital and political and civil society engagement. This metric is not an end in itself but rather a starting point for a broader research agenda that aims to delve into the nuances of migrant networks and their societal contributions. With a particular focus on domestic migration, our study enriches the academic discourse on migrant solidarity networks in Turkey and other contexts facing similar migratory trends.

However, we are mindful of the constraints inherent in our approach. Specifically, our method may not fully capture the depth and quality of interpersonal relationships within these communities, including the strength,

durability, intensity, and breadth of these connections. These qualitative dimensions are crucial for understanding the true nature of organizational cohesion but are challenging to quantify through simple numerical measures.

Acknowledging these limitations, we argue for the development and implementation of more nuanced methodologies that can capture both the quantitative and qualitative facets of migrant group cohesion. Future research endeavors should aim to incorporate methods that allow for a more comprehensive understanding of the social dynamics within migrant communities. This could include ethnographic fieldwork, long-term observational studies, and the use of social network analysis techniques, which can provide richer insights into the complex web of relationships that underpin migrant communities.

Notes

1. Carroll and Hannan, "Density Dependence."
2. Koytak and Celik, "A Text Mining Approach."
3. Schüler, *Türkiye'de Sosyal Demokrasi*.
4. Ibid.
5. Ibid.
6. Caglar, "Hometown Associations," and Dicarlo, *Migrating to America*.
7. Demirbağ, "Refah Partisi," and Coşkun, "Village Associations."
8. Çelik, "'I Miss My Village!'"; Yılmaz, *Hemşehri Kimliği*; Kırlı, and "İstanbul'da Hemşehrilik."
9. Bayraktar, "Formelleşen Hemşehri."
10. Erder, *İstanbul'a Bir Kent Kondu*.
11. Dubetsky, "Kinship, Primordial Ties," and Güneş-Ayata, "Gecekondularda Kimlik."
12. Schüler, *Türkiye'de Sosyal Demokrasi*; Köksal and Kara, "1980 Sonrasında"; and Caymaz, "İstanbul'da Niğdeli Hemşehri Dernekleri."
13. Orozco and Rouse, "Migrant Hometown Associations," and Bada, "Collective Remittances."
14. Moya, "Immigrants and Associations"; Somerville, Durana, and Terrazas, "Hometown Associations"; and Kayaoğlu, "Hometown Associations."
15. Erder, *İstanbul'a Bir Kent Kondu*; Hersant and Toumarkine, "Hometown Organisations"; and Pérouse, "Phénomène Migratoire."
16. Pérouse, "Phénomène Migratoire, s."
17. Meeker, *A Nation Of Empire*, 432.
18. Christiansen, "Hometown Associations."
19. Caglar, "Hometown Associations."
20. Bavoni, "Soccer and Hometown Associations."
21. Ahn Paarlberg, "Hometown Associations."
22. Vonderlack-Navarro and Sites, "The Bi-National Road."
23. Muñoz and Collazo, "Looking out for Paisanos."
24. Waldinger, Popkin, and Magana, "Conflict and Contestation."
25. Massicard, *Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya*.
26. Schüler, *Türkiye'de Sosyal Demokrasi*.
27. Massicard, *Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya*.

28. Erder, *Kentsel Gerilim*.
29. Erder, *Yeni Nesil Popülizmi*.
30. Tuğal, "The Appeal of Islamic Politics," and Tuğal, "The Urban Dynamism."
31. Wedel, *Siyaset ve Cinsiyet*.
32. Ibid, 118.
33. Doğan, *Mahalledeki AKP*.
34. Ibid, 68.
35. Ibid, 105.
36. Işık and Pınarcıoğlu, *Nöbetleşe Yoksulluk*, 77–78.
37. Ibid, 117.
38. Ibid, 171.
39. Ibid, 260.
40. Tuğal, "The Urban Dynamism."
41. Pérouse, "Phénomène Migratoire,\."
42. Yaman, *Köy Köy Türkiye Yol Atlası*.
43. Kurtoğlu, "Kentleşme Sürecinde"; "Toplumsal Değişim Raporlari"; and Kayaoğlu, "Veri Sunumu:."
44. Kayaoğlu, "Veri Sunumu:."
45. Kurtoğlu, "Mekansal Bir Olgu Olarak Hemşehrilik."
46. All supplementary tables and figures are available in the on-line version of this article and can be requested from the corresponding author.
47. https://derbis.dernekler.gov.tr/IstatistikDerneklerWeb/IlFaaliyetAlaniDernekler
48. HTAs are classified using the concepts of province, district, village, and region. Turkey consists of 81 provinces, which are further subdivided into smaller administrative units known as districts. These districts usually encompass a central district area and its surrounding villages. The villages, typically located in rural areas, represent Turkey's smallest administrative units. Additionally, on a regional level, Turkey is segmented into various regions. These regions are defined by their geographic, economic, and demographic characteristics and, while not official administrative structures, are utilized for planning and statistical analysis.
49. Bayraktar, "Formelleşen Hemşehri"
50. Aslandaş, "1980 Sonrası Dernekler."
51. Erder, *İstanbul'a Bir Kent Kondu*.
52. Acar et al., *İlçelerin Sosyo-Ekonomik*.
53. Caymaz, "İstanbul'da Niğdeli."
54. Fliche, "The Hemşehrilik and the Village:"; Le Ray, "Associations de Pays"; Massicard, "Politiser La Provenance."; Yücel, "Les Jeunes Alévis"; and Erder, *İstanbul Bir Kervansaray*.
55. Massicard, *Türkiye'den Avrupa'ya*.
56. Hersant and Toumarkine, "Hometown Organisations."
57. Pérouse, "Phénomène Migratoire."
58. Bayraktar, "Formelleşen Hemşehri Dayanışma Ağları."
59. Pérouse, "Phénomène Migratoire."

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